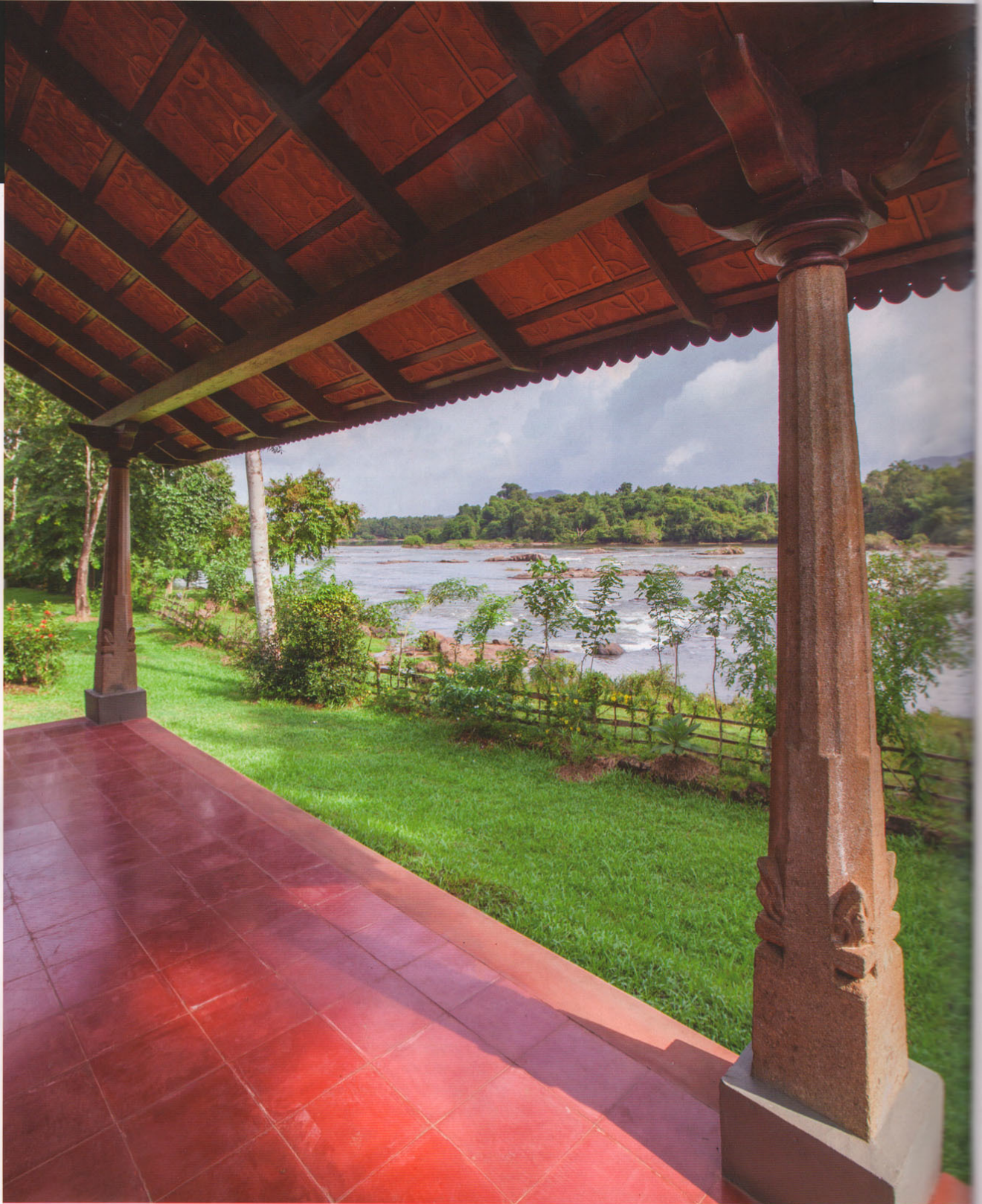


ECO STAY



Gushing water and S O L I T U D E

BY NANDHINI SUNDAR

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAHESH CHADAGA

Time literally comes to a standstill, more so as the eco stay is sans all man-made interventions, be it the television, the internet or for that matter even the ubiquitous mobile. It is total severance and hence total undiluted bliss during the entire stay, the conversation happening purely with nature.

It was a ride through lush green forest land, the long winding path extremely narrow, the bumpy road adding to the adventure as the quaint green bus trundled down, taking us deeper within to reach a quiet stream tucked away amidst the thick greens. We were asked to disembark and climb on to a boat that eagerly greeted us, waiting to row us through the picturesque environs to a little island that was blissfully stashed away from all the travails of this human existence, by the enchanting gushing waters of the Periyar River.

The eco stay, **The Quiet by the River**, is literally situated in a 'No Man's' land, making it not only a memorable destination to relax, unwind, rejuvenate but also romantic, placed as it is, in its solitude, against the banks of the incessantly flowing river, the sound of water therapeutic to the senses as well as transporting those so inclined, to another dimension.

The island resort, situated on an erstwhile rubber plantation, is totally secluded, with only the surrounding green hills and relentless flow of water in the river for company. The only sounds that greet

the resident besides the gushing river are the chirping of the birds in the multiple trees and plants in and around the resort.

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Keeping with the sensitivities of the location and the prevailing environs, the resort is deftly structured to merge with the landscape, the sloping clay tiled roofs, wood and stone walls of the cottages snuggling amidst the greens, blending in seamlessly with the surroundings. The four twin cottages are placed in the landscape in an uncluttered manner with each individual structure enjoying a sizeable portion of the existing green space in the small island.

The charming garden with its tall trees and picket fence demarcating the river bed is a feast for the eyes as you relax in the expansive old world open verandas overlooking the river and slip into a



quiet reverie. It is nature, undisturbed, in its magnificent best. Says **Benny Kuriakose** of **Benny Kuriakose Architects**, who designed the resort, “while locally available stones were used for the stone cottages, the timber used in the wooden cottages was salvaged from old buildings in Kerala. The objective was to use locally available materials or use salvaged materials and ensure the intervention into the natural characteristics of the location is minimal.”

The fine work displayed in the timber walls further stands testimony to the design sensitivities and wood structures that prevailed in the state earlier. The interiors offer an equally heavy wood décor, the walls and the ceiling revealing copious presence of wood, completed by the four poster wooden cot infusing old world charm.

The clay tiled roof indicates minimal use of concrete while the judicious placement of the individual cottages ensures there is minimal disturbance to the existing flora. The dining area reveals similar play of wood and tiles blending into its contemporary style, the first storey affording a spectacular view from the balcony, of the

expanse of water with its backdrop of green hills. The presence of water further seeps into the senses in the dining area, the visual connect prevailing through the wood and glass walls enclosing the section.

For those who choose to exercise their bodies while feasting on the greens, a charming 45 minute early morning trek through the nearby fields is offered on request. After a dip in the infinity pool and lazing by the river as you gaze dreamily into the relentless flow of water, soaking in its soothing sounds, a sumptuous meal awaits you, to pamper the palate. It is certainly with reluctance that we packed our bags and climbed on to the boat when it was time to leave the enthralling environs where the rest of the world seemed far away, almost non-existent.

