

Supplement of TRAVTALK AUGUST 2<sup>ND</sup> FORTNIGHT ISSUE 2018



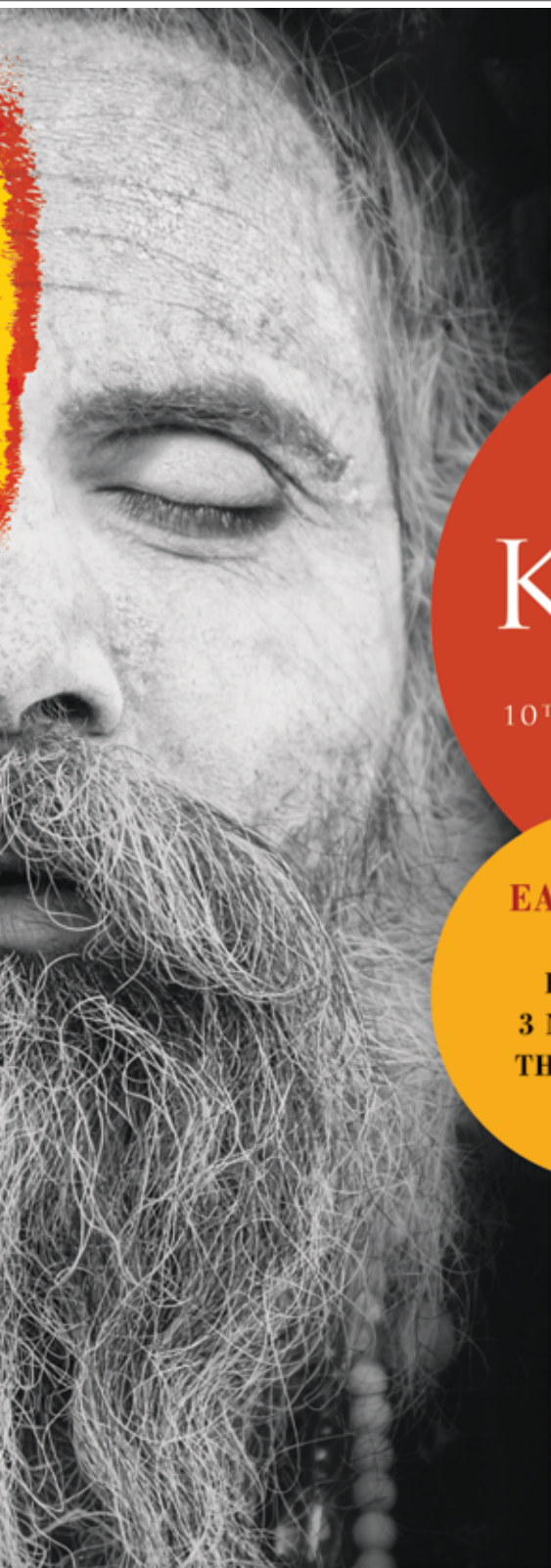
# Hotel talk

Pages 32

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## Hotel talk

### STAYS TO REMEMBER

What makes for a perfect stay? A good room with a great view, a seven-course meal in a Michelin star restaurant or an infinity pool that overlooks the ocean? Today a perfect stay at a hotel entails all this and more. That 'more' has become the biggest distinguishing factor for hotels.

In order to offer something extra to guests, hotels are leaving no stone unturned to come up with new ideas to engage with guests. Unique experiences form the core of this exercise, where properties offer a taste of the local life and activities to the guests. While this not only engrosses travellers and takes their experience a notch higher, it also makes them increase the room-nights for the hotel, resulting in a win-win situation for both.

Another trend that we have seen is how new hotels are coming up with state-of-the-art facilities and comforts in the room, while old hotels are getting changes done in existing structures to stay in the competition. Today, no brand can sustain on its past laurels, especially with international brands coming into the market and expanding not only in the five-star segment but also in the budget sector.

Many countries are trying to vie for the attention of outbound travellers from India, so much so, that they are offering breakfast buffets, especially catering to them. Travellers from India are high spenders, not only internationally but also in the domestic market, and hotels are going that extra mile to grab a share of this growing pie.

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# NEWS IN BRIEF



### LIGHT UP YOUR DIWALI AT JA MANAFARU, MALDIVES

Get ready to celebrate the Festival of Lights at JA Manafaru, Maldives. Set in the northern Haa Alif atoll, the five-star property is situated on a 35-acre island and boasts 84 villas and suites all with their own private pools. In celebration of Diwali from November 7-14, a diya lighting ceremony will open the festivities which will boast a sumptuous dinner of North Indian cuisine.



### One&Only Desaru Coast to open soon

One&Only Desaru Coast is all set to open its doors in Malaysia and offer an ultimate bespoke lifestyle experience on a 128-acre beachfront development. The property will have 42 suites, two luxury suites and an exclusive four-bedroom villa, as well as approximately 50 One&Only Private Homes available for purchase. The hotel would be the first One&Only in Malaysia, as the brand continues to grow and develop internationally. Accessible from Singapore Changi International Airport and Senai International Airport in Johor, Desaru Coast is the new premium integrated destination located in the south-eastern region of Malaysia in the state of Johor.



### Ascott expands in Vietnam

Ascott has opened Vietnam's largest serviced residence—Citadines Blue Cove Danang—and its fifth property in Ho Chi Minh City—Citadines Regency Saigon.

### AccorHotels to acquire 21c Museum Hotels

AccorHotels has signed an agreement to acquire 85 per cent of 21c Museum Hotels to create a unique travel experience. Founded in 2006, 21c offers a melange of a multi-venue contemporary art museum, boutique hotels and chef-driven restaurants, with 11 properties currently open and under development across the United States.

## Raffles opens in Poland

Raffles Europejski Warsaw is the latest property under the brand to have opened in Poland. The hotel brings over 160 years of history and heritage to the culturally rich Raffles Hotels & Resorts brand and is the third European destination for the brand after Paris and Istanbul. The interiors are elegant and showcase the very best of modern and contemporary Polish art. The 106 rooms and suites are classically stylish with blackened oak floors, contemporary Polish art, a corner library and sleek marble-clad bathrooms with Art Deco touches. But the jewel in the crown is the Presidential Suite, spread over a magnificent 293 square metres.



## Marriott opens Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa

Marriott International has opened doors to Sheraton Grand Chennai Resort & Spa, a stunning resort property located along the scenic East Coast Road of Tamil Nadu. Overlooking the Bay of Bengal, the property is spread over 10 acres of land that includes landscaped gardens opening on to miles of virgin beach sands and an endless ocean. The architecture and design in the resort reflects the lilting waves, shimmering sands and vast greenery. Rich wood accents, soothing colour palettes, intricate tapestry and the inclusion of copper displayed throughout the property, subtly depict local elements that capture the charm of the city.

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## Niraamaya Retreats debuts in North India with Royal Heritage Haveli, Jaipur

