

GROWTH SCENARIO OF INDIA'S WELLNESS TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Wellness tourism has been one of the drivers of the growth of India's tourism sector. The rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India offers meditation, yoga, and ayurveda retreats. The seeds of yoga were sowed and developed in India. Various Ayurvedic schools and professionals are instrumental in spreading yoga as a lifestyle-based, preventive, personalized, and natural form of medicine the world over. These strengths of India have contributed to the development of Wellness tourism in India. The present research paper aims to (i) explore the prospects of relation between Yoga and health and wellness tourism in India, (ii) find out the recent trends in wellness tourism. The study uses descriptive and analytical approach. The services in the wellness sector have 40% of the market share as per report, Government of India. The AYUSH sector (Ayurveda, Yogam Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) has an annual turnover of around INR 120 billion. Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has setup India portal for top medical tourism destinations. Tourists from across the globe come to India to experience the transformative benefits of therapies such as Ayurveda and yoga, combined with modern healthcare offerings. As a country rich in spiritual heritage, India offers a wide range of wellness retreats, often set against scenic backdrops that enhance the experience of relaxation and rejuvenation. The wellness tourism market in India is projected to grow at a CAGR of 6.70% during the period 2024-2032. There is rise in expenditures on the tourism sector and changes in the regulations and subsidies to help attract more tourists.

Keywords: *Wellness Tourism, Yoga, Ayurveda, Mental Health, Growth Centres*

INTRODUCTION

Wellness tourism has been one of the drivers of the growth of India's tourism sector. The rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India offers meditation, yoga, and ayurveda retreats. The wellness sector and Sushruta Sahinta, Charak Sahinta provide natural treatment and knowledge about herbs for the cure of severe and common diseases and tells the good and healthy way of living in tune with Mother Nature. In the modern sense, it provides remedies for personal care & beauty, nutrition, and wellness and good health. Yoga is linked with the culture and heritage of India. Yoga has its roots in Rig Veda. Maharishi Patanjali, the father of classical yoga, wrote the Yoga Sutras around 500 BC. It described Ashtanga- eight parts: Yama-social & ethics, Niyama-personal & ethics, Asana-postures, Pranayama- breathing exercises, Pratyahara -withdrawing senses, Dharana - focus, Dhyana -meditation and Samadhi-merging with the self. Swami Vivekananda made Yoga very popular and continued to spread its knowledge outside India also. Modern men have adopted this oldest science of life as a tool for keeping the systems of the body and mind in good health. The seeds of yoga were sowed and developed in India and now it is spreading all over the world by Swami Ramdev ji. Yoga and Yagana are important elements of our rich culture. They purify our mind as well as environment. Various Ayurvedic schools and professionals are instrumental in spreading yoga as a lifestyle-based, preventive, personalized, and natural form of medicine the world over. These strengths of India have contributed to the development of Wellness tourism in India.

Objectives: The present research paper aims to (i) explore the prospects of relation between Yoga and health and wellness tourism in India, (ii) find out the recent trends in wellness tourism. The paper tries to understand the role of yoga and wellness in promoting tourism in India.

Methodology: The study uses descriptive and analytical approach. It uses secondary data from various sources such as statistical abstracts, economic surveys and other sources.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS:

As per reports of CII, Medical Tourism industry is expected to be worth US\$ 4billion. India has a potential to attract one million health tourists per year. The wellness industry in India is worth INR 490 billion. The services in the wellness sector have 40% of the market share as per report, Government of India. The AYUSH sector

(Ayurveda, Yogam Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) has an annual turnover of around INR 120 billion. The Medical Tourists undergo health restorative treatments of a combination of Ayurveda, Yoga, acupuncture, herbal oil massage, nature therapies, and some ancient Indian healthcare methods like an alternate health care service. India has become a destination for the world for the rejuvenation, wellness, relaxation, medical wellness due to its yoga and Ayurvedic treatments. Therefore, it is essential to project India as wellness tourist place. It is a great pride that United Nations announced June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. As per reports of CII, Medical Tourism industry is expected to be worth US\$ 4billion. India has a potential to attract 1 million health tourists per annum. The wellness industry in India is worth INR 490 billion, and wellness services alone comprise 40% of the market (Make in India Report, Government of India. India has lot of tourists from other countries coming for the rejuvenation promised by wellness industry.

