

L'Avenir GREEN DIGEST

Responsible Lifestyle

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A matter of Responsibility-
Orange County Resorts

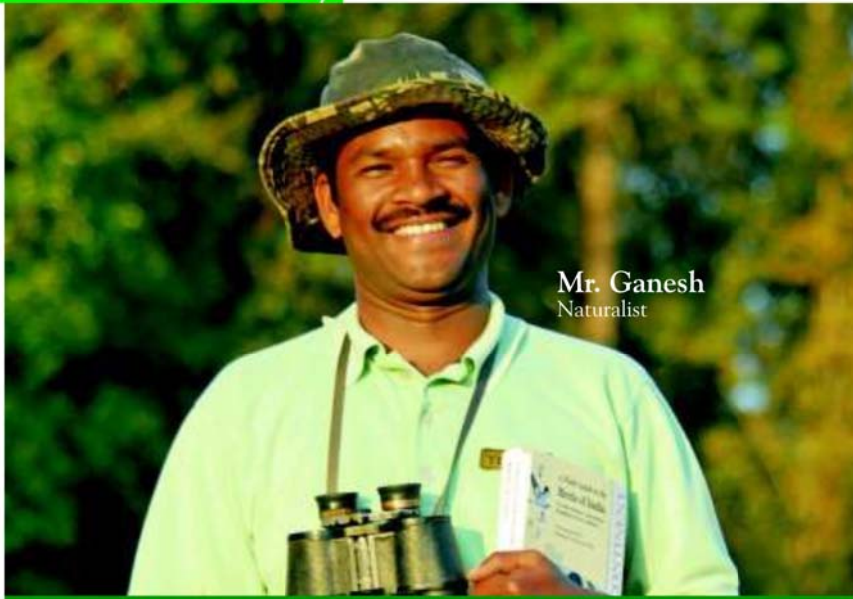


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A MATTER OF RESPONSIBILITY Orange County Resorts

By Vikram Nanjappa. nanjappavikram@yahoo.co.in

Travel has been an essential part of man's journey through the ages. The desire to explore and experience has been the essential driving force behind his success as a species. The modern tourism industry is born out of this desire; it provides both new sights and insights for those of us who are beckoned by the gods of travel. It panders to the lurking nomad in all of us, beseeching us to see new places, make new friends and have new experiences. When intention and experience coincide, travel can open our minds and touch our hearts.

However, in the recent past, this essential desire of ours has become a major contributor to planetary defilement. If not executed responsibly, pollution, waste and the disruption of local societies and economies can be some of its natural by-products. When this realization finally dawned on the industry, it led to the formulation of the covenant for responsible tourism in 2002. It was a sign

of the times and was born in response to a growing need for environmental care and human welfare in combined harmony.

These were the thoughts that were in my mind when I walked into one of the properties of Orange County Resorts and Hotels. From the moment I entered the property to the time I left it, it never once struck me that this could by any stretch of imagination be considered a contributor to the defilement of our planet. I was to learn that there was a reason for this.

I soon realized that the concept of responsible tourism comes naturally to Orange County Resorts. It has been, in essence, an integral part of the company's philosophy long before it became a catch word for the rest of the industry. It is, after all, an extension of the vision and philosophy of the House of Ramapuram whose values are broad, contemporary and inclusive. The family, whose fortunes began with plantations almost a century

ago, has never seen land or the people who work there as a means to an end. This spirit of responsible stewardship guides the managerial practices of their hospitality sector, which is now a growing arm of the family's commercial expansions. The principal tenets of responsible tourism can be seen and experienced in the day to day life and running of the company's two resorts at Kabini and Coorg, both of which endeavour to offer more than just luxurious holidays. They aspire to offer experiences that enrich and enlighten their guests - experiences that tell of the fragility of the eco systems of which we are all a part and the measures that can be taken consciously to soften our footprints upon an environment under stress.

The name 'Orange County' itself is a reflection of the guiding principle and philosophy of the company which is 'Spirit of the Land'. The famous loose-jacketed mandarin orange was as much a part of the warp and weft of Coorg as the coffee with which it was inter-planted. They say the taste of the Coorg Orange lingers long after it is consumed, which was equally true of my experience at the resort. For the planters and citizens of Coorg, this is a bittersweet truth, as pests and disease have all but obliterated citrus cultivation and memories are all that remain. Thus the Orange County name was chosen by the Ramapuram family for their first resort at Coorg, in memory of the captivating fragrance and flavour of this wonderful fruit which was, not long ago, part of the Spirit of the Land.

