



# ENGAGE

May-June 2023 | Volume 3 | Issue 3



## Wellness Breaks

Shaken and stirred after the pandemic, travellers are now looking for mind, body and soul experiences. Hotels are tweaking offerings to respond to the change.



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## From the President's Desk



**PUNEET CHHATWAL**  
President, Hotel Association of India  
MD & CEO, The Indian Hotels Company Limited

**W**ellness Tourism is one of the fastest-growing tourism segments. It is a vibrant, creative and evolving field that is expected to lead the global tourism industry as more travellers are prioritizing their well-being and seeking experiences that promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and self-care.

Today's consumer views wellness through a much broader lens, encompassing physical and emotional well-being. The growing significance of holistic wellness has prompted the hospitality industry to respond by incorporating wellness facilities, integrating wellness into design and dining options, offering mindfulness and wellness programming, prioritizing sleep quality, curating wellness-inspired packages, and leveraging technology. By doing so, the industry is adapting to the evolving needs and preferences of guests seeking comprehensive well-being experiences during their travels, making wellness breaks a significant aspect of the industry.

The focus on wellness extends beyond guests to include the well-being of hospitality staff. Hotels and resorts are recognizing the importance of providing support and resources to their employees to promote a healthy work-life balance. This may include wellness programs, access to fitness facilities, mental health support, and training in self-care practices.

Yoga and ayurveda play a significant role in this space, and India has recognized their potential as key attractions for international travellers. The Indian government has incorporated these practices into its tourism policy to promote wellness tourism and position India as a leading destination for holistic well-being. India played a crucial role in establishing the International Day of Yoga, celebrated on June 21 every year with the motive of spreading awareness about the Vedic practice, yoga, and meditation.

India's tourism policy encourages the development of dedicated yoga and ayurveda centers across the country. Specific guidelines for the accreditation of wellness centers have been developed by National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) in consultation with AYUSH. The Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) focuses on research, development, and standardization of ayurveda and yoga practices.

Recognizing the immense potential of Indian wellness offerings to attract international and domestic tourists, the government aims to position India as a leading destination for wellness tourism, leveraging its rich traditions, natural landscapes, and expertise in yoga and ayurveda. **HAI**



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COVER IMAGES:  
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Take a stunning visual tour of some incredible sights of historic importance and architectural marvels. The art, craft and culinary delights of the state will leave you craving for more.

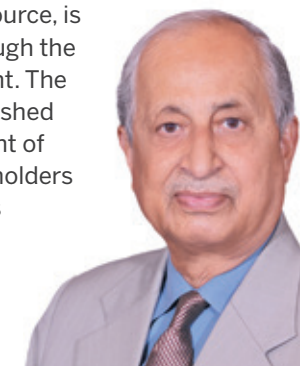


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### Expanding the Horizon of Experience

Wellness, as a tourism resource, is not a very old concept though the tradition behind it is ancient. The Covid-19 crisis was a watershed moment in the development of tourism, compelling stakeholders to look at sustainable ways to rebuild tourism, and to look at opportunities for transformation. "Wellness" is one way of such transformation.



# ENGAGE



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## Hospitality industry aims to capitalize on Rs 850-cr revenue opportunity during India's G20 presidency



**T**he hospitality sector is gearing up to maximize profits, projected at Rs 850 crore, from the surge in demand due to India's G20 Presidency. The increased travel and accommodation needs of delegations have presented an immense opportunity for players in the industry, who are also focused on strengthening their foundations for future expansion.

Cities hosting G20 meetings have witnessed a remarkable spike in room rates for five-star hotels, with prices soaring by approximately 20 percent since the last quarter of 2022. This upward trend is expected to persist in the coming months, according to K B Kachru, Vice President of the Hotel Association of India, who shared his insights with PTI.

Kachru said: "The event is anticipated to generate around Rs 850 crore in revenue, primarily from delegation-related travel and accommodation requirements. Consequently, it is certain to exert a positive influence on the growth of the business."

There is a visible impact in the increase in hotel occupancies and revenues as also in the employment prospects in the sector, said Kachru, who is also chairman emeritus and principal advisor, South Asia, Radisson Group, adding, "The hospitality industry is expected to witness a 5.5 percent CAGR."

India will host over 200 meetings in 59 different locations across the country with over 1.5-lakh delegates from the Group of 20 countries expected to participate.

In a similar vein, Chalet Hotels Ltd managing director & CEO Sanjay Sethi has said: "The G20 summit, hosted by India as part of its presidency, is set to provide a major boost to the country. The positive impact of the summit extends beyond the immediate year, encompassing increased international exposure, infrastructure development, and destination branding."

Regenta & Royal Orchid Hotels chairman and managing director Chander K Baljee said G20 presidency will also be a critical enabler of showcasing and promoting "India's rich heritage, landscape, tourist attractions and the diversity in a greater canvas and thereby attracting a larger influx of international tourism -something that is yet to come back at pre-covid levels".

When asked about the increase in room tariffs, Kachru said: "Price is a factor of demand and supply. G20 has spurred demand, especially in cities where the meetings are scheduled."

Citing a report by JLL, he said: "Room rates for five-star hotels in key business cities have increased by about 20 percent since the last quarter of 2022. There has been a threefold growth in rates and occupancy. Rates also vary with seasonality and market mix."

He further said, "We expect this trend to continue in the coming months, propelled by sporting events, the Cricket World Cup (ICC), weddings and the beginning of the tourist season." **HAI**



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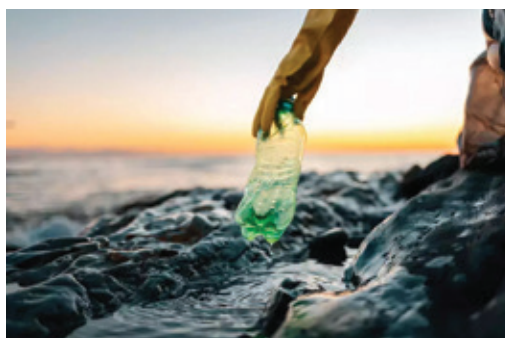
## 'India committed to sustainable tourism'



India is creating a conducive environment for the tourism sector to contribute to economic growth, environmental protection and social well-being in a sustainable manner, Union Minister for Culture, Tourism and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) G Kishan Reddy stated. Addressing an event at the 'High-Level Political Forum 2023 - UN World Tourism Organisation' at the UN headquarters, he said India is committed to sustainable and green tourism.

## HAI promotes social inclusion

A deep sense of concern for the planet and the community has been a prominent focus area for the Hotel Association of India (HAI). MP Bezbaruah, Secretary General, HAI, has stated: "We are proud to be able to receive continued support from our member hotels to all our initiatives of social inclusion that project and strengthen the image of the Industry as being a responsible one, a sector that cares for the community and the society at large. HAI's initiatives of social inclusion are unprecedented and have no parallel in any hospitality industry at the global level." Recently, HAI became the first Industry body to align with WTTC's initiative of Global Hotel Sustainability Basics.



## IIHM curriculum revisions

IIHMs have been revising curriculums to evolve with the times. Their hospitality courses now provide learning and practical training in relevant areas like data analytics, CRM, and

revenue management systems, as well as in the rapidly expanding field of digital marketing. At IIHM, students may opt for international internships too. Another major driver of hospitality education is going to be sustainability.



In line with UN SDGs, courses on waste management, green building, and eco-friendly practices have also been incorporated.



## Skilling is important: Kachru

KB Kachru, vice-president, Hotel Association of India (HAI), and chairman, Radisson Hotels Group, in an interaction with ET Hospitality-World stated: "I feel that the industry has to work individually and collectively with skill agencies like Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council (THSC). It has been doing a commendable job in keeping a close watch on emerging trends in the hospitality industry, and helping develop courses and training programs that address these trends and equip workers with the skills they need to succeed in these areas."



