JK LAKSHMIPAT UNIVERSITY
Institute of Design
NAAC 'A' Grade Accredited

Signage & Wayfinding Design Startegy for Alila Diwa, Coorg

VOL. 1 of 1

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Sponsor : **VersionAbsolute Design Studio**

Mentor : **Prof. Binil Mohan**

Programme :
Bachelor of Design (B.Des)
Interdisciplinary Design

THE GRADUATION PROJECT 2025

The Evaluation Jury has recommended **Kanishq Tyagi**

for graduation from **Institute of Design, JK LAKSHMIPAT UNIVERSITY**

with specialization in **Interdisciplinary Design**

Herewith, for the project titled "**Signage & Wayfinding Design Strategy for Alila Diwa, Coorg"**

on fulfillment of requirements by

Jury Chairman

Jury Member

Jury Member

Subsequent remarks regarding fulfillment of requirements

Dean, Institute of Design
JK Lakshmipat University

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Alila Diwa Coorg - Signage & Wayfinding Design Concept
Designed at VersionAbsolute Design Studio.

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Bachelor of Design, Interdisciplinary Design 2021-2025
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Acknowledgement

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Founder, VersionAbsolute Design Studio

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Architect, VersionAbsolute Design Studio

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Institute of Design, JK Lakshmipat University

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Prologue

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the project, establishing its context and significance.

From March to April 2024, I undertook a project as part of my graduation project in Bachelors of Design in Interdisciplinary Design. This documentation captures the process and learnings from this project.

Prologue

As part of my academic journey at JK Lakshmipat University, I was required to complete a Graduation Project with a client organization. This project involved working on a comprehensive design brief that aligned with my field of study, allowing me to apply my design knowledge and skills in a real-world setting. The project demanded academic rigor, incorporating systematic research and informed design decisions.

For this project, I worked with the firm VersionAbsolute Design Studio based in Delhi, whose client for this project was Alila Diwa, for two months. Alila is an upscale hotel and resort brand founded in Indonesia in 2001, whose name means “surprise” in Sanskrit. It focuses on authentic connections, sustainable living, and delivering awe-inspiring experiences that allow guests to relax, think, and restore. Alila operates luxury properties across Asia and North America and became part of Hyatt Hotels Corporation in 2018.
The Alila brand is known for blending contemporary design with local culture and nature, offering bespoke services and environmentally conscious hospitality.

The project required an in-depth understanding of materials and how they are used to add an emphasis to the experience of a space. The project also required learning and understanding wayfinding systems from ground-up. To be able to design a unique and functional strategy which blends in with the site location, a multi-facted approach was taken to understand material typology and functional product design.

This document serves as a reference for the design process followed during the project, detailing each stage from research to final concepts. It reflects on the challenges faced, insights gained and overall approach for the project.

Through this project, I gained valuable insights into designing a well informed product family using relevant materials while, keeping the fabrication of the products simple and sustainable. This project also allowed me to step into a new discipline of design, which is wayfinding as a system. This new learning will allow me to look at things around me more deeply and critically.


AlilA COORG . INDIA



Contents

/ Prologue 6-11

1. Introduction 14-15

1.1 Client & Brand

2. Project 16-23

2.1 Project Brief
2.2 Site Background
2.3 Project Timeline
2.4 Process

3. Research 24-29

3.1 Coorg - Culture & Architecture
3.2 Site Features
3.3 Spaces

4. Ideation 31-39

4.1 Material Typology
4.2 Signage Concept Ideation
- Concept 1
- Concept 2
- Concept 3

5. Final Design 41-59

5.1 Block Naming Strategy
5.2 Material Identity
5.3 Signage Identity
- 5.3.1 Internal Signage
- 5.3.2 External Signage

5.4 Typography
5.5 Other

6. Epilogue 60-64

6.1 Conclusion
6.2 Retrospect
6.3 References

1. Introduction

1.1 Client & Brand

1.1 Client & Brand

Hyatt Hotels Corporation is a global hospitality leader known for delivering exceptional experiences across a diverse portfolio of brands. Founded in 1957 by Jay Pritzker, Hyatt has grown to encompass more than 1,300 properties in over 70 countries, offering a spectrum of accommodations from luxury resorts to lifestyle and extended-stay hotels.



Alila Diwa, Goa. Photo: Alila Website

At the heart of Hyatt's philosophy is its purpose: "We care for people so they can be their best," which informs every aspect of its operations—from guest service to sustainable design. Among its premier luxury and lifestyle brands is Alila, a collection of eco-conscious properties celebrated for blending contemporary elegance with deeply rooted cultural and environmental sensitivity.

Alila is a luxury resort brand operating under Hyatt Corporation since 2018. Its diverse portfolio of resorts spans from North America to Asia.

Alila, which means "surprise" in Sanskrit, emphasizes harmony with nature, local artistry, and bespoke guest experiences, making it especially relevant for destinations like Coorg, where natural beauty and local heritage are central.

The Brand Philosphy

Sustainaibility and respect for the local culture informs the experience curated by Alila. The spaces are designed to explore and appreciate the culture you are immersed in through carefully crafted experiences.

As part of Hyatt's expanding luxury portfolio, Alila embodies the group's commitment to sustainability, wellness, and immersive hospitality. Through brands like Alila, Hyatt continues to redefine modern luxury by integrating purposeful design, cultural respect, and thoughtful care into every stay.



Site Elevstion. Alila Diwa, Coorg. Photo: Ficus

2. Project

2.1 Project Brief
2.2 Site Background
2.3 Project Timeline
2.4 Process

2.1 Project Brief

The Alila Coorg – Signage & Wayfinding Design System is a comprehensive product design and visual communication project commissioned by Hyatt Hotels Corporation for its luxury resort property under the Alila brand, located in the lush Western Ghats of Karnataka, India. The project aims to create an intuitive, aesthetically aligned, and brand-consistent signage system that enhances navigation across the site while reflecting the resort's unique eco-conscious identity.

Core Objective

The project's core objectives include improving wayfinding clarity for guests, staff, and visitors; seamlessly integrating signage with the natural and architectural landscape; and developing a scalable system that can grow with future expansions. The design must also align with Alila's minimalist brand ethos, employing understated elegance, neutral tones, and natural materials like wood, oxidized metal, and stone.

