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Service.

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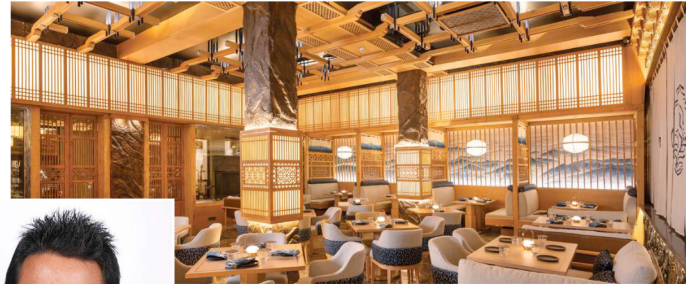
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Providing expertise and exposure to local Ladakhi talent

RYU OKA at The Grand Dragon Ladakh was envisioned as Ladakh's first destination-led fine dining concept, filling a gap beyond buffet-driven tourism dining. Rooted in Silk Route heritage yet attuned to modern travellers, it blends Pan-Asian cuisine with local produce. In an interview, Danish Din, Director, The Grand Dragon Ladakh, talks about the restaurant's approach with immersive storytelling and sustainable talent development to redefine hospitality in the region and future plans

What market gap or guest need was RYU OKA designed to address that The Grand Dragon Ladakh's existing restaurants could not fulfill?

For years, dining in Ladakh has largely revolved around hospitality catering largely to tourists and groups – generous buffets, familiar multi-cuisine menus, and meals designed for packaged itineraries. What was missing was a fine dining restaurant that people would actively seek out as part of the destination experience itself. RYU OKA was conceptualised to fill that space. The idea was not simply to introduce another cuisine, but to create a more layered and immersive dining experience – one that reflects Ladakh's historic connection to Asia through the Silk Route while responding to the evolving expectations of modern travellers who increasingly value storytelling, atmosphere, and culinary identity as much as the food itself.

How does the group overcome Ladakh's supply chain and kitchen constraints while sourcing both local ingredients and imported components?

In Ladakh, logistics shape every kitchen decision. Roads close seasonally, fresh



produce is unpredictable, and imported ingredients require meticulous planning. Rather than resisting these realities, RYU OKA was designed around them.

Certain speciality ingredients essential to the integrity of the cuisine are sourced and stocked well in advance, while the menu itself remains adaptive and responsive to what the region can sustainably provide. Local produce – from mountain greens and herbs to apricots and seabuckthorn – finds its way into the menu not as a novelty, but as a meaningful part of the restaurant's culinary language. The result is a Pan-Asian experience that feels rooted in place rather than disconnected from it.

How does RYU OKA balance training local Ladakhi talent with hiring specialised chefs, and how sustainable is this model in a remote region like Ladakh?

Since The Grand Dragon Ladakh has been nurturing talent for the last few decades, it is but natural that we would offer growth opportunities and learning to our in-house talent. At RYU OKA and The Grand Dragon Ladakh, there is a conscious effort to balance external expertise with local talent development. We are constantly working on providing expertise and exposure to local Ladakhi



Anjum Qadir, the creative force behind RYU OKA and scion of the Abdu family that runs The Grand Dragon Ladakh

talent to build the foundation of continuity and long-term growth. Training is deeply embedded into the process, with an emphasis on gradually building specialised culinary and service skills within the local workforce.

In a region where retaining talent can be challenging, investing in people becomes essential. Over time, the aim is not simply to operate a successful restaurant, but to contribute to the evolution of hospitality talent within Ladakh itself.

How does RYU OKA manage Ladakh's seasonal tourism fluctuations, and how is it positioned as a destination dining experience beyond hotel guests?

Seasonality defines life in Ladakh, and hospitality here naturally moves in rhythm with the landscape. During the summer months, RYU OKA hopes to cater to a growing segment of experiential travellers seeking an elevated dining experience that would be available to them at any leisure destination. In quieter months, the focus shifts toward intimate dining experiences, curated menus, local gatherings, and long-stay travellers, helping create a more year-round identity rather than one tied purely to peak tourism cycles.

Is RYU OKA intended to remain a flagship concept unique to Leh, or are there plans to replicate it in other mountain destinations?

At its core, RYU OKA the concept draws deeply from the region's geography, history, and centuries-old cultural exchange routes linking Central Asia to China, Japan and other Asian countries. While the broader philosophy of destination-led dining could certainly evolve in other unique geographies over time, the restaurant was never conceived as a formula to be replicated quickly.

What are The Grand Dragon Ladakh's peak and off-season business trends? What is the ratio of F&B to Rooms revenue?

Like most hospitality businesses in Ladakh, The Grand Dragon experiences its strongest occupancy between May and September, when leisure tourism peaks and the region becomes more accessible. However, travel patterns to Ladakh are slowly evolving. Winter tourism, cultural travel, photography expeditions, wellness retreats, and smaller experiential groups are increasingly extending interest beyond the traditional season. While rooms continue to contribute the majority of revenue, food and beverage has steadily become a more strategic vertical for the hotel. Concepts like RYU OKA reflect a broader shift toward positioning dining not merely as a supporting amenity, but as an important part of the property's identity and guest appeal.

How does The Grand Dragon Ladakh position its pricing against emerging luxury stays and resorts? Is pricing point a concern to achieve high occupancy?

Ladakh is like any other leisure destination and pricing is dependent on supply and demand.

What is the expected ROI timeline for RYU OKA, and will future investments focus on expansion, new F&B concepts, or local sourcing integration?

RYU OKA is being viewed as a long-term investment in brand identity as much as in revenue generation. ROIs are normally calculated over a 5-year gestation period, but restaurants of this nature often create value beyond direct financial returns – shaping perception, strengthening destination appeal, and elevating the overall hospitality narrative of the property to reflect Ladakh's evolving position within luxury and experiential travel.