## Sports events boost Hospitality

Supporting events, alongside weddings, have emerged as significant contributors to the hotel industry. Cricket, Kabbadi and Football matches have led to a surge in hotel bookings. Also, the advent of new leagues has increased hotel occupancy rates in many cities. The ODI Cricket World Cup hosted in October and November will fuel demand around the match dates.

## Green Key certification

Ahmedabad-based Centre for Environment Education (CEE) will introduce Green Key, an international standard and certification for excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operations, associated with

the hospitality industry. CEE was set up under the scheme for centres of excellence by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC). It's the India partner of the Copenhagen-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).



## 'Native Explorers' holiday closer to home



Marriott International has coined a term to describe a new generation of travellers set to disrupt the industry over the next few years. 'Native Explorers' recognizes a tribe of affluent millennial and Gen Z travelers in Asia Pacific who are bucking the trend by travelling in reverse order to generations before them. As per a survey by Marriott International, more than two-thirds of Asia-Pacific's Gen Z and millennials intend to holiday closer to home.



## HAI mourns the loss of visionary hotelier Anil Madhok

The Hotel Association of India (HAI) is deeply saddened by the demise of Mr Anil Madhok, founder of Sarovar Hotels and esteemed HAI member. He was a visionary leader, an industry icon and an inspiration to many in the hospitality sector. He will be missed dearly. His legacy will continue to enthuse and encourage the industry in times to come.

## Haryana restaurants open 24x7

Restaurants in Haryana may now remain open for 24 hours. This would give a significant boost to revenue and night life in cities like Gurgaon and Chandigarh, which have a large young population. "There will be no restrictions on restaurants to close at night; no one can force them to shut down," Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala has said. Industry executives welcomed the development, stating that the move would be a win-win for all stakeholders. abroad so far has exceeded the threshold of Rs 7 lakh in the fiscal year.

## TCS on overseas tours

The Ministry of Finance has said that TCS will be levied at 5% on overseas tour packages for amounts of up to Rs 7 lakh per individual per annum. The rate will go up to 20% for spending beyond the threshold. MakeMyTrip group vice-president, taxation, Tajinder Singh said, in case a tour package is booked from the e-commerce portal, the company will take an undertaking from its customers, on whether the total amount remitted abroad so far has exceeded the threshold of Rs 7 lakh in the fiscal year.



## Meghalaya secures \$79.05 mn from NDB to boost tourism

The Meghalaya Ecotourism Infrastructure Development Project (MEIDP), an externally aided project (EAP), recently got into an agreement with the New Development Bank (NDB). The total cost of the project is \$98.80 million (equivalent to Rs 731 crore), of which \$79.05 million is being supported by the NDB.

For EAPs in the north-eastern states, the Government of India passes 90% of the funding as grants to the State and only 10% of the amount is borne by the state government.



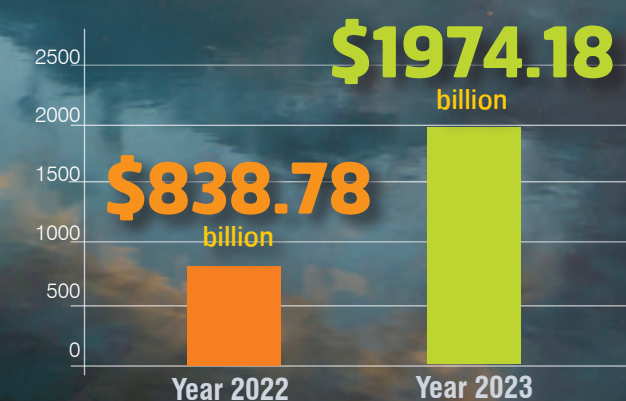
# Tranquil Sanctuaries

Shaken and stirred after the pandemic, travellers are now looking for mind, body, soul experiences. The imperative to be far from the teeming crowd and being responsive to people and planet has overtaken the urge to simply have a holiday with pretty pictures. Hotels are tweaking offerings to respond to the change. The government too has taken note of the vast potential of wellness tourism and guidelines are in place to ensure quality of service.

Team HAI Engage

CGH Earth Group of Hotels

## Global Wellness Tourism Market Size



CAGR during the forecast period for 2023-2031: **10.17%**

Source: <https://www.insightanalytics.com/>

## Feeling good: The wellness imperative

McKinsey survey of 7,500 consumers in six countries:

Wellness is top priority:  
**42 %**



Wellness is important:  
**79%**





Wellness tourism is on the rise. The UN sustainable development goals report 2022 states that by 2050, seven out of 10 people will be living in urban areas. In India, by 2047, half of the country's population would be urbanised. The pressures of urban life lead to a desire for wellness, for self-discovery and for healing. Post Covid-19, there has been a palpable change in people's awareness and attitude towards mind, body, soul experiences. The awakening of a healthy 'I' beyond the physical self has been the silver lining to the tough times all experienced during the pandemic. However, that's not the only change. What has been most apparent is the growing belief in holistic wellness—going back to the basics and opening up to ancient wisdom and the oldest sciences of healing such as ayurveda and yoga—has started to resonate the world over. India's ancient systems of healing are also propelling the medical tourism industry, that's attracting people from SAARC nations, African and CIS countries. While the international medical tourism is primarily drawn by the swank private hospital chains, yoga, meditation and spiritual sites are a popular refuge for those seeking holistic healing.

Leaning into a bucolic life promises wellness, being away from traffic and daily routine. Rural tourism is picking up in pristine green



Niraamaya Spa

places, from Majuli in Assam, Nako in Himachal, Mawlynnong in Meghalaya, to Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu. More than 60% of domestic tourism is spiritual. People are flocking to holy places, where the past, present and future cross paths, existing in a meaningful soiree. About 70 million people visited the Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi last year after its renovation compared to around eight million a year earlier. 2023 travel predictions claim that nearly 70% of Indian travellers are seeking to

try a spiritual stay, which includes meditation and mindfulness getaways, while 63% are looking at silent retreats. The Global Wellness Tourism Market Size is valued at \$838.78 billion in 2022 and is predicted to reach \$1974.18 billion by 2031 at a 10.17% CAGR.

Wellness tourist spots promote blended experiences, or a combination of physiological, spiritual, and emotional activities that encourage good health and well-being.

As per a McKinsey survey of roughly 7,500 consumers in six countries, 79% of the respondents said they believe that wellness is important, and 42% consider it a top priority. In fact, consumers in every market researched reported a substantial increase in the prioritization of wellness.

Wellness tourism is undoubtedly leading India's travel recovery. Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced schemes such as PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and



Spiritual Augmentation Drive) in 2015. Focusing on developing pilgrimage sites across India, Modi's efforts to promote spiritual tourism were part of a broader strategy – to boost tourism in the country and showcase India's cultural and spiritual diversity to the world. Realising the change in people's preference for travel, the makers of the Incredible India Campaign 2.0 have made a shift from generic promotions to specific promotional plans. Thematic creatives on niche tourism products are being used in the campaign now to cater to diverse consumer interests, including yoga and wellness. India is being positioned as a centre of Ayurveda, Yoga, Sidha, Naturopathy, etc. together with the spiritual philosophy that has been integral to the Indian way of life.



