

# Creators of new horizons



People rarely dare to trudge offbeat paths. While some take this route to give it a try, some travel this path, with a determination to make it a successful journey. Vedic Village, which launched the concept of a luxurious resort featuring the ambience of a village, can well be grouped in the latter list. It wanted to build a unique medical spa and taste success. And now, it has a reason to smile. In an interview to Asian Traveller, Michael J Robertson, CEO, Best Western Premier Vedic Village Spa Resort, Kolkata, deliberated at length on its journey so far, future plans and the importance of resorts such as Vedic Village in building destinations. Edited Excerpts.

**Why did you go in for a Vedic village resort and not an ordinary luxurious resort? How befitting is the name of your resort and its atmosphere?**

It was our intention to build a unique medical spa resort from the very outset which blended the ancient natural therapies of ayurveda and naturopathy. This had not been done in India or anywhere else before and the plan was to build it in idyllic surroundings of lakes and organic farmlands, to capture the beauty of the Bengal country side. We designed the plan in a way to accommodate every luxury possible and did take special care to involve local artisans in developing structures, to capture the flavour of local India. The resort abounds with local arts and crafts and in a way it can be considered as preservation of age old customs, in a five star resort luxury. We believe we have achieved our goal by

providing a luxurious village atmosphere, combining elements of a village and a luxury resort in a balanced way.

**What's special about your resort? If you don't mind, provide a clear picture of the offerings at Vedic Village.**

Vedic Village has tied up with the Best Western Premier brand, to ensure the finest standards in quality and service. Best Western is the largest hotel chain in the world, with 4000 properties in its fold. However, the Premier

segment has just 120 properties and the Vedic Village was one of the first in India to be branded to the exacting quality standards. Since ours is a medical spa resort, which offers on site ayurveda, naturopathy and homeopathy therapies, the property figures in the list of highly ranked spa resorts, in the world. Visitors from all over the world can enjoy the benefits of advice of our highly qualified doctors and experienced therapists. At the same time, there is a lot to

experience from the local flavour of an organic environment. Butterflies and rare birds can be found throughout the 100 acre campus, which abounds with lakes and organic farmlands. It can well be considered as a short getaway from the hectic city life, located just 25 minutes away from the Kolkata International Airport. **How successful has been Vedic Village since its launch in 2003? Would you take us through its growth path, over the years?**

The property has been extremely successful, since its opening in 2003. The surprise is that it has also been used as a conference destination by the MICE segment, which finds the property an ideal getaway. We also enjoy tremendous support from the travel agent fraternity, who recommend the property to international clientele. As a destination close to the international airport, the



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property is also being used as a transit getaway en-route to Darjeeling, Sikkim and the North East. The property has added rooms to its inventory and has eight conference halls, with some of the finest facilities on offer.

**We learnt that you usually give a lot of importance to ayurvedic therapies. Do you have a solid reason to travel the ayurvedic route? If yes, detail.**

Ayurveda is the core of our Sanjeeva Medical Spa and we have a doctor of medicine (MD) in Panchakrama, as our director of medicine to focus the medical direction of our property. We have 14 therapy rooms and a team of doctors and therapists to support the facility, which is one of the largest in India. We have applied for an NABH accreditation from the Quality Council of India, as a Wellness Centre. Vedic Village is the first spa resort in the country to take such an initiative and it speaks volumes for our commitment to quality medical service in this sector. We believe that in the years to come the credibility of facilities such as ours will rest on the accreditation of facilities.