Scope of work

The scope of work encompasses the design of all key signage typologies—arrival gateways, vehicular and pedestrian directions, building and room identifiers, facility and amenity signs, and necessary regulatory and informational signage. Deliverables will include conceptual design strategies, type and icon systems, signage hierarchy, bilingual design solutions, and technical drawings with materials and fabrication guidance. Sustainability, legibility, and ease of maintenance are essential principles guiding the design process.

Design Considerations

Key design considerations include environmental sensitivity, visual minimalism, cultural respect, and the possibility of incorporating handcrafted details to reflect local artistry. The signage should feel like a natural extension of the resort rather than a foreign element imposed on the environment.

This project involved collaboration between the architecture consultants, the appointed signage design consultants which I was a part of and the landscape consultants. The project is being developed by Parekh Group who were also a part of the design process and provided critical inputs.

2.2 Site Background

Alila Coorg is a luxury retreat nestled amidst the verdant coffee plantations, valleys, and water bodies of Coorg. Inspired by Kodava heritage, the resort's architecture harmoniously integrates materials like laterite, wood, metal, and glass to blend seamlessly with the natural landscape. Thoughtfully designed pathways, valley walks, and curated trails connect guests to the region's rich biodiversity.



Site Circulation

Vehicular access at Alila Coorg is intentionally limited to the Main Block to ensure a tranquil, immersive environment throughout the resort. Beyond this point, movement is facilitated by electric buggies and pedestrian pathways, allowing for convenient access while preserving the site's natural beauty. A dedicated bus service brings guests to the Main Block, complemented by valet services for added ease. The 32-acre developed area is thoughtfully planned with strategically located amenity blocks to maintain smooth connectivity.



Spatial Experience

The Alila Coorg site is thoughtfully designed to offer an immersive experience that harmoniously blends natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and curated spaces. A network of trails and pathways connects key destinations while maintaining the serenity of the forest, with the terrain itself subtly guiding movement. Valley walks offer sweeping views, and select areas are designated for night sky viewing, enhancing the connection to nature. The site museum adds cultural and historical context, deepening the guest experience. These elements collectively inform a wayfinding approach that is intuitive, integrated, and reflective of the resort's immersive philosophy.

2.3 Project Timeline

Total Duration: 2 months/8 weeks
March-April

Phase 1: Research and forming intial direction for the project.
2 weeks

This phase involves gathering information comprehensive information about the project site. This includes understanding the site features, circulation and built spaces. This phase also requires understanding the architectural and landscape features of the site.

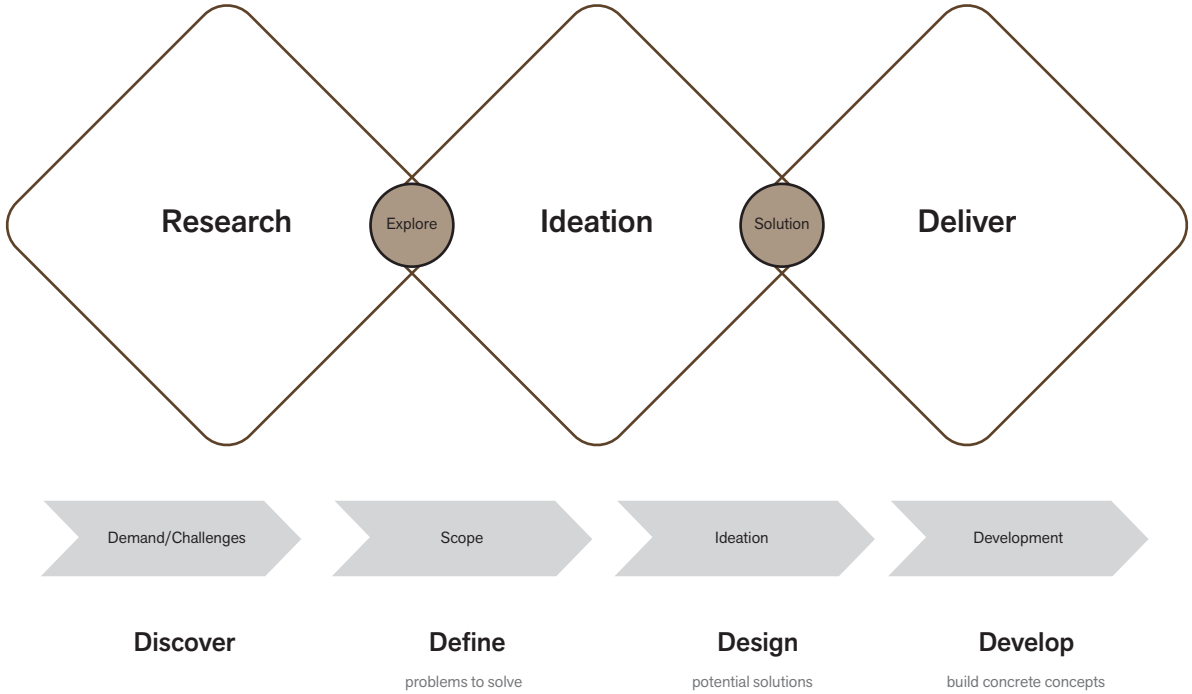
Phase 2: Ideation
4 weeks

This phase includes brainstorming for inspiration and potential ideas. These ideas are informed by the materials and methods rooted within the culture, typology and geography of the site location.
This phase invloves sketching ideas, creating first draft visuals.

Phase 3: Final Concept
2 weeks

This phase includes translating approved ideas into concrete concepts which will then be developed as complete signage family. The final concepts includes a material palette which will be used across the signage family and, has cohesiveness with the architecture and landscape features.

2.4 Process


Research
Explore
Ideation
Solution
Deliver
Demand/Challenges
Scope
Ideation
Development
Discover
Define
problems to solve
Design
potential solutions
Develop
build concrete concepts

3. Research

3.1 Coorg - Culture & Architecture
3.2 Site Features
3.3 Spaces



Site Aerial photo. Alila Diwa, Coorg. Photo: Ficus

3.1 Coorg - Culture & Architecture

Coorg's culture and architecture are deeply rooted in the region's natural rhythms and rich heritage. Traditional Kodava homes, or ainmanes, feature sloping roofs, open courtyards, and laterite stone walls—designed to adapt to the hilly terrain and monsoon climate. Local craftsmanship is reflected in the use of carved wood and symbolic artifacts, such as the Ayudha Katti and Pichangatti knives, which speak to the community's martial traditions and respect for nature. Coorg's heritage is also deeply rooted in its landscape- from the mist-laden forests and cascading waterfalls to its famed coffee estates

Coorg's architecture blends heritage and nature, with ainmanes featuring sloping roofs, carved wood, and laterite stone. Open courtyards and verandas enhance community living while adapting to the region's climate.