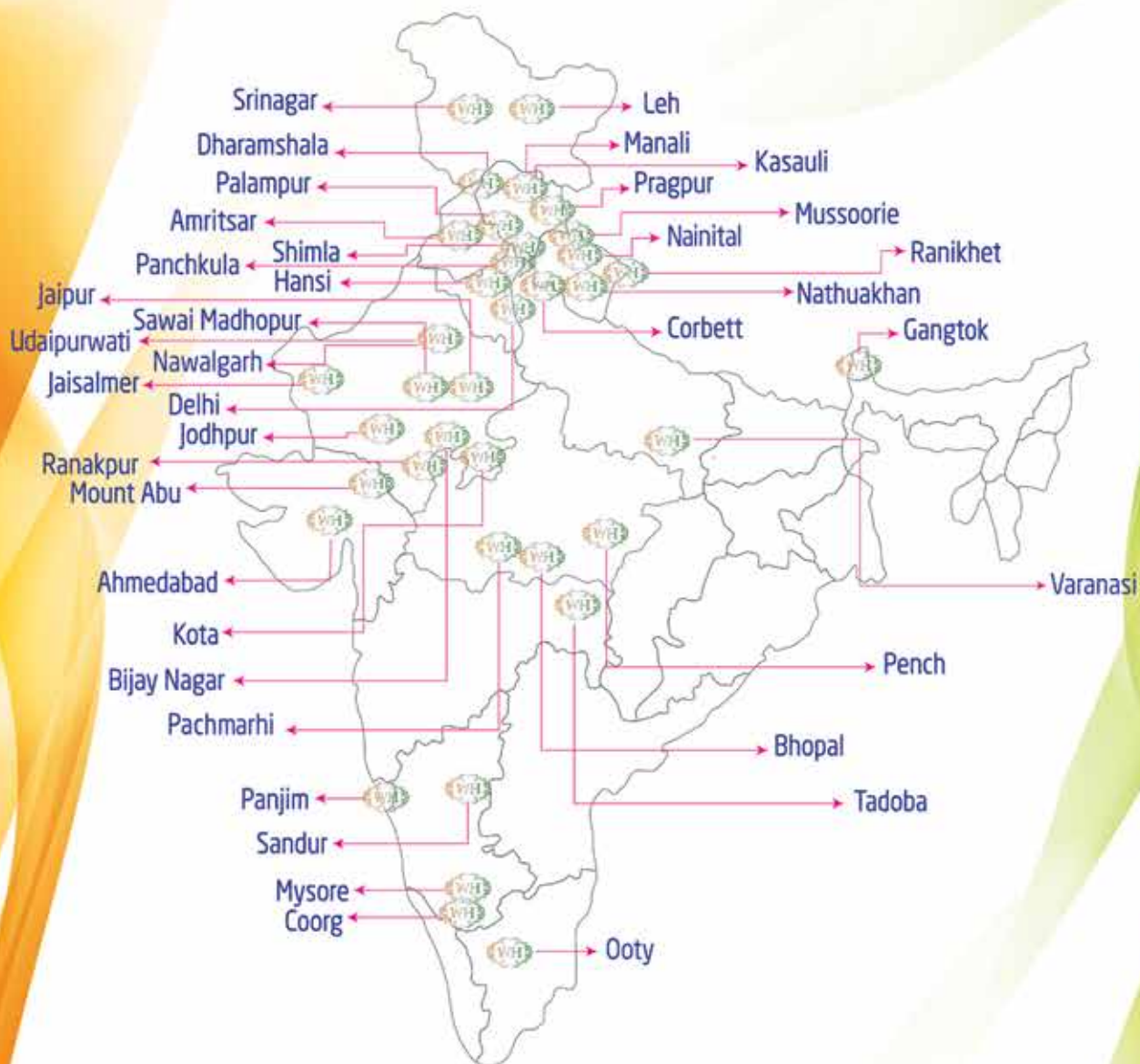
Niraamaya Retreats, a collection of boutique properties across India, has announced its first foray in North India to operate and manage Royal Heritage Haveli in Jaipur. Located on the outskirts of the city, the *haveli* offers unique experiences such as destination cued dining, cooking sessions revealing the secrets of the family's favourite recipes passed down generations, a hands-on hand-block printing workshop and a private class of Polo at a nearby farm. Built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a hunting lodge for the Jaipur royal family, the five-acre property offers 19 spacious suites. Each of the living spaces features well-appointed interiors with the highest standards of luxury and comfort.



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Situated in the heart of the blue city of Jodhpur, Ranbanka Palace is the perfect destination to tie the knot, especially with the new wedding packages on offer at the property. Built in 1927 for a member of Jodhpur's founding family, Ranbanka Palace is certified as a 'Classic Heritage Hotel' by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. It is eminent for its gorgeous heritage venue and hosting some prominent weddings over the years. From planning the logistics, theme to menu customisation, the Palace's wedding planning team is hands-on ensuring your special day runs smooth without any worries.



TRs Coral Hotel, the luxurious adults-only property in Costa Mujeres in Mexico, which is set to open in autumn 2018 by Palladium Hotel Group, has been included in the The Leading Hotels of The World collection. The property has satisfactorily fulfilled the quality and service criteria of the prestigious collection. Costa Mujeres will welcome TRs Coral Hotel, as well as Grand Palladium Costa Mujeres Resort & Spa, from November 2018. TRs Coral Hotel has 469 luxurious rooms, each with a balcony or terrace, whirlpool bath, direct access to exclusive swim-up pools and stunning views over the landscape.



## A SEA OF GREEN OVERLOOKING THE AGRA FORT & TAJ MAHAL



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# Of idyllic calm and harmony

Clarks Exotica Convention Resort & Spa, Bengaluru is one of the only five-star resorts with a convention centre in South India, reveals the hotel's CEO, **M Balaji**.

With over 2 lakh sq ft of meeting and banquet space and strategic location close to the Bengaluru International Airport, Clarks Exotica Convention Resort & Spa is one of the largest five-star convention resorts in South India. Talking about the hotel's specialised offerings, **M Balaji**, CEO, Clarks Exotica Convention Resort & Spa says, "Clarks Exotica provides a relaxed yet sophisticated environment that embraces the vibrance and natural beauty of Bengaluru with 141 well-appointed rooms. Be it leisure, business, wellness or a wedding, we pamper guests beyond expectations with our tastefully furnished rooms, conference halls with inviting banquet facilities, fine dining options, indoor and outdoor sport facilities and a wellness centre."

With majority of its business from MICE and corporate events, the hotel also specialises in destination weddings. Speaking about property's growth and occupancy, Balaji explains, "In terms of occupancy, we have seen a 7 per cent growth while in terms of revenue, we have stepped up by 18 per cent in last one year. In the next year, we are aiming for about 85 per cent occupancy in the hotel from the current rate of 82 per cent. We also aim to achieve a 20 per cent growth in revenue in the coming year."

Nestled amidst 70 acres of lush greenery, Clarks Exotica is a destination in itself with an experience personalised to the guest's delight. On the USP of the property, Balaji shares, "Our strategic location ensures guests enjoy their day-outing, corporate



or social events within a hand's reach of Central Bangalore. The 70 acres of lush green spread provides a fresh and calm environment for all categories of events."

"Guests who visit our property always have more to do. They can wrap a long day's meeting and unwind by the pool, go for a swim or relax at the spa. We also provide games and activities like squash, badminton, basketball, football, cricket, cycling, lawn tennis, table tennis, billiards and other indoor games," Balaji added.

Insisting on his plans of expansion, Balaji says that Clarks Exotica will be adding more keys to the existing inventory in the future. He says, "We have seen an increase in demand for the requirements in our property. Thanks to the quality of our facilities and services, good word of mouth has worked as a boon for us. We are also looking at engaging guests through the internal loyalty programme – Clarks Exotica Club membership launched in April 2018."

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# Indulge in royalty

Taste the quintessential Rajasthani hospitality at Mandawa Haveli in Jaipur and get transported back in time whilst being treated like royalty.

**S**nuggled in the heart of the city of Jaipur, Mandawa Haveli is a delight for any traveller who likes to experience some old-world hospitality and ambience. With 70 rooms, this property offers a touch of personalisation when it comes to services provided as a guest. This bespoke experience is what differentiates it from many other heritage properties mushrooming around the country.



Built in 1896 by Thakur Bhagwat Singh, the 15<sup>th</sup> ruler of Mandawa, Mandawa Haveli was located in the heart of Shekhavati region and was ruled by the clan of Kachhawa Rajputs from the House of Amber. Their ancestor, Rao Shekhaji was a scion of the House of Amber. While the haveli was conceived as a town house earlier, it was Thakur Devi Singhji, the 17<sup>th</sup> descendant of Rao Shekha, who got it converted into a luxury hotel with all modern amenities.

Today, the haveli is a part of Mandawa Group of Hotels, offering old-style well-appointed rooms with every possible amenity available for the guests. The dining room here overlooks one of the terraces and an Indian cuisine restaurant is also available in the courtyard, offering local delicacies to discerning guests. One of the most beautiful features of the property is what is called Peacock swimming pool—designed in a unique pattern, with motifs of peacock feathers at its base, which

gave an amazing impression on the water. While the pool is small, the pooside can act as a perfect location for small parties.

Even the courtyard can be used for special events. In fact, the hotel offers special arrangements for gala evenings of folk dances, music and puppet shows as well. For those who want to organise corporate outings and meetings, the conference boardroom can accommodate 40-50 people.

Mandawa Haveli is a part of Mandawa Group of Hotels, offering old-style well-appointed rooms with every possible amenity available for the guest



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# It doesn't get **BIGGER** than this!

The First World Hotel, Genting Malaysia Berhad, is the world's largest hotel. Take a sneak peek into the property and see what makes it unique along with the advantages and disadvantages of being what it is!

**ANUPRIYA BISHNOI FROM MALAYSIA**

**R**esorts World Genting, as a holiday destination, appealed greatly to the Indian visitor for a long time with lots of activities on offer for all age groups. After three years of construction, Genting is now ready to give the world a first look at its ongoing metamorphosis. The revamp plan, which includes the world's first 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox World Theme Park, is expected to push the number of visitors to Resorts World Genting to 30 million by 2020.