Orange County Resorts and Hotels Ltd., a public limited company incorporated under the Company's Act 1956, opened its first resort at Coorg in 1994. The resort is built on the theme of Coffee, Spice & Plantation Life reflecting the true spirit of Coorg, one which the discerning up-market traveller will not fail to appreciate. The beauty of the resort is further enhanced by the fact that it is situated amidst three hundred acres of coffee and spice plantations, flanked on one side by the Dubare Reserve Forest and the River Cauvery on the other, and it seamlessly blends into the environment.

From its inception, this beautifully themed working plantation resort has married the

finest guest facilities with outstanding service standards to offer its guests an idyllic retreat into a bygone, more relaxed era of gentleman planters. In the year 2000, the resort added a state-of-the-art Vaidyasala, a serene Ayurvedic Spa, and also built exclusive 'Private Pool Villas', all inspired by the ethnic Kodava architecture. In a land where time stands still, the resort has kept moving, and today, Orange County, Coorg has come to be known as one of the finest resorts in India.

My stay at Orange County, Coorg left me thirsting for more, and I soon found myself driving through the gates of their second property at Kabini. Orange County Resorts & Hotels Ltd. opened its second resort at Kabini in 2007. No sooner than I entered, I realized that the company's guiding principle and philosophy, 'Spirit of the Land' finds its most intimate expression here on their property in Kabini. Here, the casual visitor is well and truly drawn into the very bosom of the Nilgiri biosphere on whose edge the resort is situated. The theme of the resort is 'Wildlife, the Tribal Way'.

While I was cradled in the lap of luxury, I managed to get a wildlife experience like no other. I also found myself drawn into the vibrant social tapestry of the local Kadu Kuruba tribe. This was made possible by the fact that this picturesque resort of sweeping panoramic vistas is steeped in local lore and culture, and inspired in design by the Hadis (tribal villages), bordered on two sides by the Kabini River, which separates the Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks, which in turn are part of the larger Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

Impressed with the entire package, I set out to discover what made Orange County work. I knew from experience that a lot of hard work and thought would have been applied behind the scenes. The management went out of their way to answer all my queries and I found to my delight that the company is committed to the concept of 'Responsible Tourism' through which it seeks to enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of the host community, apart from incentivizing the retention and regeneration of their unique culture. The brand 'Orange County' is committed to

employing the best in environmental and ecological practices in technology, equipment and operational processes.

Deriving sustenance from their 'Spirit of the Land' philosophy, Orange County Resorts plans to find the most enchanting locales, and offer exquisitely luxurious holiday experiences there, while preserving the purity of the natural and cultural landscape.

It is not surprising that today the brand 'Orange County' has earned high acclaim in the market and is rated as one of the best hospitality groups worldwide. The Group plans to have four new luxury resorts operational by 2016, at Hampi, Karwar and Kerala, and the projects are progressing as per the timelines framed by the management.

Responsible Tourism Policy

Orange County Resorts is committed to operating resorts that will adhere to the fundamentals of 'Responsible Tourism'. The objectives are to provide long-term economic benefits to the host communities, preserve and/or improve the

environment at each destination, and contribute towards the revival of the traditional culture and heritage of the region. The company's RT policy embraces and pays respect to the following:

The Environment

Preserving the natural ecological balance of its destinations and surroundings through conscious measures to minimize negative environmental impact