These elements together weave a cultural fabric which is deeply rooted and refined, which formed the foundation for the design inspiration.



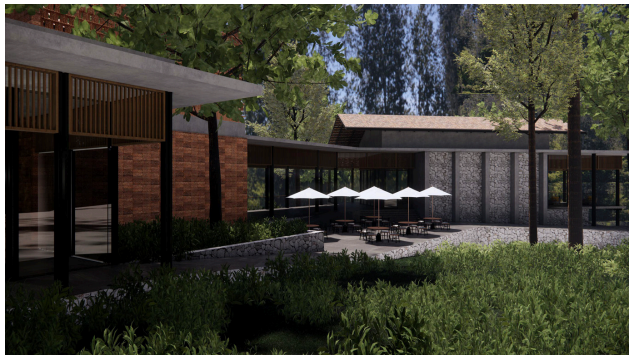




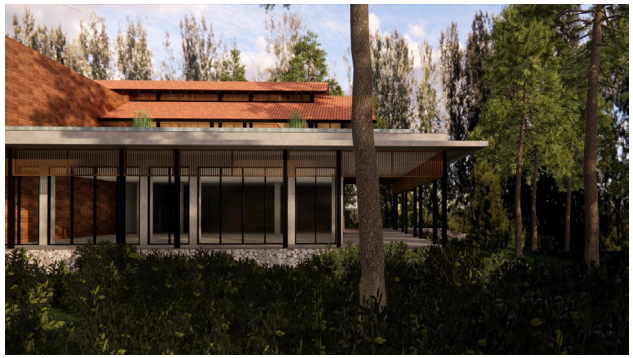
3.2 Site Features

Alila Coorg is a luxury retreat nestled within the lush coffee plantations, valleys, and water bodies of Coorg.

- The architecture draws inspiration from Kodava heritage, seamlessly integrating laterite, wood, metal, and glass.
- Designed to blend with the natural landscape, the resort offers an immersive experience while preserving the site's ecological integrity.
- Pathways, valley walks, and curated trails enhance exploration, connecting guests to the rich biodiversity of Coorg.
- Sensory-driven design elements—textures, lighting, and materials—create a harmonious balance between nature and luxury.
- Sustainability and cultural authenticity shape the retreat, offering an unparalleled escape rooted in Coorg's heritage.









3.3 Spaces

This table maps out all key blocks and their associated spaces, with guest accessible spaces highlighted in red.

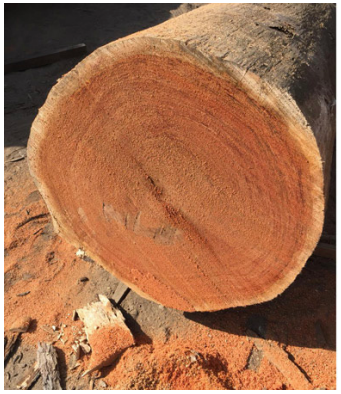
	Activity Block	Main Block	Spa	Bar	Oota Mane	Living Space
Upper level		Entry court & Reception Lobby / Sunken Pool Meeting Rooms Staff dining Laundry Service room & housekeeping	Relaxation lounge Consultation room Treatment room		Display Kitchen Indoor dining Outdoor seating Housekeeping Chiller room	Standard rooms Block 1 - 7 (6 rooms each)
Lower Level		Prefunction & Banquet hall All day dining Store room Admin/accounts HR office				Junior Suites Block 8 & 9 (2 rooms each) Junior Villas Block 10(a,b), 11(,a,b) (2 each= 10 rooms)
Deck Level	Gymnasium Kids' Play area Activity zone Daycare Multiuse space			Besides main block		

4. Ideation

4.1 Material Typology
4.2 Signage Concept Ideation
Concept 1
Concept 2
Concept 3

4.1 Material Typology

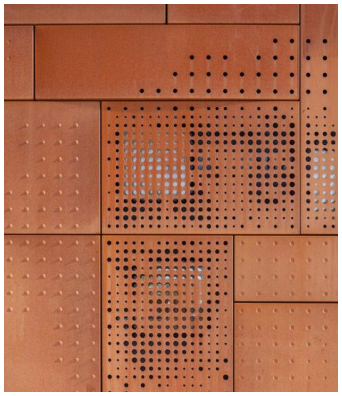
The ideation phase started with understanding the kind of materials that can be extracted from the site architecture, location and the local context. This process required going through past hospitality projects developed at VersionAbsolute and trying to take a direction from those projects.
Other projects under the Alila Brand were also taken in consideration to understand the visual and material design of the projects and what aligns with the brand philosophy.

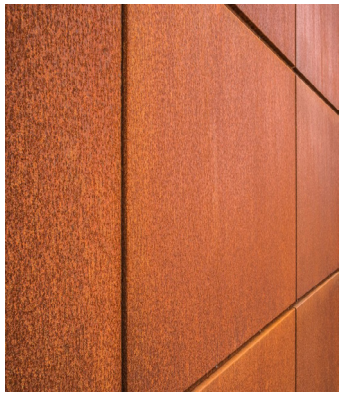




Wood

Coorg is famous for its different varieties of wood, which can be integrated within the signage system creating a connection with the landscape.
Locally sourced wood enhances authenticity, sustainability and provides a tactile experience.

