

TODAY'S traveller

CORPORATE, BUSINESS, AVIATION, LUXURY & LEISURE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

JULY 2026 - ₹400



**THE WELLNESS RESET:
A \$6.8T GLOBAL SHIFT**

**WELLNESS & LUXURY
RETREATS**

IHG'S NEXT CHAPTER: INDIA AT SCALE

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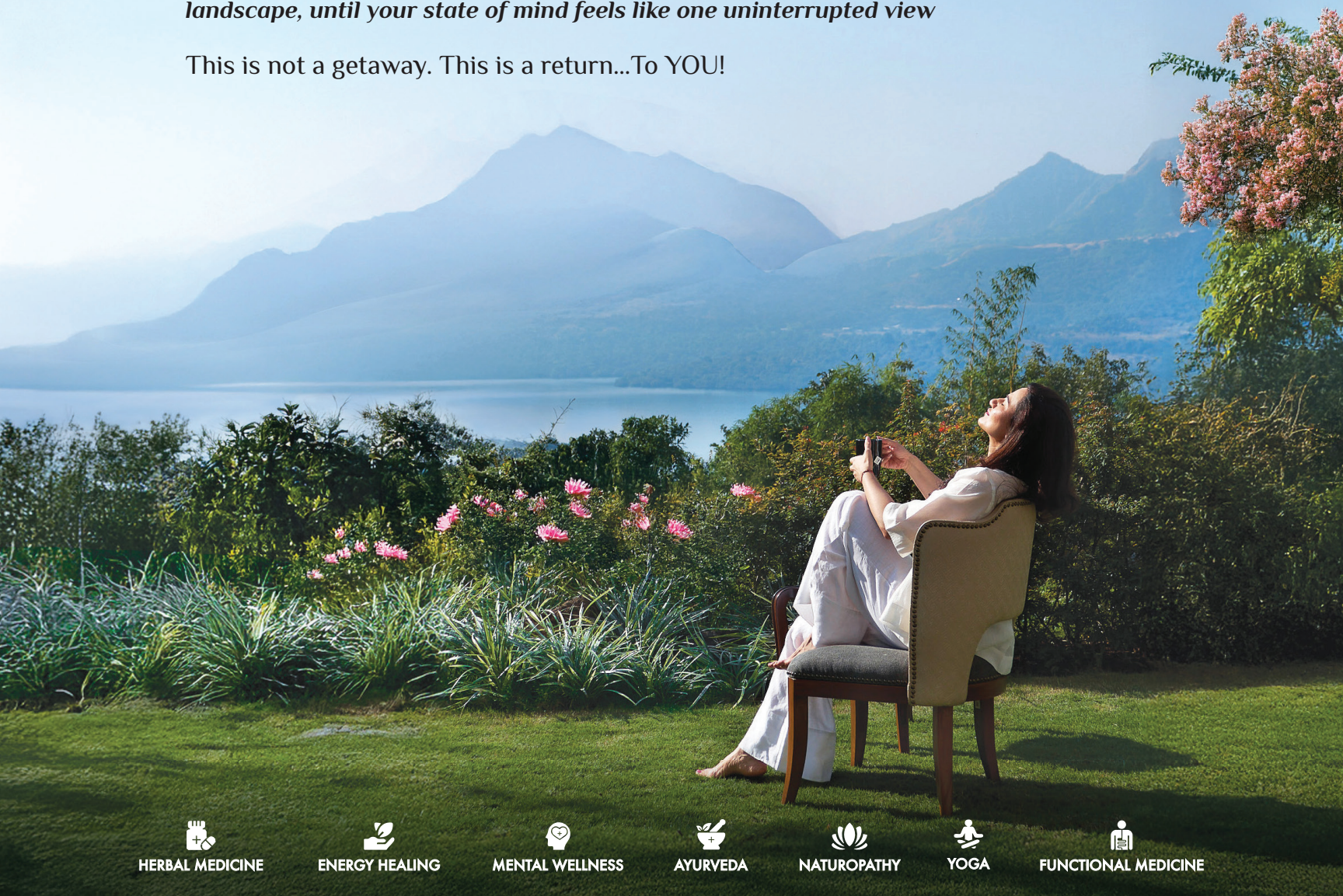
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Today's Traveller is published/printed by Kamal Gill on behalf of M/s Gill India Concepts Pvt. Ltd. Registered Office : Z-33, 11nd Floor, Hauz Khas, New Delhi, 110016

Printed at: HT Media Limited,
Plot Number 8, Udyog Vihar,
Greater Noida - 201306, UP.