Kashi Vishwanath Temple

**70 million people visited the Kashi Vishwanath Dham in Varanasi last year after its renovation compared to around eight million a year earlier**



**“The philosophy of Ananda focuses on Ayurveda & holistic wellness, yoga & meditation, emotional healing, spiritual awareness, and healthy cuisine”**

**MAHESH NATARAJAN**  
**COO, Ananda, Himalayas**

Over two decades back, near Rishikesh, Ananda in the Himalayas offered a peaceful retreat for wellness seekers. The spa still retains its eminent position owing to a dedicated clientele and word of mouth recommendations. Says **Mahesh Natarajan**, COO, Ananda in the Himalayas: “Rishikesh is the birthplace of ayurveda, yoga and meditation. Taking an integrative ayurvedic approach, Ananda addresses underlying factors that lead to chronic and debilitating lifestyle disorders through their 15 signature wellness programmes which are customised to individual requirements. The philosophy of Ananda focuses on ayurveda & holistic wellness, yoga & meditation, emotional healing, spiritual awareness, and healthy food.”

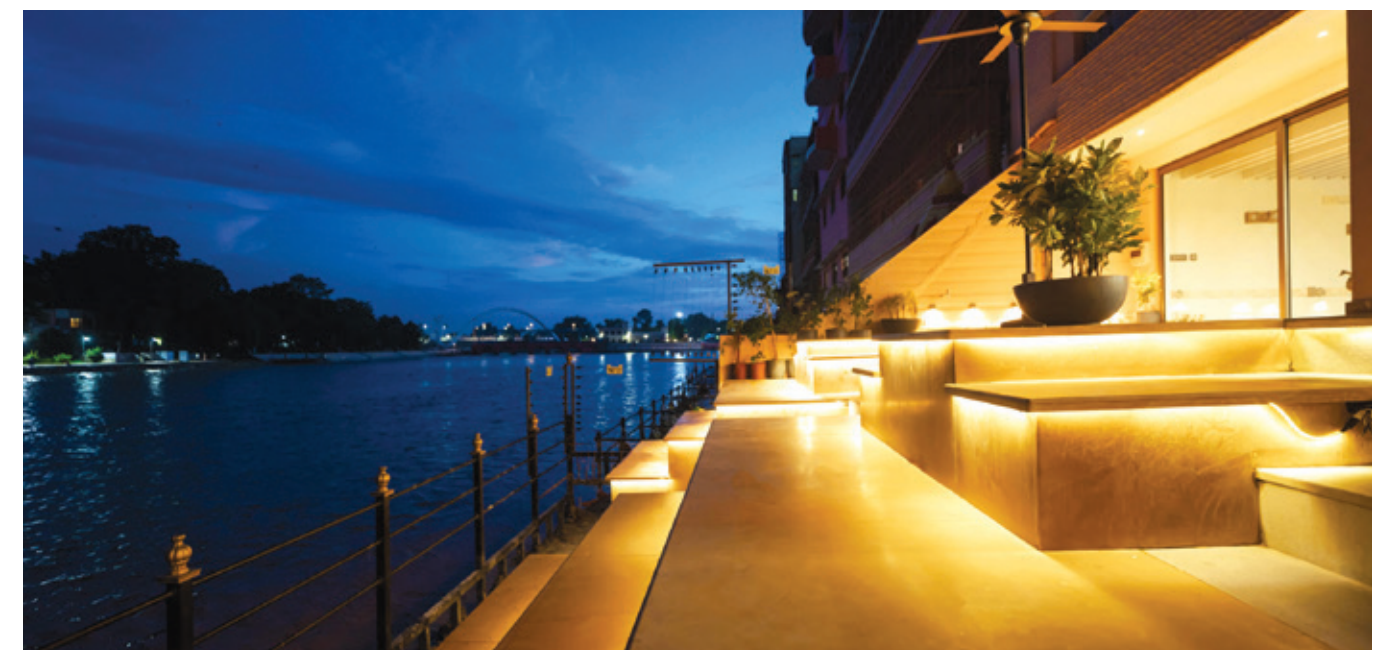


Ananda In The Himalayas

The 25,000 sq ft spectacular Ananda spa features aesthetically designed therapy rooms with views of nature, open-air yoga and meditation pavilions, an outdoor pool, a physiotherapy centre, gymnasium, and ayurvedic and international therapies to cleanse the body, mind, and soul. Doctors, healers, and wellbeing practitioners are part of the team.

What is it that the wellness guest is looking for? Natarajan comments: “The problem arises due to constant engagement. The term popularised by the social media has surely helped businesses, and though individuals carve their way to success faster now, it has compromised the mental capacity to relax or disengage.”

At Ananda, he says, “While programmes such as Detox and Weight Management and Panchakarma have been popular, another trend that we see post-pandemic is the desire for a Stress Management programme. Ananda offers Emotional Healing and Therapy spearheaded by holistic experts from fields of clinical psychology, energy therapy, hypnosis and Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) which blend seamlessly into the programme to address emotional stress.” Ananda's Dhyana, a signature Ananda programme, harmonises the mind to withdraw from all senses and attain a sense of self awareness and higher consciousness.



Ekaanta Luxury Wellness Retreat





**There's a growing concern about emotional healing, managing the stressors of daily life, prioritizing well-being of the mind and body, and achieving a better work-life balance**

**SHRADHA LOHIA**  
Ekaanta's Founder

Another retreat, Ekaanta at Haridwar, is cocooned within the thick foliage of the Uttarakhand forests. The calm of the woods is spiced up by the gushing waves of River Ganga lapping at the steps of the facility. Ekaanta's Founder, **Shradha Lohia**, guides guests on a journey of understanding the power of food and its impact on overall wellness. The nutrition sessions focus on mindful eating but also personal consults on healing through food, for endocrine diseases, PCOS, women's health and so on.

Says **Lohia**: "Covid-19 prompted people to explore different lifestyles. The change in lifestyle has made them question how they can live better. There is a growing concern about emotional healing, managing the stressors of daily life, prioritizing well-being of the mind and body, and achieving better work-life balance. We offer a range of wellness experiences that are designed to promote mind-body balance." A healing package comprises sessions on mindfulness, nature walks, shinrin-yoku (forest bathing), movie screenings under the stars, yoga, and healthy eating. Each dish is curated to provide a balance of nutrients, leaving participants feeling energized, fulfilled, and grateful for the nourishment they receive."

Lohia is of the opinion that a typical wellness break customer seeks a comprehensive and rejuvenating experience that focuses on overall well-being. The wellness customer looks to rejuvenate the mind and escape the routine

stressors of work and life. Serene and natural environments, qualified professionals, healthy and nutritious cuisine, mindful and sustainable practices, customizable experiences, opportunities for rest and relaxation, and a sense of community and connection are all important factors. Customers seek retreats that provide a holistic and transformative experience.

**Arun Gupta**, owner of Shaheen Bagh, a stylish boutique resort in Dehradun, says: "After pandemic, people have realised that prioritizing self-care and taking time out for rest and relaxation is important for physical and mental health." Their wellness features include a Jacuzzi, an ayurvedic massage, and a steam bath. They also provide yoga classes and nutritional consultations. "A typical wellness break customer looks for a variety of features that promise a relaxing and rejuvenating experience. This could include spa treatments, outdoor activities such as hiking and biking, access to nutritious food



**a wellness break should provide a holistic, immersive experience that helps restore balance and harmony in the body and mind**

**ARUN GUPTA**  
Owner of Shaheen Bagh

and drinks, and other activities such as yoga and meditation. A wellness break should provide a holistic, immersive experience that helps restore balance and harmony in the body and mind."

He says wellness heavily influenced the design of their hotel. They have included natural elements throughout the property, such as wood, stone, and natural fibre in interiors. "This wellness trend is here to stay and is a really positive development," he adds.