Society

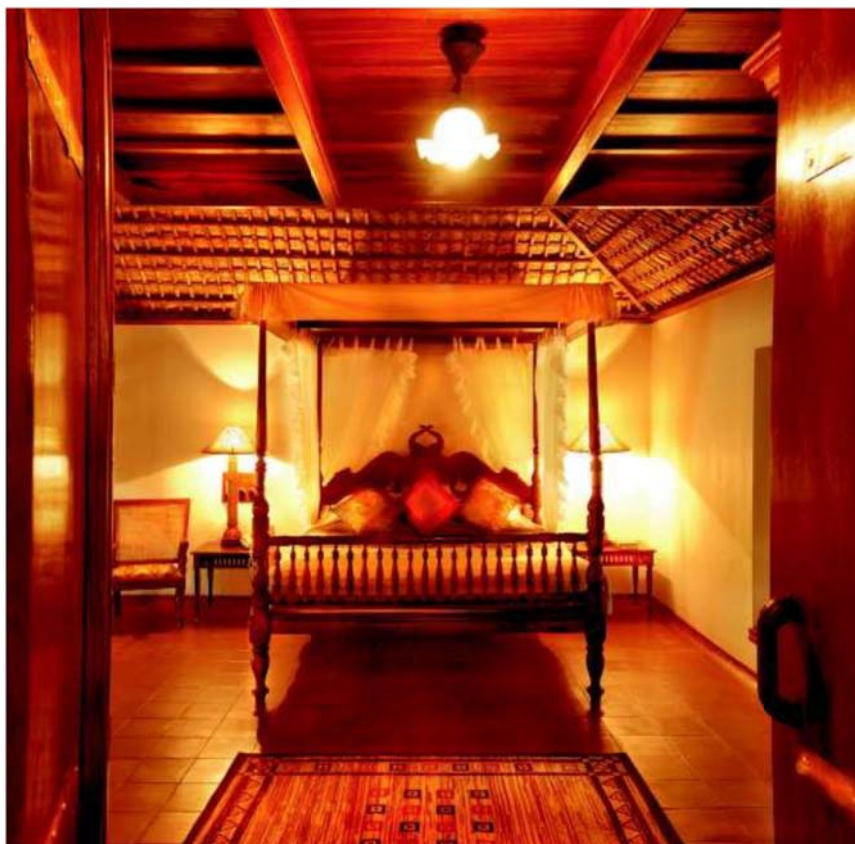
Maintaining/Enhancing the social and cultural well-being of host communities by consciously eschewing disruptive activities and programs

Economy

Generating economic benefits to the local populace through direct employment or invitation to participate in income generating activities

Fair Trade

Ensuring fair trade practices as a matter of routine and policy in all its economic dealings with local people



Conservation through Conversations

The company spares no efforts to educate, train and sensitize its staff, guests and local community in the different facets of Responsible Tourism. Guests are introduced to local customs, culture and the environment through opportunities to participate in local conservation and community development programmes.

The resorts are staffed with an eclectic, amiable and knowledgeable group of people who come from different walks of life. In keeping with a 'Think Global - Hire Local' policy, many of them are from immediate neighbourhoods and have over the years,

evolved to become a valuable part of the Orange County family, adding spice and local flavour to the resort.

Trained and constantly mentored by specialists and experts who represent the best



in the fields of hospitality, environment and wildlife conservation, culture and responsible tourism, Orange County's people endeavour to deliver truly life-changing experiences to each of the guests, adding a fulfilling dimension to the stay, educating, enchanting, entertaining and enlightening guests in myriad ways: be it while savouring a heady cup of the local 'Sidapur' coffee in the coffee lounge, or sighting a Hornbill upon its Rosewood perch during the Guided Bird Watching at the Coorg resort, or while calling your attention to a herd of elephants grazing on the banks of the River Kabini, or revealing the intricacies of the traditional Kuruba dance at its Kabini resort.



The following Green Practices are Standard at Orange County's Kabini and Coorg Resorts, setting industry benchmarks

Water Conservation

- ◆ Dual flushing cisterns.
- ◆ STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) with stream-water standard output.
- ◆ The treated water used for horticulture.
- ◆ Foam flow faucets used to reduce water consumption.

Solid Waste Management

- ◆ Bio-gas plant processes kitchen waste
- ◆ Bio gas sludge used as fertilizer (organic manure)
- ◆ Piggery set up jointly with local farmer near the resort to manage food waste
- ◆ Degradable / Bio degradable waste segregation
- ◆ Plastic / paper / glass / metals (cans) sent for recycling

Sound Pollution

- ◆ Acoustic enclosures installed for generators / kitchen exhausts
- ◆ Continuously working to minimizing mechanical noise levels at resort
- ◆ Electric buggies used to transport guests within resort
- ◆ Vehicular movement minimized within the resort premises

Air Pollution

- ◆ Electric buggies used to transport guests within resort
- ◆ Diesel generators with electronic governors to reduce fuel consumption
- ◆ Common transportation provided for staff from town
- ◆ Majority of staff accommodated within property. Hence no transportation required
- ◆ Company owned wind power generator fully offsets power consumption from government utilities
- ◆ Company owned wind power generators supplying surplus power to government
- ◆ Local trees planted in the resort premises

Energy Conservation

- ◆ CFL Lamps used
- ◆ Electronic key tags used
- ◆ Auto sensors are installed for lights in public wash rooms
- ◆ Multiple entries discouraged in cold rooms
- ◆ Electronic governors on Diesel Generators to reduce fuel consumption.
- ◆ Two separate Diesel Generators with lower and higher capacity installed to reduced fuel consumption during lower occupancy days.

