



Indian Institute of Architects
Kerala Chapter

**IIA STATE AWARD FOR
EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE 2008**

Heritage Methanam

Heritage Hotel Project at Kumbalanghi

Kumbalanghi, the internationally acclaimed model tourism village of Kerala, is an island set in the backwaters of Vembanad Lake near its sea mouth at the city of Cochin. Set in the cultural landscape of the wetlands, this island, with its dominating coconut skyline has many wetlands of aquaculture and wet rice cultivation. Tourists come here to experience the typical village landscape and its little wonders. Although Kumbalanghi is a popular destination since a decade, it didn't have any established tourist resort or hotels except a few home-stay facilities.

Heritage Methanam, located right at the entrance to Kumbalanghi Island through the Perumpadappu Bridge, is the first established Heritage Hotel Property here. Converting an old house in the waterfront into a Heritage Hotel, this project is a successful example of Heritage Conservation and Adaptive Reuse.

Restoring and reusing this old building which was in a structurally stressful condition, was a challenge. But, through consistent efforts and teamwork the project was completed successfully. On its completion, this project stands out as a model for adaptive reuse of small/medium heritage houses and structures. A thoughtful transformation has not only brought out the lost charm of the building, but together with a sensitive landscape treatment, it stands out as a celebration to the beautiful village it belongs.



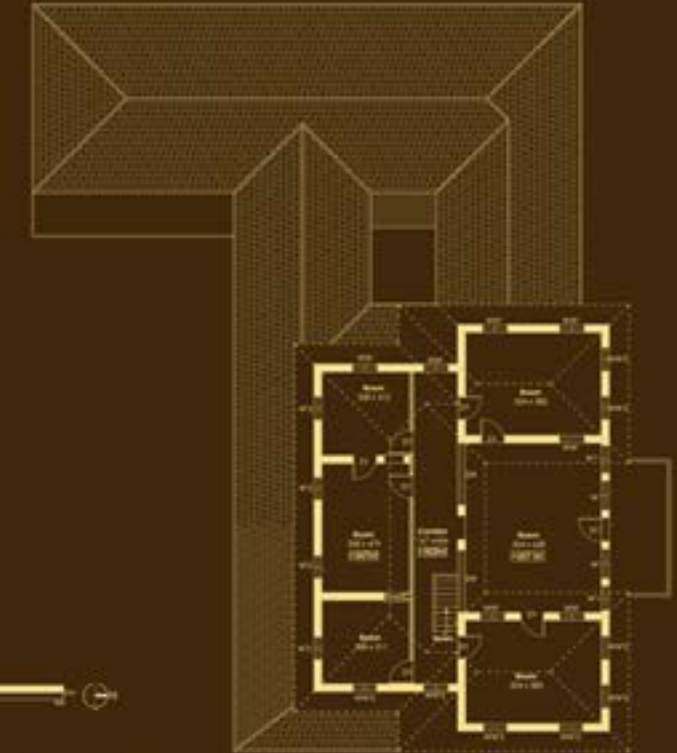
Reusing an Old Residence

The 65 year old residential building was in a much dilapidated condition, when the promoters purchased it. They were in two-minds, whether investing on such an old building will be worthwhile. However, the challenge was taken and the team had decided to go ahead. One of the first tasks was to stabilize the 5180 Sft. building, which by then had developed many cracked walls and a twisted ridge on its roof. This was mainly due to addition in front of the building, which was a porch built about 20 years ago in concrete, in contrast, both structurally and architecturally, to the old structure.

The differential load on one side of the building had, over a period, affected the structure's stability. The walls near to the new concrete addition cracked and started to settle towards the additional load created by the concrete part. First task was a surgical operation to remove this front concrete porch, doing which released the stress on the original structure. A more suitably designed porch with tiled roof replaced this porch.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN - BEFORE RENOVATION



FIRST FLOOR PLAN - BEFORE RENOVATION



Clockwise from top - Southern side Elevation and Verandah, Living Room and broken wooden beams on the First Floor



Northern Facade showing the later additions in Concrete for Sunshades and an Entrance Porch



Eastern Facade almost retaining the Original Character



Site Layout

VIEWS OF PERUMPADAPPU KADAL



Designing for Transformation

While preparing the reuse plan, first intention was to reinvent the original character of the traditional structure and further enhance it.