**Arun Pillai**, Wellness Director, Dharana Retreat, Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa, says: "Covid opened our eyes and taught us how important was our health, and made us realise that the body is the only place to live, all others are materialistic. According to the



Shaheen Bagh





Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa



**“We orchestrate our wellness programs through the three pillars of Conserve, Sustain and Heal. Our minimalistic and locally inspired design, conservation efforts to safeguard the 3500 acres of pristine forest, and every action that’s closer to nature, sustains the purpose of the guests coming to experience healing”**

**ARUN PILLAI**  
Wellness Director, Dharana Retreat

government’s Make In India report, the wellness industry in India is worth Rs 490 billion, and wellness services comprise 40% of the market.”

Dharana looks at holistic wellness through nutrition, mental and physical wellbeing, through exercise, meditation, spirituality, ayurveda and naturopathy. “We orchestrate our wellness programs through the three pillars of Conserve, Sustain and Heal. Our minimalistic and locally inspired design, conservation efforts to safeguard the 3,500

acres of pristine forest, and every action that’s closer to nature, sustains the purpose of the guests coming to experience healing. We were blessed to be under the guidance of Margie Ruddick, a renowned eco-landscape designer to help us through this process,” he says.

Leisure Hotels Group is a 34-year-old experiential luxury resort chain, operating in North India, and is among the largest resort chains in Uttarakhand. Leisure Hotels’ Director, **Vibhas Prasad** says: “At our resorts, the Tattva Spa presents an extensive selection of indulgent treatments, such as massages,



The Naini Retreat by Leisure Hotels Group

**Hotels’ wellness programs include talks on Veda and Upanishads, sound healing through vibrations known to promote harmony and balance, kirtan & Ganga arti, yoga and meditation**

**VIBHAS PRASAD**  
Director, Leisure Hotels Group



### GOVT GUIDELINES FOR WELLNESS CENTRES

The burgeoning wellness centres in the country have given rise to the concern for quality service. The Guidelines for Accreditation of Wellness Centres have been developed by National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) in consultation with AYUSH.

The Ministry of Tourism has also extended its Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme to wellness tourism service providers including accredited wellness centres. Presently the wellness centres accredited by State Tourism Departments are also eligible for the MDA.



facials, body wraps, and more. With highly skilled therapists and serene surroundings, guests can immerse themselves in tranquility and release stress.” Their wellness programs include talks on Veda and Upanishads, sound healing through vibrations known to promote harmony and balance, kirtan & Ganga arti, yoga and meditation.

**Allen Machado**, CEO, Niraamaya Wellness Retreats, says they have witnessed an increase in demand for immersive wellness experiences that provide a respite from the stress of daily





**“There is a growing awareness and concern for the environment, prompting people to choose options that align with sustainable practices and minimize impact on the planet. Authenticity and the opportunity to engage with local communities and cultures are highly valued now”**

**ALLEN MACHADO**  
CEO, Niraamaya Wellness Retreats

life. Their retreats are situated in Kovalam, Kumarakom, Thekkady, Athirappilly, Kannur, Kohima, Goa, Chikmagalur, Bangalore and Seychelles. He observes that post Covid-19 “sustainability, authenticity, and local experiences have become important to travellers. There is a growing awareness and concern for the environment, prompting people to choose options that align with sustainable practices and minimize impact on the planet. Authenticity and the opportunity to engage with local communities and cultures

are highly valued, as travellers seek meaningful experiences.” To support sustainable agriculture and the local economy, they work with nearby farmers and producers to source local ingredients. This allows them to provide guests with the freshest and most wholesome produce while minimizing environmental impact. “We are committed to reducing waste, and to achieve this, we employ reusable containers and actively participate in composting our food waste,” he says.



Niraamaya Culinary



In-house Organic Garden, Niraamaya



**“Travelling with a purpose or rather a goal, which will bring you health, seems to be a popular mindset”**

**MINI CHANDRAN**  
Head, Strategic Alliances  
& Product Development,  
CGH Earth Group

In addition to the culinary offerings, they provide cooking classes and workshops for guests. These sessions offer a unique opportunity to delve into the cultural and nutritional aspects of food. Participants can explore new flavours and techniques under the guidance of experienced chefs. “We organize visits to local markets and farms, providing an immersive experience where guests can meet the producers and gain insights into their practices and the challenges they face,” he says.

Another wellness hospitality chain, CGH Earth has four wellness focussed properties out of which three are NABH-accredited hospitals. Two of these, Kalari Kovilakom and Kalari Rasayana, offer traditional Kerala Ayurveda, while the third, Prakriti Shakti, offers

naturopathy. The fourth is SwaSwara, offering all-round wellness.

Says **Mini Chandran**, Head, Strategic Alliances & Product Development, CGH Earth Group: “Travelling with a purpose or rather a goal, which will bring you health, seems to be a popular mindset. With an increased well-educated and aware traveller community, who is very conscious of maintaining health rather than ending up for curative spells in hospitals, more and more are turning towards traditional, holistic alternative healing procedures such as ayurveda and naturopathy.”



CGH Earth Group





Mango Tree Villa, Atmantan

**Sharmilee Agrawal Kapur**, Founder-Director & Pranic Healer at Atmantan Wellness Centre, near Mumbai and Pune, says a customer when looking at a typical wellness break, will expect to rejuvenate while also being able to address her/his health concerns. At Atmantan, they offer doctor-prescribed programmes to address lifestyle ailments and chronic diseases. The retreats are personalised health solutions from the schools of naturopathy, ayurveda, energy healing, and oriental and western health practices. The offerings include everything from restorative physiotherapy, disease management, sleep sanctuary, stress management, and detoxification to weight loss and fitness sessions.

**Mamta Wasan**, Director and CEO of Mekosha Ayurveda Spa Suite Retreat, says: "Health is the original wealth. The rest can be bought. Prevention is better than cure. Ayurveda ensures overall wellness." At Mekosha, guests can escape the hurried pace of life and immerse themselves in the slow lane, where yoga retreats, meditation, introspection, and private meals can be enjoyed in secluded nooks



**"At the Atmantan Wellness Centre, the offerings include everything from restorative physiotherapy, disease management, sleep sanctuary and stress management, to detoxification and weight loss sessions"**

**SHARMILEE AGRAWAL KAPUR**  
Founder-Director & Pranic Healer  
at Atmantan Wellness Centre

**At Mekosha, guests can escape the hurried pace of life and immerse themselves in the slow lane, where yoga retreats, meditation, introspection, and private meals can be enjoyed in secluded nooks amidst lush greenery and the soothing sounds of nature**

**MAMTA WASAN**  
Director and CEO of Mekosha  
Ayurveda Spa Suite Retreat



Mekosha Ayurveda

amidst lush greenery and the soothing sounds of nature. Mekosha offers a range of popular Ayurvedic packages, providing guests with a comprehensive wellness experience. Each package includes a luxurious suite stay, a doctors consultation, therapies administered in the privacy of the in-suite spa, wholesome meals, yoga, and meditation classes.

