

Detox in luxury

This new luxury retreat aims to be a game-changer in the wellness industry



Nikhil Kapur, 40, and his wife Sharmilee, aren't just any wellness enthusiasts. It's evident they take this term to heart, with their expansive new wellness resort, Atmantan, located on a pristine parcel of land near Pune.

Atmantan, which translates to mean, 'soul, 'mind' and 'body', is a result of the duo's passion for wellness and healthy living over many years – translating into their own entrepreneurial venture, and tapping into the niche but growing luxury wellness segment in India. The duo launched the property in early 2016 and since then, Atmantan has managed to establish itself, not just as a plush resort that a bevy of celebrities visit regularly, but more so for its focus on being a destination for complete holistic health and wellbeing.

"Health-based holidays are on the rise, says Nikhil Kapur, founder director, Atmantan Wellness Centre. Not just abroad, but in India as well, he adds, referring to the small but growing tribe of people visiting detox centres and retreats like the Viva Mayr Clinic in Austria, or Canyon Ranch in

the US, etc. "People want to look and feel good. And increasingly, they want to select destinations that are an extension of a good, healthy lifestyle. That's what we had in mind when launching Atmantan."

Although they always wanted to do something in the luxury wellness space, being entrepreneurs wasn't exactly their first calling. Kapur, who completed his MBA from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management

(SIBM) Pune, went on to work in the corporate world, with stints at Wipro and Reuters for six years, before deciding to turn entrepreneur. Sharmilee, an MBA graduate from Bond University, Australia, has prior experience in this space, owing to her father's interests in real estate and hospitality (Bramhacorp).

It took a while for things to fall in place, Kapur admits, saying that they initially spent 3-3.5 years consolidating the 40 acres of land over which the retreat is set, pouring in investments of about ₹170 crore to develop the property. About 70 per cent of this is bank debt and the remaining 30 per cent savings and borrowings pooled in from friends and family. That was in 2009.

The wait seems to have paid off though. Atmantan's location is probably one of its biggest draws – nestled in the Sahyadri Mountains and overlooking Mulshi Lake, with vast expanses of greenery – an enviable location for city-dwellers and the like, to detoxify and rejuvenate in the lap of nature.

The resort offers 106 rooms, including two villas, with panoramic vistas



of the surrounding mountains and lake. Built with the aim of spelling out calm and luxury, it also has a 25-room spa, infinity pool, large, open spaces and a restaurant serving organic, healthy fare with produce sourced from a nearby farm.

Customised wellness

A key element to Atmantan's offerings, are its customised wellness programs, which can be tailor-made to one's needs, preferences and dietary requirements. This involves a consultation with the in-house doctor, who then structures treatments as per the individual's requirements, or, based on any ailments.

They offer 10-11 different wellness retreats, with over 80 treatments, ranging from yoga to spa packages, holistic health, detox, physiotherapy, weight balance, Ayurveda and more. One of his personal favourites, he says, is the fitness challenge. An ironman triathlete himself, Kapur designed this package to enable people to boost their fitness levels significantly; comprising intensive personal training, yoga and spa therapies. Their detox therapies are among the popular packages with guests.

Currently, the domestic market makes up about 80 per cent of their visitors and the remaining 20 per cent are foreigners. Kapur believes there is a lot more potential. "A lot of Indians are seeing the value of investing in good health. We're seeing a strong appetite for wellness in the domestic market, with people from tier II and III cities coming to our resort as well."

Rates vary, with packages starting from about ₹25,000 per night for a couple, or, ₹18,000 per night for an individual and these are usually offered as three, five or seven night-stays or more. This includes all meals and treatments.

Kapur also sees an opportunity in the MICE segment. Having hosted several corporate wellness programs, he expects this segment to make up 30-40 per cent of their revenue streams, going forward.

Certainly, the Kapurs aren't the first to try their hand at a wellness retreat. The Hilton Shillim, near Pune, was positioned as a wellness



Kapur: health-based holidays are on the rise

resort when it first launched, but of late, has taken on more of a leisure destination tag. Ananda Spa, in Rishikesh is feted for its luxurious ayurvedic treatments and draws a large number of visitors regularly. More recently, there is Vana in Dehradun, helmed by Analjit Singh's (founder chairman emeritus, Max group, which has

interests in healthcare, insurance and real estate) family and his son, Veer Singh. So, what makes Atmantan different from any of these offerings?

"For one, our level of customised service and multi-dimensional approach," explains Kapur, adding that while places like Ananda have introduced the spa culture to India, at Atmantan, they aim to raise the level of wellness experiences. Our approach to wellness not only includes traditional sciences like: naturopathy, ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine, but we blend this with a modern approach to nutrition and fitness. For instance, you'll find we have specialists in cosmetic acupuncture and natural facelifts, he adds. "At the end of the day, we want to be a destination for result-oriented wellness experiences." Besides that, he considers Jindal Naturopathy Institute in Bengaluru, as one of their closest competitors, in terms of treatments, which has been around since the late 1970s.

With Atmantan now managing to establish a brand for itself, Kapur is also considering expanding the brand, though not anytime soon in the Indian market. "We're currently looking at an opportunity outside India, in the Middle East," he says. At the same time, we are not so hungry for growth. We want to expand without diluting the wellness experience that is core to our philosophy. Whatever we do has to be niche and boutique in nature. So, we are careful about the customised experiences that guests will be provided with. "We do see having 3-5 properties globally," he notes.

What about offers from hotel chains, that are eyeing this luxury segment with much interest? Kapur, who describes himself as a methodological entrepreneur, believes that there is no better time to be in this space and expects that 10 years from now, large hotel chains may also move towards this category in a bigger way, targeting millennials with unique wellness experiences. "For now, we are proud to be sole owners of the property, he says, adding that there is a big element of running a property that is owner-driven. "Besides, globally, some of the best known wellness properties are standalone ones," he quips.



Herb Crusted Cottage Cheese

