

# BW HOTELIER



**ADDING FLAVOURS TO  
BUSINESS**



# ‘WE AIM TO HAVE PRESENCE IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE UAE SOON’

WHILE RAJASTHAN AND UTTARAKHAND REMAIN THE PRESENT FOCUS AT ARAIYA HOTELS & RESORTS, FOUNDER **AMRUDA NAIR** SAYS THERE ARE PLANS TO OPEN PROPERTIES IN ASSAM, SIKKIM, MADHYA PRADESH, PUNJAB AND TAMIL NADU



BY **BWH BUREAU**

IT WAS just six months before the pandemic wreaked havoc globally that Araiya Hotels & Resorts was launched in 2019. This was the first resort of the Group in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh. Over the last three years plus, the journey has been interesting as Araiya Hotels & Resorts has successfully adapted from developing large-format urban hotels in the Middle East to boutique hotels in India, shares founder Amruda Nair.

The word Araiya means something beautiful and that is just how Nair wants the Araiya experience to be. “Our flagship collection of hotels, Essence By Araiya, takes the guest on a journey traversing both luxury and indulgence to deliver signature stays the world over, rich in culture. What sets us apart is excellence through exceptional experiences and unparalleled service. Our operational expertise combined with global experience, local support and best practices help us achieve strong Return On Capital Employed (ROCE) via efficient construction costs and eventual operating costs resulting in an estimated savings of 20 per cent on energy and 30 per cent on

water over local competitors,” says Nair, adding Araiya Hotels combines the best in modern style and discreet services, bringing select destinations to life with authentic experiences and design.

For curious travellers, Soul by Araiya offers great value at vibrant locations with hotels that deliver clean, streamlined design and comfort to guests wherever they voyage. Araiya Anthology is a portfolio of distinctive hotels that embody an independent spirit, a zeal for sustainability and an unmistakable sense of place. It is a handpicked collection of immersive, transformative and diverse experiences.

Araiya Hotels was developed as a hotel brand focussing on experiential travel to meet the need for Indian hospitality that is design-forward and tech-led. “Given the leadership team’s global experience across five continents, our strength lies in adopting world-class standards in operations and adaptive design to cater to local sensitivities and aesthetics. We partner with like-minded real estate developers having interest in environmental and social impact





**Araiya Palampur  
Resort**

and want their hotel assets to be managed professionally to international standards,” informs Nair. The asset-light business model gives the Group the flexibility to allocate resources efficiently to suit the changing market conditions. “It allows us to focus on our core competencies by developing competitive advantages in human resource training, revenue management and distribution. We have a strong sales network across India specialising in leisure travel and a robust loyalty and distribution system through Global Hotel Alliance with 550 partner hotels across the world and 12 million individual members,” she adds.

#### **PERFORMANCE IN 2022 VIS-À-VIS PREVIOUS YEARS**

The year 2022 was one of recovery with an underlying threat of uncertainty, feels Nair. “Latent demand remained strong and the domestic travel market continued to venture to new destinations celebrating milestones, getting together with friends and family and getting married! While the booking pace was strong, we did see some wash due to localised adversities and managing costs remained a challenge with the constant risk of inflation. In terms of development, we witnessed an increase in interest for Greenfield projects and a commitment to make up for lost time for projects

already underway. Developers with land banks who were sitting on the fence reconsidered their outlook on the asset-class and there was an increase in interest levels to invest in the sector. Overall, 2022 set a strong foundation for the growth that is to be witnessed in 2023,” says Nair who worked in the US and Singapore professionally, only to return to India and join the family business in 2010, before starting out on her own.

“My first step as an entrepreneur was a joint venture in Qatar with Sheikh Faisal Al Thani, one of the world’s largest hotel asset owners. We created a hotel brand with over 1,000 rooms across Qatar and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A key milestone was the preopening and launch of a 611-room hotel in Makkah where we had over 1,800 in-house guests in the first season,” shares Nair. On her return, she launched Araiya Hotels.

#### **STAYING COMPETITIVE**

As a hospitality player, it has been the constant endeavour at Araiya Hotels & Resorts to adapt to the latest technologies to make the offering more cost-effective and efficient from an owner’s perspective and seamless from a guest perspective. “The Araiya digital ecosystems are smoothly integrated which collectively results in 40





Araiya Palampur  
Garden

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WE PLAN TO EXPAND  
WITHIN MAHARASHTRA,  
KERALA, GUJARAT AND  
HIMACHAL PRADESH

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per cent lower transaction costs than global brands. Seamless IT systems enabled with hybrid infrastructure designed for us by HATT-VCNS Global results in 33 per cent lower IT infrastructure costs. Through customisation of off-the-shelf solutions, we have our own bespoke and fully integrated hybrid application stack delivering a 72 per cent saving on business core application costs and 44 per cent lower annual maintenance fees. Leveraging this technology and infrastructure gives us easy accessibility and transfer of knowledge of the brand training and SOP manuals across destinations via the cloud which is a big competitive advantage,” avers Nair.

Though the founder of Araiya Hotels & Resorts views the Northeast ideal for culturally immersive unique experiences, she shares that they will continue to expand their national footprint with

Rajasthan and Uttarakhand as the current focus in terms of key destinations. “We are considering the wildlife circuit, waterfront and beach locations as well as design-led properties in urban cities,” says Nair.

#### EXPANSION PLANS FOR 2023

“We are currently in the pre-opening phase for Éssence by Araiya Ahmedabad, a Glade One Golf Resort with 24 luxury villas and suites spread across nine acres overlooking the nine-hole Gary Player-designed golf course. Under our mid-market Soul brand, we have two resorts in popular trekking destinations under development that will open later this year. We continue providing design and technical input for the two Greenfield properties signed in Maharashtra. Our project in Alibaug under Araiya Anthology is getting a lot of traction after cricketer Virat Kohli purchased a 2,000 sq ft villa in Avas Living. The development momentum thus remains strong in 2023,” she feels.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

The next five years, says Nair, will witness expansion across all four flags, with current six properties opening and stabilising. “Our immediate plan is to expand within Maharashtra, Kerala, Gujarat and Himachal to enable our other brands to benefit from the combined synergies of catering to the same source markets across different price points. We are in talks for Greenfield projects and conversions in Assam, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. In the next five years, we aim to have a presence in South Asia and the UAE as Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Dubai remain popular destinations for our Indian guests,” she concludes. ■