



## The Hermitage Newsletter

January 2015

[www.neeleshwarhermitage.com](http://www.neeleshwarhermitage.com)



*First of all, we wish all our readers a healthy, happy and successful New Year! As the month of January is named after the Roman god Janus, who was two-headed - facing backwards to the old year and gazing forward into the new - it seems appropriate to follow his lead in reviewing the state of play at The Hermitage.*



**World Luxury  
Hotel  
Awards**  
NOMINEE 2015

While we were voted 'The Best Hotel in India for Health and Rejuvenation' in both 2012 and 2013 by CNBC travel awards, we have no intention to rest on our laurels. So, looking ahead we are pleased to let you know that we have just been nominated for several more awards.

The World Luxury Awards has nominated us in three categories:  
**Luxury Beach Resort**  
**Luxury Hotel - Best Scenic Environment and**  
**Luxury Boutique Hotel.**



Getting back to practicalities, many guests comment on the journeys by air and road that are needed to get to us, and we have good news on these too.

**Firstly:** a new international airport is coming on stream at Kannur, a couple of hours by road away from us, which will give a second relatively local option for those coming in from the Middle East and/or other Indian airports. Work is progressing well: the first test flight is scheduled for July 2015, and the first commercial flight is scheduled for January 2016.

**Secondly:** the beautiful scenic coast road from The Hermitage up to Mangalore is at long last being renovated in such a way that the surface will not suffer from the monsoons each year as has been the case to date. This improved condition will cut down the journey time and increase the comfort for those of you who reach us via Mangalore. This is due to be finished by March 2016.

The India Travel Awards have nominated us in the **Best Beach Resort** category. This is wonderful news and we all feel very gratified that our efforts here have been so appreciated. Congratulations to all the staff and ...watch this space!



On an operational front, the transition between seasons was a very active time for us. We finalised two rooms (*Santosh*: 'contentment' and *Sama*: 'equanimity') with beautiful sunken baths and then installed a plunge pool-cum-jacuzzi in the *Prema* ('love') cottage which straight away proved very popular with guests. We have also built two new rooms, *Sneha* ('affection') and *Maitri* ('friendliness') as Premium Garden View Rooms with lovely views right through the site and especially enlarged and landscaped bathrooms.

These are also booking very well and bring our total number of rooms up to eighteen. So we now have a wide variety of accommodation to suit all preferences, in fact an unparalleled choice in a property that remains small, personal and intimate.



We have also researched and compiled several new fascinating excursions for our guests, including birding excursions accompanied by experts and walks in the surrounding hills and spice plantations. However, it still remains the fact that so relaxing is the hotel and its facilities that many of our guests are unwilling to leave once they have arrived!



As last year, our celebrations over Christmas and the New Year were a great success.

**On Christmas Eve** a special celebratory dinner was held with tables set out on the beach overlooking the lagoon, with a classical concert featuring the *tabla* and *mrudangam* drums alongside flute and violin.

**To celebrate New Year's Eve**, the dinner location was shifted to around the pool, with special lighting and another concert, this time the lead instrument was the *veena* - India's indigenous stringed instrument that pre-dates the *sitar* by many centuries. A highlight of the entertainment was the traditional Kerala circle dance, known as *thiruvathikalli*, led by our ayurvedic physician Dr Suma accompanied by the lady staff members of the Hermitage family.

Over this festive period we had a very full house and in fact many, many people were wait-listed, so best to book now for next year!



**January 20th** is a special date in our local diary: the celebration of the local festival known as *Makarapongala*. This takes place in the lovely little Devi temple patronised by the fishing community just down the road from the hotel, and is a worship of the Great Goddess in her form as the sacred snake. Fortunately for all concerned the snakes are symbolically present rather than literally, as they possess several mediumistic women from the village who become vehicles for the Goddess for the duration of the festival. This is a highly unusual celebration, quite untouched by mass tourism, and is one of the many authentic cultural experiences we are happy to offer our guests.

### Personal story

Looking back to the year just gone, it was with great sadness that we learned of the untimely death of Mark Shand. Mark was best known for his work in conserving the endangered Asian elephant. Mark loved The Hermitage, commenting: "as usual, after 35 years of coming to India, Neeleshwar is my favourite place." We bid this unique character a fond farewell; the world will be a less colourful place with his passing.

Looking forward to the coming year, while all our guests are equally special in our eyes, one who chose to return this season was the celebrated UK gardener and broadcaster, Monty Don. Monty loves it here, writing in the Sunday Mail that The Hermitage "is beautiful, superbly run and the best place I have ever visited for recharging a weary body and mind". As we now see 35% of our annual bookings composed of previous guests, many world travellers obviously agree with him.