

# AKSHAR

RE-SCRIPTING HOSPITALITY

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Declared as Deemed to be University under Section 3 of UGC Act 1956

Vol. 3 (4), April 2013

## Repertoire



The summer is upon us, bringing with it the much awaited holidays. In this issue of Akshar, we bring you news from the Netherlands, including a visit to a hotel with a twist. In our cover story, we explore the rapid development of the hospitality scenario in Bangalore. These and many more interesting articles in store, we hope you enjoy.

-Avin Thaliath, Editor-in Chief

## Going Dutch

-Vishwas Badami



The five selected exchange students left to Breda, Holland for a five-month exchange program at the NHTV University of Applied Sciences. We were really excited at the prospect of studying in Europe, arguably the most preferred hospitality continent. Arriving mid-January to sub zero temperatures and amidst heavy snowfall was only the first of several 'firsts' for the five of us. Two months later, even having snowfall, hail, rain and bright sunshine in the span of 24 hours wouldn't cause me to raise my eyebrows. Oh, it has happened by the way.

We have been very fortunate to have a welcoming staff and students at NHTV. They helped us settle in faster than you can say Erwtensoeep. Despite being told beforehand about the lack of food culture, one must truly visit Holland to understand. Coming from the land where we live to eat (at least I do), the Netherlands is not the ideal tourist destination for foodies. A sandwich on the go, fries and fried food is Dutch food and when I say fried, literally everything is dunked in hot oil and everything is eaten with mayonnaise.

Bitterballen (balls of meat, fried), Kroket (cylinders of meat, fried) and Frikkandel (sausages and no points for guessing they're fried) are found in every respectable man's house who calls himself Dutch. In this cold weather though, you can't really blame them for craving it. The one redeeming quality probably is the influence of Surinam. Satay Bitterballens, anybody?

Apart from the food, we did experience Dutch culture during the 'carnaval' where the whole city dresses up in the whackiest costumes imaginable. There are parades through the city centre and parties that stretch to the break of dawn. Like my American roommate put it, it's like a really bad Halloween party.



Classes were quite hectic at first, given we arrived a week late but we managed to settle in pretty quickly. A Dutch friend of mine described the education system in NL as a 'pull' system, where the teachers have the necessary tools and want the students to approach them rather than having a push system where information and homework are handed to the students everyday. But with several books to research, articles to be read and group projects to be involved in, our schedules looked like Dutch people in the park on a warm day.



We did get sufficient time to travel though and were able to visit Antwerp, Brussels, Amsterdam and Den Bosch. But, we're only halfway through the program and still have a lot of plans! Despite having been in Breda for just 2 months, it already feels like home. When I got back from Antwerp, I realized that 'home' is just an idea that we create in our head and is not geographical. It was time to head back 'home' and find place for my Belgian ale in my refrigerator, which was pretty full with Kroketts and Frikkandel.

Photo Courtesy:

<http://www.studynewzealandsupport.co.nz>

<http://www.flickr.com>

## Bangalore- On the Rise

- Karan Nagpal

The hospitality industry has discovered the hospitality of Bangalore! From a city with a booming IT industry, Bangalore is fast emerging as a centre for hospitality, with many luxury upscale hotels having come up in the last few months and many more on the anvil. Established more than 200 years ago, Bangalore is located on the southern Deccan Plateau and is the capital of the State of Karnataka, India. Home to over seven million people, it is one of the fastest growing cities in India. It is aptly called the "Garden City" owing to its large number of lakes and parks. Bangalore is also known as "Silicon Valley of India," with its focus on information technology and concentration on software technology-related activities. Most recently, it has also become known as India's bio science capital.

These new hotels will vie for customers with the existing names like The Taj, The Oberoi, The Leela, ITC Windsor Manor, ITC Gardenia and Lalit Ashok.

The Bangalore hospitality market seems to have suddenly exploded with many new entrants entering across all brands and segments, with many international brands appearing in India for the first time. Joining the home-grown players are a host of foreign

chains, who view Bangalore as a great opportunity, thanks to its 'IT hub' status.

Sheraton, Alila, Best Western, Park Plaza, Movenpick and so on, are some of the new international properties all promising unmatched service and hospitality, while a few Indian chains are also extending their footprint in the City.

