

# VACATIONING YOUR WAY TO HEALTH

Wellness tourism offers exclusive packages for your wellbeing, giving you an alternative holiday option

Words by Charishma Thankappan Photographs from Niraamaya Retreats



**A**s the tourism industry opens up and expands in ever divergent arenas, the growing trend in the business is the concept of wellness tourism. Travellers are now making informed choices about the way they want to spend their holidays. For those looking for an alternative to taking time off by eating, drinking, sight-seeing, indulging in adventurous activities or lazing by the beach; they can now choose to dedicate their time towards personal wellbeing. Wellness vacations are meant for holistic relaxation. These vacations help in the rejuvenation of physical, emotional and spiritual state of mind and aid to restore balance and harmony within.

## Choosing wellness

An increasing awareness of integrated wellbeing is driving an increasing number of tourists towards spas, resorts, and the likes that provide



such wellness tourism packages. According to the Global Wellness Summit held in 2016, the market for wellness tourism is expected to reach US\$680bn in 2017.

Wellness vacations encompass

yoga retreats, meditation retreats, Ayurveda, and detox as the main segments. It is therefore not an entirely new concept in the Indian wellness scenario. "A wellness retreat is about getting away from the stresses, responsibilities and mad rush



of daily life and letting the mind quiet down from its daily routine. It's a time to connect with that inner silence and inner peace. A wellness retreat provides a much needed safe space in our busy lives, to finally slow down, relax and be with ourselves," says Shiyas S T, managing director of Veda Exotic Holidays.

## Determining factors

Dr Arun Aravind, head of Spa Niraamaya, Niraamaya Retreats, says that "health conditions, location of the destination, and the climate" are the deciding elements for a customer to choose wellness vacations. Such wellness packages are meant primarily for adults "but wellness for children is also starting to catch up in certain countries after a long and serious research," says Shiyas.

Wellness vacations always depend on the destination and the kind of audience, says Shiyas. "In the

northern part of India, wellness treatments are connected with Thai, Chinese, leisure and pleasure concepts. In Kerala, wellness is always blended with Ayurveda."

Wellness care packages are not recommended without medical advice for people suffering from mobility issues, acute skin conditions, and cardiac problems. But it acts as a remedy for the usual daily niggling ailments.

"Wellness is the new buzzword," says Gurleen Kaur, a content writer and event manager. She took a wellness package based on the recommendations of her friends and after reading reviews of the place on TripAdvisor. Her package comprised a full board Ayurveda programme for seven days, which included a 90 minute yoga session daily. "It cost around Rs 1 lakh," says Gurleen.

## Well packaged

What attracts customers to wellness vacations is the offering of the wellness experience beyond the traditional Ayurvedic centres and clinics in small towns. For Deepa Guruprasad, a freelance marketing professional, a wellness retreat offers her the choice to experience wellness in the comfort and convenience of luxurious settings. "I like how it is packaged as a lifestyle choice." Having experienced it once, she "would love to go on a wellness retreat every month!" For Deepa, going on such a health sanctuary would be a solo experience as she perceives it as well-deserved 'me-time'. "It would be an ideal time to spend with myself where I can introspect," she says.

The duration of the wellness packages can range from three to 28 days. Packages include providing rejuvenation, body purification, anti ageing, slimming, and beauty care packages. Specific treatment packages for conditions like psoriasis, spondylosis, arthritis, neck and spinal problems, abdominal issues etc., are also provided but these are based on the preliminary discussions with a doctor, according to which the doctors' panel will fix the duration of treatment. Unlike conventional vacations which are based on seasons, wellness tourism is available all year round.