

# **Where heritage meets sustainability – IHCL's Mahabaleshwar SeleQtions reimagines colonial charm with sustainable design**

Perched in the misty hills of Mahabaleshwar, IHCL's Fountain SeleQtions carries a 75-year legacy that has quietly welcomed generations of guests. Once the summer residence of a British General, the property later transformed into a resort — evolving over decades into a symbol of understated charm and continuity.

## **Designing Around Memory and Place**

The project began without a formal brief. Having collaborated with the client on earlier properties, the design team understood the spirit of the place intimately. The vision emerged organically — to preserve the property's emotional and cultural essence while harmonising it with IHCL's SeleQtions brand.

The name Fountain serves as both metaphor and memory — representing rootedness and flow. Local lore recalls that natural springs surfaced during the original construction, inspiring its identity. At the entrance, sculptural water features pay homage to this legend — subtle gestures that connect the resort to Mahabaleshwar's natural springs.

The challenge lay in updating operational standards without eroding authenticity. The architecture borrows from the site's colonial heritage yet is interpreted through a contemporary lens. Original furniture and structures were retained wherever possible, complemented by modern touches and materials. A muted sage-green palette reflects the surrounding forests, while artwork inspired by the tiger eye butterfly, native to the region, brings in local nuance.

## **Adaptive Reuse and Conservation**

Located within an eco-sensitive zone, the property's evolution emphasised adaptive reuse rather than expansion. Existing laterite and lime-mortar

buildings were carefully conserved, respecting both history and environmental regulations.

The new lobby, once an awkward corner, was transformed into an open, light-filled pavilion using a space-frame structure — creating a warm and functional arrival experience. Vehicular movement was restricted to preserve tranquillity, with pedestrian pathways meandering through lush landscaping.

Dining spaces, too, were restored rather than rebuilt. The original hall — its 1950s steel girders imported from London still intact — now houses an elegant buffet restaurant where colonial grace meets modern sophistication.

### Rooms That Tell Stories

Each room in Fountain SeleQtions tells its own story. Antique furniture, historic four-poster beds, and original architectural details were either restored or reinterpreted. Some rooms preserve colonial nostalgia; others embrace minimalist modernity — yet all open to the outdoors through verandahs and panoramic windows that frame the mist-clad hills.

The Presidential Suite, with its private plunge pool and sweeping valley views, offers a quiet expression of luxury immersed in nature.

### Balancing Heritage with Modernity

The resort features one of Mahabaleshwar's largest banquet spaces, along with expansive lawns, a spa, and recreational facilities. Yet, its true distinction lies in the emotional landscape it evokes — a sense of familiarity, continuity, and calm that transcends design trends.

The process was not without challenges. Harsh weather, limited working months, transport constraints, and strict conservation laws tested the team's perseverance and craftsmanship.

### A Timeless Continuum

Fountain SeleQtions is more than a hospitality project — it is a living narrative. Each space holds fragments of memory while embracing renewal. The resort

invites guests not merely to stay, but to rediscover their connection to place and time — where architecture, landscape, and emotion flow as one.