

The Masterplan

Kirubeli Cove Retreat, Karnataka



View of the Cove - looking North

Phase I:

- Guest Apartments - 4 Nos.
- Pre-fabricated Wooden Cabins - 3 Nos.
- Staff Housing

Phase II:

- Pre-fabricated Wooden Cabins - 7 Nos.
- Restaurant
- Library

Project Type	: Residential + Hospitality
Location	: Kagala, North Karnataka, India
Structural Consultant	: Dolomite Structures
MEP Consultants	: ESVE Designs Pvt. Ltd.
Land Area	: 9.8 Acres
Built Up Area	: 24,394 sq.ft.
Year	: 2022 - 2026
Status	: Work in progress
	Phase I expected to complete by December, 2025
Photographs	: OTLA
	(Kashyap Bhagat, Krish Shah, Megha Yadav)

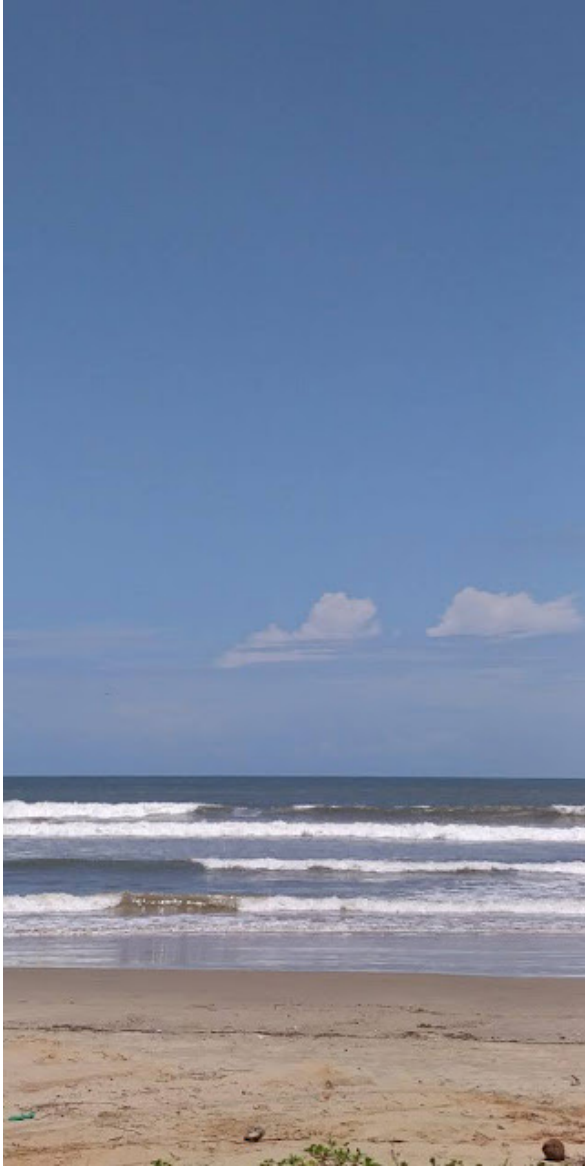


Beyond the magnanimity of the Western Ghats, the Aghanashini river basin unfolds a labyrinth of shallow waterways into the Arabian Sea. These rivers running into the basin bring nutrient rich waters down from the Ghats; nurturing an abundant ecosystem, supporting large expanses of shrimp and clam farms, paddy fields and aquaculture. These backwaters are the result of the estuary in low-lying land trapped between a slightly raised coastal belt and the last vestiges of the Western Ghats which tumble into their waters.

Nestled within this densely forested coastal belt, out beyond a hillock at the land's end, the cross sea waves of the Aghanashini estuary lap on a gentle, sable-soft beach at the cove. This cove is formed by two forest cliffs, 350 meters apart, dramatically dropping into the sea. Just a few hundred meters away from the beach, beyond a thicket of coconut, cashew and jack-fruit trees, a wall of jungle rises up, enveloping the expanse of the cove. Anchored onto the Laterite bedrocks at the foot of the hillock, lies a small village settlement called Kirubeli. This fishermen settlement of about 8 families thrives on a unique ecosystem of natural resources and the sponge like geography of the tapering cliffs; acting as a catchment for absorbing monsoon rains, abundantly recharging underground aquifers resulting in a topography of fresh water wells at the cove.