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IHG'S INDIA AMBITION: BUILDING A 400 HOTEL FUTURE

With record signings, a widening brand portfolio and growing owner confidence, IHG is placing India at the centre of its global expansion strategy

TT BUREAU

India has moved decisively into the heart of IHG Hotels & Resorts' global growth story. Across metropolitan business districts, emerging commercial centres, leisure destinations and luxury resort markets, the hospitality group is building an Indian portfolio designed around the changing ambitions of travellers and hotel owners.

Its plans extend far beyond adding rooms. IHG is creating a carefully layered network of globally recognised brands, each positioned for a distinct guest, location and investment opportunity.

The scale of that ambition is significant. With more than 52 operating hotels and 98 hotels in development, comprising close to 14,000 rooms, IHG plans to more than triple its estate in India over the next five years. Its stated goal is to cross 400 open and in-development hotels, transforming India into one of the most consequential markets within the company's international system.

Supporting that expansion is a portfolio covering Luxury & Lifestyle, Premium and Essentials hospitality. Six Senses and InterContinental are strengthening IHG's position at the higher end of the



Lobby, Six Senses Vana

market. Crowne Plaza and voco are opening fresh possibilities across premium business and leisure destinations. Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express continue to provide scale, while Garner introduces a flexible conversion proposition for owners seeking access to an international hotel platform.

The arrival of both Kimpton and Vignette Collection in India underscores the growing sophistication of the country's luxury hospitality landscape, as travellers increasingly seek distinctive brands, immersive experiences, and hotels with a strong sense of individuality.

Together, these developments reveal the foundations of IHG's India strategy: brand choice, disciplined expansion, local market relevance and enduring owner partnerships.

INDIA MOVES CENTRE STAGE

India delivered a third consecutive year of record IHG signings in 2025, reinforcing its position as a major growth engine for the company. The momentum comes amid strong domestic travel, rising demand across business and leisure segments, favourable demographics and considerable space for internationally branded accommodation across the country.

IHG's strategy reflects the breadth of this demand. The company currently has hotels operating or signed across ten brands in India: Six Senses, InterContinental, Kimpton, Vignette Collection, Crowne Plaza, voco, Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Garner and Staybridge Suites. This growing portfolio enables IHG to approach different markets with a brand suited to the destination, guest profile, and an owner's investment objectives.

Elie Maalouf, Chief Executive Officer, IHG Hotels & Resorts, said: "India is one of IHG's strategic markets globally and a key contributor to our long-term growth ambitions. Strong domestic demand, favourable demographics, and the depth of confidence owners express in our brands continue to support our expansion here. With a global portfolio of 21 distinct brands, IHG is strategically expanding its presence in India by introducing more choices to the market. The upcoming debut of Vignette Collection and Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, along with a

strong response to newer brands such as Garner, highlights the relevance and flexibility of our portfolio in meeting the evolving needs of owners and guests. Backed by a robust portfolio of hotels in development, we are well-positioned to accelerate growth in India while advancing our broader ambition of building scale across key markets."

The statement captures an important shift. India is emerging as a market where multiple IHG brands can grow simultaneously, serving travellers across different price points and journey types.

A PORTFOLIO DESIGNED FOR INDIA'S DIVERSITY

No single hospitality format can adequately serve a country as varied as India. IHG's portfolio-led approach allows the company to respond to these distinctions.

Its Essentials brands provide reliable accommodation across business and leisure markets. Premium brands address demand for elevated services, meetings, social occasions, and experience-driven stays. Luxury & Lifestyle brands bring globally recognised hospitality concepts into destinations shaped by increasingly discerning travellers.



