



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | ECOLOGE DESIGN | ECOTOURISM PLANNING | ARCHITECTURE | PHOTOGRAPHY

HITESH MEHTA

Protected Area Planning Resume

SUMMARY

Mr. Mehta is one of the world's leading authorities, practitioners and researchers on sustainable tourism and ecotourism physical planning and both the landscape architectural and architectural aspects of ecolodges. He also has vast experience in Protected Area Physical Planning and has worked on Sustainable Tourism Plans for National Parks that protect the last remaining endangered species such as Mountain Gorillas in Rwanda and DR Congo; Western Lowland Gorillas in Gabon, Chimpanzees in Uganda and Rwanda; Giant Pandas in China; Tigers in India and Black Rhinos in Kenya. Mr. Mehta not only has post-conflict experience in Rwanda but in-conflict experience in DR Congo.

From 1987-2006, Mr. Mehta was a Vice – President and Head of the Ecotourism and Environmental Planning Market Sector at EDSA, (Florida) the world's largest Landscape Architecture and Planning Firm. In January 2007, Mr. Mehta has re-started his firm **HM Design** which began in Kenya in 1991 and is currently working on projects in Costa Rica, Namibia, China, Panama, Kenya, Indonesia and Dominica.

He is the main editor of the *International Ecolodge Guidelines* and the author of the chapters on "Site Planning" and "Architectural Design". Mr. Mehta regularly conducts research on international trends in Ecolodges and his latest book - *Authentic Ecolodges* will be published by *Harper Collins* in October 2010. He sits on the Advisory Boards of The International Ecotourism Society, Adventure Council and "Dances for the Earth and all her Peoples" – IUCN and is one of the founding members of Ecotourism Kenya. Mr. Mehta is the International Advisor for the Japan Ecolodge Association and the French Ecotourism Association.

Mr. Mehta is/was a judge and on-site inspector for the Tourism for Tomorrow (WTTC), World Legacy Awards for Heritage Tourism and Ecotourism (National Geographic/Conservation International), Ecotourism Awards (Conde Nast Traveler) and Green Hotelier Awards (Caribbean Hotel Association).

Mr. Mehta has a distinguished history in academia. Apart from being an adjunct professor at several universities in Southern Florida, he was also the Chairman of Landscape Architecture Section, Department of Architecture, University of Nairobi and conducted studios in sustainable planning and design for five years. Currently, Mr. Mehta conducts one-of-a kind Ecoplanning and Design Workshops and Charettes (for George Washington University and The International Ecotourism Society) around the world and which are attended by, amongst others Deans, Professors and Students.

Mr. Mehta is also a *Professional Photographer* and an Ex-Cricket Captain from Kenya and in July 2006, **National Geographic** Adventure magazine identified Mr. Mehta as one of five Sustainable Tourism Pioneers in the world. In July 2005 he was named by **Men's Journal**, a New York based Magazine as the "25 Most Powerful People in Adventure" in the world.

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PROTECTED AREA RELATED EXPERIENCE

Mr. Mehta has had various experiences in Protected Area Sustainable Tourism Planning. Most of the experiences are in Africa while others are in Asia and the Caribbean:

