

Reflections of Green Hospitality

By Swarnendu Biswas

With the threat of global warming, extensive air and water pollution and fast depletion of non-renewable energy sources looming over us, luxury without environmental responsibility has translated as an irresponsible luxury which we can no longer afford.

It doesn't deserve a mention that environmental degradation can not only endanger our health and lives but the very future of our planet and all the people of the earth should be the stakeholders in saving the earth from further environmental

damage, which sometimes can be irreparable.

Need of the Hour

The hospitality industry as a whole too should make sincere endeavours in this direction. Rainwater harvesting, use of solar energy, LED lighting, preventing water and food wastage, waste recycling, preference towards using of local materials and labour in construction should be the new watchwords for the hospitality industry in this new age.

Succinctly, combining high-end amenities with minimum possible carbon footprints

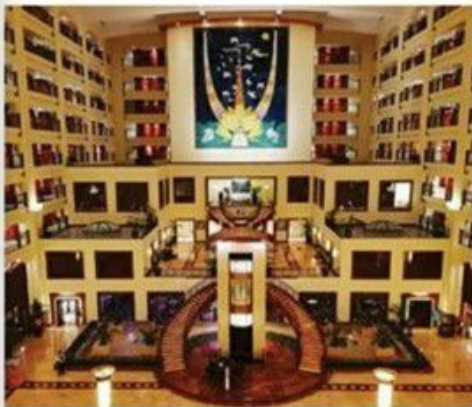
should be the motto of hospitality industry in this post-modern age. Even if the hospitality properties cannot provide high-end amenities it would do but it shouldn't operate without environmental-friendly initiatives and sustainable measures.

In India's hospitality industry some praiseworthy efforts have been taken in this direction, but much more needs to be done. However, it is heartening that the concept of eco-friendly tourism and hospitality is gaining currency in the country.

Here we would talk about some of the wonderful eco-friendly hospitality properties and chains of India, where staying can not only give the guests an enjoyable experience, but which can act as inspirations to many other players in adhering to the principles of eco-friendly hospitality.

Grand and Green

One of the hotel chains in India which is highly committed towards environment is the ITC Hotels. Welcome2green is ITC Hotels' vision for a green world. It is a multi-faceted programme started in order to propagate



inspired by Gond tribal architecture and offer environmentally sensitive, low-impact accommodation," informed the portal. There is use of locally available materials such as mud plaster, stone, terracotta tiles, rough-hewn timber beams and furniture made from waste and recycled wood in the cottages, which helps them to blend in seamlessly with the scenic green surroundings.

Garbage segregation and use of a compost pit, the use of RO filtration system to discourage the use of plastic, water bottles, dual-capacity flushing cistern, and quarter-turn basin taps, eco-friendly construction and eco-sensitive waste disposal system, extensive use of solar lanterns and solar cookers for guests and staff are some other eco-friendly measures adhered to by the property. What is more, organic vegetables and fruits are grown by the local villagers for the lodge.

The lodge's eco-shop contributes 25 percent of its proceeds towards conservation activities. The infinity pool at the property is set between mature trees and its edges merge into forests.

Named one of the 25 world's best eco lodges by National Geographic Traveler, Evelyn Back Kumbha Safari Lodge, Kabini, Karnataka reflects environmentally-friendly hospitality. Simulating a tribal village, this picturesque resort of sweeping panoramic vistas is bordered on two sides by the Kabini river. It is located on the border of Nagarhole National Park. All the luxurious 'huts' of the resort have either a plunge pool or a jacuzzi.

The resort's architecture has a tribal Kudu Kumbha leitmotif, where each of the guest huts evokes a happy marriage of traditional craft and modern luxury. Boat safari, nature walk and night birding are some of the activities that one can enjoy while staying at the resort. Vehicle safari can also be done to explore the fascinating wildlife at the Nagarhole ecosystem.

Electricity generated through windmills, reverse osmosis water filtering system in every 'hut', and state-of-the-art sewerage treatment plant are some of the green initiatives at the resort.

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Sustainability with Wildlife

Kanha Earth Lodge is another noteworthy name among India's green hospitality properties. According to its website, "Kanha Earth Lodge lies in 30 acres of natural forest, tucked away in a small hamlet bordering Kanha's buffer zone. Its unique location, 30 minutes from the Khajuraho park gate,

ensures that it is close enough for easy access to the park, but still far enough from the glut of innng hotels in Kanha National Park tourist hub so as to offer guests a true wilderness experience." The lodge has won several Indian and international awards for its high environmental standards.

Kanha Earth Lodge presents an ideal setting for nature walks, bird watching and cycling trips, through the surrounding forest. Of course, shooting the wildlife with your camera can be a wonderful adventure upon during your stay at the retreat.

Locally sourced stones and recycled waste wood have been used in the construction of the idyllic resort, where one can find one's lost serenity and also the latent love for the wildlife.

"The 12 luxury cottages with en suite bathrooms and open verandahs have been



Holistically Green

The green initiatives adopted by Jaison Inn, Thattan are also commendable. Located on a 6-acre area, the sprawling property has 59 deluxe rooms of 290 sq ft, each and four suites of 560 sq ft, each. The hotel, located only two hours drive from Pune, was designed not only for corporate travellers but also for family getaways. The hotel offers exciting opportunities for rural and religious tourism and can be used as a retreat for the city-jaded tourists.

The hotel is a LEED Platinum Certified Hotel (2015) by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC). "One of our sustainable development goals is environment conservation. We have moved to recyclable straws & even eco-friendly toothbrushes. We currently have only two plastic items in

the hotel, which are mineral water bottles & garbage bags. Very soon we will become a plastic-free hotel by eliminating these," elaborated Soraya Rebello, Vice-President - Strategic Operations, Jaison Hospitality & CSR Head - Jaison Group.

"As Phalgun falls under the drought-prone zone, there is scarcity of water, especially during summers. We have installed a rainwater harvesting system that supports our water needs. This coupled with drip irrigation and treated water from the STP supports our water requirements for nine months of the year," expressed Soraya with a smile of satisfaction.

That is not all, as far as sustainable measures at Jaison Inn Thattan go. "One of our biggest projects this year has been installation of a 350KW solar plant that generates 1400 units per day, which has brought down our electricity costs by 30 percent," Soraya disclosed. "Recently we have also been conferred with the 'Green Hotel of the Year Award 2018' by PHRA in the upscale to mid-market segment," she added further.

Ideally, a hotel should not only adhere



Soraya Rebello

to environment-friendly measures, but should also make efforts to percolate an environment-friendly attitude among its guests and employees, even if such an attitude is already present among them. "We educate our guests about a good thing is also good."

"We educate our guests about our environment-friendly measures and it is very interesting to observe that most of our guests support these initiatives. Every guest is invited to plant a tree in the six-acre

property or at the nearby school adopted by us. Many of our loyal guests have even tasted the fruits of the trees (pomogranate & chikoo) in name a tree that they had planted in 2014. Moreover, our employees are trained and assisted on energy conservation practices. Our notice boards carry pictorial representations of all our green initiatives. Competitions on green initiatives are also being held among employees' children," Soraya informed enthusiastically.

These are only some of the many hotels and resorts in the country which have adopted environmentally-friendly practices in their operations or have used sustainable material in their construction, or are doing both. And many of the eco-friendly measures can also help in saving costs for hospitality properties in the long run, though some of these initiatives may incur an additional initial investment as compared to a non-green property.

But such extra investments are not only worth it, they are not only helpful for fostering the hospitality business in today's times, they can turn out to be invaluable for our future in the long run.

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