

# Space Craft

As we begin a new calendar year, it is time to look into the crystal ball to see which design trends will rule the hospitality industry this year.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

**H**ospitality and design are elements that go hand in hand. In case of hospitality, design, of course, means much more – especially when it comes to innovative use of places while making sure it has an aesthetic balance. Hospitality experts weigh in with their thoughts.

## STORYTELLING DESIGN

Hospitality today is all about being rooted to the soil and hotel designs incorporate and are inspired from countless subtle elements from the local culture, history and environment. It weaves a narrative connecting visitors with the essence of the destination.

“Every aspect must tell a story developing a unique identity of its locale. ITC Hotel's WelcomArt initiative showcases Indian art and artists through its public areas. This sense and spirit are evident from our newly built ITC Narmada, Ahmedabad, where the entire hotel atrium architecture is indicative of a Gujarati step-well and the theme is retained in all the interior elements. Locally made bangles greet you as you enter ITC Kohenuur in Hyderabad. Popular the world over for their bangle craft, this element depicts the 'regional' flavour of the land. Starting from bangles to drawing inspiration from other local art like the legendary bidri work of the artisans, marble, zardozi work and the etched designs and accents and even reflecting facets of the famous 'jewellery' that the city is known for,” says Vidya Prakash, Vice-President, Projects, ITC Hotels.

## MAXIMALISM

Collaborative spaces are set to reign supreme, providing guests with multifunctional areas that seamlessly blend work, leisure, and socialising. This trend stems from the growing desire for multi-purpose spaces that meet the needs of guests.

Radisson Blu Dwarka exemplifies this trend with a different approach. As the hospitality industry evolves, the emphasis on spaces where guests can engage and participate while staying at the hotel is an expected 2024 trend, redefining traditional hotel stays in a spacious and exciting social encounter.



CGH SwaSwara Aayurveda And Yoga on Om Beach aerial view



Vidya Prakash, Vice President, Projects, ITC Hotels



Jimmy Patel, Founder, Aramness Gir



Taljinder Singh, Senior Vice-President & Brand Custodian, IHCL



Rakesh Sethi, General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel, New Delhi



Mridula Jose, Vice-President, Marketing & Product Development, CGH Earth

“The heartbeat of hospitality design in 2024 lies in enhancing the in-residence experience through multi-functional, collaborative spaces,” says Rakesh Sethi, General Manager, Radisson Blu Hotel, New Delhi. “Radisson Blu Dwarka exemplifies this trend by integrating offerings and effortlessly transforming a stay into a multi-dimensional journey where each space is a new experience.”

**VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE**

Hoteliers are betting big on vernacular architecture that speaks the language of the destination. Jimmy Patel, Founder, Aramness Gir, says, “The architectural and design narrative of Aramness Gir was conceived when I, along with Nicholas Plewman, and Chris and Debra of Fox Brown Creative, wandered the streets of Haripur, a neighbouring village. A local vernacular emerged from the beautiful synthesis of a jumbled yet bedazzling village scene - oxcarts, people, shops, livestock, water wells, pops of vibrant colour, and beautiful homes (kothi) with a hidden courtyard that were beautified with pride. There is deep respect for wildlife and

*Carefully calibrated to perfection, the lighting gives the room a soft, enchanting glow that draws you in even more.*

agriculture, both immensely integral to local lives.”

**COLOUR POP**

Colour pop, as a design trend in hospitality, involves the strategic and aesthetic use of vibrant colours against monochromatic tones to create a visually striking experience. Bold, vibrant colours, through artworks, drapes and accents, help draw attention to specific areas, infuse visual energy and make a hospitality environment more dynamic and upbeat.

“When used in a well-thought manner, they help balance out spaces aesthetically, and lend a creative touch, making them photogenic and Instagrammable in today’s digital first world. A striking example on how we at IHCL have incorporated this trend is with our design philosophy for Loya – our newest and most celebrated Indian restaurant brand, that offers an immersive journey through the heart of North,” says Taljinder Singh, Senior Vice-President & Brand Custodian, IHCL.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

Hoteliers are incorporating sustainability in design as a dedicated focus on minimising ecological impact, preserving cultural heritage, and actively engaging local communities responsibly and sustainably while benefiting them economically too.

Mridula Jose, Vice President, Marketing & Product Development CGH Earth, explains, “Spice Village was created keeping in mind the local ethos of the original inhabitants of the land, the Mannan Tribe. The cottages with Elephant Grass roofs



Loya, Taj Palace, New Delhi

from the forest were inspired by their homes. At Coconut Lagoon, we have protected several old ‘tharavad’ mansions from around our resort that would otherwise be sold off as parts in the antique market. We reassembled them on our site using the unique skills of local craftsmen following ancient ‘Tha-



Sumeet Suri, General Manager, The Westin Mumbai Garden City

chu Shastra’ carpentry principles. SwaSwara, modelled after the Bunt community of the Konkan region, follows the typology of the land using sustainable materials like local laterite and coconut thatch for the construction of the villas.”