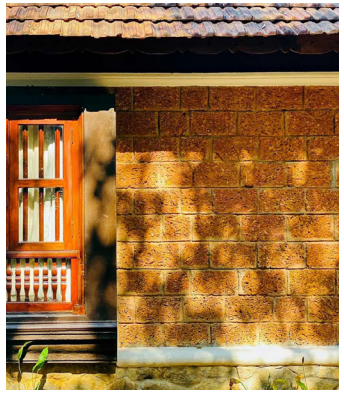




Corten Steel

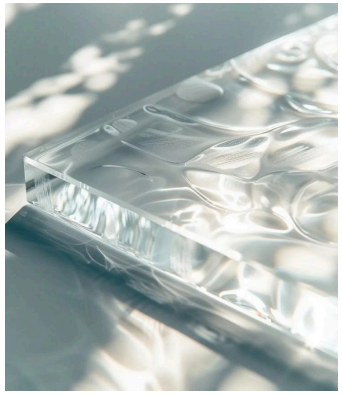
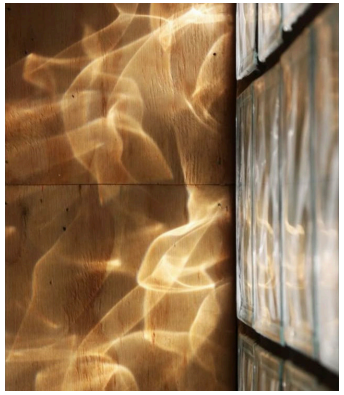
Corten steel takes an inspiration from Coorg's rich coffee heritage. The hues and texture of the material can be utilised in a way which goes beyond just visuals.





Laterite & Granite

Both granite and laterite are used across the architecture of the sites's built area, and they are used locally in traditional homes which creates a sense of grounding to the local culture.

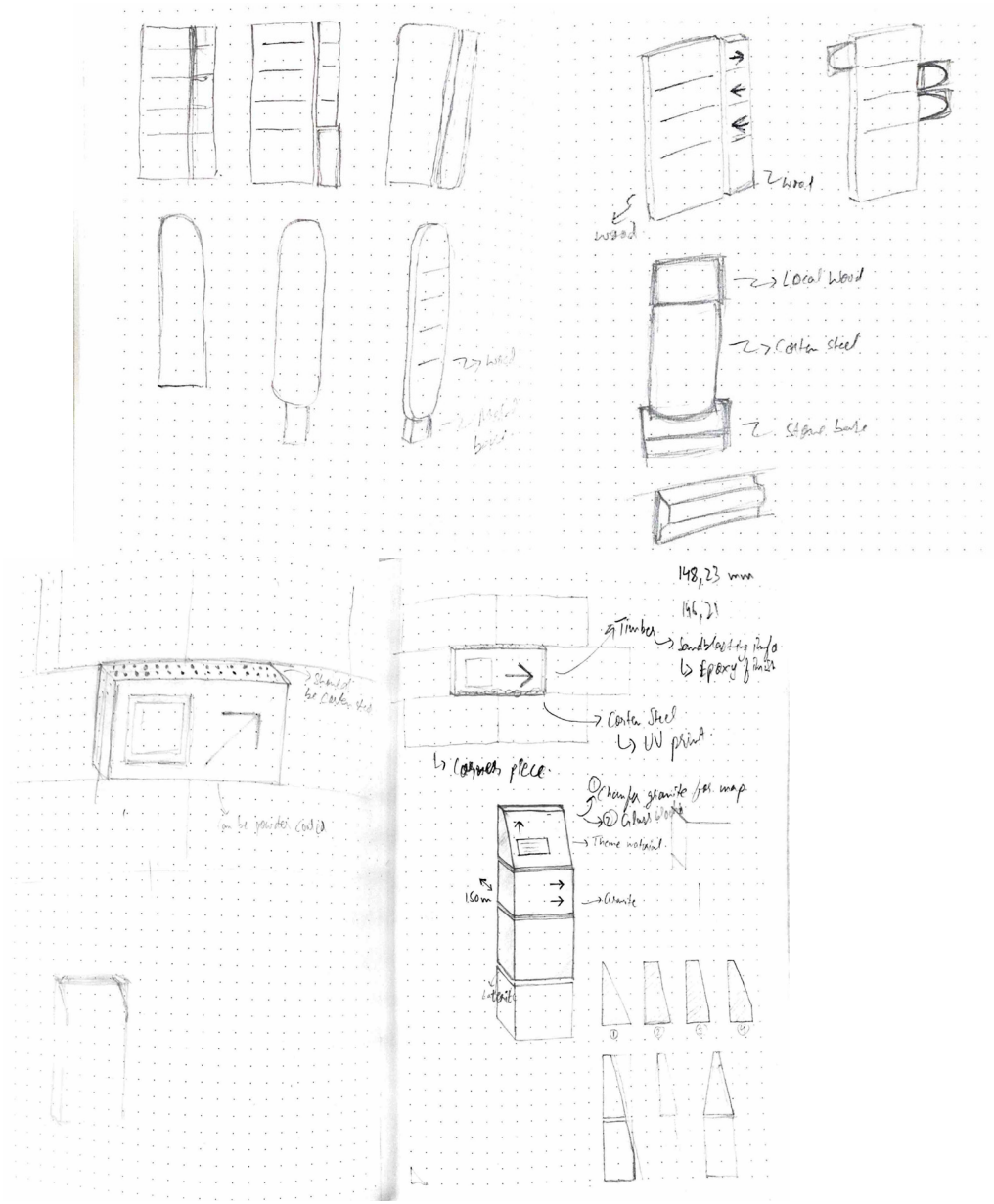



Glass

Glass is taken as a material to signify the beauty and fluidity of the rivers and waterfalls occuring in Coorg. It can be used to create a dynamic visual effect when the glass reflects light to create caustics, similar to water reflecting light.

4.2 Signage Concept Ideation

The ideation started with rough sketches exploring forms, taking inspiration from similar hospitality projects which blend minimalist and contemporay design language.
The brand positioning and experience was kept in consideration while exploring the ideas.

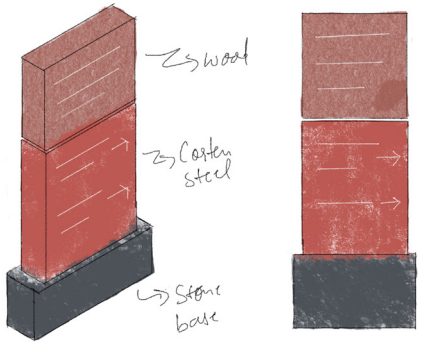


Concept 1

Wood+Corten Steel+Granite

External Signage

The concept utilises earthy tones which blend within the site landscape while also being modular to allow addition of information blocks if needed.



Wood:The top block captures drop-off information

Corten Steel:This block captures navigational information

Granite:This block is the base and integrates seamlessly with the architecture.