Kosi Bar & Kitchen, voco Jim Corbett by IHG



The structure also offers owners greater choice. New-build projects, conversions, resort developments, and individual luxury hotels can enter the IHG system through brands aligned with their commercial requirements and the character of their markets.

Sudeep Jain, Managing Director, South West Asia, IHG Hotels & Resorts, added: "India remains one of IHG's most active markets, supported by an underpenetrated branded hotel landscape and strong demand across business and leisure segments. The introduction of brands such as Kimpton, Vignette Collection and the rapid growth of the InterContinental and Crowne Plaza brands strengthen our offering across the luxury and premium segments, complementing the strong performance of our Essentials portfolio, such as Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express, that anchor our scale

in India. With 98 hotels in development and an increasing signing momentum, we remain focused on delivering accelerating growth in the country over the next five years."

ESSENTIALS PORTFOLIO STRENGTH DRIVES INDIA'S FOOTPRINT

Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express remain central to IHG's Indian presence. Together, the two brands represent more than 70 % of the company's operating hotels in India and account for the majority of its development pipeline.

Their reach is supported by a steady demand across corporate travel, short leisure breaks, family holidays, weekend getaways and urban stays. Both brands carry international recognition while remaining adaptable across a wide range of Indian destinations.

Holiday Inn's appeal across its city hotels and resorts allows it to address business travel, as well as family and leisure demand. Holiday Inn Express offers a focused and efficient hotel experience for travellers seeking uniformity, convenience and value.

The performance of Holiday Inn Express has been particularly notable. The brand ranked in first place in signings within its industry category on a year-to-date basis during the third quarter of 2025. This signals continued market appetite for branded accommodation that can deliver operational efficiency to international standards.

As India's commercial activity spreads beyond its largest cities and domestic travel continues to grow, these brands can play an increasingly important role in IHG's expansion.

GARNER OPENS A NEW CONVERSION PATH

The introduction of Garner in 2025 marked a new phase in IHG's mainstream strategy.

Garner is the company's newest midscale conversion brand, created for hotel owners seeking a more flexible route into the IHG portfolio. Conversion brands enable suitable existing properties to join an international system while operating within a model designed for efficient operations and essential guest experiences.

Early signings demonstrate Garner's potential across diverse Indian markets. Garner Etawah in Uttar Pradesh and Garner Kathua in Jammu & Kashmir were signed during 2025, followed by additions in Kutch and Bhiwadi.



voco Amritsar by IHG



Six Senses Fort Barwara

The brand's initial traction also signals owner confidence in conversion-led development. For IHG, that confidence will be critical as it pursues scale across a country with widely differing real estate conditions and investment profiles.

PREMIUM BRANDS GAIN MOMENTUM

IHG's expansion is equally visible within the Premium segment. Crowne Plaza continues to strengthen its Indian footprint and now represents around 25 % of the company's hotels in development across the region. Its combination of accommodation, meetings infrastructure, dining and social spaces gives it relevance across corporate centres, convention markets and destinations with strong demand for events.

The opening of Crowne Plaza Lucknow in May 2025 carried particular significance. The hotel became IHG's 50th operating property in India, marking an important milestone in the company's growth journey.

The expansion of voco brings a different expression of premium hospitality. The brand combines the individuality of each property with the reassurance and systems of an international hotel group. Since entering India, voco has secured signings across major cities and leisure destinations, including Srinagar, Goa, Gurugram, Mumbai and Amritsar.

Its first Indian opening at Jim Corbett National Park demonstrated the brand's ability to operate in a resort environment. The destination attracts wildlife travellers, families, small celebrations and premium leisure guests, giving voco access to several high-growth travel segments within a single market.

The geographic range of its signings suggests that voco can occupy a valuable space in IHG's portfolio.

IHG's ambitions within the Premium segment extend beyond its existing portfolio. The recent global launch of Noted Collection, the company's 21st brand and a premium collection offering, reflects its continued focus on expanding brand choice for owners and travellers. As one of IHG's priority growth markets globally, India presents significant potential for the introduction of additional brands from the company's portfolio as guest expectations become more nuanced and demand continues to diversify.



