

RUSTIC ROYALTY

Hospitality in wilderness and nature-ensconced spaces is getting a sustainable twist that goes beyond banning plastic and using bamboo toothbrushes.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

The success of the retreat can happen when people come for a safari and not go on it. People can experience wilderness and find their own thing to do. There is so much to absorb from nature. Our mission has been to build skillsets with the local people and we build experiences from the surroundings, villas, and food," says Keyur Joshi, Founder, Tipai by Wildlife Luxuries, and Co-Founder and COO of Make My Trip. These words could not ring truer today as the world is increasingly focusing on ensuring that carbon footprint is minimal.

ECO SENSITIVITY

Sustainable practices such as responsible water management, minimising waste and employing eco-friendly construction methods can minimise the negative impact on the surrounding natu-



Keyur Joshi, Founder, Tipai by Wildlife Luxuries, and Co-Founder and COO of Make My Trip

ral resources, such as water bodies and wildlife habitats. Additionally, implementing sustainable practices can help reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, which not only benefits the environment but also helps lessen the property's ecological footprint. Sustainable practices also attract eco-conscious tourists who prioritise environmental responsibility when choosing their accommodation.

Michael Dominic, MD & CEO, CGH Earth, says, "As a guest in the forest, we handle nature with sensitive



anadan Chetti Mulake Pepper and more. We feature these grains and spices in our cuisine to give the local farmers the recognition they deserve and deliver the local flavours guests expect.”

LOCAL LOVE

Looking beyond the set notions of what is ecologically sensitive, hoteliers in wilderness and nature sensitive spaces are now working closely to champion community involvement.

“We implement wastewater treatment through STP, utilizing the treated water for our organic kitchen garden. With pervasive slogans promoting energy and water conservation across the resort, we aim to raise awareness. Our commitment extends beyond the resort; we hope guests carry these practices into their homes and offices post-checkout. Through methods like 4-bin segregation, the 3R approach, vermicomposting, and reliance on renewable energy, our resort stands as



📍 Bharat Bhushan Biswal, GM, Lotus Eco Resort, Konark



We implement wastewater treatment through STP, utilizing the treated water for our organic kitchen garden. With pervasive slogans promoting energy and water conservation across the resort, we aim to raise awareness. Our commitment extends beyond the resort."

a sustainable model,” says Bharat Bhushan Biswal, GM, Lotus Eco Resort, Konark.

Siddharth Chakravarty, Sustainability Director, Six Senses Fort Barwara, adds, “Currently, 31% of our hosts are locals, and our food miles guidelines set a radius for procuring raw materials; we are sourcing 90% of our vegetables locally. We also hired a local potter to work on our experience’s menu, and we take our guests on hikes through our guava orchards, paying them for the hikes. We also collaborate with an NGO on our block printing and bangle-making activities.”

DEVELOPMENT PARTNER

Being in ecologically sensitive areas has meant that these hoteliers are now doing more. Evolve Back’s sustainability model encompasses a holistic approach that extends from environmental conservation to meaningful community engagement. “Our engagement extends to supporting vital conservation projects in collaboration with Government initiatives, reinforcing our commitment to environmental stewardship. Beyond environmental efforts, we actively contribute to health, education, and

hands. Our spacious cottages sit on stilts without impeding the surrounding forest. Our naturalists play a central role in the experience of Wayanad. Apart from building awareness about the flora and fauna of the region, they dedicate their time to researching the biodiversity of the Wayanad Hills. True to its name – Wayanad, the land of paddy fields – is home to indigenous varieties of rice like Gandhakasala, and Jeerakasala, spices like Way-



community development. Collaborating with St.Philomena's Hospital in Bangalore, we provide financial and medical assistance to individuals facing renal disease. Embracing the belief in the inherent dignity of every individual, Evolve Back is a partner with organisations like 'Akasha Paravagal' and 'Little Sisters of the Poor' to ensure destitute individuals receive compassionate care," says Jose Ramapuram, Director of Marketing, Evolve Back Resorts.

NATURE INSPIRED

Implementing comprehensive practices that prioritize environmental conservation and community engagement is increasingly the way forward.

Manish Goyal, Founder, Stotrak Hospitality, that manages the Earth at Ranthambore, says, "The resort properties of Stotrak which are offering wilderness as an experience are very unique. Both our resorts in Ranthambore and Kumbhalgarh are operating sustainably by using a lot of initiatives, such as growing our own vegetables. Most of the trees we have are fruit trees, the waste control measures help us keep the environment more cleaner, rain water harvesting and a few more. Even the development has been done in a way to make sure we are low on carbon footprints and use the locally sourced material, which includes wheat husk, limestone, and mud in Ranthambore and Kota stone beds, retaining walls in Kumbhalgarh."

GREEN FINGERS

Being in remote and often rural belts, these properties need to be



Jose Ramapuram, Director of Marketing, Evolve Back Resorts

more conscientious when it comes to being mindful of energy usage. Six Senses Vana achieved LEED Platinum status in 2015 making it India's first retreat to have attained this standard of environmental design. Manish Kumar, Director of Sustainability, Six Senses Vana, explains, "We are committed to textiles made only with natural fibres. Our guest clothing and team uniform is made from 100% cotton with no synthetic fibres. We source the cotton for our retreat attire from an organic cotton farm in South India that adheres to the highest organic standards. Likewise, all bed and bath linen are organic. Our decision to use FSC-certified wood (bamboo flooring in all our rooms) and disposable cotton innerwear is in line with our other efforts to lower our overall impact on the surroundings."

CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION

Ensuring the built space is minimal, wilderness retreats are betting





big on keeping the natural landscape intact. Veeram Dev Singh Krishnawat, MD, Chunda Group of Hotels, says, “We are spread in almost 600 bigha of land of which we are utilizing only 5% in construction. Rest is dedicated to the flora and fauna and the forest area which has been conserved by us. It is my passion project and along with my team, we have transformed it from a land that has lost its charm due to deforestation and faced a consequential loss of its natural habitats, to now a stunning wildlife reserve property. We have planted many native and diverse tree species to enhance the ecosystem resilience and support a variety of birds and wildlife. We have also developed a butterfly garden around the property, planting nectar plants, host plants, and grasses for them.”

RECYCLE AND UPCYCLE

The famed three Rs of reduce, reuse, and recycle is a given today. Jimmy Patel, Founder and Owner of Aramness, Gir, says, “Since the opening of our lodge, we have assisted the community by spreading awareness and providing educational sessions on snake bites, guiding classes for local forest department guides, conducting local cleaning drives, providing fodder for livestock, facilitating access to medical facilities, donating agricultural seeds and mango saplings, promotion of regional art, pottery, and music. To maintain the cleanliness of forest roads and to inform locals about the problems associated with using plastic and improperly disposing it, we organise frequent cleaning walks and awareness sessions with the state forest department.”



Manish Goyal, Founder, Stotrak Hospitality

CHALLENGES & MORE

Implementing sustainable technologies and practices often involves higher upfront costs. Despite the long-term benefits, managing these initial expenses can be challenging. We mitigate this by viewing sustainability as a strategic investment and exploring cost-effective, innovative solutions. Sourcing sustainable materials locally can sometimes be a logistical challenge. We address this by building strong relationships with local suppliers, actively participating in community networks, and collaborating with businesses that share our commitment to sustainability,” says Shelley Thayil, COO, Paul John Resorts & Hotels. Even while some of the sustainability initiatives can call for expensive investments in the beginning, in the long run, they reap the economic benefits with the added advantage of being environmentally sound. And that is what is non-negotiable. 