**Akash Garg**, CMD, Asia Resorts Ltd, Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, says: "Our resort serves as a sanctuary where individuals can find solace, rejuvenation, and a much-needed escape from the demands of daily life. We are proud to be a part of this transformative

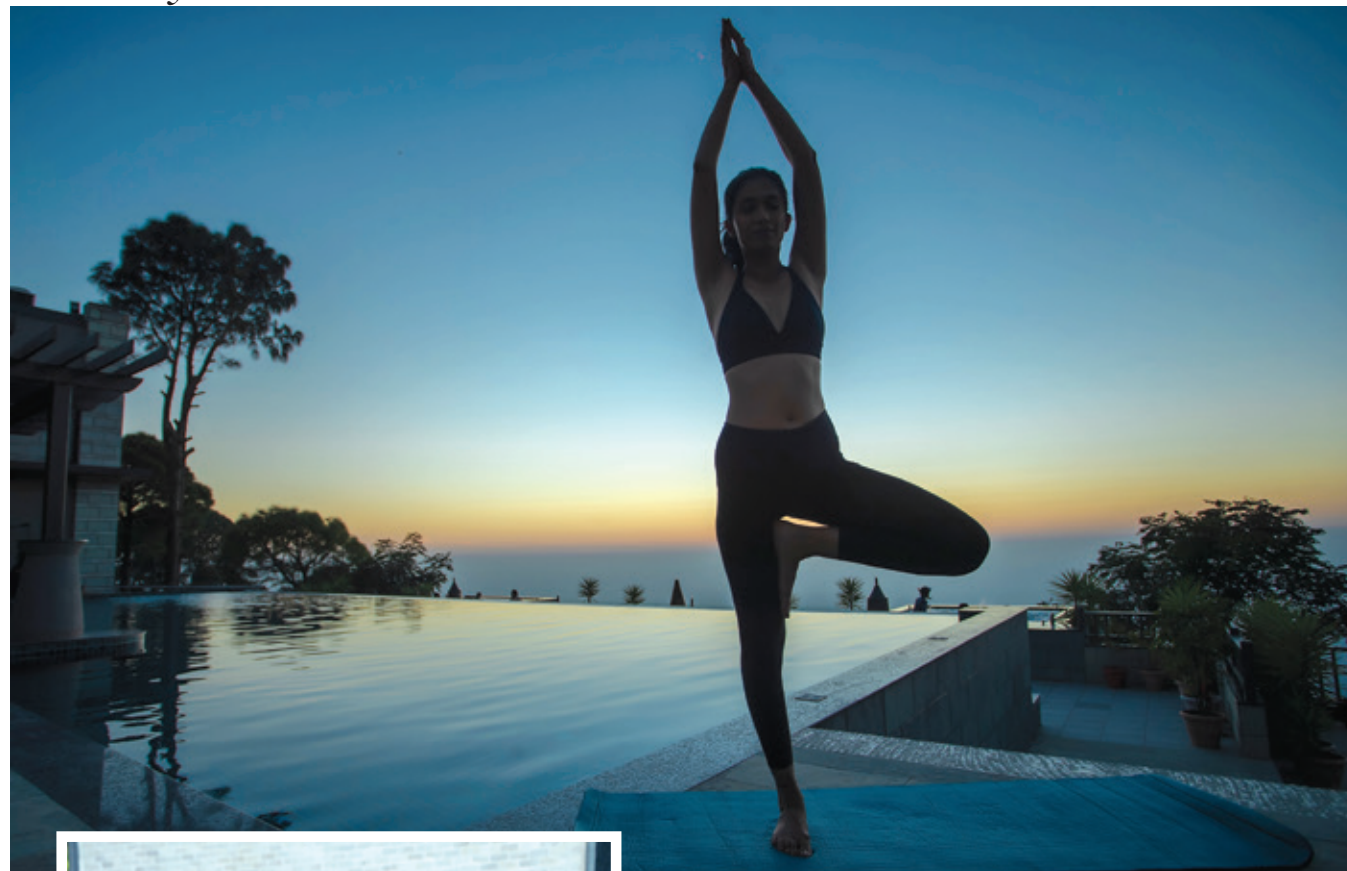


Mekosha nourishing meals

journey, catering to the evolving needs of our guests in their quest for holistic wellness." They have qualified ayurvedic and naturopathy doctors, a temperature-controlled infinity pool, and a Jacuzzi that overlooks breathtaking vistas.

Health tourism is a key growth sector in India, propelled by state-of-the-art medical facilities available in big private hospital chains that are comparable to the best the world has to offer. Medical Value Travel (MVT), which includes foreign patients availing treatments in modern medicine and the AYUSH sector, is a \$3 billion market for India. NITI Aayog and the Ministry





Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort



**“We are proud to be a part of this transformative journey, catering to the evolving needs of our guests in their quest for holistic wellness”**

**AKASH GARG**

**CMD, Asia Resorts Ltd,  
Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort**

of Commerce have included Medical Travel Industry as one of the 12 sectors they wish to promote under the Services Promotion Council. With easy availability of English-speaking people, and expert interpreters available at most multi-speciality private hospitals, foreign travellers do not find it difficult to undertake most tasks here, and also look out for alternative therapies like yoga and relaxations.

Hotels are therefore tweaking their offerings to include certified health and mindfulness professionals. Most hotels offer immersive experiences that give visitors a sense of local connection (folk music etc), artistic indulgence (through aesthetics and craft bazars), soul-replenishment (mindfulness, sleep therapy, green spaces) and healing practices (yoga, ayurveda). While big, luxury chains, have always catered for a diversified offerings, many mid-size and small hotels are also seizing the opportunity to offer holistic wellness breaks. HAI

*(Wellness tourism includes countless hotels, boutiques and resorts. Only a few have been mentioned in the article for a representative feature.)*



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# A TEMPLE OF WELLNESS



PARINEETA SETHI, Chief Editor, GlobalSpa Magazine, writes that with a rich Ayurveda culture already existing in India, wellness retreats have adapted the knowledge, blended it with modern science, and transformed it as an experience for guests.

**T**he paradigm shift towards personal well-being has become a global phenomenon. People from all walks of life increasingly recognise the need to prioritise self-care and focus on holistic wellbeing. In the pursuit of wellness, travel has emerged as a cherished avenue for recreation. We are always on the lookout for a long weekend and immediately seize any opportunity that arises to embark on a rejuvenation holiday. We are seeking comprehensive experiences that address our physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing, which is why wellness retreats have gained popularity. They provide an array of

wellness offerings right from their synchronisation with nature, ambience, to spa treatments and healthy cuisine.

With a rich Ayurveda culture that has received global prominence, and the trend of going back to our roots, the wellness retreats in India have adapted the knowledge, blended it with modern science, and transformed it as an experience for their guests.

In addition to traditional treatments, new healing therapies are gaining popularity. These include crystal healing, sound therapy, mindfulness-based practices, energy healing, and specialised techniques aimed at addressing specific wellness concerns.

Such innovative therapies provide guests with unique and transformative experiences, expanding the horizons of holistic well-being.

Ananda in the Himalayas is set amidst the breathtaking Himalayan foothills and indulges in ancient Ayurvedic therapies, traditional yoga and meditation practices, and focuses on healthy organic cuisine. With qualified Ayurveda doctors and therapists to administer treatments ranging from therapeutic massages to more rigorous modes of toxic elimination, the Ayurvedic therapies at Ananda are strongly rooted in ancient traditions, while keeping in mind contemporary preferences and comforts. They offer many programmes, including Post covid rejuvenation.

Another wellness retreat, Six Senses Vana, is a sanctuary where Ayurveda, Yoga, Tibetan Medicine, and Natural Healing Therapies combine with a kind-hearted team and personalised support. It is one of the few places in the world where Sowa Rigpa, a Tibetan traditional system of medicine with roots in Ayurveda, Chinese medicine and Buddhism, is formally offered in its complete avatar. The retreat encourages mindfulness, settles anxiety, and soothes stress with instant and lasting benefits.

In the south, Carnoustie Ayurveda & Wellness

**Wellness hospitality encompasses healthy and organic culinary experiences, fitness facilities, wellness coaching, mindfulness workshops, and immersive activities designed to promote self-discovery and personal development**

Resort provides a solace of nature with 25 acres of landscape gardens. It offers its guests holistic treatments, combining practices of Ayurveda, Yoga, Marma, Mantra and Naturopathy. They involve natural methods combining a blend of modern science with traditional, age-old practices. Treatments like Shiro Basti- a pool of herbal oils is kept over the head in a specially constructed chamber to nourish the central nervous system, and Elakizhi- a massage with heated boluses which has many herbal ingredients and promotes better blood circulation and eliminates waste from skin, are now in focus.