Holiday Inn Chandigarh Zirakpur

LUXURY FINDS NEW DESTINATIONS

Luxury & Lifestyle brands form a growing proportion of IHG's India pipeline. The expansion of InterContinental illustrates how the country's luxury market is widening geographically. Alongside key metropolitan destinations such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad, the brand is progressing across leisure locations including Mahabalipuram, Kasauli and Kodaikanal.

These destinations represent different expressions of Indian luxury. Mahabalipuram combines heritage, coastline and proximity to Chennai. Kasauli offers a quieter Himalayan setting with access to key northern markets. Kodaikanal brings established hill-station appeal, a cooler climate, and a strong domestic leisure tradition.

InterContinental's movement into such locations reflects rising demand for high-end resort stays among Indian travellers.

IHG has also strengthened its presence at the most exclusive end of the market through Six Senses. Six Senses Fort Barwara opened in Rajasthan in 2021, bringing the brand's wellness-led luxury philosophy into a restored historic fort. Six Senses Vana followed in 2023, adding one of India's best-known wellness retreats to the portfolio.

These properties connect IHG with travellers seeking immersive stays defined by wellbeing, heritage, privacy and a strong sense of place.

Looking ahead, IHG sees significant headroom to deepen its Luxury & Lifestyle presence in India. As the market continues to mature, the company will evaluate opportunities to introduce additional brands from its global portfolio, including ultra-luxury offerings such as Regent, further broadening choice for owners and meeting the evolving expectations of discerning travellers.



Six Senses, Thimphu, Bhutan



Crowne Plaza Lucknow by IHG

VIGNETTE COLLECTION AND THE VALUE OF INDIVIDUALITY

The addition of the Vignette Collection is expected to expand IHG's Luxury & Lifestyle offering further.

The collection brand is designed for distinctive hotels that want to preserve their own stories, identities and design language while gaining access to IHG's global distribution, commercial infrastructure and loyalty ecosystem.

India presents considerable potential for this model. Heritage buildings, independent luxury resorts, design-focused hotels and culturally rooted properties often derive their appeal from their individuality. A collection brand can enable such hotels to join an international network without sacrificing the qualities that make them memorable.

OWNER CONFIDENCE DRIVES THE PIPELINE

Hotels require long investment horizons. A robust development pipeline, therefore, represents more than numerical growth. It reflects the willingness of owners to commit capital, land and operating partnerships to a hotel company and its brands.

IHG's 98 hotels in development point to sustained confidence in its Indian strategy.

That confidence is supported by the company's portfolio of 21 global brands, its enterprise systems and IHG One Rewards, which has more than 160 million members internationally. For hotel owners, affiliation with the group offers access to global distribution, direct booking channels, revenue capabilities, operational support and an extensive loyalty audience.

Strong partnerships will remain essential as the company works towards more than 400 open and in-development hotels. India's hospitality market is shaped by regional ownership groups, family businesses, institutional investors, and developers entering the sector for the first time. Building scale will depend on creating models that work for each. Beyond brands and systems, IHG's growth is powered by its people. Alongside expanding its hotel footprint, the company continues to invest in building a future-ready workforce through initiatives such as IHG Academy, leadership development programmes and vocational training partnerships. As the portfolio grows, strengthening the talent pipeline and creating meaningful career opportunities across hospitality operations, commercial functions and hotel leadership will remain central to supporting sustainable growth.

THE ROAD TO 400

IHG currently operates 52 hotels across six brands in India, including Six Senses, InterContinental Hotels & Resorts, Crowne Plaza, voco Hotels, Holiday Inn Resort and Holiday Inn Express. Another 98 hotels are under development and are expected to open over the next three to five years.

Globally, the company has more than 1 million rooms, and over 7000 hotels open across more than 100 countries, and a development pipeline exceeding 2,300 properties. India is poised to contribute an increasingly important share of that future growth. Disciplined signings, strategic conversions, new brand introductions and deeper partnerships with owners will shape the path ahead.

