PROJECT SUMMARY

MUGHAL HOTEL
Agra, India

The 200 room, five-star hotel, planned around garden courts and fountains, is entirely constructed of local materials.

occupied: November 1976

I. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

A. To provide adequate hotel, restaurant, and meeting facilities for visitors to the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri.

B. To capture the spirit of traditional Mughal architecture in a contemporary medium, responding to the physical and climatic environment.

C. To use and develop local trades and crafts, and to stimulate the local economy.

II. DESCRIPTION

A. The five hectare site is an irregularly shaped plot of land 5 kilometers from Agra, surrounded by agricultural fields. To the north lies the small village of Tajganj, whose cemetery forms the eastern edge of the site. The Taj Mahal is just north of the village, and Fatehpur Sikri is nearby.

B. The hotel consists of 200 rooms, four restaurants, two conference rooms, a health club, recreational facilities, and a small shopping arcade. Support facilities include the kitchen, laundry, sewage and mechanical plants.

C. The rooms are organized around three courtyards in two- storey quadrangles. They are linked to each other and to the central public block by enclosed pedestrian bridges. The courts are gradually excavated to a level 12 feet below grade by a series of landscaped terraces, pools, and fountains that act as buffer zones between the private rooms and common areas.

D. A formal Mughal garden, on axis with the Taj Mahal, provides a vista for the central building, and serves as the focal point of the walkways.
A series of informal gardens to the east completes the complex.

III. DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND USE

A. The predominantly two-storey, garden-oriented structure is intended to be a contemporary expression of traditional Mughal architecture. The primary model was the red sandstone city of Fatehpur Sikri. As was characteristic of Mughal design, landscaping and water form an integral part of the scheme.

B. Climate Control
The hotel is conceived as an oasis in the hot, dusty environment. All rooms are grouped to take advantage of the cooling effects of the pools and gardens. Those facing north and south have bay windows, while those facing east and west have deeply recessed windows.

Since most of the common areas in the public block have high ceilings and many windows to assure a view of the Taj, these rooms are enclosed with a double wall system that acts as a thick screen to shelter the large openings from direct sun penetration. There are no openings in the south and west facades.

All rooms are centrally air conditioned. The major HVAC system is separately housed to form principal elements in the massing scheme. The distribution system of interconnected shafts, service tunnels, and roof terraces ensures an ease of installation and maintenance while reducing the need for large diffusers and access panels.

C. Construction
The availability of local craftsmen and a large labor force, along with an abundance of readily accessible simple materials allowed a minimum dependence on modern technology. All work was done in the construction yard established on the site. The entirely domestic labor force was primarily (80%) unskilled.

D. Materials
The basic structure for the hotel rooms is brick bearing walls supporting concrete slabs. The central block of public spaces is a concrete frame structure with brick infill.

Paving material is white marble in the public areas, slate and red sandstone in the gardens, and carpeting in the hotel rooms. The lodgings are finished with painted plaster, and the lobby walls are faced with marble. Door and window frames are teak, and structural ceramic tiles are used for the planters and curbing.