Study model of the cove



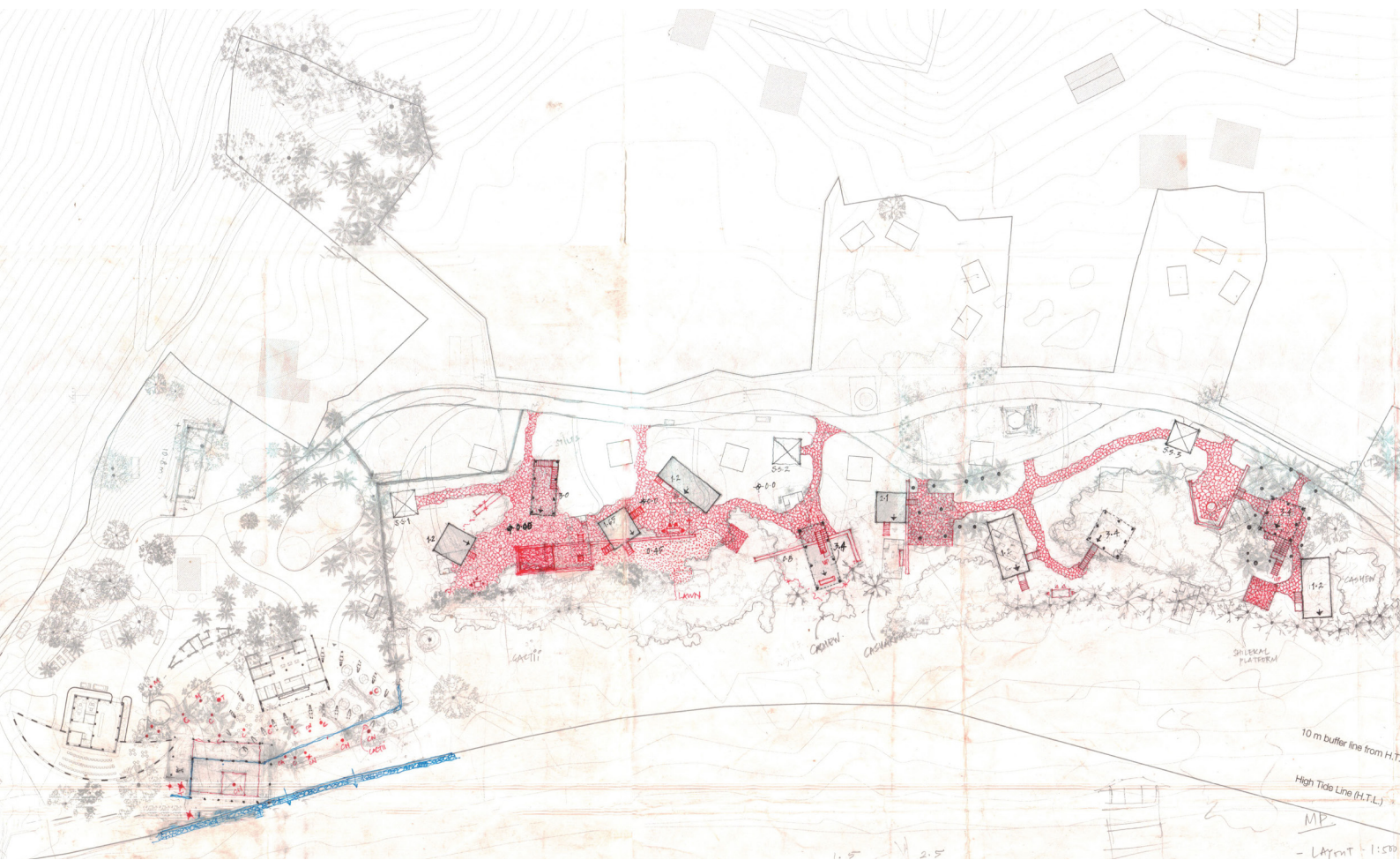


The vision for the land is rooted into the study of this terrain and attempts to preserve this pristine ecosystem while inhabiting it discretely, through a series of sensitive design interventions with a focus on innovative and proactive ecological regeneration. The business model is to create spaces of extended stay for nature immersive wellness - eat, rest, leisure, pray, and adventure; by partnering with the communities that have nurtured this wetland ecosystem for millennia.