Corten Steel

Internal Signage

The internal signage concept is explored while making it easy to integrate within the architecture, so that it does not hinder the experience of the visitor.
These blocks are designed to fit in the laterite walls by replacing a block.



To enhance the experience, a module with removable face plate was designed which provides space to put coffee beans, to disperse its aroma, allowing the visitors to experience the famed Coorg coffee.

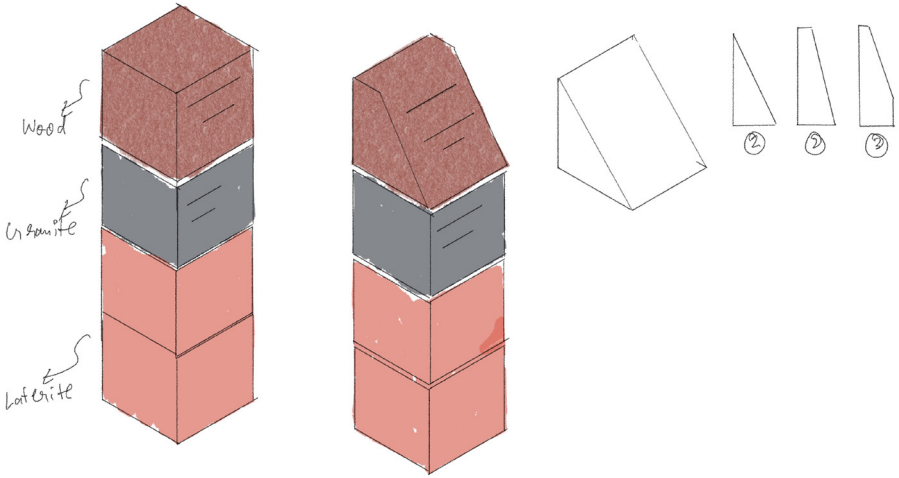


Concept 2

Wood/Glass+Granite+Laterite

External Signage

The concept utilises materials from the architectural palette, while also introducing context relevant materials like wood and glass.



Wood/Glass:the top block captures drop-off information

Granite:This block captures navigational information

Laterite:This block is the base and integrates seamlessly with the architecture.

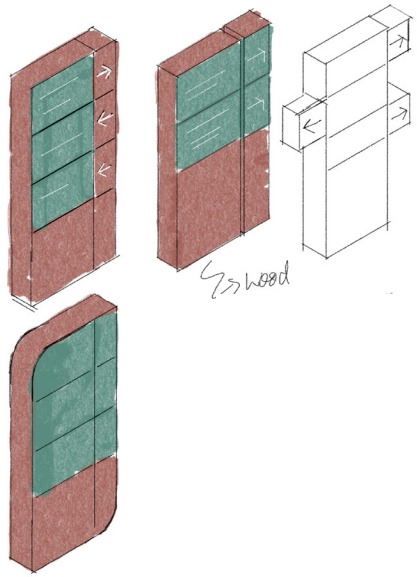


Concept 3

Wood

External Signage

The external signage concept utilises locally sourced wood with a green painted finish at the top half to blend in with the landscape. The bottom provides additional location information using the Block and Trail Map which promotes exploration by the visitors.



Painted Wood: The green painted captures drop-off and navigational information



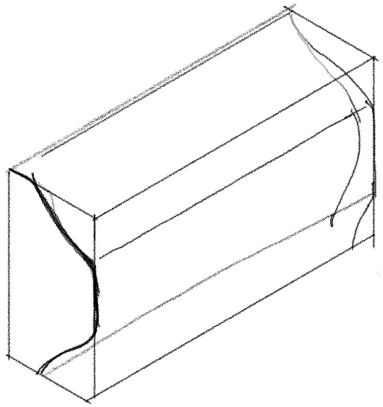
Wood: The base section provides a location map which provides relevant information to the visitor when exploring the site.

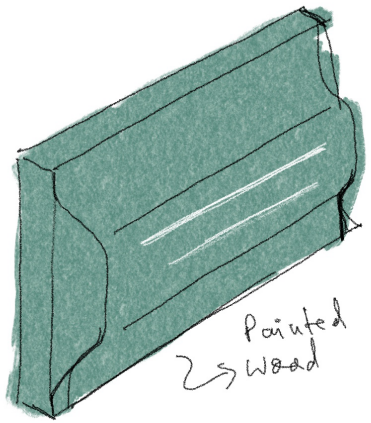


Wood

Internal Signage

The internal signage concept utilises locally sourced wood which utilises a soft protrusion in the form to put emphasis on the room number information and follows the color guideline similar to the external signage.









5. Final Design

5.1 Block Naming Strategy

5.2 Material Identity

5.3 Signage Identity

- 5.3.1 Internal Signage
- 5.3.2 External Signage

5.4 Typography

5.5 Other

5.1 Block Naming Strategy

The site location informs the block naming system by including references from the local culture, nature and heritage which sits within the experience seamlessly.







Use of vernacular elements-

Native trees - the geography where Coorg is situated is famed for its different varieties of wood which has a become a symbol for the place. the use of tree names adds to the experience by grounding it in the local context.

Water Bodies - The rivers and waterfalls serve as a life-line for the local people which is deeply woven into the local culture.

Coffee Plantations - Coorg is the coffee capital of India, famous for its high quality coffee around the world. The rolling plantations define its landscape.

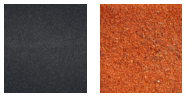
The categorization of accommodations into Standard Rooms, Suites, and Villas establishes a clear and intuitive progression in luxury, making it easy for guests to understand the spatial hierarchy. Each category is defined by a distinct yet interconnected theme—native trees, water bodies, and coffee plantation—that together narrate a journey through Coorg's natural and cultural landscape. This thematic approach allows guests to experience the essence of Coorg in layers, deepening their connection with the region's heritage. The incorporation of authentic Coorg elements throughout reinforces a sense of place and cultural continuity within the resort.

Category	Blocks	Theme	Example	Meaning
Standard Rooms	7 blocks, 6 rooms each	**Native Trees**	Maramane (Block 1-7)	"Mara" means tree/wood in Kodava and Kannada. "Mane" means house.
Junior Suites	2 blocks, 2 rooms each	**Water Bodies**	Thodumane (Block 8-9)	"Thodu" means stream or small river. "Mane" means house.
Junior Villas	5 blocks, 2 rooms each	**Coffee Plantations**	Beedmane (Block 10-14)	"Beedmane" refers to a settlement house associated with agricultural land and traditional Kodava homesteads.