Ayurveda: Basis of Wellness Tourism:

Ayurveda is our ancient medical system giving holistic healing for the mind and body. Ayurveda is the foundation of all the medical treatments because it is in tune with Nature. It herbs for medicines for treatment and healthy life. It stresses on food, breathing techniques and meditation which will balance three doshas namely Vata (wind), Pitta (fire), and Kapha (earth). Panchakarma, yoga, Meditation are an integral part of it. The potential of wellness systems, developed through centuries of wisdom of this ancient civilization would be fully tapped. This is being done by positioning India as a centre of Ayurveda, Yoga, Sidha, Naturopathy, etc. together with the spiritual philosophy that has been integral to the Indian way of life. Ministry of Tourism has drafted guideline for wellness tourism. These guidelines address issues regarding making available quality publicity material, training and capacity building for the service providers, participation in international & domestic Wellness related events, etc. Unlike medical tourism, which focuses on treatments for specific health conditions, wellness tourism encompasses preventive care and the pursuit of a healthier lifestyle. Popular activities include yoga retreats, Ayurvedic treatments, meditation camps, spa therapies, and naturopathy sessions. India has become a global hub for wellness tourism due to its ancient wellness practices that offer holistic health benefits. Tourists from across the globe come to India to experience the transformative benefits of therapies such as Ayurveda and yoga, combined with modern healthcare offerings. As a country rich in spiritual heritage, India offers a wide range of wellness retreats, often set against scenic backdrops that enhance the experience of relaxation and rejuvenation.



Image source: Ayuroots and Ministry of Ayush.

Accelerated growth of wellness tourism boosting overall tourism sector in India:

The wellness tourism market in India is projected to grow at a CAGR of 6.70% during the period 2024-2032.

This growth is reflected in terms of all the segments and sub-segments of tourism sector such as

- ❖ Transport and travel
- ❖ Lodging, homestays, hotels
- ❖ Food and Beverage, Restaurants
- ❖ Shopping boosting Indian handicrafts and other goods
- ❖ Activities and Excursion
- ❖ Heritage
- ❖ Cultural fests
- ❖ Exhibitions
- ❖ Trade fairs
- ❖ Others