Coconut palm shading device





Conceptual sketch -
Pedestrian access and stone follies through the accomodations area

Due to the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) guidelines, an extensive part of the design is built as a collection of temporary structures in pre-fabricated timber post and beam construction techniques. Owing to the presence of an old, dilapidated mud-plastered house, a pre-designed RCC framed structure was permitted to be built on the same footprint.

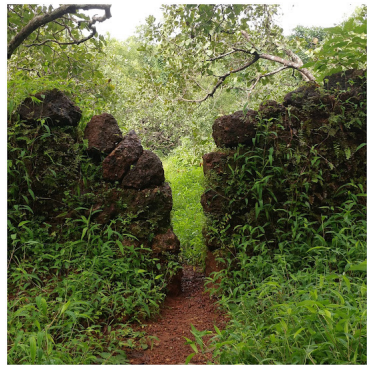
The project starts with the revival of the age-old storm water channel and creation of the main artery across the length of the property to act like a bund, keeping a check on the surface run-off water from the forests above, preventing excessive flooding into the main areas during peak monsoons. The guidelines from a local priest paved the way for conceptualizing the revival of the historic shrines using granite and timber, crafted with a team of boat-makers and artisans.

As one drives down through the thicket of the jungle, pinned at the northernmost tip of the cove, two angled 'shilekallu' dressed stone walls mark the entrance of the retreat, with a small opening - just enough to get a glimpse of the shimmering waters beyond. Through the opening, a stone paved pathway, meandering through the coastal fringes of the forest, opens up to the vastness of the estuary – leading the way south, towards the accommodations.