The resort houses seven hotels overall, but the highlight remains the world's largest hotel - First World Hotel (FWH) with the largest inventory of 7,351 rooms. The hotel is further divided into three towers, the newest designed keeping millennials in mind. Here, the experience is larger than life. It enjoys the status of the world's largest hotel with wonderful attractions right at its doorstep—including SkyAvenue, the resort's latest lifestyle



**ROCKY TOO**  
Senior Vice President  
Sales & Marketing  
Genting Malaysia Berhad

“ Since January, we have been operating consistently at 96 per cent

”



mall with a variety of retail, food and beverage outlets, as well as an advanced cable car system with glass floor that you need to buy a hotel map. The property also adjoins the Genting International Convention Centre. The First World Plaza has also opened after refurbishment and is located just one floor above the lobby level of FWH.



Resorts World Genting houses seven hotels but the highlight remains the world's largest hotel - First World Hotel with the largest inventory of 7,351 rooms

**Rocky Too**, Senior Vice President—Sales & Marketing, Genting Malaysia Berhad, is excited about the new 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox World Theme Park, a first-of-its-kind in the world scheduled to open soon. Its opening is going to create more traffic to Genting, especially from the Indian market. In fact, talking about challenges that Genting faces in meeting this onrush, Too says, “We do not have enough rooms despite having seven hotels with over 10,000 rooms. Last year, we closed our room occupancy at 96 per cent and since January, we have been operating consistently at 96 per cent.”

Check-in at the hotel can easily be done with the automated check-in kiosks at the lobby since the check-in lines could be longer than you expect. Visitors can choose from the various category of rooms - Standard, Deluxe, Y5 Deluxe Room, Deluxe Triple Room, Y5 Triple Room, Superior Deluxe Room and World Club Room.

The F&B options include Terminal 2 that houses Asian delicacies and Western staples. Lobby Café is located at the lobby floor of First World Hotel, perfect for those looking for a quick bite. One can



Check-in at the hotel can easily be done with the automated check-in kiosks at the lobby

try local favourites like the Hainanese Chicken Rice, Nasi Lemak, Wantan Noodles and Curry Laksa.

This hotel houses a convenience store, a pharmacy and a salon, among others. When you are inside, it feels more like a city than a hotel. Perhaps the only challenge visitors may face is that while being in the hotel, Wi-Fi is available only in select rooms.

## Get the ZUPER-Edge

In today's competitive world, Zuper Hotel Solutions offers the best means for independent properties to deliver the perfect hospitality experience to its guests, while making sure the revenues are intact.

In today's times, independent hotels and resorts are facing a tough time competing with global brands to match sales and generate the desired revenue, especially while focusing on building brand value, product quality and guest experiences.

In such a scenario, Zuper Hotel Solutions based out of Bombay, specialises in complete revenue generation services through all possible modes in the market. Talking about how they make sure that the required hospitality standards are met, **Akaal Singh Manchanda**, Head—Sales & Marketing, says, “Developing a good hospitality unit and ensuring it does the right revenues are two very different propositions.

This is where Zuper comes in with already existing corporate and travel trade relations built by delivering the best to the existing and ever-growing clientele. While your brand gets the boost by hosting niche clientele, we work in the sidelines to ensure we give you a team second to none.” Zuper allows the unit to concentrate on delivering



Tropical Retreat, Igatpuri



wonderful guest experiences while the team is at work manning the revenue for the organisation. Having served some wonderful properties like The O Hotel Pune & Goa, Tropical Retreat Igatpuri, Zara's Resort Khandala for many years, Zuper has proved its mettle and is a wonderful option for the ever-growing list of independent hotels and resorts across the country.



**AKAAL SINGH MANCHANDA**  
Head  
Sales & Marketing

“Developing a good hospitality unit and ensuring it does the right revenues are very different propositions

”



Even as a single lady traveller practises extra caution while away from home, it's also the hotel's responsibility that she feel absolutely safe at the property



Picture Courtesy: Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris

# THROW ‘CAUTION’ TO THE WIND

We ask hotel spokespersons how crucial a matter the security of women travellers is and how they ensure that guests, while at the hotel or outside, have nothing to fear.

ANUPRIYA BISHNOI

**T**he last thing any woman wants while travelling is to worry about her safety. This thought even extends to the time she's staying at a hotel. If travellers in a country, especially women, do not feel safe, the effect can be incalculable. Without ensuring safety for women travellers, the great dream of making India a tourism hub can't be realised.

One of the prime drivers for attracting tourists in the country is the hospitality industry. Even as a single

lady traveller practises extra caution while away from home, it's also the hotel's responsibility that she feel absolutely safe when at the property, and be ensured that she have ready assistance available when outdoors. This industry must be more cautious than the rest in this regard, as it's a mirror to what's happening in the country. Safety protocol must be in place all the time. One mistake can lead to a decline in the number of tourist arrivals and the image of the nation. This article talks about the initiatives various hotels are taking to ensure the stay of lady guests is seamless and that they return feeling safe.

## ENSURING SAFETY



“All hotel staff has been trained to ensure a female guest’s room number never be mentioned out loud.”

**ABHISHEK GOEL**  
Managing Director  
Regenta LP Vilas, Dehradun



“Safety cards are given to lady guests at our hotel which include all the necessary emergency contacts.”

**SUMAN GAHLOT**  
General Manager  
Aloft New Delhi Aerocity



“In case of room service at night, lady associates attend to the guest. A lady official is always available at the hotel.”

**RAHUL RAJ**  
General Manager, Courtyard by  
Marriott Ahmedabad



“Separate female frisking areas & separate floors for single female travellers have been allocated for women.”

**DEVESH RAWAT**  
General Manager  
Indore Marriott Hotel

Picture Courtesy: The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts



The hospitality industry must be more cautious when it comes to safety as it's a mirror to what's happening in India

### TAILOR-MADE SERVICES

**Abhishek Goel**, Managing Director, Regenta LP Vilas, Dehradun elaborates, “Rooms are positioned on a higher floor within a well-lit corridor, never in an isolated area. The front desk is manned 24 hours per day and all hotel staff has been trained to ensure a female guest’s room number never be mentioned out loud. Tailor-made services like a fully-equipped wing with CCTVs, lady butlers and housekeeping staff round-the-clock are provided. Valet parking services are provided to avoid the need of a woman to enter the parking lot.” According to Goel, if a woman traveller is not assigned a room on the special executive floor, most often on request, her accommodation is upgraded to that floor without an increase in room rate.

### DEDICATED SERVICES

Safety is paramount to the female traveller, believes **Suman Gahlot**, General Manager, Aloft New Delhi Aerocity. She shares, “We ensure 24\*7 CCTV surveillance, additional screening of visitors, controlled access to guest floors by key cards and presence of lady associates round-the-clock to cater to the lady guests. The hotel also has a women-only

floor for its lady guests. Other facilities provided include a dedicated lady concierge, women-only housekeeping staff offering lady chauffeurs and women guides for sightseeing on request. The hotel also offers the option of joining a communal dining table in the restaurant, where solo travellers can eat and chat with each other.” The hotel assigns a safety guard to lady guests while stepping outside the hotel. “Safety cards are given to the lady guests and include all emergency contacts such as a women helpline number, hotel boardline number, police control room number, duty manager’s number, as well as the General Manager’s personal number,” Gahlot said.

### KEEPING AN EYE ON EVERY CORNER

Depending upon availability, single women travellers are allocated rooms closer to the elevator at Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad. The hotel’s General Manager **Rahul Raj**, comments, “Unless requested, we do not offer interconnecting rooms to our single lady guests. We have elevators that are key card programmed; guest rooms can only be accessed by authorised personnel and guests for each floor. In case of room service ordered at night, lady associates attend to the guest. A lady security



Picture Courtesy: Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris

official is always available at the hotel. All our rooms are equipped with double locks, keyholes, and secondary chain locks in the form of U-bolt, while the doors close automatically when left open at a 90-degree angle.”

### SECURITY IS PRIORITY

Security is key for **Devesh Rawat**, General Manager, Indore Marriott Hotel. “When a lady traveller books a room with us, an experienced specialist contacts her, explains the services, and responds to any queries she may have. Taking the female guest’s comfort into consideration, we appoint a lady chauffeur to pick her up from the airport. Apart from these personalised experiences, webcams are also installed in and around the hotel premises. Separate female frisking areas and separate floors for single female travellers have been allocated for women,” Rawat explained.