**Tentative block names in kannada, to be determined*

5.2 Material Identity

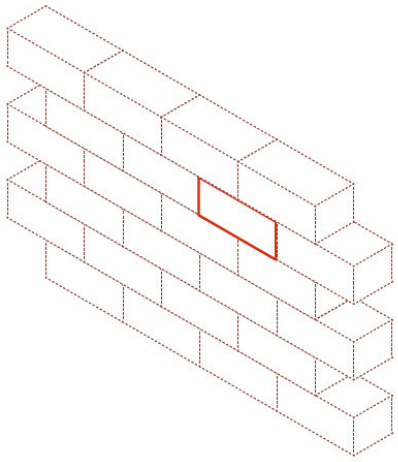
An overview of the material identity designed for addressing the blocks and spaces, showcasing corresponding themes, materials and naming approach. The strategy is developed to ensure clarity, consistency, and easy recall in navigation.

Category	Internal Material	External Material	Theme	Addressing
Standard Rooms	Wood 	Wood+ Granite+ Laterite 	**Native Trees**	Maramane Maramane 1> 101 (Block 1-7)
Junior Suites	Glass 	Glass+ Granite+ Laterite 	**Water Bodies**	Thodumane Thodumane 8 > 801 (Block 8-9)
Junior Villas	Corten steel 	Corten Steel+ Granite+ Laterite 	**Coffee Varities**	Beedmane Beedmane 10> 1001 (Block 10-14)
Other Blocks	Granite 	Granite + Laterite 		

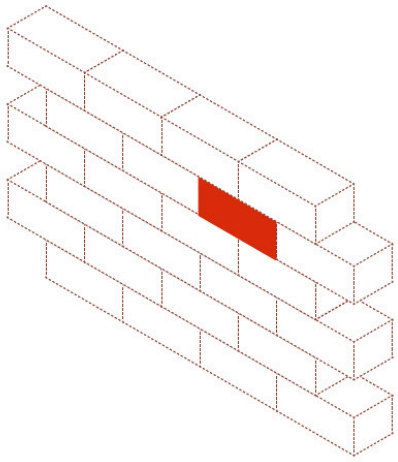
5.3 Signage Identity

5.3.1 Internal Sigange

With minimal intervention and maximum harmony, the approach embeds signage within the architecture by replacing select laterite stone blocks with materials reflecting each block's theme. This subtle integration ensures wayfinding feels natural while maintaining the integrity of the built environment. By blending signage into the structure, the startegy creates a cohesive, immersive experience that deepens the connection between guests and their surroundings.



Exixting laterite wall with highlighted placement



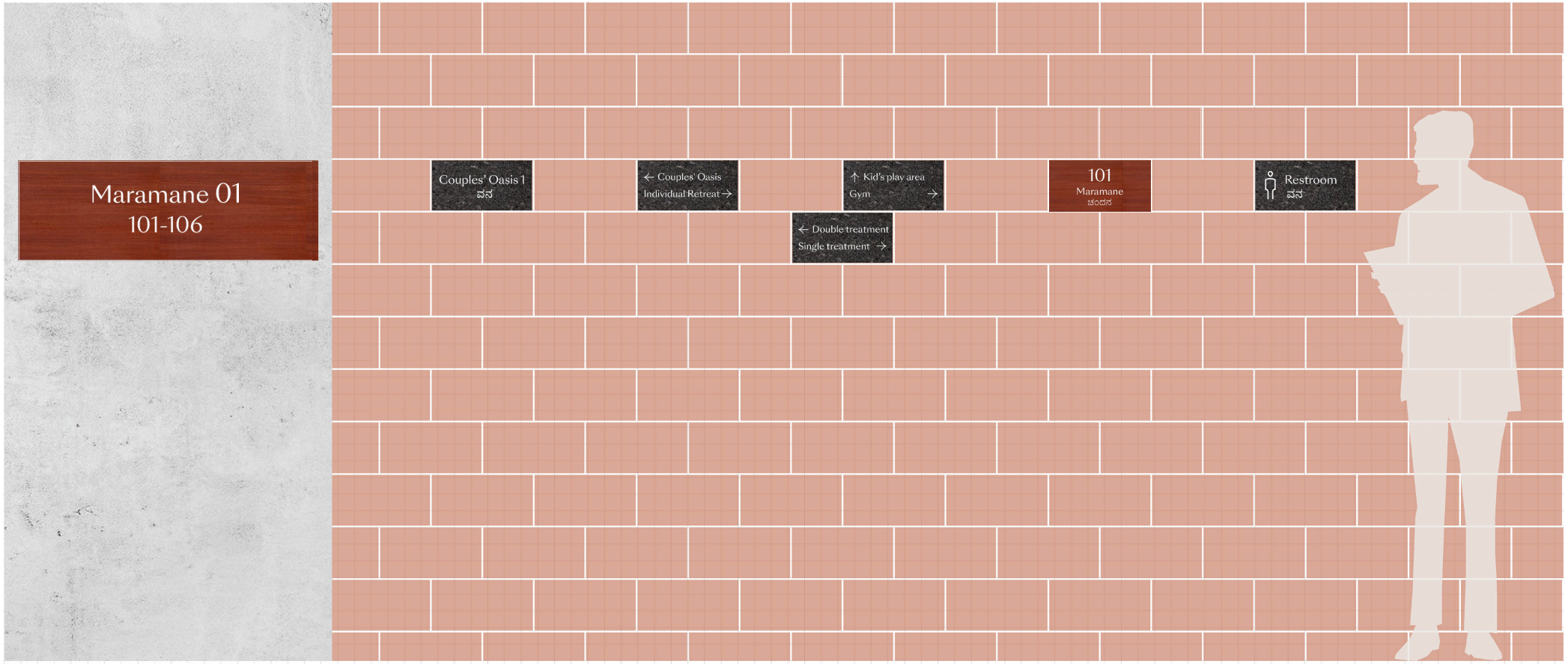
Replacing with selected theme material



Signage placement at room entry

The system is designed to be modular, allowing flexibilty in different spaces while maintaining a cohesive identity and seamless integration with the architecture.