- ◆ Air conditioners only in the bed rooms
- ◆ Reduced use of plastic
- ◆ Reverse Osmosis plant in all suites and restaurants make the resorts free of plastic bottles from packaged drinking water.
- ◆ Usage of cloth bags & bags made out of news papers is encouraged
- ◆ Biodegradable bags used in the waste bins

Flora & Fauna

- ◆ Planting of only local trees and plants promoted within the resort premises
- ◆ No exotic fauna within resort premises
- ◆ Steps taken to minimize formal landscaping

Sustainable tourism

- ◆ Number of guests entering the forest on safaris is limited
- ◆ Construction of rooms is limited to retain the serenity of the environment
- ◆ Guests' and vehicle intrusion into ecologically sensitive areas minimized

Light Pollution

- ◆ Usage of lights optimized to minimize disturbance to nocturnal wildlife



Mr. Jose T Ramapuram
Director - Marketing

During one of the many pleasant interactions I had with the resort staff, I came to know that one of my fellow guests was none other than Mr. Jose Ramapuram, a member of the Ramapuram family and presently, Director - Marketing. I took the opportunity to speak with him to find out more about the company and to congratulate him for showing that we can enjoy our planet without defiling it.

Q. What are the reasons for promoting Orange County Resorts as a responsible tourism destination?

A. Our family always had a penchant for 'rural connect'. The family's fortunes began with plantations almost a century ago. We have never seen land or the people who work there as a means to an end. This spirit of responsible stewardship has been our guiding light. It is a great opportunity for us to give back to the land we hail from in ways that benefit the local community. Responsible

tourism was a natural extension of our business vision when we started our resorts. We have devised a policy of responsible tourism that includes key facets like the Environment, Economy, Society, Fair Trade and Conservation through Education.

Q. How is the response of your customers after they experience your eco-friendly luxury resorts?

A. Our guests are environmentally conscious individuals who are well-travelled and exposed to some of the finest travel experiences in the world. They appreciate our efforts to be eco-sensitive through our various nature and culture related conservation efforts. Local cuisine is given a significant place in our buffets, reflecting our efforts in supporting local culture, local farmers and their produce. They are also made aware of our efforts to improve the local schools near our resorts with teaching materials, school uniforms, toilets, computers, protein and vitamin food supplements and sports kits, to name a few. It makes us and our guests happy to see that these simple interventions enhance the education and fulfill the extracurricular needs of the students who hail from local communities.

Q. Please tell us how "Lifescapes by Orange County" originated, and how is this unique initiative faring?

A. The idea was actually to create an emotional connect between the urban opinion makers of the world and the

rural societies that we operate in. This we understood, had to be executed in a manner that is appreciated by the audience. It had to be non intrusive, yet something that the subscriber looked forward to receiving. So we got in touch with the world class local photographers available in Karnataka and combined their work in our destinations with one of the finest writing talents in India. The result is a fortnightly photo-essay that showcases the nature and culture of our destinations in a light, humorous, yet educational way. The subscriber base for Lifescapes has risen from 8,000 to 40,000 in one year's time. The outstanding quality of this photo essay is much appreciated by our subscriber base and has won us the 'World's Leading Online Tourism Marketing Campaign Award 2010' from World Travel Awards - the 'Oscars' of the travel industry.

Q. Going ahead, what are your plans to promote responsible tourism further?

As of now, most of the Responsible Tourism Initiatives are undertaken by the company. We hope to ramp up our interventions in this area considerably, in the coming years. Further, the next big step in this direction is to involve the guests in our Responsible Tourism efforts. This, we believe, will surely instill in them a respect for local nature and culture. Ultimately, providing a deeper and wider involvement with local communities leaves them with a sense of joy and well-being while carrying back memories of a lifetime.