



Fancy a home like a hotel?

Rahul Shankhwalker gets talking on how residential spaces today are inspired by hotel decor



OPULENT SETTING To create that suite-like look in your home, use plush decor, rich colours and include luxurious amenities.

There are very few things more relaxing than spending a weekend at a lavishly designed luxury resort, replete with the latest amenities. As a result, hotels of today have been constantly adapting to the changing trends and have gone to great lengths to incorporate beautifully intricate design elements in their architecture that leave their guests spellbound. Now, however, these trends, having originated in the luxury hotel sector, are rapidly becoming popular even in the residential design sector.

Lavish designs

Consumers today want to experience the same luxury and exuberance in their homes that they do in a resort. Therefore, the residential design sector has experienced a significant shift in the last few years, with a growing need for innovation to capture the spirit of the designs of modern luxury hotels. While hotels have been drawing upon the comfort and cosiness of residential buildings

to reflect the same in their design and architecture, residential designs have been incorporating the magnificence and splendour of hotels, along with their luxuries and amenities.

Luxury hotels are well known for their pools, lush green lawns and gardens, adding a touch of nature to their grandiose theme. Residential homes, on the other hand, are designed to be personal spaces that are attuned to the people staying in them and providing a quiet respite from the noise of the outside world. As a result, the use of organic hues and natural designs has been on the rise.

Green homes are also highly popular today, as they leave a lower carbon footprint and are usually self-sufficient in terms of basic necessities like water and energy, by using rainwater harvesting and solar energy panels. People have also tried to incorporate infinity pools in high-rise homes that allow for elaborate elements, or a table fountain for homes with space constraints or catering to a minimalist theme.

Additionally, the ever-increasing number of travellers and tourists in today's world has created the perfect opportunity for the hotel industry to revamp itself to attract guests and customers. While travellers almost always look for the new and unknown in terms of the destination, experience, and so on, an element of re-

latability becomes a major factor when it comes to their choice of stay. The familiarity factor, a result of them having seen similar designs across the globe or in their own countries helps in capturing the spirit of their travels back home.

Truly yours

While the design aspects of hotels have already made their way into the residential design sector, the decor isn't always inspired by them. Most hotels reflect the local and cultural context of the area, which is not essential for residential buildings. Instead, homes are becoming more and more personalised, adorned with the memories and mementoes of people's travels.

Customers wish to have their homes speak of their experiences and their journeys. Thus, modern homes are designed practically, keeping in mind the specific needs of the residents, while also drawing upon their lives and experiences through regional art, handicraft, and other keepsakes brought back from their travels.

Architectural design isn't about one grand piece, be it a magnificent sculpture

adorning the entrance, or a marble fountain in the garden. It is about the many design aspects working harmoniously to create a beautiful home for the owners. The kind of decorations chosen for it has a huge impact on the impression it leaves on guests and residents alike, affecting their moods, temperaments, and overall well-being. A consistently natural theme, in this regard, helps create a soothing environment that rejuvenates the mind and body, while impressionistic paintings and set pieces add a contrasting character to the house.

Homeowners, however, should be careful to avoid emulating the trend blindly as it destroys the primary essence of a home. Instead, they should adopt an original, flamboyant, and carefree theme for the building that reflects who they are. Homes, by nature, are extensions of one's self, and as such, need to reflect their unique personalities. Only then will the true essence of the family or the residents be captured by the building, complemented by the rich, extravagant design elements of luxury hotels.

(The author is founding partner, Studio HBA)

US Embassy in London goes crystal



The new American Embassy in South London is finally complete. The 12-storey, 518,000 sq ft building in Nine Elms, on the banks of River Thames, has been designed by Philadelphia-based architect firm Kieran Timberlake, who were the winners of a competition launched by the US Department of State in 2008. The new state-of-the-art structure is said to be the most expensive embassy building in the world, although diplomats say it has been funded entirely from the sale of properties in London.

It has taken four years to complete and replace the embassy on Grosvenor Square in Mayfair, which is being turned into a hotel. The location next to the river, and a half-moon-shaped 'moat' around one side are designed to give the building high security which was not possible on the current site in the midst of a residential neighbourhood.

The building stands out as a crystalline cube from its brick-clad neighbours. On three sides of the 213-foot structure are ethylene tetrafluoroethylene (ETFE) sails, which act as a shading device.

James Timberlake, a partner in the firm, stressed the need to "filter all that enters," listing "people, air, and even materials." Even birds are kept out through star-spangled fritting found on the northern-facing facade. The building will have a staff of 800 and attract about 1,000 visitors a day.

They will be greeted by curving walkways into the interiors, with gardens on every floor, each representing a different landscape of the US. Artworks in the building include a monumental cast of a typical US suburban house in the lobby, created by English artist Rachel Whiteread.

Geetha Balachandran



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