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DESTINATIONS

A Guide to the world of Hospitality and Tourism

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Readers: Our Most Precious Asset

Daiwik Hotels: Taking religious tourism on a different platter

While most of the large hotel group's have neglected religious tourism, one such group to take steps in building quality hotels at religious destinations is Daiwik Hotels.

When I first met Debashis Ghosal, CEO, Daiwik Hotels at the HIFI event a couple of years back, I was pretty impressed that some one was finally taking interest in our numerous pilgrimage centers. He talked very fondly of his first four star property at Rameswaram. Then when I met him again at HIFI this year he talked of his Shirdi property.



was kind enough to arrange for a VIP darshan so it was quick.

Shirdi is famous for its temple of Sai Baba which was established in 1922. Sai Baba lived in Shirdi from 1838 to 1918 who was regarded with great reverence by both Hindu and Muslim followers. He lived in a mosque and after death his body was cremated in a temple. Shirdi as a town has grown around its main attraction - the Sai Baba temple

With Kumbh Mela round the corner we at Global Destinations thought it an ideal opportunity to focus on Daiwik Shirdi Hotel. Earlier known as Sai Sanjivani the group has put in efforts to extensively upgrade the hotel with luxurious decor and excellent facilities. The outcome is quite appealing. While talking to one of the frequent devotee to Shirdi and this hotel he said that now it was better maintained and comfortable for aged people thanks to the addition of a lift. He further added that the hotel offers the perfect location for pilgrims as it is just a few minutes walk from the Sai Baba Temple – the Samadhi Mandir.

with almost all major sights and sounds are all within walking distances. The main attractions are the temple is Sai Baba's Samadhi, Dwarakamayi, and Chavadi. Though entry is free for the temple the waiting time for darshan varies from an hour to 4 hours depending on the day. Mobile phones and cameras are prohibited within the temple premises. A 10 minute walk from the temple will bring you to Khandoba Raya temple where Mahalsapati first welcomed Sai Baba and recognized that he is no ordinary saint.

The Shirdi sansthan provides decent accommodation for its devotees through Bhaktha Nivas. Prasad during lunch time is provided at a very nominal price. They also run charitable hospitals.

For dinner I visited the multi-cuisine restaurant Ahaan which has a spread of Indian and continental vegetarian dishes. During dinner I relished the signature of Daiwik Shirdi "Grand Maratha Thali" with some delicious Maharashtrian food including bhakri, pithla, chapatti etc. The hotel provides free WIFI and the staff are not only friendly but also quite impressively dressed.

They have also launched special holiday packages that enable pilgrims and visitors to visit Nasik, Aurangabad and Mumbai. The ex-Shirdi packages come in two night / three day and three night/ four days formats tailored to suit tourist needs and preferences. The most popular are Shirdi and Nasik Darshan as well as Shirdi and Aurangabad Darshan.



From Mumbai it's quite a comfortable drive of 4.5 hours to the hotel. As you enter the hotel you will find a huge gated parking area with lots of greenery. The reception lobby though small is clean and tastefully done with a huge portrait of Sai Baba. Also do try the lobby sofas – they are so comfortable and cozy you can have a small nap. The welcome drink and cold towel after a long journey are truly refreshing.

I checked into a very spacious suite though was a bit disappointed by the bathroom which in comparison was quite small. The hotel has 56 rooms. The standard room is 160 Sq. ft, the Superior room is 200 Sq. ft and can accommodate upto 3 pax but the most popular is the family deluxe room which is 340 Sq. ft. and can accommodate 4 pax easily.

After an excellent lunch I proceeded to Sai Baba temple. As the guest had mentioned it was a short walk to the shrine. The hotel





Noticing that there are there are very few facilities available at most of our pilgrim centres **Debashis Ghosal, Managing Director & CEO, Daiwik Hotels** embarked upon creating star quality properties at pilgrim places. His first hotel is at Rameswaram followed by one more in Shirdi and several more in the pipeline. In an e-interview Debashis highlights the concept of religious tourism. Excerpts

primary focus. Everything is planned to enhance and ease the experience of the pilgrim like a help desk, the type of food that is served for any special requirements and the activity room. We research and develop unique tours like the footsteps of Lord Rama in Rameswaram which traces over 15 places in Ramnad that was visited by Lord Rama as per sage Valmiki's Ramayana. Similar tours are being researched in all the destinations we will be in.

Would you also be having a loyalty card as many religious people frequently visit these centers?

We are offering a Daiwik club membership which is affiliated to RCI hotels across the world and get special privileges across the Daiwik properties.

Are luxury resorts also in pipeline?

We are a very young brand and will keep our options open depending on the opportunities that come by our way.

The tendency not to splurge at pilgrimage destinations even by the rich is well known What made you enter this segment?

We are very clear that we want to bring in standardised hotels across the pilgrim destinations in India. We believe in luxury at an affordable price. We are in the mid segment hotel category and will focus on the same both in terms of delivery as well as pricing and that is working for us in the pilgrim circuit so far.

Which pilgrimage centers are you targeting?

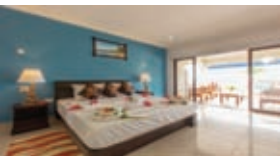
We are developing a hotel cum service apartment project in Tirupati and a hotel in Dwarka, Gujarat. We want to be present in Varanasi, the Buddhist circuit, Ajmer and any other pilgrim potential place.

What will be so unique about these hotels?

Authentic information and help to the pilgrim traveler is our



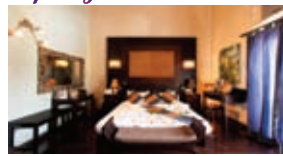
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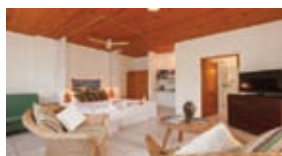
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