Taj Hotels & Resorts set up its third Vivanta at Yeshwantpur last month, which is positioned as a new-age urban oasis eyeing corporate travellers.



Realty giant Prestige Group has also marked its footprint on the City's hotel scene by unveiling the 24 Tech Hotel within the Prestige Tech Park on the Sarjapur - Marathahalli Outer Ring Road. Meanwhile, several other foreign chains have shown interest in the City, such as Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriot which are scheduled to open in 2012. (As per July 2011)

Meanwhile, French hotel major Accor which opened its Grand Mercure in Koramangala back in 2008, will be opening three more hotels (two ibis, one Novotel) before the year-end 2013, taking its City inventory to more than 850 rooms.

Says Sheraton Bangalore at Brigade Gateway General Manager Martin Wuethrich:

“Bangalore has grown tremendously since the boom of the IT sector. Every pocket of the City has seen growth. Now, the North-West part is becoming the highlight and will see a lot of growth over the next three years with the development of the metro.” Adds Park Plaza Bangalore General Manager Alexander Schneider, “Business travellers and hotel companies alike try to limit commuting distances as much as they can in order to prevent loss of time in traffic. That is the reason why we have chosen the Outer Ring Road for our hotel.”

At the same time, with many prestigious institutions as well as an Indian base of operations for many multi-national companies, Bangalore is also host to a series of conferences, seminars and symposia, attracting visitors from around the world. The City is also a starting point for excursions to many places of interest in the South, hence, bringing in tourists.

Meanwhile, the home-grown players have already shaped the City’s hotel scene way before the advent of the foreign chains, successfully setting benchmarks for Indian hospitality. But is the market big enough to sustain a boom in room availability?

Viewing this trend as a healthy one, The Oberoi Bangalore Director (Sales) Jaspreet Singh says, “Competition is healthy and important for

growth. The foreign players’ entry into the (hotel) market shall give us both an opportunity to learn from their best practices and at the same time, sharpen our core strength of highly personalised services.”

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, one of Asia’s leading luxury hotel groups, has signed a management contract with India’s Adarsh Group to operate Shangri-La Hotel, Bangalore, on Palace Road, scheduled to open in 2013.



Strategically located in the central business district of Bangalore, Shangri-La Hotel, Bangalore will feature 397 deluxe guestrooms including 40 suites. The hotel has named Singapore-based Wilson Associates as interior designers. Guestrooms are designed to be modern and will reflect a classic yet contemporary style combined with local cultural influences.

The \$125-million, super-premium Ritz-Carlton hotel being developed by Nitesh Estates in the heart of the city was first scheduled to become operational in 2010, but the launch got deferred to the first quarter of 2012. As per the new schedule, the 277-room hotel will open in 2013.

Marriot and Ritz-Carlton are among the over 22 upcoming luxury hotels that are in different stages of construction. Mantri Developers, which has tied up with Chicago-headquartered Hyatt Corp for operations in Bangalore, is yet to get started on its projects, including a 200-room Hyatt Regency property in Whitefield.

This certainly is good news for us Hospitality Industry hopefuls, with tons of

opportunities and and promising careers on the horizon.



Photo Courtesy:

<http://www.skyscrapers.com/>

<http://www.starwoodhotels.com>

## Hopeless Traveller

The Bay of Islands, New Zealand

- Anahita Girish

Hills, seas, treks, swims and a whole lot of lazing about is exactly what you can find at the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Situated at the Northern tip of the Northern Island of New Zealand, it is an unusually shaped inlet famous for its views, its fishing as well as its quaint character.

After a 3 and a half hour drive from Auckland, passing gorgeous green pastures and

a million fluffy sheep (including purple tinted ones!), we finally arrived at our guest house which was perched at a steep angle on a sharp hill in the Island of Kerikeri. Once we were done tackling the automatic check-in systems, we finally entered a fully equipped, artsy looking house with absolutely breathtaking views.

With a tiny garden, a wonderful deck and a solid barbecue, we found it impossible to remove ourselves from the house, even just to grab our luggage from the car. However, we did manage to pry ourselves away just to take a look at the main village.