- **Wild Beauty Tourism Accommodations**, Montenegro. Mr. Mehta has been assisting the German Aid Agency GTZ and the Ministry of Tourism in Montenegro to help create a new concept of accommodations in the wilderness areas of Montenegro. He has written a 36-page book that defines concepts such as 'wilderness' and 'wild beauty' in the context of Montenegro and which details all the various environmentally and socially friendly accommodations (including ecolodges) that should be permitted to build in the 'wild beauty' areas (8/08 to 7/09).
- **Volcanoes Safaris Lodges**, Rwanda and Uganda. Mr. Mehta advised the largest Great Apes Lodge Operator – Volcanoes Safaris on greening their three existing properties, namely Virunga Lodge (Rwanda), Gahinga Lodge (Uganda) and Bwindi Lodge (Uganda). HM Design's task was to audit and write a report on the existing site planning and Architectural designs, technologies and operations and to propose new environmentally friendly technologies, eco-design techniques and most importantly on how to create community, conservation and interpretation programmes which would upgrade the existing lodges into Ecolodges. HM Design also designed the new 'Executive Villa' (7/07 to 9/07).
- **Kyambura Gorge Lodge**, Uganda. Mr. Mehta was part of a team that designed the first Ecolodge in Uganda. HM Design is also the Landscape Architect and Site Planner and recently prepared the overall Site Plan of this beautiful site that overlooks the famous Kyambura Gorge which has a troop of Chimpanzees. The ecolodge site is creating a buffer zone between Queen Elizabeth National Park and local community farms. HM Design's input was not a full service effort but on a fixed day consultancy (6/07 to 1/08).
- **The Lodge at Chaa Creek**, Chaa Creek Nature Reserve, Belize. Mr. Mehta led a team that prepared a master plan for a 375 acre Nature Reserve and Ecolodge that contains over 70 Mayan ruins. The existing ecolodge has been running for over 25 years and is one of the most awarded ecolodges in the world. Mr. Mehta helped the client build a multi-disciplinary consultant team which included an Architect, Environmental Planner, landscape architects and eco-psychologist. HM Design produced in conjunction with consultants and staff members a ten year overall Master Plan which includes additions to the existing ecolodge as well as conservation areas. HM Design also designed high end 'rental pool' forest villas which are a first in Central America. The Overall master Plan now includes a forest ecolodge, destination wellness center, summer tented camp, nature interpretation center, conference center, wedding chapel, swimming pool, 'rental pool' villas, organic garden, horse and walking trails, canoeing etc. (4/07 to 9/07).
- **Dhikala Ecolodge**, Corbett Tiger Reserve, India. Mr. Mehta was the facilitator and team leader for the preparation of conceptual master plan for the rehabilitation of the existing Dhikala Lodge in Corbett Tiger Reserve, six hours north by car from New Delhi. Mr. Mehta facilitated a participatory ecolodge design charette comprising of local community, professionals, developers and members of the Forest Department and led the teams that is preparing the plans for the Dhikala Ecolodge. The program includes private accommodation (villas, dormitories) areas, old Forest Rest House, an interpretation center, day-use visitor center, amphitheater and public spaces such as reception, lounge and dining (5/06 to 7/06).



- **Nyungwe Ecolodge**, Nyungwe Forest National Park, Rwanda. Mr. Mehta was the lead Consultant, concept architect and landscape architect for the team that planned, designed and supervised the construction of the first ecolodge in Rwanda until it was taken over by Dubai World. The ecolodge is located in a tea plantation and at the edge of a Protected Area - Nyungwe Forest National Park. HM Design provided full services (from Conceptual Design to Construction Documents) and their local team consisted of Architect of Record, Mechanical Engineer, Electrical Engineer, Civil Engineer, Structural Engineer, Quantity Surveyor, a community Crafts liaison and an interior designer. The master plan includes four different types of villas, tree houses, conference center, wellness center, nature activity center, tree houses, library, trails. (3/06 to 1/08).
- **Parque Nacional de Los Nevados Ecotourism Plan**, Colombia, S. America. Mr. Mehta was the lead consultant contracted by the Governor of Departamento de Caldas to prepare an ecotourism plan for Los Nevados National Park which is home to the Volcano of Nevado Ruiz. The park includes high altitude volcano vegetation, the lakes and active volcanoes (8/05 to 3/06).
- **Kasese and Kabarole District Tourism Development Plans**, Uganda, East Africa. Mr. Mehta was the project manager for the team that planned World Bank funded sustainable development tourism plans for two districts in Western Uganda. These districts contain the UNESCO World Heritage site of Ruwenzori Mountain National Park, Kibale National Park and Queen Elizabeth National Park – protected areas that are important watersheds for Africa and which harbor the largest number of primate species in the world. EDSA produced in conjunction with local consultants and stakeholders an overall sustainable tourism master plan which includes community based products, royal tombs, museums, ecolodges, visitor centers, mountain and forest trails, crafts markets. EDSA also developed Zoning Plans and Tourism Circuits (6/05 to 6/06).
- **Menjangan Ecoresort**, Bali, Indonesia. Mr. Mehta was part of the EDSA team that designed the first Conceptual Master Plan for the first ecoresort in a National Park in Indonesia. The ecoresort lies in the buffer zone of the West Bali National Park. EDSA's task was to audit the existing master plan and facilities and to propose new environmentally friendly tourism products (Spa and wellness Center, Village, Dive Lodge etc) which will bring value to the property (4/05 to 6/06).
- **Shalta Desert Ecolodge**, Al Ghat, Saudi Arabia. Mr. Mehta was the facilitator and team leader for the preparation of a Desert Ecolodge in the Al Ghat National Park, three hours north of Riyadh. Mr. Mehta facilitated a participatory ecolodge workshop comprising of local community, professionals and members of the Supreme Commission of Tourism and led the team that prepared the final plans for the Shalta Ecolodge. The program includes private accommodation areas, presidential suite, an environmental utility learning area, nature center and public spaces such as reception, lounge and dining (3/05 to 10/05)
- **Desert Ecolodge Guidelines**, Saudi Arabia. Mr. Mehta helped the Supreme Commission of Tourism to select the best desert sites for ecolodge development in Saudi Arabia. Mr. Mehta also produced a comprehensive Desert Ecolodge Guidelines Document that will be handed out to potential developers and investors of ecolodge projects in the designated Ecotourism areas around the country. The prescriptive guidelines cover all aspects of development including site