The room, which filled in the otherwise 'U' shaped original plan, during the time of the construction of concrete porch, was removed to create an entrance courtyard. This space leads one to the central hall, designed as the lobby of the property. Coming out of the lobby, one would reach a verandah facing the small private courtyard in the back. The rooms on both sides of the entrance courtyard and lobby were renovated to create 4 bedrooms with attached toilets in the ground floor.

The steeper internal staircase of the old house was removed and a new covered staircase was added from the entrance courtyard taking one to the first floor of the house. 5 habitable rooms were available on the first floor, out of which the 2 big rooms facing the backwater side were converted into double rooms with attached toilets. The 3 smaller rooms were combined together to make a suite room with an attached living room.



Semi enclosed Entrance Courtyard



Mural Paintings creating background for Lobby & Reception



Rear Verandah & Courtyard



FRONT (NORTH) ELEVATION - AFTER RENOVATION



SECTION THROUGH COURTYARD - AFTER RENOVATION

Designing for Transformation

The upper verandah opens on the backwater side with a charupadi seating above the entrance courtyard. The kitchen, work areas, store and firewood stores were separated from the main building by another courtyard. The smaller rooms along this courtyard were converted into common wash-rooms and toilets. The other rooms were spacious enough to be converted into a full fledged store, kitchen and work areas catering to a 16 cover restaurant. This restaurant further opens into a large Pool Deck, accommodating additional pool side dining under the shade of a large mango tree.

A medium size lawn separates the backwater from the swimming pool. The 4 feet deep pool features a full length seat facing the backwater. There is a pool house with separate changing rooms for ladies and gents. Facing the deck and backwater is also a temporary thatched hall, constructed during the inaugural Pooja ceremony of the property, which together with the pool deck and lawns is used for small gatherings of 120 – 150p. An ancillary structure at the rear yard houses electrical room, staff changing rooms for ladies and gents, and a house keeping store.



Restaurant facing Pool and Kayal



Pool deck with Perumpadappu Kayal as backdrop



Swimming Pool by night



Heritage Methanam by night



EAST ELEVATION - AFTER RENOVATION

Eco-Sensitive Approaches

The renovation process had incorporated the existing wood from the old structure as much as possible. Windows and Doors were repaired and modified to create a uniform character. The project also has used old used-wood as much as possible for its wood requirements. Old tiles of the existing building were reused and old tiles of the same make were collected for the additional requirements.

Although the property makes use of electricity provided by KSEB with a complete generator back-up, solar energy is used for water heating requirements. Other than this, by use of a bio-gas plant and associated anaerobic sewage treatment system, the entire biotic waste and sewage generates gas used for cooking purposes.

Rainwater gutters run the entire length of the tiled roof, collecting rainwater from various parts of the roof to rainwater harvesting tanks. During rainy season this water is used for irrigation purposes and hotel requirements after treatment. However, during summer, water is brought in tankers and stored and treated at site, through the water treatment plant.

The property has generous parking areas and it is expressly landscaped with indigenous plants and grass. All the existing trees have been conserved in the outdoor space. Adequate and indirect yard lighting provided in the outdoor spaces make this property attractive at night.

Accessibility

Accessibility is another feature incorporated while transforming this heritage building. Wheel Chair ramps are provided from the arrival court to access the entrance courtyard of the building and further connecting very easily to the room reserved for differently abled. From here the restaurant is across the internal courtyard accessed by the Wheel Chair through the verandah around it. The Pool Deck is also accessible by Wheel Chair through the padippura from the arrival court.

Right from its finishing days the travelers to Kumbalanghi are attracted by the property's heritage appearance and many of them stopping by to eat or enquire regarding accommodation. The hotel is also gaining feet in the tourism industry through unique architecture, exceptional hospitality and tasty cuisine.



Driveway & Porch



Padippura leading to Swimming Pool and Waterfront Lawns



Ramp near Porch



Entrance Verandah & Porch