

Ambuja Realty plans projects in the foothills of the Himalayas, in North Bengal and Dooars region

SUDIPTA DEV - Mumbai

Kolkata headquartered Ambuja Realty is one of the largest real estate players in east India. The hospitality division of the company comprises the following sub categories – F&B (including restaurants), hotels, resorts and banqueting. Two decades ago the company developed Ffort Raichak, 50 kms south of Kolkata. The hotel was built on the theme of an old fort. Next to it Ganga Kutir came up in 2008 – the 16 rooms were built on the lines of Sri Lankan coastal resort. Recently another wing of 10 independent villas, called Sundarwasala, was added. Ganga Kutir is also the only hotel in eastern India that is part of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. All these developments come under the umbrella of Raichak-on-Ganges that covers an area of 80 acres. It also includes Ganga Awas country homes that Ambuja Realty has developed at Raichak. Swisshotel in Kolkata is another landmark property of Ambuja Realty.

The company has plans to extend the 'Kutir' brand up in the foothills of the Himalayas in North Bengal as well as the Dooars region. "What genuinely excites us about these areas is the sheer beauty of the region. Also, I think compared to many parts of our country, these regions are lesser explored and known. We will typically create boutique hotels that are quiet getaways with nature and a comfortable, cozy experience being the highlight of each property," said Harshavardhan Neotia, chairman, Ambuja Realty. The upcoming projects include: Himal Kutir – a luxury boutique resort at the picturesque hill station of Ghoom in Darjeeling; Vanya Kutir – spread across 10 acres the luxury boutique resort is coming up at Lataguri, Jalpaiguri; Chia Kutir – spread across 22 acres the boutique hotel will be in the famous Makaibari Tea Estate in Darjeeling; Club Montana Vista – the maiden premium club of Siliguri is coming up at Uttorayon township in Siliguri. "For our hospitality vertical, we are also looking at Sikkim besides Bengal. Other than hospitality, we have townships and retail development planned in other states as well," stated Neotia.



Aesthetics and unique architecture play a significant role in the brand strategy of the company. The projects have seen collaboration with renowned architects like Channa Daswatte, Prabir Mitra, Kapil Bhalla and others. "As a group, we are quite passionate about our properties, not only serving a function but also being aesthetically appealing and relevant over a period of time. We like to infuse functionality with imagination," stated Neotia.



Regarding the evolution of the hospitality market in Kolkata, Neotia pointed out that there have been significant developments in the last few years. "Currently, Kolkata has about 10-12 star properties and over the next two-three years, we have several large players such as ITC, Taj, Westin, Novotel and others coming in or adding a hotel. Reports suggest that during peak seasons we fall short of about 2000 rooms per night and this will get checked with the new properties coming up," he stated, adding that besides these developments, the city today is keeping pace with other metros when it comes to globe trotting and spending on travel. This of course maybe attributed to an overall increase in disposable income and awareness, making travellers want to explore newer destinations.

Ambuja Realty hospitality ventures

Hotels & Resorts

- The Ffort Raichak, Raichak-on-Ganges
- The Ffort Suites, Raichak-on-Ganges
- Ganga Kutir, Raichak-on-Ganges
- Swissôtel Kolkata Neotia Vista

Food & Beverage

- Afraa
- Afraa Deli
- Afraa Crêperie
- Deli by The Conclave
- Hangout
- The Tea Junction

Clubs & banquets

- The Conclave
- Conclave Ecohub
- Club Verde Vista by Conclave
- Swabhumi, the heritage plaza

Spa Location

- Raichak-on-Ganges
- Club Verde Vista by Conclave

Along the Ganges

When the company had set up the flagship property - Ffort Raichak - nearly two decades ago, Calcutta was not used to the concept of weekend getaways unlike Delhi or Mumbai. The options too were limited. "So, you may say that Ffort Raichak was a fairly pioneering initiative then, nestled in a tiny fishing village of Bengal called Raichak with the Ganges as the magical backdrop. We then of course, decided to let our creative juices loose and created a hotel around the concept of an old fort. Thus emerged Ffort Raichak," said Neotia. The property is today a comprehensive destination – not just a weekend gateway but a perfect location for weddings and MICE.



Ffort Raichak has also witnessed the profile of guests evolve over the years. "We have seen the destination become a favoured one for weddings. Corporate houses also increasingly want to hold off-sites in natural environs where they can hold their meetings through the day and also have management games and other HR activities in the evening. The individual traveller of course is taking many shorter breaks through the year. Given that Ffort Raichak is just a two hour drive from Kolkata, it is convenient," said Neotia.

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The guest profile at Ganga Kutir is however different from that at Ffort Raichak, though both are neighbours in the same 80 acre complex. "The guests at Ganga Kutir enjoy the quiet and unhurried atmosphere. They opt for sessions at the Anaya Spa, enjoy light homely meals and generally catch up with themselves and with their close ones. Ffort Raichak on the other hand is where guests enjoy the action and let their hair down," mentioned Neotia. It is not only the Kolkata crowd or the domestic traveller who frequent both properties, Ffort Raichak and Ganga Kutir often plays host to NRIs and guests from overseas.