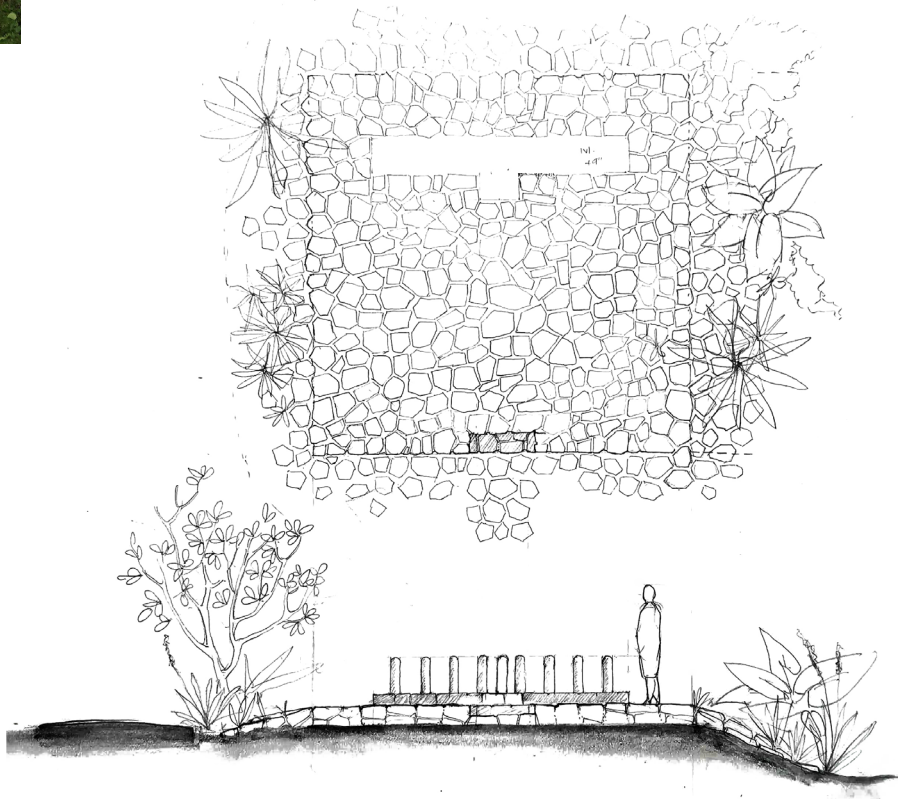


Masterplan





Pedestrian entrance
to the Retreat

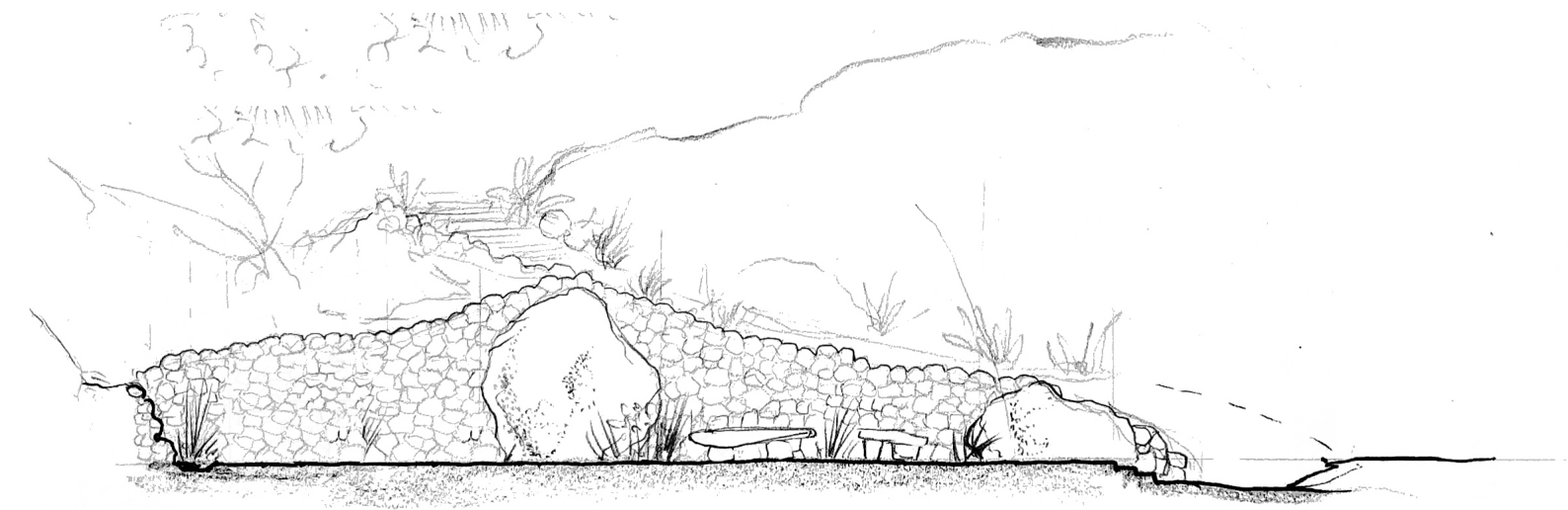


Revival of an existing sacred grove
dedicated to Lord Shiva