Internal Signage Family



Entry Sign | Area id | Internal Directional Sign | Room No. | Restroom id

**Tentative Content*

Material Application



Material: Glass



Material: Corten Steel



Material: Timber



Room id

**Tentative Content*

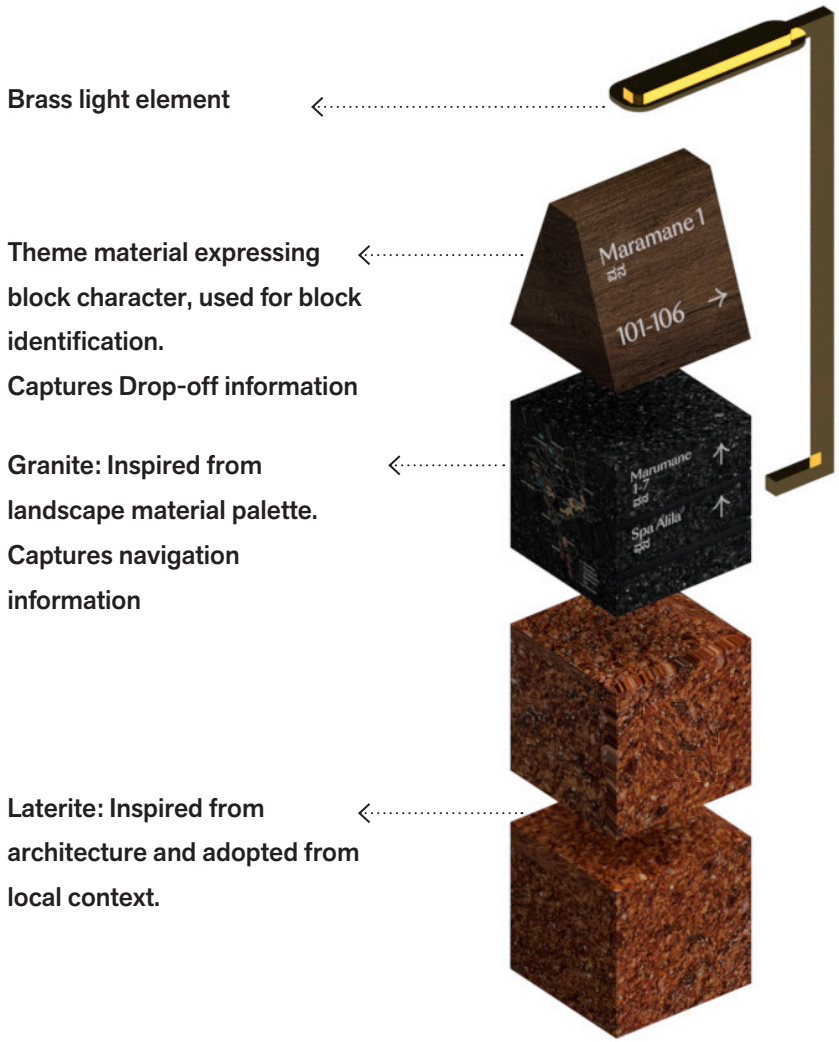
** Colors and finishes are tentative and only used for representative purpose*