### CLOSED QUARTERS

Women guests at Novotel Chennai Chamiers Road are provided rooms near the elevator, phone calls are screened before connecting to the room; only lady butlers and housekeepers service the

Depending upon availability, single women travellers are allocated rooms closer to the elevator at Courtyard by Marriott Ahmedabad



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## SECURITY IS KEY



“The hotel provides a safe room to stay and has double lock system, safety latch, peephole to check who is knocking.”

**GAURAV SHIVA**  
General Manager  
Novotel Chennai Chamiers Road



“For single lady travellers, we ensure the room is allocated near the elevator and a lady associate escorts her.”

**RAHUL MAINI**  
General Manager  
The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat



“We have a mandate to allocate to female travellers’ guest rooms that are closer to elevators & fire exits.”

**GAURAV SINHA**  
Director of Rooms  
JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity



“Whenever a lady traveller makes a reservation, information is passed down to every department.”

**REJIMON KANICHIKATTTIL**  
CLSO  
Security Manager, Fairmont Jaipur

Picture Courtesy: Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris



The Marriott ambassadors at the airport ensure that a woman is assigned its elite fleet driven by a female chauffeur

room, and the security team ensures they take additional floor rounds on floors occupied by single lady guests, shares the hotel’s General Manager **Gaurav Shiva**. The hotel provides a safe room to stay and has double lock system, safety latch, peephole to check who is knocking at the door. On prioritising evacuation, Sinha mentioned, “During an emergency, single lady guests and expectant mothers are given priority to evacuate safely.”

### ESCORTING TRAVELLERS

At a time when more and more women are travelling for work trips, safety and security is of utmost importance, feels **Rahul Maini**, General Manager, The Westin Kolkata Rajarhat. He elaborates, “For single lady travellers, we ensure the room is allocated near the elevator, a lady associate escorts the guest to her room and a female stewardess attends to her during room service. All our floors are covered by CCTV, which is constantly monitored.” On tackling emergencies, Maini said, “We have an effective emergency response team with a well-constructed plan in place.”

### ASSISTANCE AT EVERY STEP

**Gaurav Sinha**, Director of Rooms, JW Marriott

Hotel New Delhi Aerocity, remarks that the essence of safety provided by JW Marriott New Delhi to its female travellers commences few miles away from the hotel, at the airport itself. The Marriott ambassadors at the airport ensure that a female traveller is assigned our elite fleet driven by a female chauffeur. This service is extended to when a car is required for travel within the city as well. Priority is given to single women travellers and specially-abled female guests. “At JW Marriott, we have a mandate to allocate to female travellers’ guest rooms that are closer to elevators and fire exits to ensure fast and efficient evacuation, should there be a requirement,” Sinha said.

### ENSURING COMFORT

**Rejimon Kanichikatttil CLSO**, Security Manager, Fairmont Jaipur shares, “From the time a single lady traveller makes a reservation at Fairmont Jaipur, the information is passed down to the front office, housekeeping and security. This flagging is to make sure that she has been welcomed and made comfortable. This also gives enough time for the front office to allocate her a room closer to the elevators and if possible, a room which has minimum disturbance of other guest movements.”

# AWARD-WINNING ASIAN HOSPITALITY IN THE HEART OF ORCHARD ROAD



**MANDARIN  
ORCHARD**  
SINGAPORE  
BY MERITUS

Mandarin Orchard Singapore has been a landmark of Asian hospitality on Orchard Road since 1971, preferred by discerning international travellers for its service excellence and prime location in the heart of Singapore's most prominent shopping district.

The hotel boasts some 1,077 spacious guestrooms and suites that offer views of the city skyline from higher floors. Each room is equipped with advance in-room technologies including a smartphone solution that provides registered hotel guests complimentary local and international calls, as well as access to unlimited 4G data throughout their stay. Guests can also enjoy the latest blockbuster movies through a complimentary movie platform available in all rooms.

Bespoke amenities await guests of the Meritus Club—from the personalised service of Meritus Ambassadors, to all-day refreshments served in the

exclusive environment of the Meritus Club Lounge at Top of the M.

Mandarin Orchard Singapore offers over 30,000 square feet of versatile meeting and function spaces, backed by the dedicated assistance of Meeting and Event Specialists.

Starring in the hotel's vibrant lineup of restaurants is the all-time favourite Chatterbox, home of the legendary Mandarin Chicken Rice; Triple Three, a Japanese-inspired international buffet restaurant; and Shisen Hanten by Chen Kentaro which was awarded two stars Michelin Guide Singapore 2016, 2017, and 2018, making it the highest Michelin-rated Chinese restaurant island-wide.

For some well-deserved retail therapy, right on the doorstep of Mandarin Orchard Singapore is Mandarin Gallery, a unique shopping destination featuring an exciting variety of luxury brands and

boutique eateries, making for an all-encompassing retail and hospitality experience for guests of the hotel.

Book direct on [meritushotels.com/orchard](http://meritushotels.com/orchard) and unlock an extra 10% off room offers when you sign up as a Meritus Rewards member.

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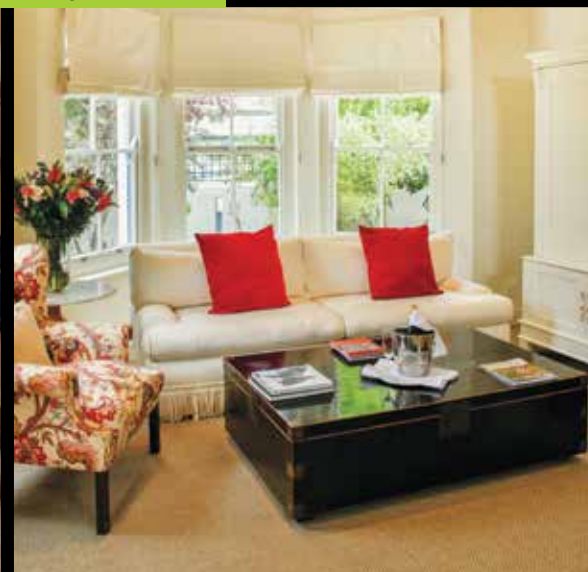
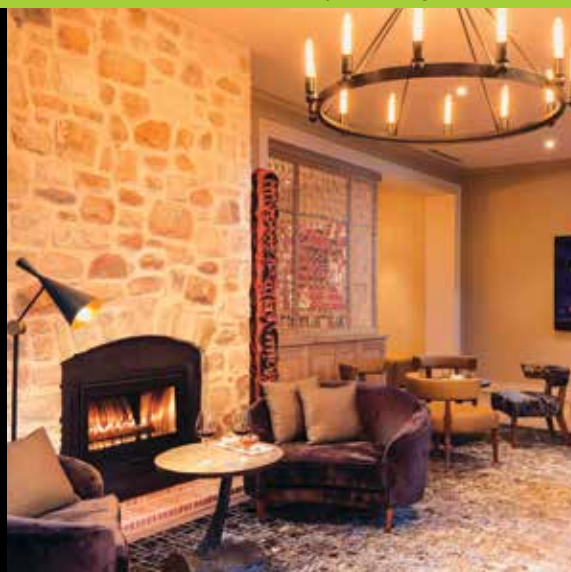
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**World Luxury Hotel Awards 2016**  
Luxury Hotel Brand





Everard Read, in partnership with Leeu Collection, is a space in Franschhoek that shows modern and contemporary artworks by artists





# One LOOK & you're SOLD!

**Analjit Singh**, Founder, Leeu Collection, has set out to pursue 'The Pleasures of Life' in founding the brand.

**ANUPRIYA BISHNOI**





Nature, beauty and the uniqueness of each of Leeu Collection's properties combined with world-class food and wine offerings make it special



## GIVE US AN INSIGHT INTO THE PORTFOLIO OF LEEU COLLECTION.

Leeu Collection comprises three five-star boutique properties in South Africa—Leeu Estates, a 17-room country house retreat and boutique winery in the Franschhoek valley; Leeu House, a 12-room hotel in the heart of the Franschhoek town; and Le Quartier Français, a romantic 21-room hotel and three-bedroom villa also located in the town. Linthwaite House, a country retreat overlooking Lake Windermere in England's scenic Lake District and a boutique hotel situated on 5.6 hectares of landscaped gardens is another in its portfolio. A property in London and one in Florence will be coming up in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Several restaurants also complement the Leeu Collection hotels in Franschhoek. Heritage Square is home to Marigold, Franschhoek's first Indian restaurant, and adjacent to Leeu House stands Tuk Tuk, a craft beer microbrewery in partnership with the Cape Brewing Company team, which serves bespoke brews and Mexican food.

