

26 | **Afternoon BUSINESS**
DESPATCH & COURIER

What is the concept behind Ayana Hospitality?

Ayana Hospitality is a Joint Venture between the ICS Group, India and the Mantis Group, South Africa. The primary aim of Ayana Hospitality is to create a collection of luxury boutique hotels in the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia much like our South African partners. Their ethos is also closely linked with our concern for the environment. Our objective at Ayana is to share untouched nature destinations with our guest, providing the ultimate luxury experience. With a dedicated focus on wildlife conservation and responsible tourism, Ayana will showcase the region's natural and cultural richness.



Akhil Behl,
CEO, Ayana
Hospitality

How big is the potential for a business like yours?

'Providing the ultimate LUXURY EXPERIENCE'

Akhil Behl is the CEO and co-founder of Ayana Hospitality. He leads the Indian JV, influencing the design process of hospitality ventures from concept level. Over the last few years, he has been involved in the conceptualization of luxury eco-lodge projects in the well-known sanctuaries of India. Akhil graduated from Trinity College (U.S.A) in 2001 and completed his MBA at INSEAD (France/Singapore) in 2006.

In conversation with **AD&C**, Akhil reveals Ayana's primary aim of creating a collection of luxury boutique hotels in the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia and providing the ultimate luxury experience to guests by sharing untouched nature destinations.

The luxury boutique as well as the nature tourism segment in India are as yet untapped and have immense potential. It is a very opportune time for us to be in and we intend to make the most of it. Internationally too, India ranks high among the tourism destinations in the world given the immense bio-diversity and the varied landscapes. We are witnessing a steady increase in inbound international travellers too, who are now keen to explore and experience India.

How do you plan to scale up?

Apart from the flagship property at Fort Kochi, Ayana, today, has a collection of three properties in wildlife destinations in central India that include Vannraj By Ayana at Pench National Park, Muba at Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary



and Muba at Kanha National Park. In addition, Ayana is looking at adding to the current collection of properties by expanding further in Kerala to destinations in and around Cochin.

Essentially we are keen to build circuits in key destinations like Kerala and MP to take advantage of cross selling opportunities and operational synergies.

What are some of the challenges that you face?

The major challenges we face is the shortage of skilled manpower and attention to detail during the construction process. We believe both these are important aspects that will impact our end customers and make a difference between a good and a great experience.

Where do you see yourself five years down the road?

Going forward we intend to establish a successful model of eco-tourism by providing a meaningful and unique experience to guests, while ensuring the future protection of India's spectacular wildlife and natural heritage and in the process, being recognised as one of the best boutique luxury operators in the country.