5.3 Signage Identity

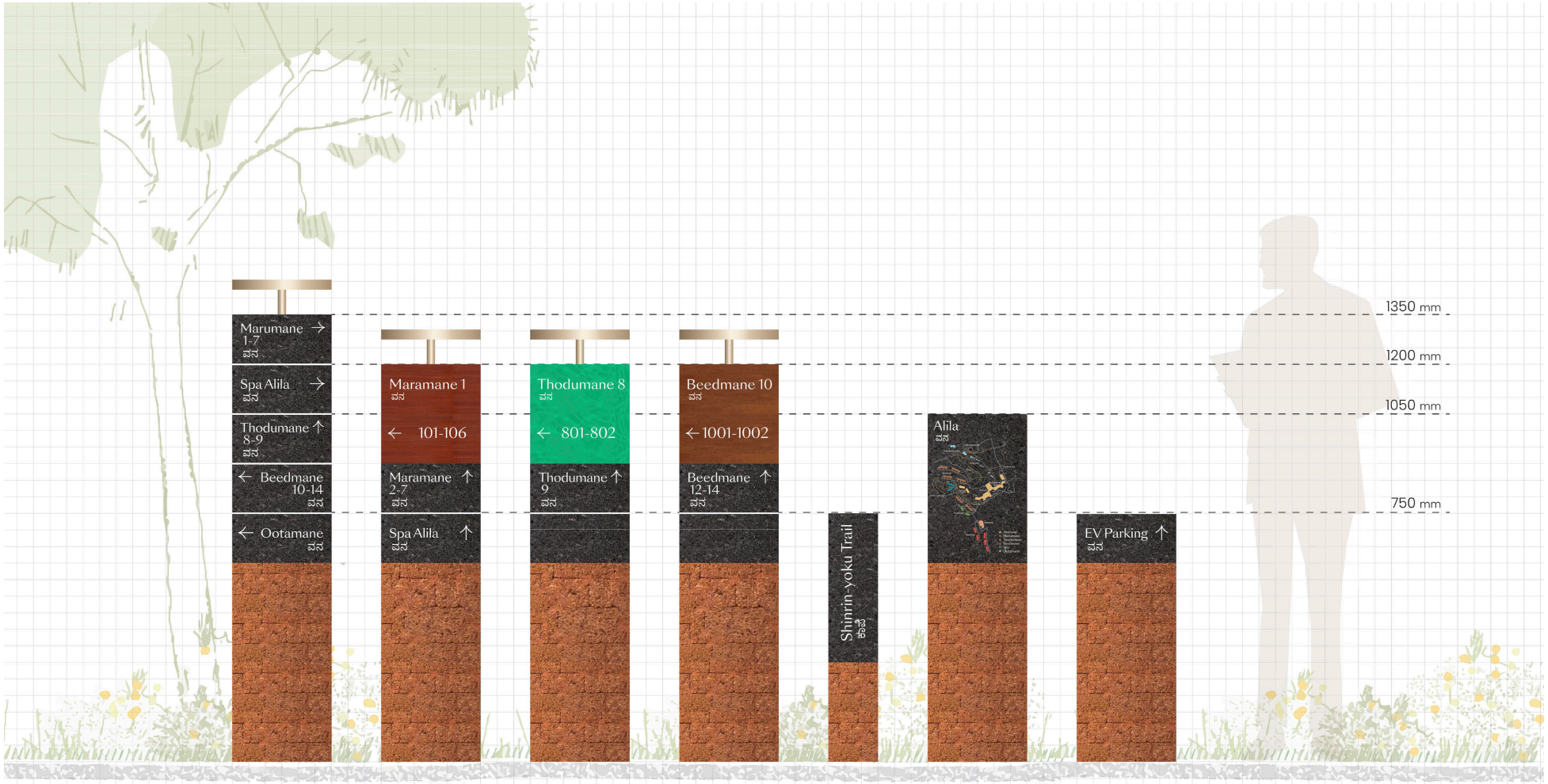
5.3.2 External Signage

The external signage identity draws inspiration from the architecture and local material palette. Laterite, as seen in the built form, is reflected in the sign base to maintain contextual relevance. Granite is used as a durable grounding element. Theme-specific materials like timber, glass, or corten steel will be introduced at drop-offs to subtly reflect the identity of each block. The lighting element is designed to be minimal and uses brass drawing inspiration form local culture.

The material identity is kept similar to internal signage as to keep cohesivness and clarity in navigational experience.



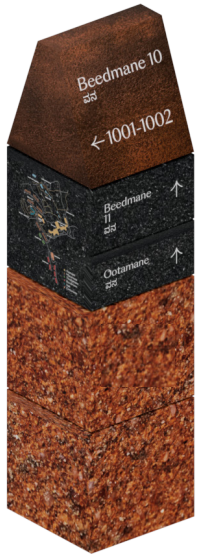
External Signage Family



Directional Sign | Drop-off Directional Sign | Trail Sign | Location Map Sign | Area id

*Tentative Content

Material Application



Material: Corten Steel



Material: Glass



Material: Timber



Location Map Sign



Trail Sign

**Tentative Content*

** Colors and finishes are tentative and only used for representative purpose*

Day/Night View




101-106


Maramane 1
101-106
Marumane
1-7
Spa Atila


Shinrin-yoku Trail
Start


← Couples' Oasis
Individual Retreat →


101
Maramane
102
Maramane


Maramane 01
101-106

5.4 Typography

Sangbleu Sunrise

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

The font family is used across the Alila brand as defined in the brand guidlines.
A modern, clean font ensuring readibility and elegance.

Noto Serif Kannada

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

A contemporary typeface that preserves the local script, reinforcing regional authenticity.

The combination of typefaces balances contemporary aesthetics with cultural relevance.

5.5 Other

The spa is one of the major attraction point for the Alila brand and serves as an experiential space to relax and allow the visitors to embrace the beauty of the site.

To enhance this experience a sigange is developed to stimulate the senses of the visitors when in the spa area. This signage is put outside each treatment room with a dip at the base to keep a diya which are to be lighted when the room is in use.
The oils in the diya activates the wood fragrance to enhance the overall experience of the visitor. The top part is made of granite which captures the room information.



**Tentative Content*

** Colors and finishes are tentative and only used for representative purpose*

6. Epilogue

6.1 Conclusion
6.2 Retrospect
6.3 References

6.1 Conclusion

Reflecting on the Alila Coorg signage and wayfinding design project, several challenges were identified, including integrating diverse user needs, preserving the natural and cultural context, and achieving visual clarity without disrupting the landscape. Addressing these challenges required a deeply contextual approach, extensive site research, and collaborative iteration with architects and stakeholders.

The project evolved from a basic directional system into a comprehensive design language that enhances both navigation and guest experience. Drawing from Coorg's architectural traditions and natural textures, the signage system incorporates sustainable materials and thematic cues—wood, stone, and perforated metal—each aligned with the spatial hierarchy of rooms and villas.

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During design presentations, the concept received enthusiastic feedback for its thoughtful integration and narrative depth. Stakeholders appreciated how the signage not only serves functional needs but also enhances the sense of place throughout the resort.

Key achievements of the project:

Brand Integration: The design reflects Alila's luxury-with-purpose philosophy while honoring Coorg's cultural roots.
Environmental Harmony: Materials and placements are carefully chosen to blend with the natural and built environment.
Intuitive Navigation: A clear visual hierarchy, consistent iconography, and bilingual content ensure a seamless guest journey.

This project not only fulfills its immediate goals but also establishes a replicable framework for signage design in eco-luxury resorts. The Alila Coorg signage system demonstrates the importance of experience-driven design and its role in shaping meaningful, place-sensitive hospitality environments.

6.2 Retrospect

Reflecting on the Alila Coorg signage and wayfinding design project, several key learnings and insights emerged. The design process required a careful balance between guest usability, brand expression, and environmental sensitivity. By anchoring the project in user-centered design principles and drawing from Coorg's cultural and architectural vocabulary, the solution was able to meaningfully respond to the resort's unique context. This approach not only elevated the functional clarity of the signage but also underscored the importance of context-aware design in luxury hospitality environments.

Team collaboration played a vital role throughout the project. The interdisciplinary nature of the work—combining spatial planning, graphic design, material research, and cultural storytelling—enabled a holistic and nuanced solution. Working alongside architects and brand stakeholders was particularly valuable in aligning signage placement and language with broader design intentions and guest journeys.

There were, however, certain constraints that shaped the project. Limited access to live guest data and on-site user testing due to project stage and scheduling posed challenges in validating some assumptions. Nevertheless, the conceptual framework was grounded in real-world references, design precedents, and insights from previous hospitality projects, ensuring that solutions remained informed and practical. Despite these limitations, the emphasis on modularity, sustainability, and typographic clarity contributed to a system that is both adaptable and enduring.

Overall, this project offered a rich learning experience that reinforced the importance of cultural sensitivity, material storytelling, and collaborative iteration in spatial design. It deepened my understanding of how wayfinding can serve not just as a navigation tool but as a medium for storytelling—connecting guests more deeply to the landscape, the brand, and the local heritage. The opportunity to contribute to a project of this scale and intention was both rewarding and inspiring, providing insights that will undoubtedly shape my future design practice.

6.2 References

-Project Archive, VersionAbsolute Design Studio

-Alila Hotels Brand Standards – Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Internal Brand Manual

-Designing for Wayfinding in Natural Landscapes, Environmental Graphics Society Journal

-Alila Diwa Coorg Landscape Concept, Ficus

-Alila Diwa Coorg Architecture, Stapati