Everard Read, in partnership with Leeu Collection, is a space in Franschhoek that shows modern and contemporary artworks by southern African artists. The gallery includes a sculpture garden, interspersed with herbs and vegetables, and is located adjacent to Le Quartier Français.

## HOW DIFFERENT OR REWARDING HAS THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY BEEN COMPARED TO OTHER SEGMENTS YOU ARE PART OF?

Since early 2000, I chose to be in the consumer service business, as I find the proximity of contact with the customer to be inspiring, rewarding and compatible with my DNA. The hospitality sector brings you as close to the customer as you can be.

## WHICH ARE YOUR KEY MARKETS ABROAD AND WHY?

The UK, two coasts in the USA, and select parts of Europe, South America and Australia have been identified as emerging markets. India is also one of the markets we are targeting. People immensely enjoy the Franschhoek valley, with its Cape Dutch heritage and strong French influences, as it is renowned as one of the world's finest food and wine destinations. The area and its surroundings offer breathtaking landscapes and various indulgence options bundled with our heartfelt warm hospitality, making it a top choice for the Indian traveller.

## IN INDIA, WHICH CITIES ARE ON YOUR EXPANSION RADAR?

For marketing our properties, we have just completed a five-city roadshow with South African Tourism, in the cities of Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru,



ANALJIT SINGH  
Founder  
Leeu Collection

“People enjoy the Franschhoek valley, with Cape Dutch heritage and strong French influences

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Kolkata and Ahmedabad. The response has been amazing and we look forward to welcoming more Indian travellers to the Leeu Collection.

## DO YOU OFFER ANY INDIAN ESSENCE IN YOUR PROPERTIES ABROAD?

Apart from the famous Indian restaurant in Franschhoek, Marigold, our projects are true and customised to the countries where the properties are located.

## WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE?

The two biggest challenges are finding the right talent and optimising high investment levels to create the experience relative to financial viability.

## WHAT ARE THE PLANS FOR OTHER PROPERTIES IN THE NEAR TERM?

We are reopening our UK property in Lake District this spring and are focused on our latest projects in London and Florence.

## HOW DO YOU SEE THE DEFINITION OF LUXURY CHANGING?

Luxury has become synonymous with personification. People want authentic experiences and intuitive service and encounters that money cannot buy. Functionality and comfort have become non-negotiable.

## INDIANS ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR UNIQUE ACCOMMODATIONS TO STAY IN. HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ATTRACT THE INDIAN CROWD TO YOUR BOUTIQUE PROPERTIES?

Nature, beauty and the unique sense of place at each of our properties combined with our world-class food and wine offerings make us special. Attention to detail and superlative service together with the fact that our properties are well-suited for individual experiences rather than big group travel will ensure an unforgettable escape.

Indian travellers absolutely love our wine tasting experience, our signature relaxed treatments at the Leeu Spa, our fine-dine gourmet selection and an interactive involvement with our famous art collection. Our aim is to increase the number of Indian travellers to the Leeu Collection, with a product portfolio that is diverse and geared to cater to the Indian clientele, including families and honeymooners.

## WHAT MADE YOU TAKE THE RISK OF VENTURING INTO A FIELD VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU WERE IN?

It is not really that different from other consumer service business, which have many similar touchpoints, except perhaps the enjoyment of drinking wine while being in business.



## Old-world charm in

Offering state-of-the-art facilities and comforts, L'auberge du Jeu de Paume, Relais & Châteaux is the perfect getaway to experience old-world hospitality.

**NISHA VERMA FROM FRANCE**

**R**elish the quintessential French hospitality at the L'auberge du Jeu de Paume, Relais & Château — the five-star property adjacent to the Château de Chantilly. Just an hour and half's drive from Paris, Chantilly is the idyllic escape for those who want a luxurious experience away from the usual monotony and hustle and bustle of the city. With 92 rooms, this boutique hotel offers subdued and personalised luxury for its guests with a good mix of modern amenities and traditional French hospitality.

Expect to be greeted with warm smiles and elegant décor as you enter the tastefully done up lobby, which leads up to a square courtyard decorated discerningly with wrought iron furniture and flowers. Once you get into the room is when it

strikes you that luxury is actually in the details. Right from the comfort of the beds to the couch has been taken utmost care of. In fact, the classic décor and colour in the room, puts one at ease immediately. Guests have every amenity that one can think of in the room.

The property is not opulent but indulgent to the core. Apart from the rooms that take care of every need, the property has an indoor pool, Spa Valmont and Michelin star restaurant that satiates the need for every palate with a French menu that offers the best in the region. The restaurant—La Table du Connétable—looks over the gardens of the Château de Chantilly, offering the perfect setting for a romantic evening. Le Jardin D'Hiver is the signature Relais & Châteaux feature, and offers gastronomical delights for guests from French



Chantilly is home to a big equestrian industry - right from breeding the horses, to races, to horse shows, one can witness many such activities



cuisine. There is also a bar and relaxing areas for the guests to enjoy their stays. With a stylishly done up banquet and meeting spaces, the property is idyllic for small couture weddings. In fact, the gardens of the castle adjacent to the hotel have also been used for organising Indian weddings.

Those staying at the property can also go for local experiences in and around Chantilly. A visit to Château de Chantilly is a must for travellers to this region, owing to the great outdoors and an equally interesting museum called

Musée Condé named after its owner Grand Condé, who was the cousin of Henri II. Besides the Chateau are the grand stables, as Chantilly is home to a big equestrian industry. Right from breeding the horses, to races, to horse shows, one can witness many such activities in and outside the stables, which are right opposite to the hotel. One can even drive an hour away from Chantilly to cellar Champagne Pannier in Château-Thierry and see how they produce and store Champagne, taste a few samples and even buy a few bottles for your loved ones.

  
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# Go local with

# Luxury

Indian hotel brands are leaving no stone unturned to offer stays that go beyond just the room, food and facilities.

**NISHA VERMA**

## TAKING THE COMMUNITY FORWARD

With a plan to reach the count of 10 properties by 2019 under its two brands, **Himmat Anand**, Founder, Tree of Life Resorts & Hotels and Tree Leaf Hospitality, says that 20-25 per cent of their workforce comes from the village the property is situated at. In fact, none of the Tree of Life or Tree Leaf properties are situated within a city. “We are never in the city’s surroundings; we always ensure that our properties are located next to a village. The community, in turn, is involved in housekeeping, garden or at the kitchen,” revealed Anand.

All the Tree of Life and Tree Leaf properties are designed with local elements. However, Anand says, “We don’t believe in selling rooms only. Every guest will have 8-10 experiences with the local community. It could mean a trek in the surroundings, a bullock cart ride and visiting village homes. It could also mean going in a tractor and indulging in some farming or going to a weaver’s house in Banaras near our property. Such experiences are created for guests as we firmly believe that while accommodation and regular sightseeing is one part of their stay, there is an opportunity for guests to do more. The challenge in that is the fact that most tour operators sell the destinations only for one-two nights but that is not enough to do anything other than sightseeing. Hence, our initiative is to try and make the guest stay for at least three nights so that they can get a feel of the place and its surroundings.”



HIMMAT ANAND

“We always ensure that our properties are located next to a village and never in a city’s vicinity

”



All the Tree of Life and Tree Leaf properties are designed with local elements for guests to feel the essence of a place and its surroundings



MRS Group has properties that are opulent and offer the most modern comforts in an ambience that takes one back into the times of yore

## AN OPULENT ESCAPE

Rajasthan is synonymous with Rajwadas and opulence of the Rajputs. MRS Group, which owns the Suryagarh, Jaisalmer; Narendra Bhawan, Bikaner as well as Laxmi Niwas Palace, Bikaner has properties that are opulent and offer the most modern comforts in an ambience that takes you back into the times of yore. **Karan Singh**, President, MRS Group of Hotels, says that India is filled with excellent tourism spots, and it is only imperative that stakeholders should promote this fact out in the world. Claiming that Bikaner is a great destination to explore, he says that they want people to experience the soul of the destination through stays which are tailored only for them and how they want it. "We are sitting on a wealth of magic, and all it needs is spoken about more, so that more travellers come to us. At our properties, we offer hospitality your way with a touch of our hand. There is nothing that is hospitable unless it is the way you want it to be. I cannot impose my rules on my guests. The guest shall make his/her own rules. They should be able to tell us what they require and we should be able to give them a product that they are most comfortable with. Hence, we offer bespoke services and sincerity, with which we expect our guests' requests and oblige them."



