

ARCHITECT and INTERIORS INDIA

Inspiration and insight for architects and interior designers

Vol 11 | Issue 7 | October 2019 | ₹100

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UNSUNG LEGEND

Shiv Datt Sharma, who lives in Chandigarh – the 'City Beautiful' he helped create while working alongside French architect Le Corbusier, completes six decades of practice

DATA BASE

THIS 'GLAMPING' RESORT DESIGNED BY JIMMY MISTRY SEEKS TO EMPOWER CIVILIANS WITH MILITARY TRAINING

BY MARIA LOUIS



1. A lush green landscape welcomes visitors to DATA.

It is the bone-jostling journey in a four-wheel drive vehicle, swerving and swaying vigorously along rough village roads, that gives you the first indication that the experience and stay at the Della Adventure Training Academy – D.A.T.A., for short – is going to be a unique and exciting one. Nestled in a remote forest region near Lonavala, this resort likes to prides itself on offering a glamping adventure like no other – ‘glamping’ being a cross between ‘glamour’ and ‘camping’.

After the horrific terrorist attacks of 26/11 that shook Mumbai to its core, Jimmy Mistry, chairman and managing director of Della, felt the need to make a difference by empowering the people of the city and making them less vulnerable. “One of my major inspirations has been the army and navy, they have always managed to capture my attention and have fascinated me from the very beginning. DATA has been created as a necessity for changing times, and to influence civilians to incorporate training as an element in their daily lives. When I first saw the jungle [with

a dam nearby], it struck me that this would be the perfect place to bring this idea to life. I believed this place could be transformed into something that does not exist in the country – a training camp for civilians.”

But if you are expecting grit and gore behind the huge military style camp gates that swing open to welcome you, then you are going to be pleasantly surprised. Whenever we think of military experiences, we think of temporary make-shift toilets, unhygienic conditions and surviving rough in a tent. DATA is anything but that. It intends to change this mindset and set up a permanent military camp with 5-star luxury aesthetics and some fantastic life-long learning experiences. This glamping resort offers experiential hospitality that is innovatively conceptualised to fit the visitor’s needs, infusing luxury with an essence of military. The staff running the resort is an interesting mix of hospitality professionals and ex-Forces personnel.

The vision [for DATA] kept changing through a period of three years, initially it was supposed to be just a camp site.



The concepts grew clearer with the passing of time, after a number of visits to the site – be it early morning or late at night, giving birth to a process of design improvisation that eventually evolved into a proper military boot camp.

“Personally, for me, design must be in the context of things – so understanding the form and functionality is the most important thing,” insists Mistry. “Designing the campus in respect to its location and ours having the backdrop of a forest, nature and dam, our design needs to show through those elements. The colour palette has been chosen in context to the environment. The most important aspect is the theme, is the army and military – hence we have used a lot of olive green throughout the process, with touches of black and sandstone.”

The landscape design of the resort features a lit paver pathway enveloped with flora leading to the resort reception, while exterior lighting secures the perimeter, ensuring complete safety even in the middle of the jungle. The reception, fitted with ornate chairs, sofa and centre table, is flanked by a souvenir store and bar which are fabricated out of trucks – rendering a military style appeal. Innovatively metamorphosed camouflage-painted shipping containers, which are used as stables and other utility spaces, give the resort a rugged-chic look.

Each space has been designed with its own theme and purpose – for example, the Gurkha lounge which is semi-indoor and outdoor, also includes a fireplace right next to

PROJECT DETAILS

The project: D.A.T.A. Della Adventure Training Academy

Category: Interiors - retail and hospitality

Client: Della Adventure & Resorts Pvt Ltd

Location: Lonavala

Date of completion: March 2018

the swimming pool, giving guests a comfortable area to relax and lounge in, post their training. The Gurkha lounge is designed as a tribute to the legendary Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw’s unit – Gurkha regiment.

A compact bar and an open glass-panelled kitchen extend to the poolside deck, which is embellished with a carved wooden horse and rattan mushrooms. Cantilever parasols canopy the teakwood tables and slatted chairs, while loungers are placed around a pit fire and stools provide added seating or could be used as convenient end tables. The bird-cage pavilions with chairs and tables within, glow with ambient lights and are surrounded by lush foliage, while the swimming pool boasts of floating bars stylishly completing the outdoor experience.

The Maratha banquet has its own characteristics and charm, and is dedicated to the Maratha regiment. Adorned

2. A wooden horsehead creates a point of interest by the poolside.

3&4. Belying its military theme, the resort has 27 impeccably appointed, luxurious 500sq-ft tents.



5&7. The Gurkha lounge pays tribute to Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw's unit – Gurkha regiment. The semi-indoor and outdoor space features a fireplace right next to the swimming pool and a scattering of comfortable seating.

6. The 80-seater Salaam Manekshaw restaurant: tufted-back seating and industrial-style tables echo the military theme.

with exquisite crystal chandeliers, the banquet accommodates 120 seats and is used for lavish dinners, relaxed get-togethers and corporate events.

A stairway, spruced up with military-themed hanging helmets and Royal Enfield bikes – set up as installations – leads you to the 80-seater Salaam Manekshaw restaurant. The military theme seamlessly flows through the indoors and outdoors of the restaurant with army green tufted-back seating and industrial-style tables, apart from minute detailing as seen in the quirky grenade-shaped salt and pepper shakers placed on each table.

The glamping resort comprises 27 ultra-modern 500sq-ft military-styled tents that are outfitted with two double beds and boldly-designed ottomans with AK47 rifle bases that complement the theme. The gun table lamp, lustrous pendant light and minimalist mood lighting give the rooms a warm glow. The bedside table, bar, TV panel, study desk and chairs are designed in refined wood with accents of olive green and animal print. The state-of-the-art bathrooms,

accessed by a wooden door that sports a grenade-shaped handle, is covered with stunning black tiles and includes twin vanity counters and a shower cubicle with LED rain shower. Steam room, whirlpool massage Jacuzzi and a walk-in closet complete the ensemble. The patio of every tent offers an outdoor setting with folding chairs, tables and boat hammocks overlooking the greenery. All the products used in the project, including furniture, lights and sanitaryware, apart from other decor items, are by Della's in-house interior brand – Della by Jimmy Mistry.

"The location was the most challenging aspect of this project; being in a remote area, it was extremely difficult to transport equipment, and every element chosen in the design procedure had to be made feasible enough to reach the location in a stable condition," recalls Mistry.

Creating the first military base-style camp for civilians melded with all the trappings of a luxury resort, has been a daunting task indeed. The resort aims to give its guests a comfortable stay, besides preparing them for any kind of eventuality they may encounter – and the challenges have been well worth the outcome. As Mistry says, "All my team at DATA and I want to do, is provide a training platform that helps visitors increase their chances of survival in case they are faced with any adversity in their daily lives." **A&I**