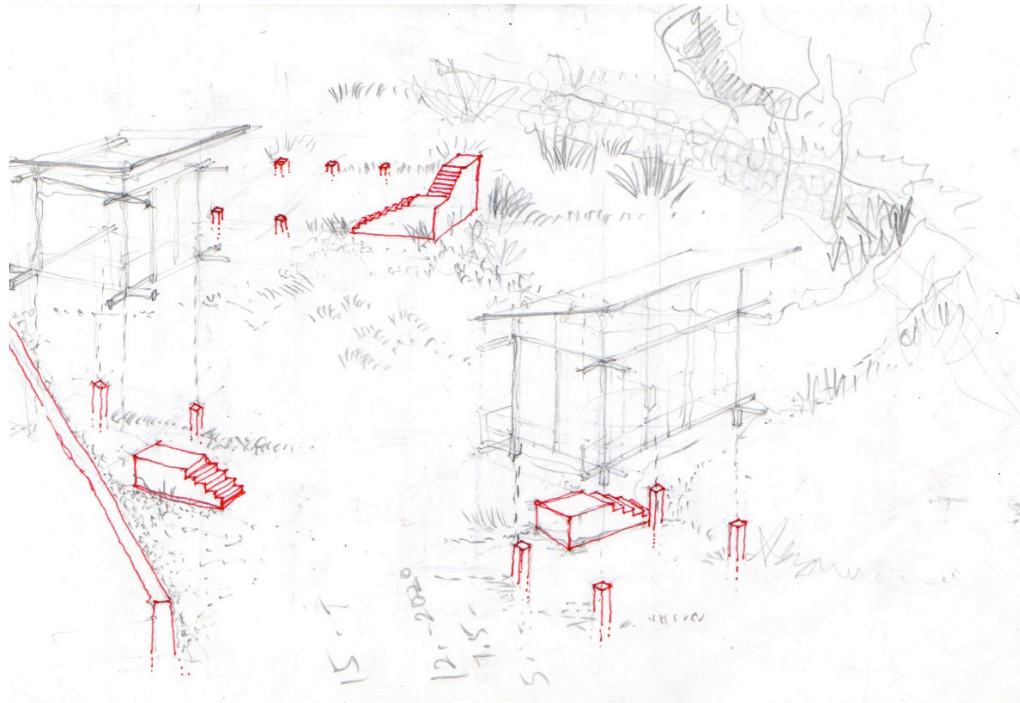
Revival of the existing
community shrine dedicated to
Lord Shiva





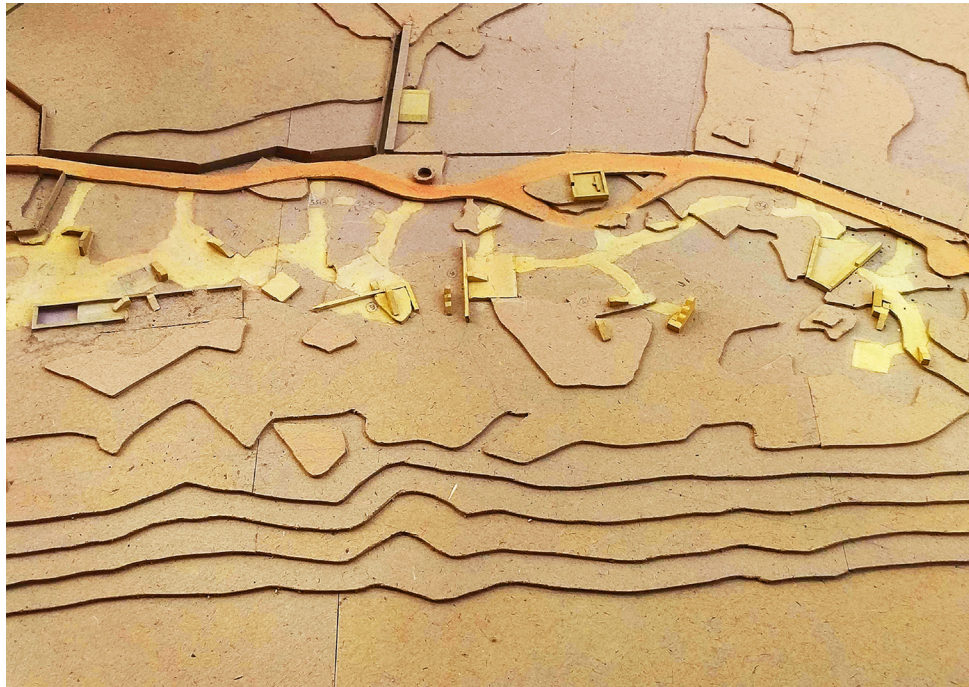
Revival of an existing, privately owned shrine
dedicated to Lord Shiva