**How are you planning to position Vedic village in the market?**

Vedic Village is positioned as an international medical spa resort and is presented as such in the international market. We exhibit at the World Travel Market and ITB Berlin every year and these events have helped us to build a substantial client base. **According to you, how important a role can 'ayurveda' play in promoting tourism in India?**

The example of Kerala is

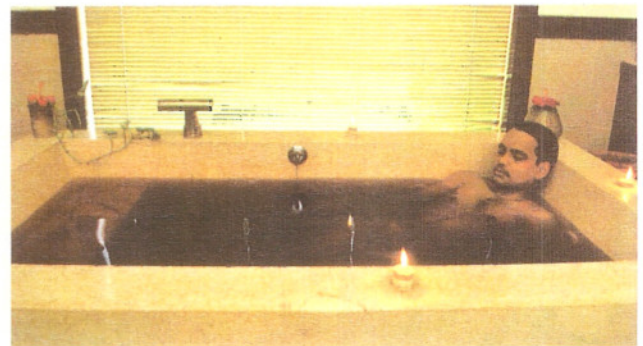
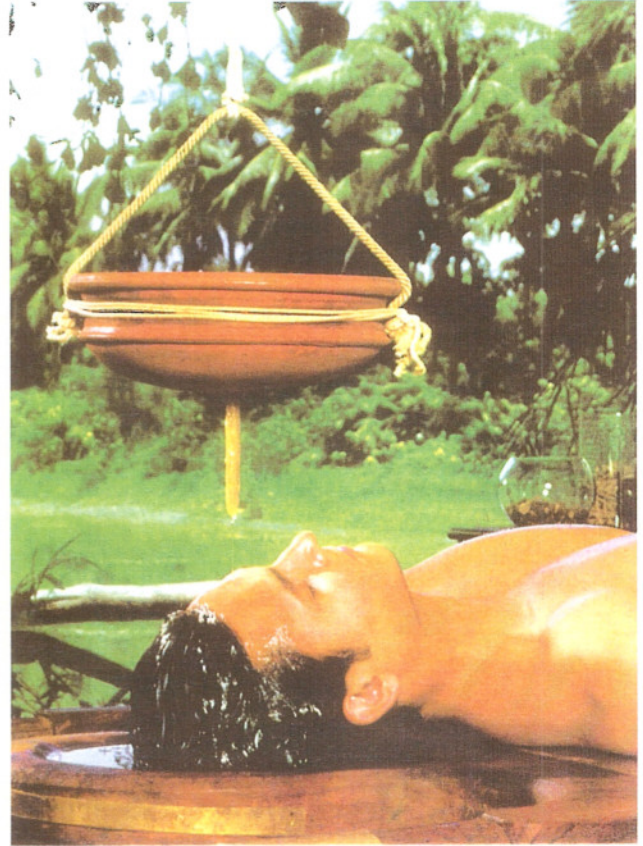
there for all to see. The core of the success of Kerala market is ayurveda. However, there is substantial scope to develop it in other parts of the country. Ayurveda is a national asset and must be given every importance in development of tourism.

**As of now, how do you see the demand for ayurvedic therapies among domestic and foreign travellers? What are your plans to cash in on this growing opportunity?**

There is a tremendous demand for ayurvedic therapies, both nationally and internationally. However, there are concerns about quality and authentic treatments. As the business grows, quality will play a key role in administering treatment and therefore there is a need to develop quality standards under NABH and the Quality Council of India. We will expand our business, as the health tourism market worldwide is growing by leaps and bounds. We are tying up with a group in Bangladesh to take ayurveda to that country for the first time. There are opportunities in other parts of the world, where the science is very well respected - Germany, Italy, Denmark, UK, etc., are just a few places to mention.

**Do you think, there is a need to spread awareness on what ayurvedic therapies can do to infuse new energy into an individual's life? Will you ever take up a campaign to this effect?**

Certainly! We are continuously doing so at fairs and conferences throughout the world. **Would you brief us about the expansion plans? Where are your upcoming properties located?**



As mentioned, we are opening a centre in Bangladesh and another international spa resort in Neemrana, positioned between Delhi and Jaipur. This will be a state-of-the-art property. **Do you think, in the near future, resorts such as Vedic Village will play an important role in developing a destination? If yes, please**

**detail the reasons.**

We have had many requests for expanding our base. However, we need to proceed in an organised way, so that we do not overstretch ourselves. Trained manpower, who work according to exacting quality standards, is the key to success and this takes time to develop. Therefore, we will move step by step. □

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