KARAN SINGH

“We offer bespoke services, with which we expect our guests' requests and oblige them

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## IN TOUCH WITH LOCAL LUXURY

Dev Shree Luxury Hotel in Deogarh, Rajasthan, with only five rooms makes for the perfect destination for those who are looking for some dedicated time for themselves with their loved ones in the lap of luxury. Opened recently by the owners, **Shatrunjay Singh** and **Bhavna Kumari**, Dev Shree is a labour of love and gives the impression of a temple through its design. Referring to the property as a family home established in 1670, Kumari reveals, "It's built in the typical Mewari architecture with stone pillars and carvings. My husband, Shatrunjay and I run it as a boutique homestay. As an experiential property, the idea is to give people a respite from the hustle and bustle of the cities. We offer cooking demonstration, farm picnics, cycling, trekking, etc."

The property is located beside the lake and has recently been declared as a Relais & Chateaux property. "Water always has a calming and therapeutic effect on the senses. We offer yoga classes, meditation and train rides down the hills. Those who want to visit Kumbhalgarh or Ranakpur for Jain Temple can also stay at Dev Shree."



BHAVNA KUMARI

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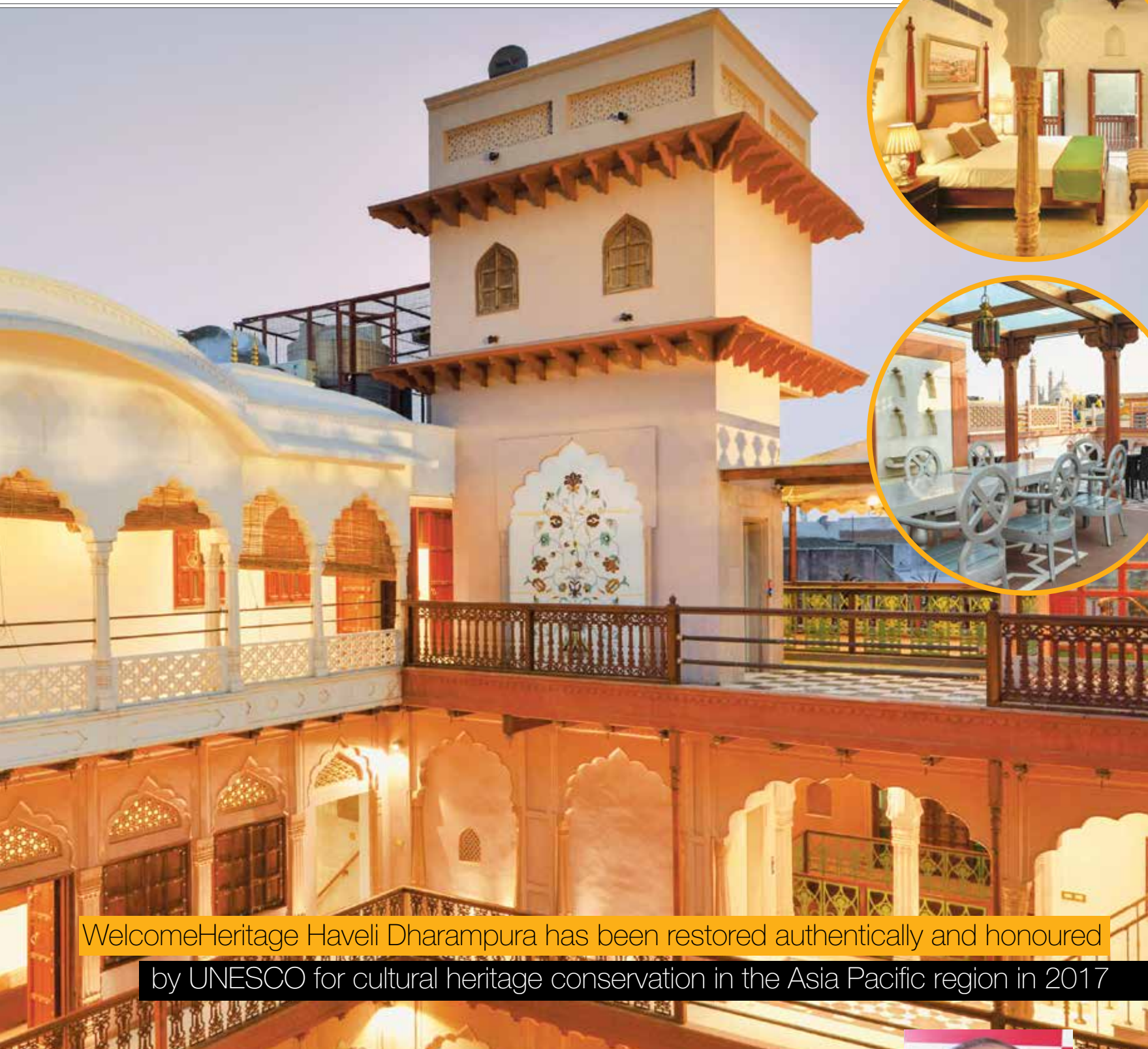
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Opened recently by the owners, Shatrunjay Singh and Bhavna

Kumari, Dev Shree is a labour of love giving the impression of a temple



WelcomeHeritage Haveli Dharampura has been restored authentically and honoured by UNESCO for cultural heritage conservation in the Asia Pacific region in 2017

## OLD DELHI REVISITED

Situated in one of the bylanes opposite the Jama Masjid, WelcomeHeritage Haveli Dharampura is one of the only heritage properties in Old Delhi that offers a five-star luxury experience with the food and experiences that are quintessential to the walled city of the capital. The property was restored by **Vijay Goel**, Member of Parliament and Rajya Sabha. Since the property has been restored authentically, it has also been honoured by UNESCO for cultural heritage conservation in the Asia Pacific region in 2017. "With this recognition, our hard work of six years has reaped fruit. This is the first heritage building in Delhi to have been honoured with this recognition and I believe that after getting this award, more people would come forward with such projects and more such heritage properties would be restored," said Goel.

He revealed that today guests can find all sorts of comforts at the property and relish the best of hospitality. Apart from that, those who stay at the property can enjoy classical Kathak dance performances every weekend while relishing delicious offerings from the chef. One can even enjoy an evening of soothing classical music every week at the property. Other highlights include kite flying and pigeon flying along with high-tea. Guests can celebrate festivals like Holi on the terrace if they are staying at WelcomeHeritage Haveli Dharampura. Get a first-hand experience of Delhi 6 with a heritage walk of the area, along with a sightseeing visit arranged by the management.



VIJAY GOEL

“This is the first heritage building in Delhi to have been honoured and recognised by UNESCO

”

# Ushering in Innovation

Six hoteliers talk about how they used six different ways to either introduce a new idea in their hotel or resolve a certain issue at their respective properties to remain competitive.

**HAZEL JAIN**

**E**very change calls for a new beginning and today it's mandatory for hotels to also bring about changes to suit the evolving needs of the customer. What worked 5 years ago, might not be the best thing today and guests today not only want contemporary facilities during their stay, but also look for experiences in and around the property.

With the restaurant scenario having evolved drastically, customers and clientele from a diverse range of cultures, backgrounds and geographies hold much F&B knowledge and expectations. It is important for hotels to embrace this to meet

the requirements of modern-day travellers. While some brands are going for an entire revamp process, others are adding new features, including restaurants, MICE facilities, and lounge areas. Apart from structural changes, properties today are even adopting best practices to reduce costs, improve service and enhancing the experience of the guests at their hotels.