Wellness hospitality encompasses a wide range of offerings beyond spa treatments. They also focus on providing healthy and organic culinary experiences, fitness facilities, wellness coaching, mindfulness workshops, and immersive activities designed to promote self-discovery and personal development.

This has led to a significant growth of the spa market in India. The changing lifestyle, awareness of the importance of wellbeing, informed consumers, and the simple benefit of taking precautions have all contributed to the expansion of the spa and wellness industry in the country. Additionally, the rise of wellness tourism and the popularity of destination spas have further fuelled the market's growth.

As Indians continue to prioritise their well-being, the spa retreat experience in India will expand, offering transforming and engaging experiences to those seeking respite and rejuvenation. **HAI**





# MILLETS on PLATTER

Chef MAYANK KULSHRESHTHA,  
Area Executive Chef – South & Executive Chef ITC Grand Chola, Chennai,  
writes on millets and the way they have been incorporated at the hotel.



“At ITC Grand Chola, we embrace the principles of Responsible Luxury, with a strong focus on wellness and sustainability. As part of our culinary wellness initiatives, we proudly highlight the prominence of millets, especially in light of the United Nation’s declaration of 2023 as the International Year of Millets”

Millets are small-grained, warm-weather cereals that belong to the grass family. They possess exceptional resilience to drought and other extreme weather conditions while offering comparable nutritional value to other major cereals. *Millets include:*

## 1. Finger Millet/Ragi:

Rich in protein, ether extractives, carbohydrates, dietary fiber, and minerals, finger millet boasts of the highest calcium content among all cereals (344 mg/100 gm). It promotes healthy skin and finds application in dishes like dosa, idli, congee, ragi rava upma, ragi manni, ragi bread/pancakes, and crepes.

## 2. Pearl Millet/Bajra/Kambu:

Pearl millet is rich in protein, carbohydrates, iron, and carotene. It is beneficial for diabetics, aids detoxification, and contributes to eye health. Popular preparations include kambu koozh, khichdi, breads, and risotto.

## 3. Foxtail Millet/Kangni/Kakum:

Foxtail millet is a source of protein, dietary fiber, fat, phosphorous, potassium, magnesium, vitamin A, calcium, folic acid, sodium, niacin, iron, and zinc. It enhances overall immunity, has high iron content, and is good for bone health. Foxtail millet can be used to prepare dishes such as foxtail lemon rice, pulao, upma, and salad.

## 4. Ditch Millet/Kodo Dhana/Varagu:

Ditch millet contains carbohydrates, protein, fiber, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, sodium, vitamin B3, zinc, iron, and folate. It helps lower blood glucose levels and is exceptionally rich in fiber.

## 5. Sorghum/Jowar/Cholam:

Sorghum is a cereal that contains carbohydrates, fiber, protein, saturated fat, monounsaturated fat, omega-3 fatty acids, and omega-6. It contributes to inhibiting tumor growth and supports weight control. Sorghum can be used in preparations like breads, salads, and Florentine dishes.

## 6. Buckwheat Millet/Kuttu:

Buckwheat millet is rich in carbohydrates, saturated fat, thiamine, niacin, iron, zinc, potassium, copper, manganese, and selenium. It aids in weight loss, promotes cardiovascular health, and protects against breast cancer and asthma in children, as well as gallstones. Buckwheat millet can be used in the creation of breads, noodles, soups, pancakes, porridge, dosa, and poori.

## 7. Amaranth/Rajgira/Ramdana:

Amaranth contains carbohydrates, fat, protein, vitamins, minerals, water, selenium, and antioxidants such as gallic and vanillic acid. It reduces signs of aging and the risk of heart disease, making it a valuable addition to dishes like upma, bread, desserts, salads, tikkis, cookies, granola, tabbouleh, and laddoo.

## 8. Little Millet/Shavan/Sama/Samai/Kutki:

Little millet is a source of carbohydrates, protein, pantothenic acid, potassium, zinc, iron, copper, folate, and thiamine. It is rich in potent antioxidants and contributes to treating diabetes, lowering cholesterol, and supporting weight loss. Popular preparations include upma, samai lemon rice, idli, pulao, porridge, khichdi, and yogurt bars.



## • Health

At ITC Grand Chola, Chennai, we have curated a range of delectable dishes that incorporate millets. Some examples:

### Breakfast:

- Pearl millet and brown rice poha
- Foxtail millet and multigrain loaf
- Amaranth and red rice dosa
- Bajra and jaggery pancake

### Lunch:

- Amaranth, ajwain, and rajma tikki
- Bajra gosht kichada
- Foxtail millet and caponata cannelloni with roma tomato sauce
- Amaranth and jeera poori
- Pearl millet and wheat sourdough
- Sama aur brown rice kheer

### Dinner:

- Green peas, corn, and finger millet tartlet
- Sama murgh pulao
- Finger millet crepes with wild mushroom, onion, and feta
- Ragi poori
- Finger multi farmer's loaf
- Baked cheesecake with buckwheat crumble.

### SOME OTHER DISHES INCLUDE:

#### Kodo potato bites

(mini potato nuggets crusted with kodo millets and shallow fried)

#### Bajra gosht kheema masala

(minced lamb cooked with pearl millets and select spices)

#### Fox millet spinach corn bake

(gratin of spinach, corn and thyme-scented foxtail millet)

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Secretary General  
Hotel Association of India



# Uttar Pradesh: *Diverse Offerings*

Take a stunning visual tour of some incredible sights of historic importance and architectural marvels. The art, craft and culinary delights of the state will leave you craving for more.

**BY RIAAN JACOB GEORGE**





If we were to talk about the tourist hotspots of Uttar Pradesh, we would definitely include Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, Sarnath, Varanasi and Mathura. But in addition to this, the state packs in so much more in terms of heritage destinations, art and culture experiences, and handlooms. In fact, there's a lot to experience for nature lovers too. Uttar Pradesh, in recent times, has seen a tremendous overhaul of infrastructure with high-quality highways connecting to the major cities and increased air connectivity. In fact, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath says that UP will be the first state in India to operate five international airports. In addition to leisure and heritage tourism, Uttar Pradesh is a huge draw for religious tourism as well, with places of religious importance like Mathura, Varanasi, Vrindavan, Fatehpur Sikri, among many others. "When it comes to Uttar Pradesh, it appeals to both domestic and international tourists. Whether it is heritage, art, festivals, shopping, wildlife or even just driving on a road trip, there is something to do for everyone. And the updated infrastructure in terms of highways and hotels is just amazing," says Neeraj Gupta, founder of Peekay Holidays, a high-end travel curator.

Here is a look at what makes this north Indian state such an important player in Indian Tourism.



