



Akhil Behl
CEO – Ayana Hospitality

Ayana Hospitality 'offering unforgettable experiences'

Founded in 2012, Ayana Hospitality is a joint venture between ICS Realty and Mantis Group, South Africa. Ayana is unique in its offering of world-class all-encompassing services that take a project from conceptualisation and feasibility to planning, design, construction and eventual management and marketing of the hotel. It is the first of its kind in India. Akhil Behl, CEO – Ayana Hospitality shares more with HC.

By | Rachita Sehgal

How was the year 2015 for Ayana Hospitality?

Last year was extremely important for Ayana as we took the first steps towards opening our first branded property in Fort Kochi. We also made good inroads in securing contracts in wildlife sanctuaries in Central India and added a jungle safari to our portfolio.

How do you feel is the concept of vacation changing with the changing generations?

Today's luxury travellers (Indian and Foreign) are looking for experiential getaways rather than being pampered in large resort style five star hotels. The travellers are keen to understand and experience local customs and local cuisine. They want to discover the history and culture of the areas they visit. They even look forward for opportunities to participate in various community development and conservation related initiatives. Overall travellers today are looking for experiences rather than vacations.

What is Ayana Hospitality doing to cater to the ever changing customer demands?

Ayana's endeavour is to provide our guest with a once in a lifetime experience. Right from the time they step into the property their activities will be designed to suit their preferences. All our properties are being set up to enhance the interaction between the guest and his or her surroundings, nature and community being the two key aspects of this interaction. Our concept is drop the boundary walls around our properties to create a seamless connect between the guests and their physical surroundings.

Along with our JV partners, we have been involved in some of the most unique experiential properties in the world. Right from an expedition to Antarctica to a guided biking trip through remote destinations in India.

Where does Ayana Hospitality plans to open its first branded property in India? What is the concept behind the property?

Ayana's first branded property is in Fort Kochi, Kerala. It is based on the art décor concept and located in proximity to the Biennale Art Exhibition. A 200 year old heritage structure has been re-developed into a 16 room boutique luxury property with a rooftop café and pool. The property will celebrate the local heritage and culture of Fort Kochi which has over the centuries been influenced by the various trader communities that made Fort Kochi their getaway to India and a bustling centre for trade.

Any further information for our readers.

Experiences are what guests are demanding and gone are the days when people would sit back and relax by the pool all day. India has always been an experiential destination right from the palaces of Rajasthan to the backwaters of Kerala. The more experiences one can create in an around a hotel – the better they will be positioned for success. In creating these experiences the most important aspect is to understand the location and what it offers and then how can that be translated into an experience for the guest. There is no one better than the local community for the first aspect and the second comes down to the expertise of the hospitality company. Internationally we have been very successful in doing exactly this and look forward to offering unforgettable experiences within India to our guest.