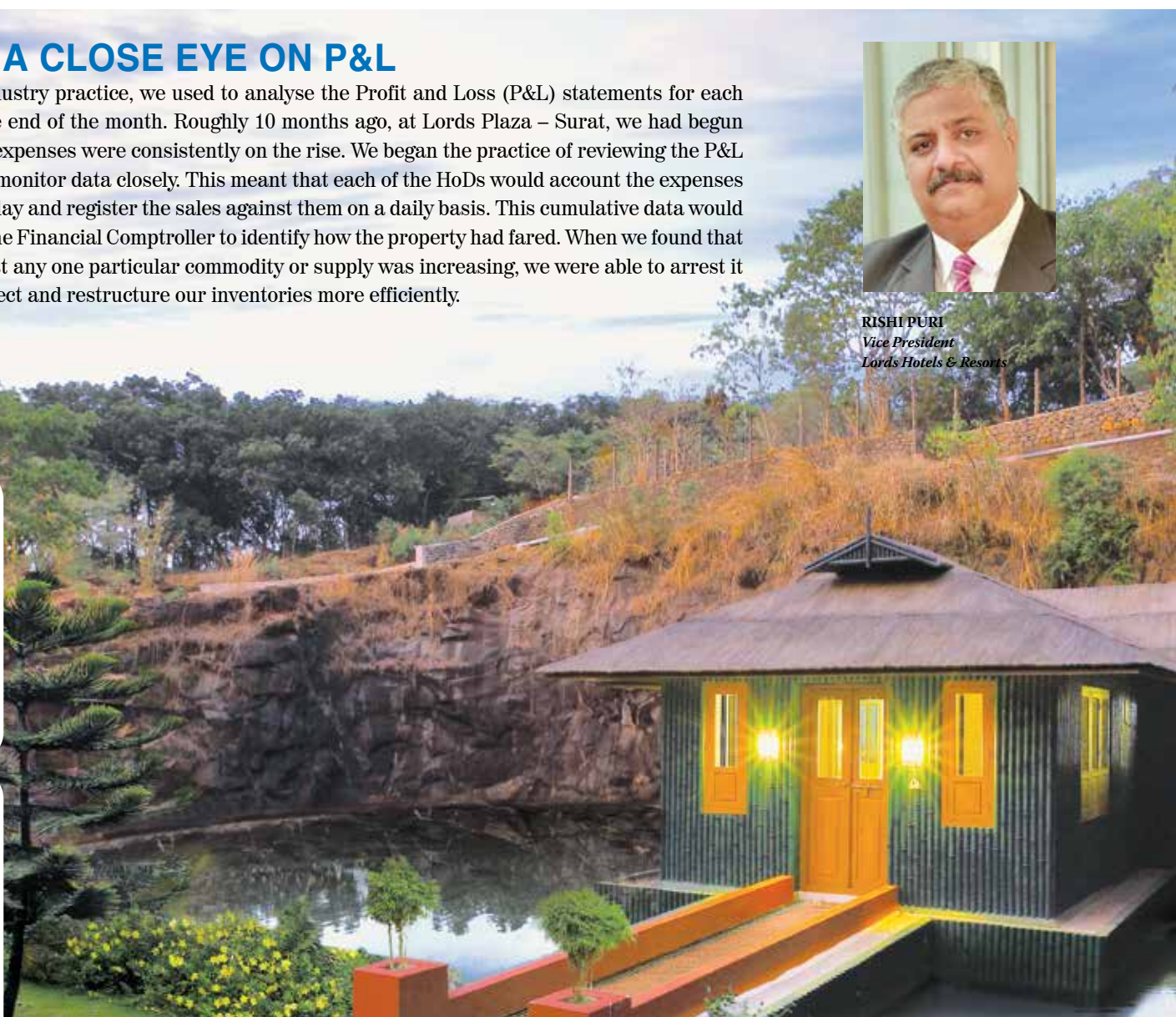
For many, a rebranding exercise does the right trick to stand out in this world of increasing competition. Even a different approach to promotion works for many properties. What is positive is the fact that the hospitality industry is leaving no stone unturned to make sure that the guest gets the best.

## KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON P&L

In line with the industry practice, we used to analyse the Profit and Loss (P&L) statements for each of our hotels at the end of the month. Roughly 10 months ago, at Lords Plaza – Surat, we had begun to realise that the expenses were consistently on the rise. We began the practice of reviewing the P&L on a daily basis to monitor data closely. This meant that each of the HoDs would account the expenses from the previous day and register the sales against them on a daily basis. This cumulative data would then be tallied by the Financial Comptroller to identify how the property had fared. When we found that the expense against any one particular commodity or supply was increasing, we were able to arrest it with immediate effect and restructure our inventories more efficiently.



**RISHI PURI**  
Vice President  
Lords Hotels & Resorts

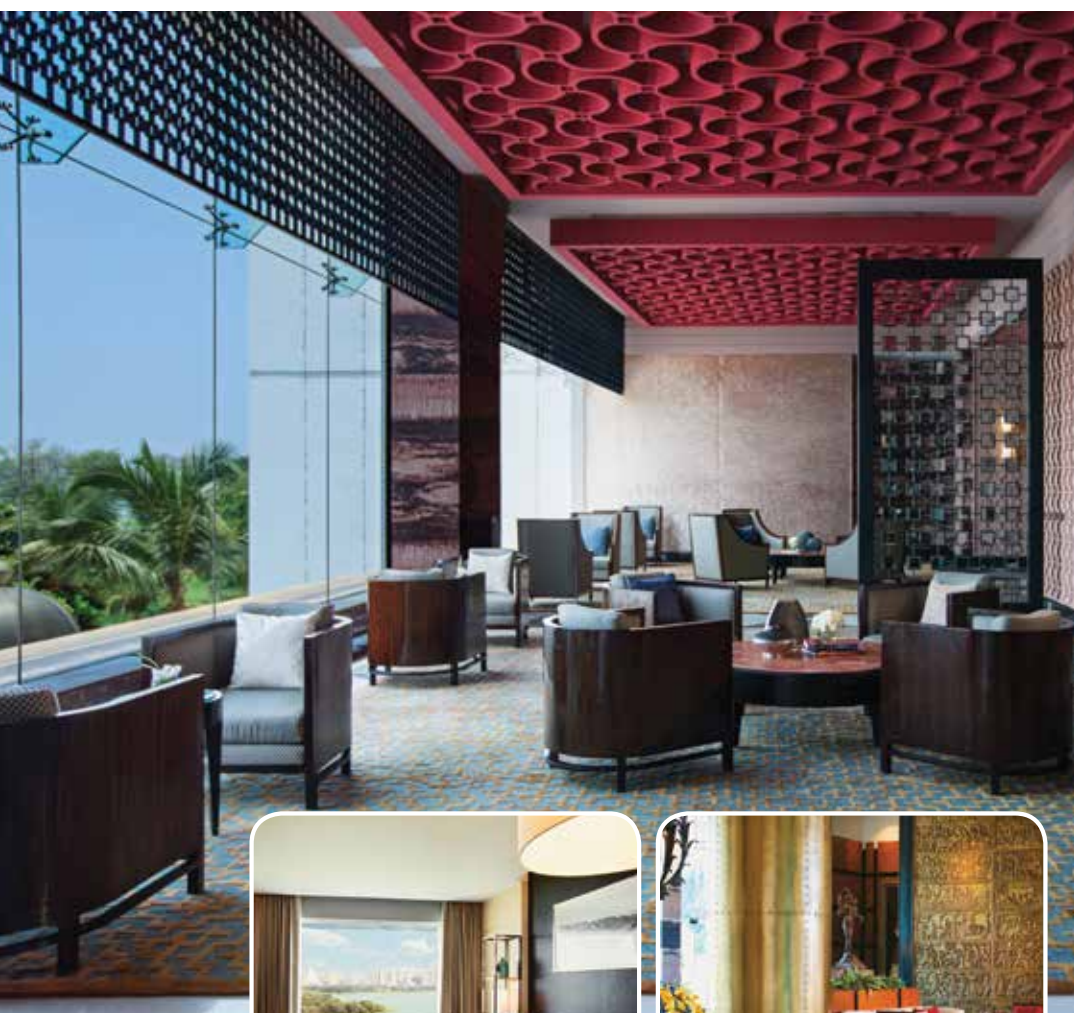
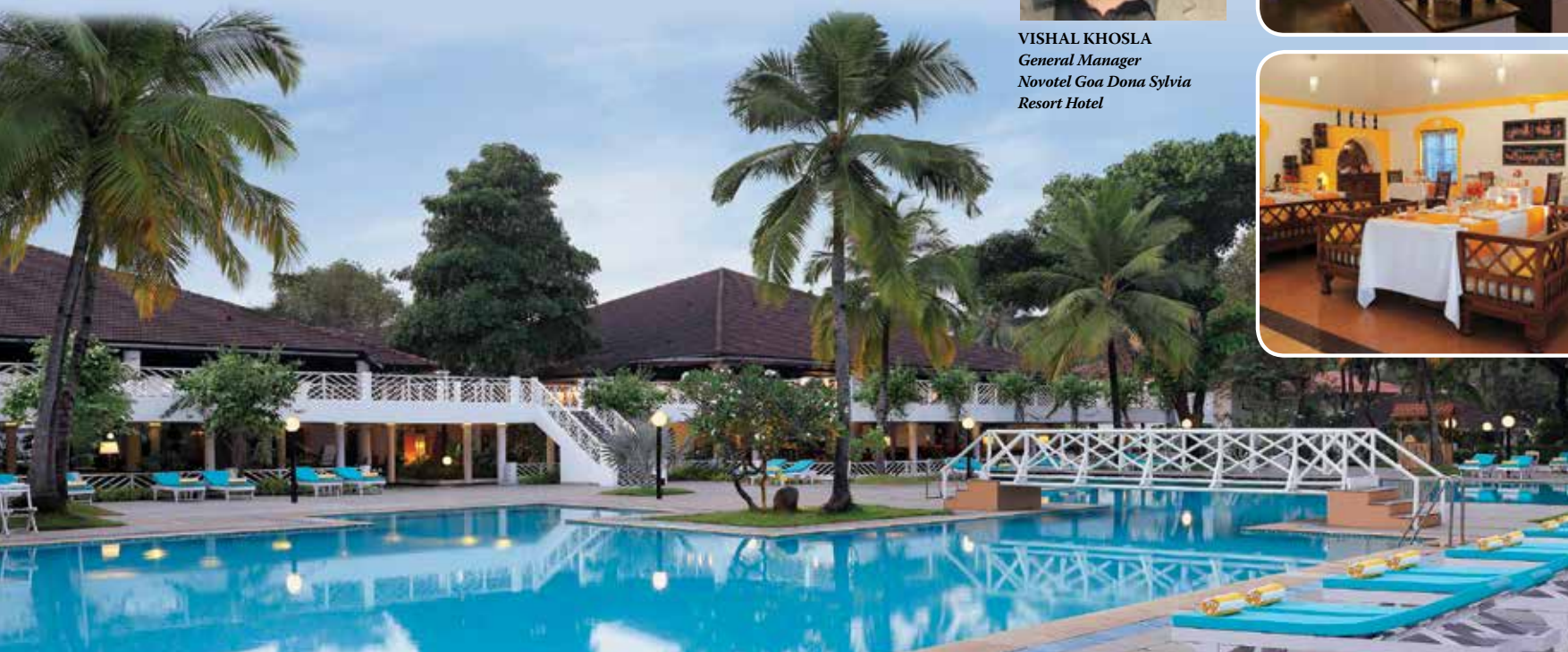