planning, architectural design, infrastructure, construction (3/05 to 10/05).

- **Nosy Be Island and Toalagnaro Sustainable Tourism Development Plans**, Madagascar. Mr. Mehta was the project manager for the team that worked on two World Bank projects. The team prepared two separate sustainable tourism development plans for the northern island archipelago of Nosy Be and the southern region of Toalagnaro. Nosy Be is an existing 'sun and sand' tourism destination and includes a few protected areas while Toalagnaro is still developing and includes the important protected area of Andohahela. This region has the highest biodiversity in Madagascar including several species of Lemurs. EDSA were the team leaders of an international group of consultants which produced in conjunction with local stakeholders including fisherman and handy craftswomen overall sustainable tourism master plans which includes beach hotels, business hotels, bed and breakfasts, community products, museums, ecolodges, interpretation centers, mountain and forest trails. The EDSA team is also developed a Zoning and Phasing Plan (1/05 to 10/05).
- **Program for Belonger Business Opportunities in Protected Areas**, Turks and Caicos (TCI), British West Indies. Mr. Mehta was the leader for an international and local consultant EDSA team that visited and analyzed the protected areas in the seven inhabited islands of TCI in order to proactively identify potential businesses which will be supportive of and supported by specific protected areas. The EDSA team comprised of Protected Area Planners, Landscape Architects, Architect, Market and Financial Analyst, Environmental Engineer, Civil Engineer, Terrestrial Ecologist, Marine Ecologist, Solid Waste Expert, local Tourism specialist and a PR professional. The team prepared in association with local stakeholders, Belonger opportunity plans for each island and also conceptual plans and business portfolios for one project in each island. The concept is to provide concessions for Belongers (local people) to allow tourist and visitor service operations within the parks system. These include the development of visitor and interpretation centers, ecotour operations, restaurants, ecolodges and small hotels primarily run by local entrepreneurs. This plan is funded by the British AID agency, DIFID. (10/04 to 4/05).
- **Virunga Massif Transboundary Tourism Plan**, DR Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. Mr. Mehta is the lead consultant of the team that prepared a protected area transboundary tourism plan for the Virunga Massif which harbors half of the world's Mountain Gorilla population and eight volcanoes. One of the main purposes of this long term plan is to demonstrate how tourism can help alleviate livelihoods of local people. The overall plan includes hotels and camping sites, ecolodges, visitor centers, boardwalks, canopy walks, trails, entry gates, park administrative offices, visitor / interpretive center, local crafts markets and tourism information offices (5/04 to 3/05).
- **Nyungwe Forest National Park Ecotourism Plan**, Rwanda, Central Africa. Mr. Mehta was the project manager for this 870 km² Protected Area Ecotourism Plan. Nyungwe Forest is the largest Afro-Montane forest in Africa and is one of only two places in the world that harbor 12 species of primates. EDSA also conducted a three - day Ecolodge workshop and prepared a zoning plan for the whole forest as well as a conceptual master plan for an ecolodge (4/04 to 6/05).
- **Tourism Diversification Vision Plan**, Vieques and Culebra, Puerto Rico. - Mr. Mehta represented EDSA in the team that prepared an alternative tourism strategy for the islands of Vieques and Culebra. EDSA also surveyed and analysed properties handed over by the navy and which are now protected areas. The main objective of this mission was to carry out a



comprehensive site reconnaissance and identify environmentally friendly projects that would help the local communities (2/04 to 5/04).

