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"The dialogue between client and architect is about as intimate as any conversation you can have, because when you're talking about building a house, you're talking about dreams"
— Robert AM Stern



Five-star *spiritual enlightenment*

Cited as one of the best of its kind worldwide, the Shreyas Yoga Retreat in Bangalore combines luxury, nature and yoga

TEXT: VIRGINIA LAU
PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF SHREYAS YOGA RETREAT



Located 35 kilometres away from Bangalore, Shreyas Yoga Retreat combines the luxuries of the city with the tranquility and natural environment of the Nelamangala countryside. Guests lead an ashram way of life through daily yoga and meditation sessions, organic vegetarian meals, and a no-alcohol policy. Shreyas has been named one of the best yoga retreats in the world, famed for promoting authentic yoga in an exclusive, celebrity environment accommodating only 25 guests at a time.

The mastermind behind the upscale resort is principal promoter Pawan Malik. With a professional career in finance, Malik's love of yoga was the inspiration for the launch of the project in 2002. Recommended by a close friend, he enlisted architects Pratap Malik & Associates and landscape architect Akshay Kaul to realise his vision two years later. The aim was to provide all modern-day comforts while doing little damage to the natural surroundings. "The place is designed as a getaway for people seeking a peaceful, tranquil break from their stressful lives," says Kaul.

Three poolside cottages, eight garden tented cottages with open-air bathrooms and a three-bedroom cottage with ensuite bathrooms take up only a portion of the 25 acres of land. The resort is equipped with all the amenities one could imagine – a library, home theatre, a kitchen that offers cooking sessions, a spa centre, and cricket nets with a professional bowling machine. Particularly noteworthy are the pools and Jacuzzis set around the cottages and dining halls. The yoga element, perhaps just an excuse for some looking for a getaway, is not mandatory.

Balanced with these luxuries, the resort's interiors consist of simple off-white finishes

through the use of natural materials such as stone and locally-sourced light grey granite, inspired by the buildings of Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa. To remain culturally intact, Malik's wife, Leesha Malik, chose Indian and Southeast Asian textiles for furnishings throughout the resort.

While it was a new concept almost 10 years ago when the project first started, environmental sustainability was already one of Malik's concerns building the resort. Locally-sourced low-embodied energy materials were used in constructing the building and its surroundings. Storm water management, water conservation and rainwater harvesting strategies were implemented as well. By planting up to 40 varieties of trees as well as shrubs, herbs, medicinal and aquatic plants, Kaul was able to restore the ecological system from its former monoculture plantation of coconut. Herbs for restorative healing and plants used in Indian folk medicine were planted in the five acres of land dedicated to organic farming.

The mix of vegetation further enhances the bio-diversity and aesthetics of Shreyas' landscape. "We wanted to intersperse the orchard with different trees for colour, variety and fragrance, and to slowly bring butterflies and birds back to the gardens," says Kaul. "Every time we come out here, we discover new smells from aromatic herbs or fruits along the jogging track in this tranquil landscape."

Abiding to 'shreyas' – literally meaning 'all round excellence' – Malik was able to realise his three key initiatives in building the retreat: an environmentally sensitive landscape, simplicity in architecture and a subtle elegance in the yoga retreat's interiors.





靜心所欲

躋身全球最佳瑜珈度假村行列的班加羅爾
Shreyas，集奢華、天然與瑜珈於一身

攝：K. VIRGINIA LAU
攝：SHREYAS 度假村提供

Shreyas 瑜珈度假村位於班加羅爾三十五公里以外，體現都市奢華和 Nalmanol 郊區寧靜天然的融合。客人入住度假村，從日常的瑜珈與冥想環節，到享用天然素食，至完全洒洒不沾，可深深感受印度靜心的生活。Shreyas 被譽為全球最頂尖的瑜珈度假村之一，以推廣正宗瑜珈、每次只招待二十五名客人的尊貴獨家環境見稱。

這個高級度假村的幕後策劃人正是主創辦人 Pawan Malik。Pawan 具專業金融知識，對瑜珈的熱愛驅使他在零二年發起項目；更在兩年後，經朋友介紹請來 Pratap Malik & Associates 建築事務所與園林建築師 Akshay Kaul 為他實現項目建設。整個項目概念，是要在盡量不破壞自然環境的前提下，提供現代舒適體驗。Akshay 說：「這個地方設計成一個避世聖地，讓人逃離平日的緊張壓力，追求寧靜平和的休息。」

三間池邊小屋、八間設露天浴室的花園帳篷小屋，以及一間附設套房浴室的三睡房小屋只佔全個度假村二十五公頃土地的一部分。度假村內一應俱全，包括圖書館、家居影院、開辦烹飪班的廚房、水療中心，以及配有專業投球器與多個板球網的練習場。而當中最觸目的，莫過於多個屋與用餐廳邊的水池與 Jacuzzi 按摩浴池。而瑜珈元素在度假村看來並非必要，或許只是人們想要旅行避世的好藉口。

蘭卡建築師 Godfrey Bawa 的建築中取得靈感，以簡單的米色作主調，選用石材與當地的淺灰花崗岩等天然物料。而為了保有濃濃的當地文化，Pawan 的太太 Leesta Malik 便為度假村的傢具陳設挑選印度與東南亞的紡織品。

項目早於十年前起步，環保永續在當時屬嶄新概念，但 Pawan 便已將之應用於度假村。度假村的建築與四周環境的建造，均選用當地取材的低內含耗能物料，亦引入暴雨處理、節約用水與雨水收集系統。Akshay 更在四周栽種多達四十種樹木、灌木、草本植物、藥用植物與水生植物，成功恢復過往因單一栽種椰子樹而遭破壞的生態系統。度假村內設有五公頃土地專門作有機耕種，種有補健草本植物與用於印度藥材的植物。

各式各樣的植物進一步加強 Shreyas 的生物多樣性，亦使其園林景觀更美麗具魅力。Akshay 說：「我們想要以各種樹木的色彩、外貌與香味來點綴森林，並慢慢把蝴蝶與鳥兒帶回花園之中。每次我們從園裡出來，沿著這片恬靜景緻的漫步徑走，總會嗅到新的香草植物或水果香味。」

「Shreyas」意指「各方面都卓越不凡」，就此，Pawan 成功實現這個度假村的三大興建目標：注重環境的園林景觀、簡約的建築設計，以及瑜珈度假村微妙優雅的室內裝潢。E