IHG's 400 hotel ambition, therefore, represents more than a development target. It signals a long-term commitment to India's evolving hospitality landscape and confidence in the country's ability to sustain multiple brands, travel segments and destination types.

IHG's India story is now entering a decisive phase, one defined by scale, sharper brand segmentation and deeper owner conviction. Its expanding portfolio is being built for the many ways India travels, conducts business, celebrates, retreats and discovers luxury.

The road to 400 hotels will do more than expand IHG's footprint. It will establish India as one of the key markets where the company's future scale, brand diversity and hospitality ambitions are most powerfully realised.



InterContinental Marine Drive-Mumbai by IHG

WELLNESS TRAVEL & LUXURY RETREATS SPECIAL 2026



THE NEW WELLNESS RESET: INSIDE A \$6.8 TRILLION GLOBAL SHIFT

As wellness moves towards longevity, preventive health and emotional restoration, hotels, clinics and destinations are becoming part of a powerful new global economy.

KAMAL GILL



Wellness is no longer a quiet corner of luxury hospitality. It has become one of the world's largest and most rapidly expanding economic forces, influencing travel, medicine, beauty, food, fitness, technology, residential development and the way people design their daily lives.

The Global Wellness Institute valued the wider wellness economy at a record US\$6.8 trillion in 2024, reflecting 7.9 % growth in a single year. The industry has doubled in size since 2013 and is projected to reach approximately US\$9.8 trillion by 2029, expanding at an annual rate of 7.6 %.

By then, wellness could account for 7.1 % of global GDP. Global wellness spending already exceeds the value of several mega-industries and represents around 60 % of total public and private health expenditure worldwide.

Different research organisations define the market in different ways. McKinsey's narrower, consumer-focused assessment places annual global wellness spending at around US\$2 trillion. Yet the direction remains consistent: consumers are allocating more attention and money to health, sleep, nutrition, fitness, mindfulness, appearance and healthy ageing.

Ageing populations, chronic disease, workplace exhaustion, heightened health awareness, and demand for prevention are making wellness one of the world's most sought-after areas for investment, innovation, and travel.

PREVENTION REPLACES OCCASIONAL PAMPERING

Consumers increasingly expect wellness to help them remain healthy, functional and independent for longer.

Katherine Johnston, Senior Research Fellow at the Global Wellness Institute, sees a lasting change in consumer thinking. Prevention, mental health, social connection, nature and the effect of living environments have all become more important. This is supporting growth across wellness real estate, mental wellness, traditional medicine, personalised health and wellness tourism.

The shift is visible in the questions travellers now ask. Can a programme improve sleep? Will it support mobility, reduce stress or rebuild strength? Can it help identify a health risk before symptoms become serious? Will its benefits continue after the holiday ends?

The future of wellness will therefore be judged less by the length of a treatment menu and more by the relevance, credibility and continuity of the experience.

GLOBAL SPECIALISTS REDEFINE WELLNESS

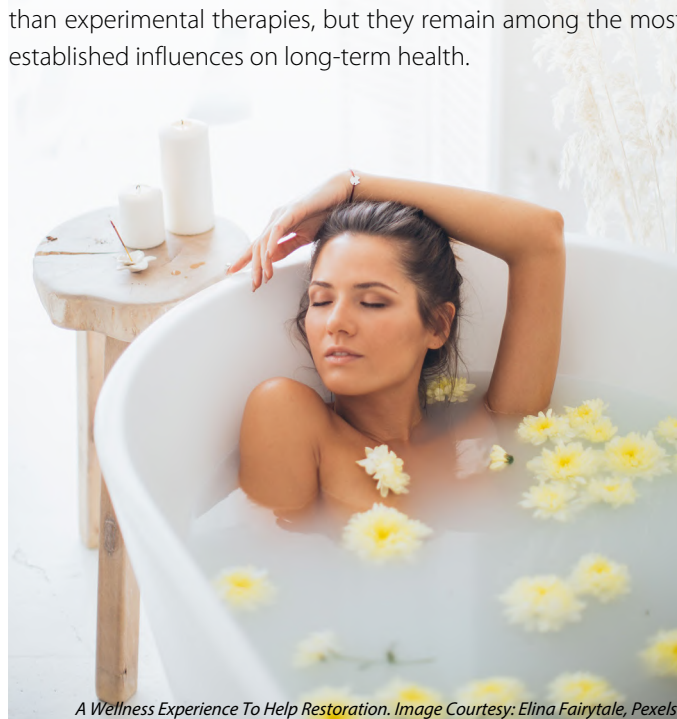
International wellness specialists increasingly see the industry as a meeting point between established lifestyle practices and advanced medicine.