- **Towards Ecotourism in Gabon – The Loango Region**, Gabon. Mr. Mehta was the EDSA representative in an international team contracted by Conservation International to prepare an ecotourism strategy and plan for the crown jewel of Gabon National Parks –Loango. EDSA analyzed existing tourism facilities and proposed ecoconversion techniques and new ecotourism products. Several conceptual master plans were developed for the various ecotourism products including ecolodges, canopy walks, existing facilities etc. (2/04 to 4/04).
- **Kisoro and Kanungu District Tourism Development Plans**, Uganda, East Africa. Mr. Mehta was the project manager for the team that planned two separate World Bank funded sustainable development tourism plans for the South-western Ugandan districts of Kanungu and Kisoro. These districts contain Mgahinga Gorilla National Park and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park – protected areas that harbor the last remaining populations of the Mountain Gorilla. EDSA produced in conjunction with local stakeholders including the Batwa (Pygmies), an overall tourism master plan which includes community products, museums, ecolodges, visitor centers, mountain and forest trails, canopy walk, crafts markets. EDSA also developed a Zoning Plan and Tourism Circuits (1/04 to 6/04).
- **Ecotourism Product Implementation Programme**, Kenya, East Africa. - Mr. Mehta was the lead consultant for TTC International which is based out of Dublin and contracted by the European Union (EU) to identify, design and develop tourism products which would contribute to the diversification of tourism in Kenya. Hitesh Mehta has helped prepare sustainable tourism development plans for Western and Nyanza Provinces which include several Protected Areas; an ecotourism Plan for Mbeere District; a conceptual master plan for an Ecolodge and construction documents for a Mud-crab restaurant. Mr. Mehta has also been working with TTF (Tourism Trust Fund) on all of the above projects (8/03 to 8/07).
- **Crosswaters Ecolodge**, Guangdong Province, S. China. Mr. Mehta was the project manager for the team that planned, designed and supervised the construction of the first ecolodge and wellness center in China within a Protected Area - Nankun Mountain Reserve. EDSA provided full services (from Conceptual Design to Construction Documents) and the team consisted of well known Australian Ecolodge Architect, Paul Pholeros, the world's leading bamboo Architect, Simon Velez from Colombia and Linda Garland, the well-known bamboo interior designer. The master plan includes an ecolodge and conference center, wellness center, nature activity center, boutique resort, trails. The project is scheduled to open in spring 2007 (3/03 to 1/07).
- **Sustainable Development Master Plan for Wolong Panda Reserve**, Sichuan Province, China. Mr. Mehta is the project manager for the team that is planning a sustainable development master plan for the 220,000-hectare Wolong Giant Panda Reserve which has the largest concentration of Giant Pandas in the world. The master plan includes hotels, ecolodge, wellness spa, visitor / interpretive center, trails and cabins, entry gates, park administrative offices, visitor / interpretive center, local crafts markets and tourism information offices (2/03 to 6/03).
- **West Caicos Island Sustainable Master Land Use Plan**, Isle of West Caicos, Turks and Caicos. Mr. Mehta is the project manager that is preparing a sustainable master land use plan for a 6,000-



acre island that has two National Parks. West Caicos has several archaeological and cultural sites of high value which will be preserved. The integrated master plan includes opportunities for heritage tourism, nature tourism, ecotourism and a residential plan for the local population (8/02 to 5/03).

- **Canouan Island Sustainable Master Plan**, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, British West Indies. Mr. Mehta was the project manager of a sustainable development master plan for the 2000-acre island of Canouan. The intention is to design an all-island conceptual land use plan, which is sustainably designed and engineered. EDSA carried out a land suitability analysis using the layering process of GIS Arcview software, and organized several stakeholder meetings to actively engage the local community in the preparation of the master plan (3/02 to 01/03).
- **Northwest Point**, Providenciales, Turks and Caicos. Mr. Mehta was part of the EDSA team that is planned and designed a sustainable master plan for a 19,000-acre area in North-West Providenciales. This very unique and pristine site has 4 national parks and reserves. The master plan includes an ecolodge and Park Ranger station, a 40-room Amman resort, a 200-room ecoresort and a long range community plan for the local population. EDSA is currently preparing a conceptual master plan for the ecoresort (1/02 to 3/03).
- **Vagamon Hill Retreat**, Kerala, India- Mr. Mehta was the project manager for a unique environmentally and socially friendly ecotourism destination in the Conservation International 'hotspot' of Western Ghats. The Tourism Master Development Plan for Vagamon as planned by EDSA, comprises of a 30-year overall Perspective Plan and 1-5 year Site Development Plan. Vagamon will be a hill destination that draws its inspiration from philosophical and spiritual traditions that are uniquely Indian. These traditions focus on the close and inextricable linkage in Indian philosophy between nature, spirituality and the self. (6/01 to 2/03).
- **Royal Galapagos Resort**, Santa Cruz, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador– Mr. Mehta carried out an environmental audit on an existing resort that was eight months from completion. The final report suggested ways in which the resort could rehabilitate its infrastructure to become more environmentally conscious. The resort includes 12 villas, swimming pool, tennis courts, spa, business center and small conference space, library and museum. (4/01 to 5/01).
- **Ecolodge Design, Construction and Operation Guidelines**, Red Sea, Egypt – Mr. Mehta was a member of the EDSA team that was involved in the production of a Guidelines Document that is handed out by the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to potential developers and investors of ecolodge projects in the designated Ecotourism Zones. The prescriptive guidelines cover all aspects of development and operations and include site planning, architectural design, infrastructure, construction, marketing, operations, financial aspects, interpretation and conservation. (9/00 to 12/00)
- **A New Ecotourism Zone**, Red Sea, Egypt – Mr. Mehta was a member of a team that was contracted by U.S.A.I.D. to create a new ecotourism zone in the southern Red Sea area, where the preservation and conservation of natural resources and environmental features were key determining factors in the design process. The team also audited samples of existing hotels and produced a document to suggest ways to improve the sustainability of tourism along the Red Sea Coast. (4/00 to 6/00)