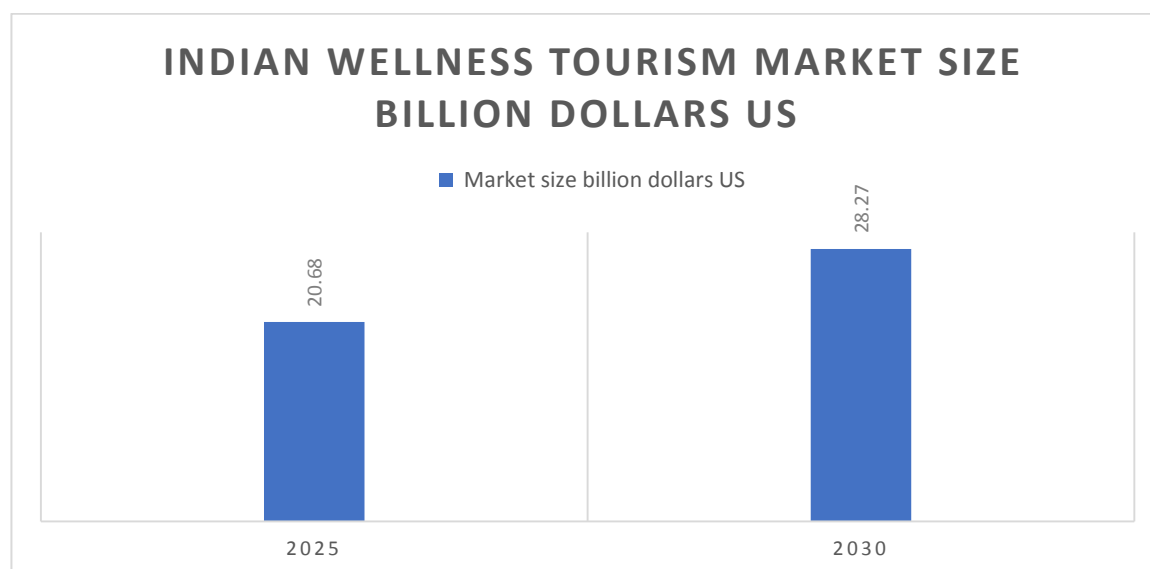


Table 1 Indian Tourism Sector

Variable	Value (%)
India's position in the world	
Share of India in International Tourist Arrivals	0.61%
India's rank in World Tourist Arrivals	40
Share of India in International Tourism Receipts	1.54%
India's rank in World Tourism Receipts	17
India's position in Asia Pacific	
Share of India in Tourist Arrivals	2.83%
India's rank in Tourist Arrivals	11
Share of India in Tourism Receipts	5.71
India's rank in Tourism Receipts	6

Source: Ministry of Tourism report, 2010 India. www.tourism.gov.in

Table 2 India's Rank in Travel and tourism index (TTDI)

TTDI Sub Index	Description	TTDI 2021 Rank	TTCI 2019 Rank
Enabling Environment	Captures the general conditions necessary for operating in a country	97	98
T&T Policy Enabling Conditions	Captures specific policies or strategic aspects	43	69
Infrastructure	Captures the availability and quality of physical	54	55
Travel and Tourism Demand Drivers	Captures the principal reason to travel	7	9
Travel & Tourism Sustainability	Captures the current or potential T&T	112	

Source: Ministry of Tourism report, 2023 India. www.tourism.gov.in

- As per government survey reports, the number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India during 2022 increased to 6.44 million as compared to 1.52 million in 2021, registering a positive growth of 321.54% and achieved 58.9% recovery as compared to pre-pandemic year 2019.
- While Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) experienced a positive growth rate in 2022, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) also experienced positive growth.
- Arrivals of NRIs have Increased by 43.9% from 2021 to 2022. In comparison to 2021, there was a 104.4% increase in yearly international tourist arrivals in India in 2022. For FTAs, air travel is the most chosen mode of transportation. 83.5 % of the FTAs entered India via air routes, 16.2 % via land routes, and 0.3% via sea routes.
- Around 46.3% of total FTAs in India were arrived at the Delhi and Mumbai airport.
- In 2022, the top 15 source markets for FTAs in India were the United States, Bangladesh, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Sri Lanka, Germany, Nepal, Singapore, Malaysia, France, Russian FED, Japan, Thailand & China.
- In 2022, the top 15 nations accounted for approximately 78.6% of total FTAs in India. Tourism continues to play an important role as a foreign exchange earner for the country.
- In 2022, foreign exchange earnings (FEEs) from tourism were US \$ 17.611 billion as compared to US\$ 8.797 billion in 2021, registering a growth of 100.19% and achieved 57.33% recovery as compared to pre-pandemic year 2019.
- The number of International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) in world estimated to rise by 111.6 percent, reaching 969.0 million in 2022.
- In 2022, ITAs in the world has achieved a recovery of 66.2% as compared to ITAs in pre-pandemic year 2019. 1.50% of worldwide tourists come to India.
- In 2022, FEEs from Tourism in India is 17.611 billion and it has 1.70% share in world tourism receipt.
- The top 10 ITA source nations worldwide are France Spain, United States, Turkey, Italy, Mexico, United Kingdom, Germany, Greece and Austria India rose from 24th place in 2019 to 17th place in terms of ITAs of the world for tourism in 2021.
- In comparison to 2021, there was an increase in Indian Nationals' Departures (INDs) from India. In 2022, 21.60 million people left the country, up from 8.55 million in 2021, with an increase of 152.62%. Residents from India frequently travel by air to foreign countries, which is also the most common mode of travel. The majority of Indian National i.e. 97.9% travelled by Air, with the remaining 1.7% travelling by land and 0.4% by sea.
- In 2022, the India received 1731.01 million domestic tourist visits in 2022, an increase of 155.45 % from 677.63 million in 2021. India received 8.59 million foreign tourist visits, an increase of 714.26 % from 1.05 million in 2021.

