

[Home](#) > [Money](#) > [Report](#)

Starwood, Urbanedge link up for 'aloft'

Ashish K Tiwari

Thursday, December 27, 2007 3:56 IST

Latter to develop the brand in the country



MUMBAI: The US-based global hospitality chain Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc has entered into a partnership with Urbanedge Hotels Pvt Ltd (UHPL) to develop "aloft" hotels across India.



While Starwood has been open to exploring investment opportunities on a case-to-case basis, it is not clear at this stage if its partnership with Urbanedge Hotels also involves equity participation from the international hospitality chain.

Starwood Hotels' officials in India were not available for a statement. However, industry sources said the arrangement with Urbanedge Hotels is a non-exclusive one with no equity participation.

A joint venture company between Citigroup Property Investors and Auromatrix Hotels Pvt Ltd, Urbanedge Hotels will launch the first two "aloft" hotels in Bangalore and Chennai.

Miguel Ko, president Asia-Pacific, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc, said: "The development partners have assisted us in refining our prototype and signature features to create a product that travellers to 'aloft' in India will love."

In April 2006, DNA Money had reported that Starwood was fine-tuning the "aloft" brand for the Asian market and had definitive plans to introduce the hotel model in the Indian hospitality market.

According to company officials Starwood has tailored "aloft" to meet the needs of the Indian market by including an all-day dining restaurant and more space for meetings.

Brian McGuinness, vice-president, "aloft" and "element" hotels, said: "These changes were being incorporated based on the feedback gathered from the Asian market in addition to specific inputs for India. The developer fraternity here has expressed a keen interest in "aloft" hotels, more so in newly developing sub-markets in both major urban centres and secondary cities, and we are confident that the Indian market will be a perfect match for the energy and vitality of 'aloft' hotels."

Aloft Bangalore will be a 170-room hotel with a large restaurant and more than 8,500 square feet of meeting space. Featuring 140 guestrooms, "aloft" Chennai, will be located on the Old Mahabalipuram Road. The hotel will also offer over 5,000 square feet of meeting space and a restaurant. Both properties will start receiving guests in 2010. Back in the US, Starwood anticipates the first "aloft" hotel to open in 2008, with 500 properties worldwide expected by 2012.

Targeting the Indian hospitality market aggressively, Starwood, in the past year, has expanded its footprint by signing deals to open new hotels across several of its brands including two new Sheratons, three new Westins and the two new aloft hotels now.

Starwood is aggressively looking at establishing its The Luxury Collection, St Regis, Sheraton, Westin etc besides the Le Meridien brands in the Indian market.

The company already has a management tie-up with the Delhi-based Vatika Hospitality Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary company of Vatika Group, for two Westin properties (The Westin Bangalore and The Westin Sohna Resort just outside of Delhi) in India. This apart, an MoU to manage Oberoi Constructions' hotel project at Goregaon under the Westin brand is already in place.

Other associations include management contract for Sheraton brand in Bangalore with the Brigade Group's hospitality venture and a similar arrangement for two large scale developments under the Sheraton branding with Hindustan Construction Company's Lavasa project at Warasgaon in Pune.

t_ashish@dnaindia.net