

# G L O B A L

## D E S T I N A T I O N S

*A Guide to the world of Hospitality, MICE and Tourism*

• Hong Kong • Kerry Hotel • Express Inn • Fern • Hilton • Singapore



Readers: Our Most Precious Asset

## “Our objective is 100 Hotels by 2020”

As one of my favourite brands in India, The Fern, celebrates a decade of success. Some of the properties are so beautiful and that's when I understood that even with limited inventory a hotel can still be a wonderful experience. As the group prepares to rejoice with numerous events spread across the year we thought it an excellent opportunity to interview THE MAN behind it - **Param Kannampilly, CMD, Concept Hospitality. Excerpts**

**Firstly congrats to you and Fern brand as you celebrate a decade of heartfelt hospitality. Over the decade how has the group grown and expanded?**

The decade celebration is over our primary brand "The Fern" We started slow and in 2009 established and branded our first hotel - "The Fern Jaipur". This was followed by the openings in Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Delhi establishing the brand. Infact I would like to credit my son, Suhail who was instrumental in launching the Brand Fern. Since then Fern has been on a roll.



We currently have 66 operational hotels – 59 within India and 7 International. The 66 hotels are spread across 46 locations with a total inventory of 3241 rooms. We have acquired the Zinc Brand and at present we are concentrating on achieving our objective of 100 Hotels / Resorts by 2020 and I think we are on track. We will continue to expand all our brands and look out to acquiring an educational Institute to cater to our requirements. I have to admit Suhail and team have been putting extra efforts to achieve the target of 100 hotels by 2020 end.

**That's great. Any specific plans to celebrate 10 glorious years of the group?**

Absolutely. The celebrations will be year round and a lot of activities have been planned. As always guests will be our priority with plenty of offers and gifts. We have planned for mall activation campaign in major cities which will be called as 'Embracing Nature Campaign' which will educate people about the brand and surprise giveaways. Secondly, we will be introducing complimentary offers for our customers depending on the availability like room upgrade, free lunch/dinner, discount on spa and many more.

**Surprisingly you have never tapped the luxury segment. Any particular reason?**

The 5 Star deluxe category has many established players and

we decided not to enter that segment for now. But we certainly have been operating the small luxury hotels of the world in India and are now operating 16 – 5 Star Hotels as per 5 Star Classified Rules Govt of India.



### Param Kannampilly - An inspiration to a generation

When I first met Param Kannampilly it was for an interview – a job to be done. But as I started interacting with him I was surprised by his in depth knowledge. When I mentioned that I met Param Kannampilly to a known GM his reaction was 'he is an encyclopedia.' And it dawned to me how true his statement is.

With over 35 years of active involvement in the hospitality industry (worked with major brands like Taj, Spencer, Fariyas, Leela, Rahejas, Orchid etc) he is a true visionary and a champion created to the creation of ecotels - environmentally sensitive hotels. While CSR is well known he promoted CER – Corporate Environment Responsibility. Today he is the driving force behind the phenomenal growth of The Fern Hotels and Resorts and an inspiration to many youngsters.

Over the years we have become very close and I try to spend a couple of hours with this the soft-spoken, jovial person at least once a month with the selfish motive - to gain from his experience and add to my knowledge. I think it would be an opportunity for a hospitality student or professional to just sit with him and get soaked with his knowledge.





**Catering to the mid segment how do you view challenges from Airbnb or Homestays?**

There are challenges; but we provide service. An Indian family on a holiday does not want to spend time with household chores when he can get all these at hotels / resorts.

**MICE is the buzz word. How important is it for the Group and your best properties for MICE?**

The mice sector is extremely important for any city hotel as well as resorts. As a group, we have a large number of business hotels as well as resorts. These days corporate prefer to go to different destinations to conduct various meetings and conferences. The emphasis in all these meeting is to build a strong team bond and that is why these resorts provide all the facilities which are prerequisite for a mice destination. In all our business hotels as well as resorts we have all the state of the art facilities to conduct such meetings. In fact some of our destinations such as Ibiza at Kolkata, Manasarovar the Fern – Hyderabad, Amanora at Pune have huge indoor and outdoor facilities for marriages as well.



**You were the pioneers to provide service and accommodation options to appeal to eco travellers in India. But how do you define a sustainable traveller?**

Sustainability is properly defined as Reduce, Reuse and Recycle and a traveller who believes in this philosophy will appreciate our hotels. The Fern at Powai has won the best 5 Star Hotel and best environmentally sensitive hotel awarded by the Government of India. The Green team of our 66 Hotels and Resorts have a yearlong program and they are all to do with sustainability.

**While there are many brands in India, what differentiates you from the rest?**

We “practice what we preach” – our brand is about concern for the environment and we demonstrate our concerns right from Projects to Practices while operating the hotel.

**FERN SPECIAL ISSUE**

As The Fern celebrates a decade of success we plan to come out with a special focus on the group taking you through its growth, in-depth analysis, exclusive interviews of COO, VP and GMs, quotes from owners, customers and also ex-employees. We hope to make it a collectors issue.

**Do look out for our Fern Special issue**