- Two states with the most domestic tourists' visits are Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, with 317.91 million and 218.58 million, respectively. Gujarat and Maharashtra have the highest numbers of foreign tourist visits, with 1.78 million & 1.51 million, respectively. India's ranking in the global Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI) is 54 in 2021.

Multiplicity of facilities in Wellness tourism in India: An integrated approach

- India is special in the sense of accessibility of wellness experiences, offering both affordable and luxury options like programmes on detox, stress relief, and mental well-being, with many resorts providing customized healing journeys that incorporate yoga, meditation, and organic nutrition.
- India's spiritual heritage provides an enriching layer to the experience. From meditation retreats at ashrams to visits to sacred temples, spiritual healing is deeply embedded in India's culture.
- As the country's wellness infrastructure continues to grow, India is set to remain a top destination for travellers seeking physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Recognizing that wellness extends to dietary choices, many hotels are prioritizing culinary offerings that emphasize health. The commitment to healthy eating helps in providing a well-rounded wellness experience.
- Eco-tourism in India is experiencing significant growth. Increasing awareness of sustainability is prompting hotels and resorts to adopt eco-friendly practices, such as utilising solar, wind, and geothermal energy to reduce their carbon footprint.
- Eco-tourism is projected to grow by 15.7 per cent from 2019 to 2027, reaching a value of \$4.55 billion (FHRAI Report).
- The hospitality sector in India is evolving to meet the diverse needs of travellers. These accommodations offer a blend of luxury and local culture, providing guests with an immersive experience.
- India is the most popular tourist destination in South Asia, rapidly expanding. The growth of medical tourism can be 110% in India, amounting to grow to nearly to USD 13 Billion in the year 2023.
- Traditional Ayurvedic resorts, destination spas, and wellness retreats are among the expanding number of hotels/resorts in India that offer a complete package of treatments, experiences, and travel. Various places like Kerala and Uttarakhand are being developed as unique places for wellness tourism. Kerala is considered an authentic and place-based wellness tourism centre for Ayurveda. Similarly, Uttarakhand is renowned for its Yoga Study Centre in Rishikesh, featured in Tripadvisor's Top 10 wellness destinations.
- There is rise in expenditures on the tourism sector and changes in the regulations and subsidies to help attract more tourists. The domestic visitor spending across India in 2021 amounted to about 151 billion U.S. dollars. The international expenditure in India for 2020 was more than USD 6 Billion.
- There are gaps between demand and supply of wellness tourism in India. India's growing wellness tourism market has challenges, such as a shortage of skilled staff for spas and other wellness services and a lack of staff training to meet international standards. With the growing market, a large number of players are entering the market. Various large companies are entering the market to provide various services such as spiritual well-being and self-improvement, traditional healing methods, luxury spa packages, and healthy food and beverage options, ultimately providing an overall wellness experience for the mind and body. While small and medium-scale enterprises are providing specific wellness programs such as meditation, yoga, and Ayurveda retreats.
- Tailoring wellness experiences to individual preferences and needs is a growing trend. From personalized fitness routines to curated wellness menus, travellers are seeking bespoke experiences that cater to their unique health and well-being goals.
- Mental health and stress reduction have become central themes in wellness tourism. Retreats and programs often include meditation, mindfulness practices, and therapies designed to support mental and emotional wellness.