## AN OVERALL UPGRADATION

Now rebranded as Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia Resort with modern refurbishments, Dona Sylvia is built like a small luxury village exhibiting traditional Goan, Portuguese as well as a mix of contemporary and local architecture. Most public areas are just large, semi-open spaces for cross-ventilation and are also adorned with a new backdrop. The 181 rooms have been renovated with extended bathrooms and additional bay windows are placed in boutique rooms. The two and four-room villas were given a luxury essence with private sit-outs.



**VISHAL KHOSLA**  
General Manager  
Novotel Goa Dona Sylvia  
Resort Hotel



**NICHOLAS DUMBELL**  
General Manager  
Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel and Lakeside  
Chalet, Mumbai - Marriott Executive Apartments

## FOCUS ON F&B

We have been spending a lot of time on the opening of a completely revamped Lake View Café (LVC). While LVC was doing extremely well, being ranked amongst the top 10 of Mumbai TripAdvisor restaurants, with a strong nostalgic following and an amazing setting on the banks of the Powai Lake, we knew that it would not last. As a part of our revamp programme, we wanted to not only expand it but also give it a modern and elegant twist. Embracing customers' changing requirements, we created four specialised kitchens within the restaurant so that our guests could see their dishes being created by our culinary and beverage craftsmen. We have spent a lot of time evaluating the bustling restaurant scene in Mumbai, determining where we will position ourselves to maximise our USP and create each kitchen's major. Coming from a restaurant background, this is the kind of project that really gets me buzzing!



**VISHAL JAMUAR**  
General Manager  
Radisson Blu Resort & Spa, Alibaug

## EMPOWERING THE ASSOCIATES

More often than not, guests interact more with our associates at the shop floor than with the senior level managers. When we analysed the requests made by guests to our associates at the shop floor, we found that majority of guests had similar requests and immediate resolution of these requests held the key to ensuring that they were satisfied. We felt that empowering our associates to take spot decisions, within certain pre-determined limits would help, and it worked big time. Not only were the guests happy, but this also resulted in them experiencing a 'wow' factor as the resolution was almost immediate. Today, our associates don't need to check with seniors on routine issues and are free to take a decision. We also found that associates took ownership to meet and cater to any guest needs. Our managers are free to focus on the bigger picture and spend time working on other core areas that result in guest delight.

**Radisson BLU**  
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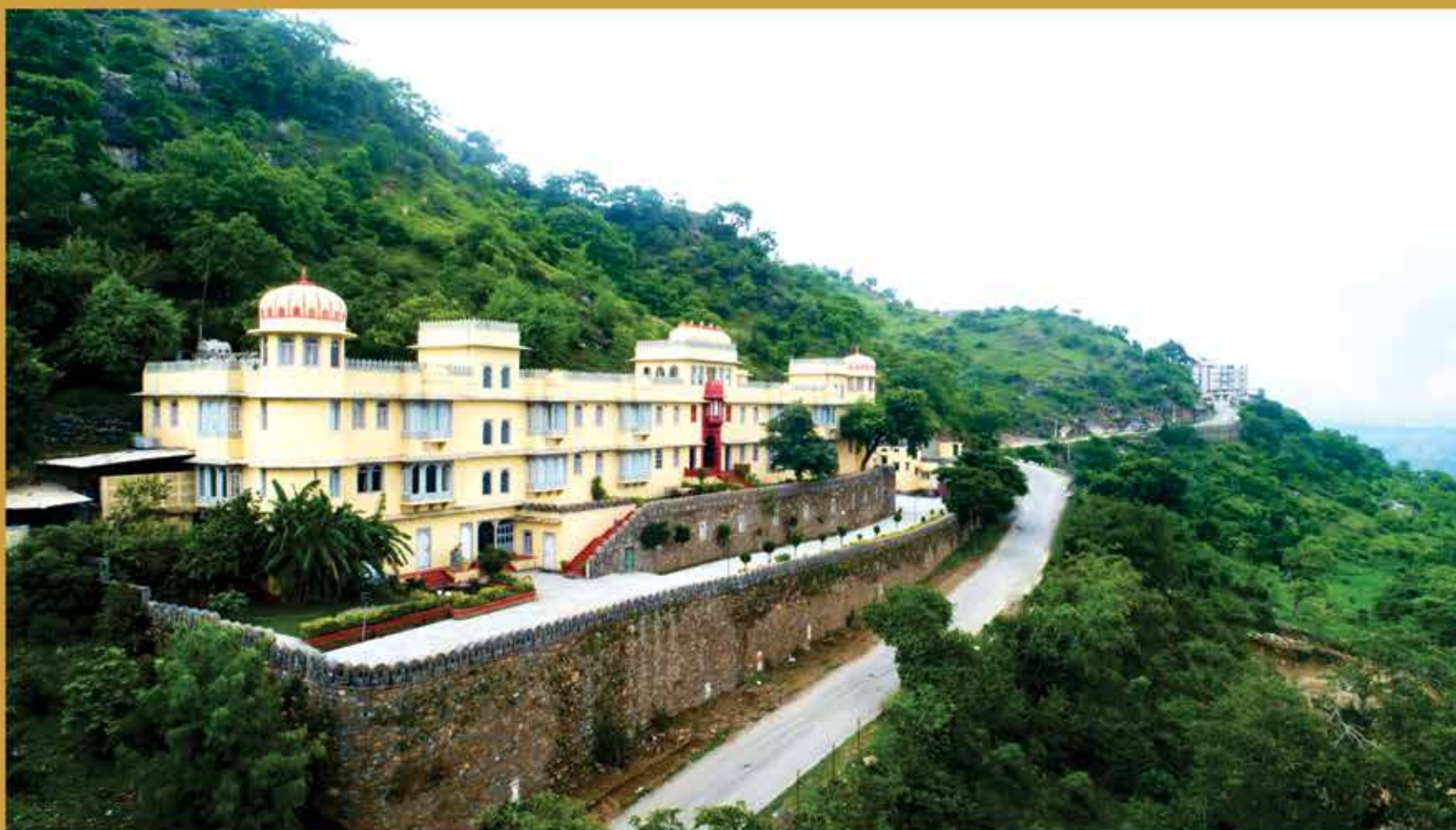
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