

News monitored for: M&M - Holidays & Resorts

EXPRESS Hospitality

PORTFOLIO INSIGHT FOR THE HOSPITALITY TRADE

More than a luxury vacation

With more than one-third of its resorts located in south India and with further expansion plans, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts has a focused strategy for the region. By **Sudipta Dev**



Ramesh Ramanathan

India's leading brand in vacation ownership space, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India (MHRIL) has a strong presence in south India. In fact, Mahindra Holidays' first resort was commissioned in the beautiful hill station of Munnar in Kerala, and remains one of its most sought after properties till date. "It would be worthwhile to mention that Munnar was our first and remains one of our marquee properties. Between Club Mahindra and Zest, we have 12 resorts in the south located in the most popular destinations," says Ramesh

Ramanathan, MD, Mahindra Holidays. The resorts are located in Karnataka (Coorg), Kerala (Ashtamudi, Poovar, Munnar, Thekkady), Tamil Nadu [Ooty (two), Kodaikanal (two), Yercaud, Masinagudi] and Puducherry.

As part of the vacation ownership model, Club Mahindra entitles members the choice of holidaying at any of its 33 resorts across India and Thailand, for seven days each year, in a season and apartment of their entitlement. Members can also choose to access a range of resorts globally through RCI affiliation. "We provide family



The Munnar property

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Synergies down south

Several factors have, in fact, defined MHRIL's success since it was established in 1996. Constant innovation and keen awareness of consumer needs and demands have been the

expansion plans in the south, figure into their overall strategy for the country? "Our members are from across the country, a strong presence in the South is very important to us as it is a popular destination for a variety of tourism - jungle, backwaters, and hill stations. Many destinations in the south have

been traditionally popular tourist destinations while many are emerging as great potential places.

More than one-third of our resorts are located in the south and we have further expansion plans," answers Haldar. He acknowledges that south India is a unique market with a good mix of

early adopters and traditional holiday makers that help bring new concepts.

Future plans for the south market include not only expanding the existing properties but also adding new destinations. "While we are expanding in our own properties in Ashtamudi and Coorg, we have created land

banks in Kadapakkam (Tamil Nadu), near Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh) and Coorg (Karnataka)," reveals Ramanathan.

Mahindra Holidays believes that holiday makers in the south region are value seeking and not necessarily budget travellers. ■



Aniruddha Halder

winning factors. "We have a strong distribution network and 33 resorts delivering memorable holidays give us great recall amongst existing and potential members. Further, our understanding of consumer needs; strong brand management; exciting product offerings from resorts to homestays; an integrated and mixed-use business model of vacation ownership contribute to our success," states Ramanathan. He avers that being a part of the Mahindra Group brings in a lot of goodwill amongst the customers. In fact, 35.18 per cent of vacation ownerships sold in the fiscal year 2009 have been attributable to member referrals.

The organisational strategy has been to leverage its competitive strengths and grow the business. They are also focused on intensifying their service offerings by increasing the distribution network and growing the number of resorts across India: "Our focus is to enhance our member growth, service excellence, innovative offerings, brand value and the variety of resorts. We believe that we can accelerate our member acquisition process by increasing our distribution network in cities under coverage and add to the number of cities being covered," points out Halder.

And how do their