- The integration of technology continues to shape wellness tourism. Virtual and augmented reality, wellness apps, and online platforms offer travellers the ability to access wellness experiences remotely. This trend has likely expanded further with the ongoing influence of digital technologies.
- Wellness tourism is increasingly incorporating elements of community and social connection. Group activities, shared experiences, and opportunities for social interaction are integrated into wellness retreats to address the broader concept of social well-being.
- Wellness tourism operators are incorporating sustainable practices, eco-friendly accommodations, and nature-focused experiences to align with the growing demand for responsible and sustainable travel. tourism sector.

INITIATIVES BY THE GOVERNMENT:

- Government of India has introduced many steps to boost wellness tourism in India.
- Government of India is also giving tourist visas and e-tourist visas to foreigners who want to pursue short-term courses in wellness in India along with short-duration medical treatment under Indian systems of medicine, recreation, sightseeing, and casual visits for business or to meet friends.
- The Ministry of Tourism has also extended its Market Development Assistance (MDA) scheme to wellness tourism service providers including accredited wellness centres.
- Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has setup India portal for top medical tourism destinations.
- The Introduction of the AYUSH Visa: to promote Health and Wellness Tourism, the Government of India has introduced the AYUSH Visa. This visa category is specifically designed for foreign nationals seeking traditional Indian wellness treatments such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) systems of medicine.
- The e-AYUSH Visa is available to citizens of 167 countries, allowing them to visit India for short-term wellness treatments at accredited institutions. It is intended to make health tourism more accessible by simplifying the visa process for those seeking holistic healthcare options.
- e-YUSH Visa is for the individuals looking to receive wellness treatment under the AYUSH system. It allows a stay of up to 60 days and offers a triple-entry facility, enabling travellers to leave and re-enter India if needed during their treatment.
- e-AYUSH Attendant Visa is issued to a close relative or friend to accompany the wellness tourist. Visa Process for Wellness Tourists.
- The process of applying for an e-AYUSH Visa is entirely online, making it convenient for international visitors. Foreign nationals need to apply through the official Indian government website, submitting their applications at least 120 days before the planned arrival date. Upon visa approval, an ETA is issued, valid for 120 days from the date of issue. Visitors must enter India within this timeframe.
- The initial visa is valid for up to 60 days, but extensions of up to six months may be granted, depending on the treatment plan and recommendations from the wellness centre. Extensions are handled by the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).
- The Government issues tourist visas and e-tourist visas to foreigners for wellness and other such purposes.
- The wellness tourism is well-knit with yoga centres. Yoga can give physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and economic benefits to individual which lead to one's improved performance leading to individual prosperity. India can assess the need of individuals of a foreign nation and customized the yoga package for exporting under service exports. To harness the trade opportunities arising out of present world's acceptance level of Yoga, tourism can be directed towards Yoga and wellness tourism. This will help in improving Indian trade performance and creating the ways for demand for Indian cultural legacies in the world market.

CONCLUSION:

- ❖ India has become a destination for the world for the rejuvenation, wellness, relaxation, medical wellness due to its yoga and Ayurvedic treatments.
- ❖ The potential of wellness systems, developed through centuries of wisdom of this ancient civilization is being fully tapped. This is being done by positioning India as a centre of Ayurveda, Yoga, Sidha, Naturopathy, etc. together with the spiritual philosophy that has been integral to the Indian way of life.
- ❖ This growth is reflected in terms of all the segments of tourism sector such as transport, lodging, homestays, food & beverage, restaurants, shopping which are providing a boost to Indian handicrafts and other goods, outdoor activities and excursion.
- ❖ India has multiplicity of facilities in wellness tourism and adopted an integrated approach.

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