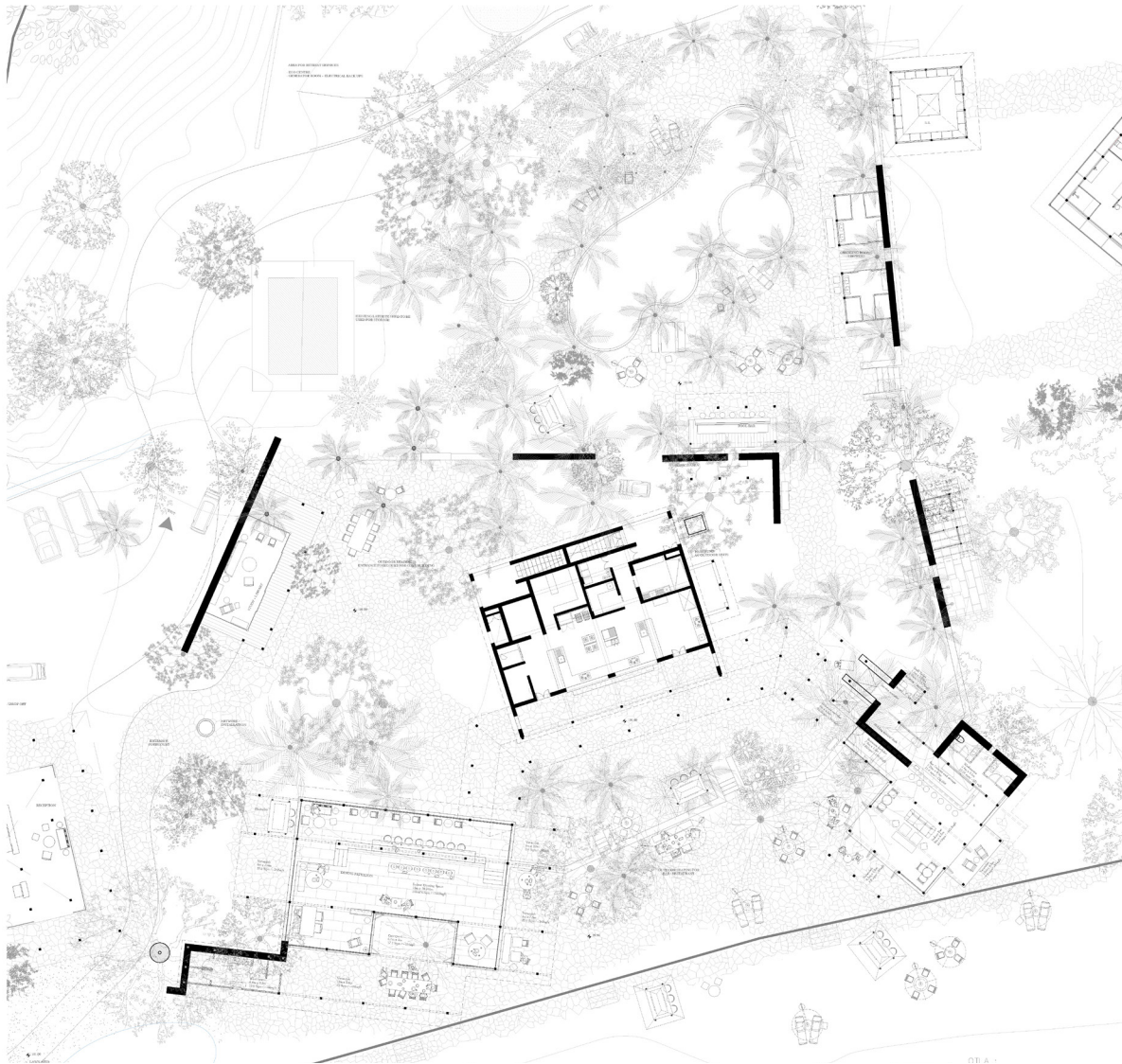
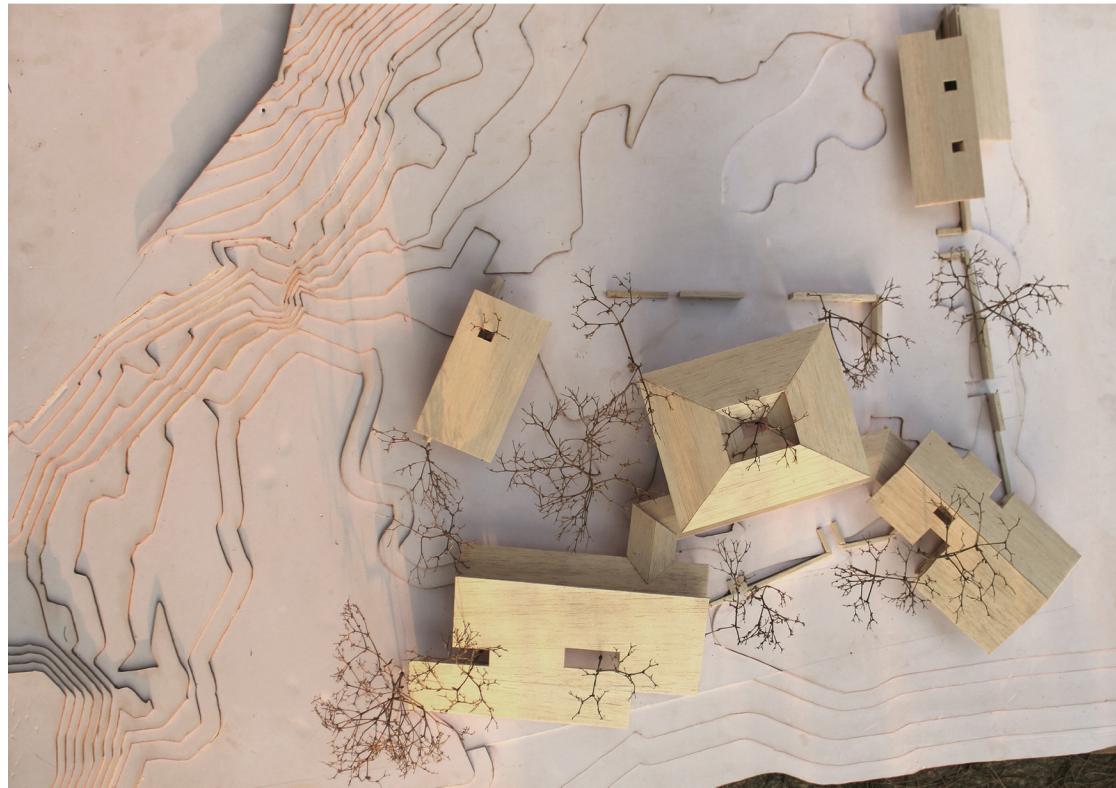
As we move southwards, just behind the beach, a low-lying area – historically a paddy field fits itself protected by a thicket of cashew trees towards the beachfront. The landscape along the beach keeps transforming itself in the form of sandy shores penetrating inwards, a row of casuarina trees acting as wind breakers or an intimate grove of coconut trees. With careful consideration of this shifting terrain, nuanced interventions of stone follies are embedded into the landscape in the form of elongated landings and platforms, bund walls and in-built benches. These inserts become points of pause, a moment to immerse and embrace the phenomenal natural wealth.

