




7.5 A forest villa terrace, Tipai.

Tipai

Pandharkawada, India

 **We weren't building a resort, we were sustaining a community.'**

Ariane Thakore Ginwala, designer²

The founder's aim for the creation of Tipai resort was 'extreme localisation'. Keyur Joshi had a long career in travel and wanted to break away from the standardised notion of what a luxurious wilderness retreat should be. He wanted this resort to give back by being regenerative, conserving the land and community it sat within, upskilling people, promoting the local culture, while sitting lightly on the land. The aims were to minimise concrete use, use local materials, build off the land, and apply all aspects of sustainability, including employing people from the local community and sharing skills with the community. This ethos runs through into the entire design brief and concept.

Working with designer Ariane Thakore Ginwala to create his whole vision, they soon found 35 acres of suitable land in central India, alongside the wilderness of Tipeswar wildlife sanctuary. They both felt an instant connection to the land, a drought-prone zone and with a bare landscape in great need of restoration. Soil health had been depleted by teak farming practices, an issue in many parts of India leftover from British colonialism. Their intention was for the resort to follow permaculture principles to reach the goal of being self-sustaining in the coming years, growing food, living off the land, preserving water and generating electricity. They brought in a permaculturist to work out how to rejuvenate the land and wove this work in with the construction design and positioning. The permaculture landscaping was devised to rejuvenate the land using bio-massed trenches to enrich the soil, and the addition of natural vegetation, including the planting of 5,000 drought-tolerant native trees and low-maintenance plants such as bamboos and grasses to

support the existing ecosystem. Rainwater harvesting was a critical part of the plan, so each villa was built on top of a 75,000-litre tank to retain water on site. A seasonal stream runs through the site, and further water bodies were added, including a well and natural plunge pools with separate planted sections, with a natural filtration process using sand, gravel and plants, developed to be chemical free to avoid the use of chlorine.

The pair invested significant time in this exploration stage, investigating options for the construction of the resort around the natural landscape. The architecture evolved from their research and collaborations. Through researching local techniques, two hours away in Wardha they found the Centre of Science for Villages (CSV), which since the mid-1970s has been keeping rural building techniques alive and developing them. They began to collaborate with CSV and incorporated their learnings into the design. One of their techniques is a vaulted roof made from conical tiles. The shape is quick to build, flood- and earthquake-proof, uses local materials and is highly labour intensive, so generates employment. To waterproof the roof, broken tiles are used which also reflect sunlight to keep the interior cooler. The arch shape retains heat in the winter. Inside, the aesthetic effect is wonderful and as no further materials are needed, visitors see the beauty of the fired terracotta-clay interlocking cone shapes. This vaulted roof design is used for the pool residences. The forest villas, with verandas, have flat roofs using a hollow flat terracotta tile, again unfinished from inside, adding to the textural aesthetic alongside the other materials used.

Rammed-earth wall construction was an obvious solution to use alongside stonemasonry but proved problematic. With the help of a specialist who tested the local soil, it was found it would work if combined with a minimal amount of cement, so it met structural and waterproofing standards. The local community was trained and worked on building with conical tiles, forming rammed-earth and stone masonry, without the need for bringing in outside labour.

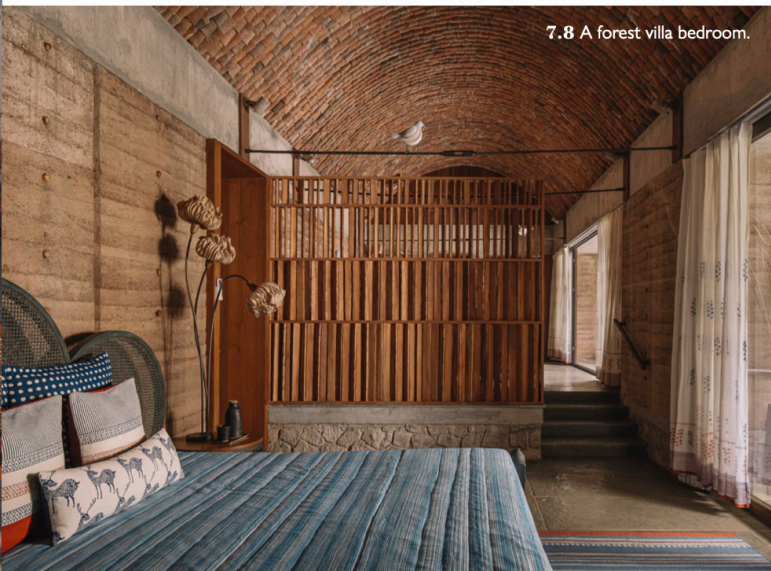
The interiors also evolved from local collaborations and are a celebration of Indian design and craft. Ginwala worked with lighting

7.6 A pool residence, with vaulted roof made from conical tiles developed by the Centre of Science for Villages; textiles were developed with the Magan Khadi Institute, including leaf-printed curtains.





7.7 A pool residence with terracotta-tiled roof, along with rammed-earth and stone walls.



7.8 A forest villa bedroom.



7.9 Huge woven bird's-nest pendants and leaf-shaped wall lights in the main building.

designer Jenny Pinto of Oojaa Design on lighting, with shades made from banana fibre paper formed to replicate the local mahua flower shape, and with the craft design studio Wicker Story on woven, organic-shaped wall lights and dramatic large pendants for the main building. Terracotta floor tiles were sourced three hours away, with hardy patina which improves over time. Ceramic handbasins were handmade, as were rugs and the furniture; screens were made from reclaimed timber taken from Ginwala's own range for her contemporary craft furnishing company This And That.

Handwoven, naturally dyed 'khadi' textiles are used, made from locally farmed organic cotton. The textiles are made by the Magan Khadi Institute, which also resides in Wardha. Their fabrics are block printed, including using leaves as a printing block. Every piece of textile, from bedding and window coverage to cushions, upholstery, bathrobes and napkins, was made by the institute, from Ginwala and her team's designs.

The main 13.7m-high building houses one of the restaurants, and a bar, along with back-of-house maintenance, service housekeeping, a laundry and kitchen areas.

Ginwala has found this to be the most fulfilling project she has worked on. It's taken five years to build, with timeframes dictated by production times. Self-sufficiency is a few years away but in progress, with food being grown on site and a 100kW solar plant in place. The resort is a thriving biodiversity hotspot for flora and fauna, and home to more than 182 species of birds and animals, including the Bengal tiger. Roughly 100 people from the local community worked on the build, acquiring transferable new skills, and 80 people are now running the resort.



7.10 The resort's designer, Ariane Thakore Ginwala, with staff members at Tipai.

FACTS

Client: Keyur Joshi, Wildlife Luxuries

Spatial design: Ariane Thakore Ginwala

Rammed-earth adviser: Ata ur Raman

Permaculturist: Parag Mody

Structural engineer: Vinod Shah

Vaults construction lead: Centre of Science for Villages (CSV)

Completion: 2022

Gross internal floor area: 5,000m²

Visit: Resort (booking only), Pandharkawada, Gondwakadi, Maharashtra 445302, India, www.wildlifeluxuries.com