**FITNESS FACILITIES IN GUESTROOMS**

As guests embark on wellness tourism, an important aspect is to have a space or elements of wellness and fitness in the rooms. The Bala Kit, featuring Bala Bangles, Bala Blocks, and a premium Westin yoga mat, reflects the trend towards diverse and adaptable fitness routines. With an increased emphasis on versatile workouts that cater to different preferences, this comprehensive set provides guests with the means to engage in a balanced fitness regimen.



Sharad Datta, General Manager, JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity

“In anticipation of 2024 wellness trends, the Hyperice and Bala kits at The Westin Mumbai Garden City are poised to become sought-after amenities for several reasons. As global awareness of holistic well-being continues to grow, guests are increasingly seeking comprehensive solutions that cater to both physical fitness and relaxation,” says Sumeet Suri, General Manager, The Westin Mumbai Garden City.



Shangri-La Al Husn Muscat - Courtyard with art pieces



Soft, textured fabrics and jewel tones at ZLB23, The Leela Palace Bengaluru



Story telling corner at Aramnesh Gir

### MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPACES

Gone are the days of 'one size fits all' event venues. In 2024, hospitality design honours the art of transition.

Sharad Datta, General Manager, JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity, says, "The Grand Crystal Ballroom at the JW Marriott New Delhi is a spectacular venue that is more than simply a ballroom; it's a blank canvas for inspiration, seamlessly transitioning from a large dinner hall to several private conference rooms, all within its outstanding embrace. Imagine sweeping ceilings folding to expose smaller, adjustable pieces, each with its own mood lighting. Walls slide silently on tucked tracks, allowing the space to breathe and respond to the event's pulse." This is the future of hospitality design, where flexibility reigns supreme, providing guests with the greatest in personalized comfort and limitless options.

### SOFT, TEXTURED FABRICS AND JEWEL TONES

Using a versatile plethora of textures, motifs and patterns across velvets, linens and more, hoteliers are creating eclectic spaces that add to the brand's ethos.

At the Leela Palace Bengaluru, for instance, ZLB23 is a speak-easy like no other as it reveals itself in the dim glow of maroon shadows, creating a sense of mystery in the room. "Carefully calibrated to perfection, the lighting gives the room a soft, enchanting glow that draws you in even more. The furniture, decorated in rich brown tones, invites you to live in a world of refined sophistication. Soft seating complements the dim lighting, creating an intimate atmosphere that encourages quiet conversations and shared secrets. As you travel through space, the carefully crafted details of ZLB23 come to life. From the carefully chosen colour palette to the warm embrace of the furniture, every element blends to take you away from the present," says Madhav Sehgal, Area Vice President - South India, The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts.

### NON BULKY DESIGNS

A hospitality design trend that is in vogue for 2024 is the concept of non-bulky designs. This concept stems from the fact that

hoteliers are looking at furniture and fixtures that come with clean, simple, and minimalist lines that are functional and yet do not compromise on aesthetics. Non-bulky designs also give the space a clutter-free look which enhances the guest experience.

"These have become integral to offerings of glamping accommodation units like ours. We work with designers to focus on reducing bulk without compromising on comfort. We use minimalistic simple designs for both our furniture and fixtures that are locally procured in our camps. For storage, we offer light iron racks instead of any mounted shelves. Our tents have modular designs which allow us to easily attach additional units if required as such designs have rapid assembly and disassembly capabilities," says Bhavik Sheth, COO, Evoke Experiences. This trend is also helping hospitality brands create a strong brand identity and being visually pleasing it is also high on the aesthetics quotient.



Madhav Sehgal, Area Vice-President, South India, The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts



Bhavik Sheth, COO, Evoke



Raghu Nair, General Manager, The Oterra Hotel

### GOLOCAL

With globalization on the rise, the concept of "going local" has gained immense popularity in various industries. This trend holds exceptional significance in the realm of hospitality design as it allows guests to truly experience the authentic essence of a destination. In 2024, this trend is expected to thrive with a focus on incorporating elements that reflect local culture, tradition, and craftsmanship. "Ahara, the newly opened Indian fine dining restaurant at The Oterra Hotel, stands as a shining example of this trend, seamlessly merging authenticity, and sophistication in its design concept. Under the creative guidance of Sandeep Mukherjee from Quercus, a specialist in hospitality designs, Ahara's interior design captures the very essence of India's art, design, and architecture. Elements such as terracotta, vegetable-tanned leather, and dark granite have been thoughtfully incorporated to convey the restaurant's earthy yet sophisticated ambiance," says Raghu Nair, General Manager, The Oterra Hotel. ■