Pre-fabricated wooden cabins as a different experience of stay and comfort; come and lightly perch themselves onto these follies, re-purposing them into accessways, foundational supports, retaining walls or ramps.



Study models for the guest cabins /
accomodations area

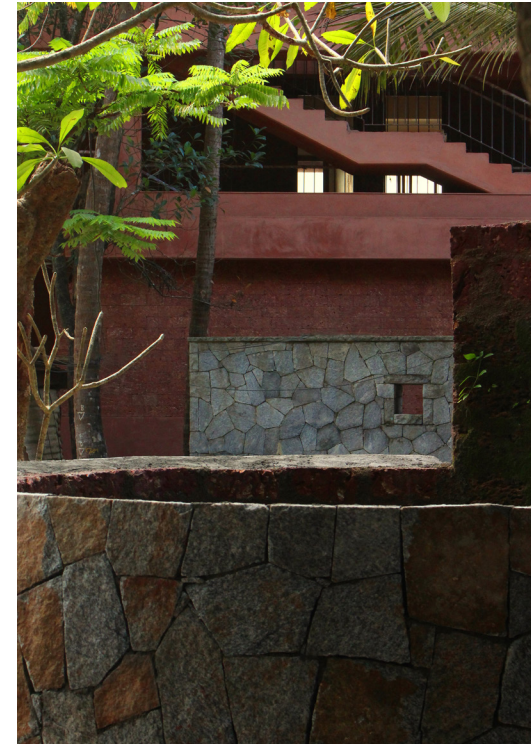




Guest apartments
Kitchen+Dining
Library
Swimming Pool





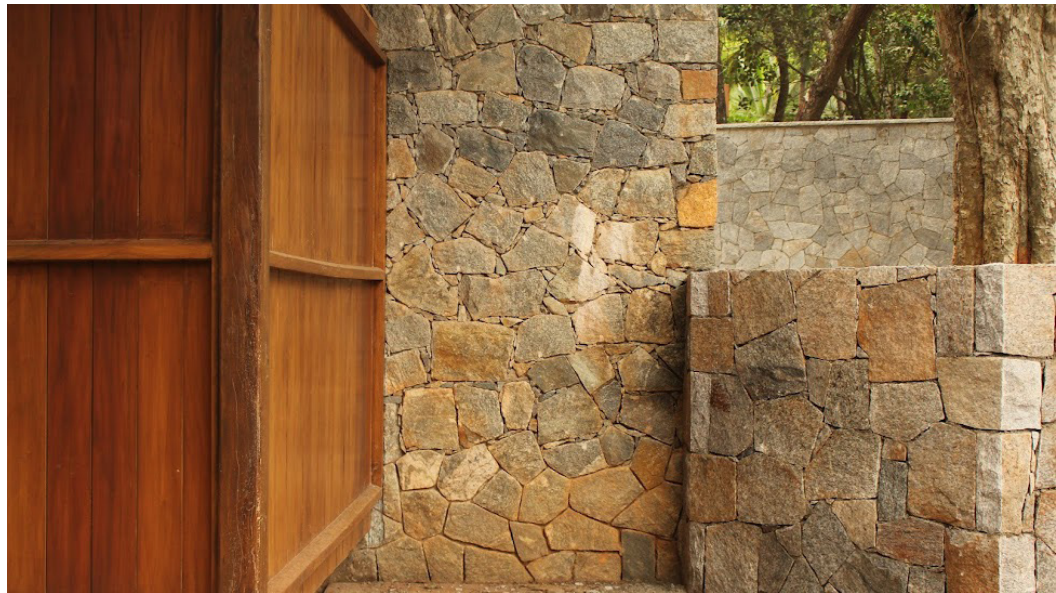


Stone follies and walls surrounding the guest apartment building





Stone walls surrounding the guest apartment building





Study model - Staff housing

Just beyond the east boundary of the site; along the water channel, a skewed strip of land juts out, connecting a small parcel of steeply sloped land amidst a jungle of coconut and mango trees. With a direct connection to the main artery of the retreat, this compact site houses the staff and the back-of-house amenities for the entire retreat.

Envisaged as a physical release from urban life, the design very subtly fits itself into the surroundings, bringing the ever-changing ecology of the estuary to the forefront. These interventions belong and catalyze the natural regeneration of the land. Almost like a palimpsest, the nuanced nature of the design provides an adaptive framework, modifying and adding to itself with time, embracing the land and its elements.

Staff Housing





Stone walls surrounding the guest apartment building