Agra Fort

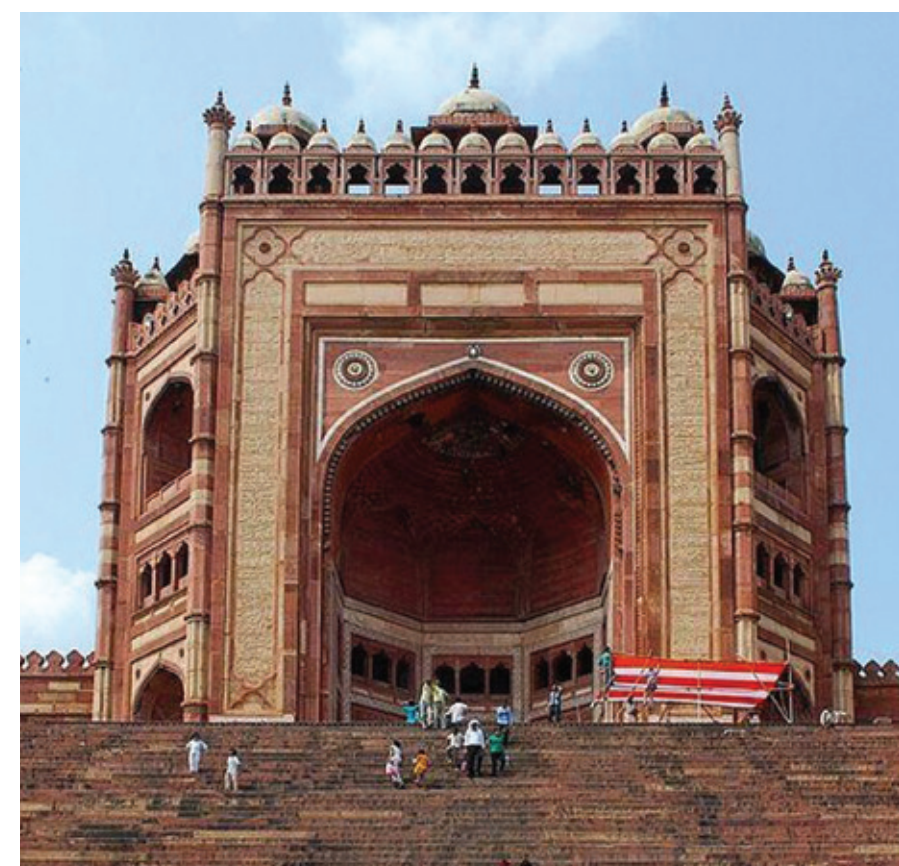


Dhamek Stupa

**One of the biggest tourist draws of the state is the ancient city of Varanasi, which attracts millions of Hindu pilgrims. The old city of Varanasi is a labyrinth of tiny roads and is said to have over 2,000 temples**



Ahilya Ghat Ganges, Varanasi



Fatehpur Sikri

### Heritage Spots

Agra needs no introduction. Tourists flock here in large numbers, for Taj Mahal, Red Fort and the nearby historic site of Fatehpur Sikri. However, in recent times, guides and travellers are talking about the lesser-known side of Agra—the intricate mausoleum of Itimad-ud-Daulah, or the Baby Taj, the Mahtab Bagh, which offers a vantage point view of Taj Mahal, or even curated experiences with the marble inlay artists of Agra or Zardozi artists.

Lucknow is known for its marvellous architecture and food scene. The city's Rumi Gate is an example of Awadhi style, and is inlaid with gemstones. A stone's throw away is the Chhota Imambara, which is a massive congregation hall, with no supporting structure. Its famous Bhool Bhulaiya maze is extremely popular.

In Prayagraj, formerly known as Allahabad, Khusro Bagh is a gorgeous



● Destination



Khusro Bagh

garden containing Mughal tombs featuring magnificent architecture and gorgeous landscaped gardens. Another place that we cannot miss out on is Sarnath's famous Dhamek Stupa, built by King Ashoka, in 249 BC. This ornate brick and stone monument is a major spot on the Buddhist trail as it represents the deer park, where Lord Buddha told the world about his Eightfold Path. Those following the Buddhist trail will be sure to visit Kushinagar, said to be the place where Lord Buddha attained Nirvana. This district is brimming with monasteries and ancient stupas, some of which date back to Ashoka's rule. Kushinagar is an interesting spot because a lot of the buildings there even have Chinese and Japanese influences.



kushinagar

The gorgeous district of Chitrakoot is particularly important to Hindus, as according to the Ramayana, this is

**Those following the Buddhist trail will be sure to visit Kushinagar, said to be the place where Lord Buddha attained Nirvana**



Rumi Gate

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## ● Destination

where Ram, Sita and Lakshman, stayed for the duration of their exile. Chitrakoot features many ancient temples like Janki Kund and Hanuman Dhara, and plays host to many religious fairs and cultural festivals.

Needless to say, one of the biggest tourist draws of the state is the ancient city of Varanasi, which attracts millions of Hindu pilgrims, seeking to bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges. The old city of Varanasi is a labyrinth of tiny roads and is said to house over 2,000 temples. In addition to the iconic ghats, which are the nerve centres of the city, there are famous temples like Kashi Vishwanath Mandir. Tourists and pilgrims flock to the Assi Ghat, Manikarnika Ghat and Dashashwamedh Ghat at dawn and dusk to participate in artis.

**The Taj Mahotsav recreates some ancient Mughal traditions like ceremonial processions, artisanal products, and performances**

### Festive Allure

Uttar Pradesh is a cultural melting pot, and this is explained by the profusion of religious and cultural festivals that take place here. Not only do these festivals shape general culture but they also draw millions of tourists annually. Take, for instance, the annual Taj Mahotsav, organised by the UP Tourism Board, at the eastern gate of the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahotsav recreates some ancient Mughal traditions like ceremonial processions, artisanal products, and performances. The Ganga Mahotsav is an ode to the holy river as part of the larger Diwali celebrations. Rangotsav takes place in Mathura, where people play traditional versions of Holi, such as *lathmar* Holi, and worship Lord Krishna, by scattering coloured powder on temples. The Ganga Mahotsav takes place over five days and, as its name suggests, is a tribute to the Ganga. Celebrations include art and craft fairs, wrestling tournaments, concerts and marathons. The highlight of this event is the Dev Deep celebration, on a full moon day, where devotees light millions of lamps.



Chitrakoot



Taj Mahotsav



Rangotsav

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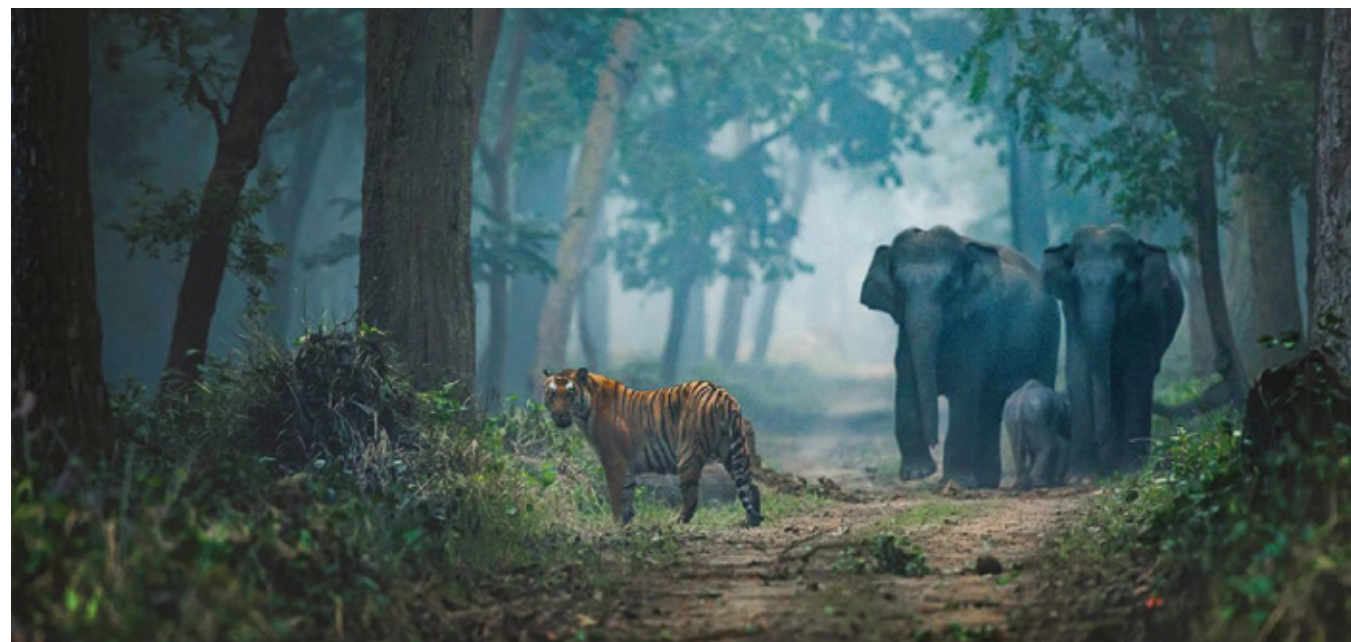


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Dudhwa National Park

### Wildlife Interlude

For a bit of nature tourism, be sure to visit Dudhwa National Park, which encompasses the wildlife sanctuaries of Kishanpur and Katarniaghat. This national park is relatively uncrowded, so you can appreciate the flora and fauna of the state. Look out for tiger and swamp deer. Dudhwa National Park is home to many reptiles and hundreds of species of birds. It is also part of several conservation projects like Project Tiger.