The Bay of Islands is an area that survives on its tourists. However, most of the tourists who visit are local Kiwis out on family holidays. The town doesn't have much to speak off except for a departmental store, a couple of restaurants and the ferry docks. There are tour operators who organize packages for guests who want to swim with dolphins or learn about Maori culture. However, we didn't consider any of these as we were eager to get back to our little house.

The first night, after tucking into quality barbecued New Zealand beef, we stretched out on the lawns to watch the stars while listening



**“There is something about New Zealand that is mesmerising. This quaint little bay is like a little piece of heaven on Earth, in my book atleast”**

**- Orlando Bloom**



to the gentle waves of the Pacific Ocean. Due to the absence of pollution, we were subject to an undisturbed show of the galaxies featuring a pristine view of the Milky Way band.

While in Kerikeri, we visited a beautiful Kauri Forest. Kauri trees are some of the most ancient trees of the world, reaching heights way above 50 metres. The natives go to great lengths to protect the magnificent tree; even by keeping peoples shoes away from it!

Kerikeri is also home to Makana Confections Boutique Chocolate factory, one of New Zealand's finest chocolate manufacturers. The factory is open for tourists to learn the art of chocolate making while sampling delicious macadamia brittle and wine jellies.

Visitors can also choose from various other activities such as sessions on Maori culture, golf, cruises and yachting, and also skydiving (a more popular choice amongst the youth)!

The Bay of Islands is a lovely holiday destination for people eager to get close to nature. The fuss-free towns allow for a peaceful visit while catering to daily needs. Well, with views like those, regular life tends to be put on hold and so, a relaxing holiday is guaranteed.

**Photo Courtesy: Anahita Girish**

## A Hotel with a Twist - "It can't get any worse but we'll try our best."

-Angelina Maben

If you are seeking revenge and would love to destroy your enemy - there are various options no doubt. The most painful would be too short and pointless. The most innocuous and the slowest delivery of pure pain would be delightful. So where on Earth could you send your enemy? The answer is simple and unsuspecting.

An all paid vacation to the cheapest hotel in Amsterdam - The Hans Brinker budget Hotel. The gleam in the eye of your foe and the drooling at the word Amsterdam will thrill your evil soul to its very core. As you smile maliciously at your own ingenuity your opponent will begin dreaming of a plush room with a massive double bed, a flat screen T.V, access to the pool and spa and of course a scrumptious breakfast. There is a condition you add in your huskiest. You have to purchase your own return fare.

Hans Brinker has history. It boasts of forum after forum talking about its notoriety. They boast of the only basement bar with low lighting where one can breathe in a free supply of beer breath. It is one of the rare green hotels - they believe in the conservation of water, electricity, heating etc. At 25 Euros you get the experience of living in the wild with the basic necessities. It's also going to help in keeping you and your enemy fit running up and

down the stairs (as the elevator does not work).

Architecture- rooms around a concrete courtyard and where the sun plays hide and seek. To add a touch of art there is graffiti screaming out of every surface. Reading this should keep you occupied for most of your stay as the televisions do not work.

Once your enemy returns from this maximum security prison (if he manages to escape getting food poisoning, plague, and trauma) you can enjoy the mental breakdown that is bound to ensue.



Photo Courtesy:

<http://www.tripadvisor.com>

# Indigenous Recipe

-Srujana Sagi



Aam Panna

Beat the heat with this traditional Indian chiller, delicious and easy to make.

## INGREDIENTS:

- > 6 medium sized Green Mangoes
- > 3/4th cup Water
- > 1 tsp roasted and ground Cumin Seeds
- > 1/2 tsp Red chilli Powder
- > 1 tsp Salt
- > 3 tblsp Sugar
- > 3 tblsp chopped Mint Leaves
- >Crushed Ice-cubes.

## PROCEDURE:

- ◆ Place the mangoes with water to cover in a sauce-pan and bring to boil.
- ◆ Simmer for 10 minutes.
- ◆ Drain off the water and then peel, stone and pulp the mango with a spoon.
- ◆ Place the pulp in a deep bowl.
- ◆ Add water, sugar, salt, chili and cumin.
- ◆ Whisk thoroughly.
- ◆ Stir in the mint and whisk again.
- ◆ Transfer it to a jug.
- ◆ Serve chilled with crushed ice.

Photo Courtesy:

<http://www.mysaffronkitchen.com>

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