- **Tourism Diversification and Development Program**, Kenya, East Africa. - Mr. Mehta was a member of a team that was contracted by the European Union (EU) to outline a program which is to contribute to the diversification of Kenya's tourism base through a sustainable model of tourism reconversion. The main objective of this mission was to carry out comprehensive project identification, entailing the gathering of relevant background information, and analyzing and processing it. EDSA's input was to provide a chapter on "Ecodesign and Ecotechnologies" for the Technical report. Three forms of methodology were used to fairly reflect the status of tourism facilities in Kenya: 1) *Interviews*, 2) *On-site visits* and 3) *Participatory Workshops*. The recommendations made in this chapter were compiled from the feedback given by the various stakeholders in the tourism building industry (3/99 to 5/99).
- **"Paraa Tented Camp"**, Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda – Mr. Mehta consulted on the preparation of eco-camp design guidelines (1/96 to 3/96).
- **"Paraa Lodge"**, Murchison Falls National Park, Uganda – Mr. Mehta was part of a three person team that prepared an Environmental Impact Assessment (E.I.A.) for alterations and additions to a 100 room existing lodge (11/94 to 5/95).
- **"Voi Wildlife Eco-Camp"**, Tsavo East National Park, Kenya – Mr. Mehta surveyed and analyzed a 50-acre site along Voi River just before the Voi Gate. Provided consultancy on location, orientation and site planning of eco-camp (6/91 to 8/91).

PROJECT AWARDS

- **"American Society Of Landscape Architect's (ASLA) General Design Honor Award"** for Crosswaters Ecolodge and Spa, China (2010)
- **"WTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Stewardship Finalist Award"** – Ministry of Tourism, Montenegro (2010).
- **"China Best Design Hotels Awards"** for 'Best Concept Hotel' and 'Judges Choice' to Crosswaters Ecolodge and Spa, Shanghai, China (2009)
- **"India Ministry of Tourism Best Planned National Park Award"** to Corbett National Park, India (2007-2008)
- **"American Society Of Landscape Architect's (ASLA) Research and Site Analysis Award"** for Crosswaters Ecolodge, China (2006)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Full member, American Society of Landscape Architects.
- Associate, The American Institute of Architects.
- Member, Royal Institute of British Architects
- Registered corporate member, Landscape Architects' Chapter of the Architectural Association of Kenya (A.A.K.).
- Registered corporate member, Architects' Chapter of the A.A.K.

MEMBERSHIPS

- World Wildlife Fund
- Sierra Club
- African Wildlife Foundation



- Greenpeace
- The Nature Conservancy

ACHIEVEMENTS

Cricket: Captain of the Kenya National Team in 1987 and 1993. Cricketer of the year (MVP): Kenya (1986 & 1992) and California (1989). Represented Kenya in all international tournaments from 1978 to 1987, including World Cups of 1979, 1982 and 1986.

Tennis: Runner-up in the Kenya Open Junior Championship, 1978.

Table Tennis: Member, University of Nairobi squad, 1983-1984.

Snooker, Squash, Badminton, Indian Dancing: Have won awards in various competitions

TRAVEL

Traveled to over 80 countries in six continents and over 36 states in United States of America.