Ayodhya

### Spiritual Culture

Uttar Pradesh has played an important part in Indian culture. It is the origin of two of India's great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. It has also nurtured two other schools of culture - the teachings of Lord Buddha and Mahavir, and both of these have had an immense impact on modern India. Hindu pilgrims flock to the holy sites of Kashi, Ayodhya and Mathura **HAI**



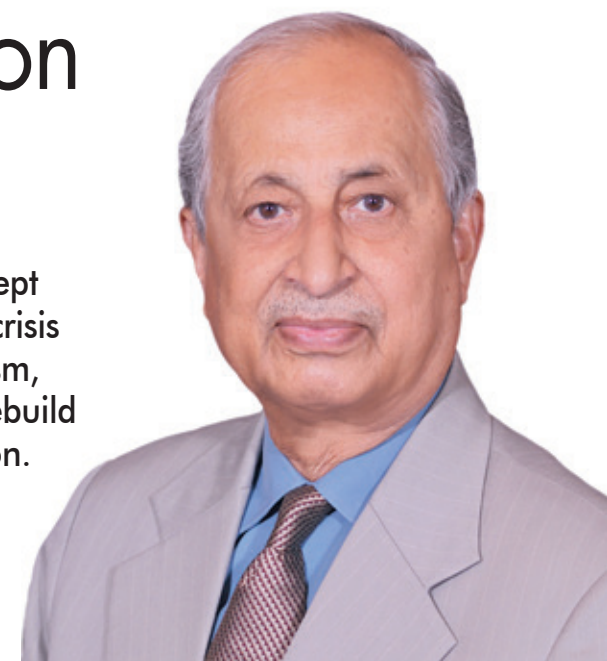
Ganga Mahotsav Varanasi

# Expanding the Horizon of Experience

Wellness, as a tourism resource, is not a very old concept though the tradition behind it is ancient. The Covid-19 crisis was a watershed moment in the development of tourism, compelling stakeholders to look at sustainable ways to rebuild tourism, and to look at opportunities for transformation. "Wellness" is one way of such transformation.

**By MP BEZBARUAH**

Secretary General, Hotel Association of India



“

**T**ourism is difficult to define... but in general a tourist is a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change," writes Valene L Smith in a delightful book "Hosts and Tourists: The Anthropology of Tourism". This definition combines two important aspects of modern tourism: "experience" and "change".

Towards the end of the last century economists explained that we were entering a new age of "experience economy". The experience economy—a term coined by economists B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore in 1998—is the selling of memorable experiences to customers. They explained that it was the next frontier, following the agricultural, then industrial then service economies and the next generation of consumers—millennials—would prefer compelling experiences. About the same time, UNWTO assessed the future megatrends and said that the focus of tourism was shifting to delivery of "unique experiences".

After a journey of quarter of a century it can be said that these mega trends continue to be relevant. These emerging trends had implications for management of tourism and hospitality. The most important impact

**The experience economy—a term coined by economists B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore in 1998—is the selling of memorable experiences to customers**

was that tourism was becoming what was described as "a market of one". The consumer, empowered by fast-changing technology, with more options and choices at his disposal, expects unique experiences. Serving that experience requires imagination, personal attention and professional competence. The quality and content of human resource development also require to be changed to meet the service quality needed to create such an experience.

"Wellness" in that sense is an important component of creating unique experiences. Wellness, as a tourism resource, is not a very old concept though the tradition behind it is ancient. The Covid-19 crisis was a watershed moment in the development of tourism, compelling stakeholders to look at sustainable ways to rebuild tourism, and to look at opportunities for transformation. "Wellness" is one way of such transformation.

The first Tourism Policy of 1982, the high-level National Tourism Committee, and the National Action Plan of 1992, did not make any specific mention of "wellness" as a tourism product. The first indirect reference was made in the National Tourism Policy of 2002. It provides the essence of what is wellness: "India is today being rediscovered by the world for the depth of its understanding of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual manifestations of the world and humankind. ....this can be India's most unique tourism product—holistic healing and rejuvenation of the individual from every dimension—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, and in doing so, it will capture the essence of the best of Indian philosophy and culture." However, the concept was not developed further nor the roadmap for exploiting this "unique" advantage was charted.

The Draft Tourism Policy of 2021, in a section on





Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort

product-specific roadmaps, clubs Ayurveda/Holistic Health Systems/Wellness together but there seems to be some lack of clarity still. It says: "There is increasing consumer demand for wellness services and products the world over. Wellness also brings in high yield tourists and significantly increases the average duration of stay." At the same time, the Draft also mentions spirituality, Yoga and Medical Tourism as other components of tourism promotion.

It is essential to remember while thinking of leveraging this unique advantage, that wellness is not just yoga or ayurvedic treatment. It is a comprehensive totality of holistic healing and mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural well-being. Managing such a wide canvas is difficult and often therefore attention gets limited to parts of it only. Considering the importance of the concept in a world ravaged by Covid and now desperately looking for lifestyle that is more in tune with nature and sustainable, it will be appropriate to design a proper policy to develop wellness tourism.

At the same time wellness tourism should not be seen in isolation. Its development should fit into what the finance minister described in the budget speech as "an integrated and innovative approach". In fact, the National Action Plan of 1992 also talked about the integrated growth of tourism, but it was conceived in terms of creating circuits rather than providing integrated services and experiences within a destination. From that point of view the approach enunciated in the budget to develop every destination "as a complete package" makes much sense. Wellness tourism should first be integrated within the destination with other tourism experiences and then it should be integrated within the circuit. Such complementarities will enhance the total experience of the tourist.

**UNWTO assessed the future megatrends and said that the focus of tourism was shifting to the delivery of "unique experiences"**

**Wellness tourism should not be seen in isolation. Its development should fit into what the finance minister described in the budget speech as "an integrated and innovative approach"**

The components of wellness tourism are derived from long traditions of the country and are unique to India. It is essential to ensure the authenticity of this experience. It is quite likely that as the demand increases there will be temptation to fill up the supply by people and organizations who do not have the expertise to create that authentic experience. Considering the very nature of the product which can impact health and well-being of a person unless done properly, governments have a responsibility to oversee the competence and expertise of the service providers. It is heartening to note that the Ministry of Tourism is alive to such concerns. The Ministry of Tourism has drafted guidelines for wellness tourism that address issues regarding making available quality publicity material, training and capacity-building for the service providers etc. Guidelines for Accreditation of wellness centres also have been developed by National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH) in consultation with AYUSH.

The National Tourism Policy 2002 enunciates the following at the beginning:

- India is a journey of mind and soul
- It is a journey of the five senses
- It is a journey of self-discovery
- It is a journey of self-fulfilment

Wellness tourism has immense potential in a world looking for such journeys. It is now time to package it imaginatively, promote it vigorously and service it professionally to satisfy the tourists' thirst for unique experiences. **HAI**

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