Susie Ellis, Chair and CEO of the Global Wellness Summit and Global Wellness Institute, believes Asia is central to this future. The region can combine preventive traditions, spirituality, nature

and social connection with diagnostics, medical expertise and emerging technology.

Anna Bjurstam, Wellness Pioneer at Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, argues that wellness and longevity must converge for either concept to remain meaningful. Longevity without everyday wellbeing risks becoming excessively medicalised, while wellness without measurable health value may struggle to establish lasting credibility.

Dr Michael Roizen, the Cleveland Clinic's first Chief Wellness Officer, continues to emphasise evidence-based lifestyle change as a foundation for redefining age. Movement, food, sleep, stress management and social connection may appear less dramatic than experimental therapies, but they remain among the most established influences on long-term health.



A Wellness Experience To Help Restoration. Image Courtesy: Elina Fairytale, Pexels



Yoga Outdoors Against a Backdrop of Snowcapped Mountains. Image Courtesy: Abhishek Gaur, Pexels



The Spa at Gateway Bekal. Image Courtesy: Script PR

The World Health Organisation takes a similarly practical view. It defines healthy ageing through functional ability: the capacity to move, think, make decisions, maintain relationships and participate in society with independence and dignity.

The goal is therefore no longer simply to add years to life. It is to protect the number of years lived with physical ability, cognitive strength, emotional stability and purpose.

HEALTH SPAN IS THE NEW MEASURE

Longevity was once understood primarily as lifespan. The more useful measure now is health span: the period of life spent in good health without serious disease or disabling limitations.

The distinction is becoming urgent. Life expectancy has increased, but many additional years are being lived with chronic illness. This gap is turning longevity into an economic, medical and social priority.

Governments must consider care and retirement systems, employers must accommodate longer working lives, and individuals are being encouraged to build physical and financial resilience much earlier.

For the wellness industry, the health span movement is driving demand for preventive diagnostics, muscle and mobility programmes, metabolic and brain health, sleep improvement, and personalised interventions.



Wellness Singing Bowl Meditation. Image Courtesy: Bhutan Spirit Sanctuary

MUSCLE POWERS LONGEVITY INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the most grounded developments within longevity is a renewed focus on muscle.

Strength is no longer presented solely as a fitness or appearance goal. Lean muscle mass, balance, mobility and cardiovascular capacity are increasingly recognised as foundations of independence and resilience in later life.

The Global Wellness Institute's 2026 ageing trends place physical activity, nutrition and sleep at the centre of healthy ageing, with mobility and muscle identified as critical determinants of health span.

This is changing the way fitness programmes are designed. Functional measures such as rising from the floor, carrying weight, climbing stairs and maintaining balance are gaining importance alongside conventional gym metrics.

WOMEN FINALLY ENTER THE LONGEVITY CONVERSATION

Much of the early commercial longevity movement was designed around male biology, male founders and male performance goals. That imbalance is beginning to change.

The Global Wellness Summit identifies women's health span as one of the defining wellness trends of 2026. The emerging approach moves beyond treating individual menopause symptoms and examines the influence of ovarian ageing, hormonal transitions, bone health, muscle function, cardiovascular risk, cognition, and metabolic changes across a woman's life.

This is likely to drive new diagnostics, research, specialist clinics, telehealth services and retreat programmes. Strength training is being reframed as essential for women's mobility and bone health, while hormone care is shifting towards a more detailed conversation about individual risk, timing and medical supervision.

Six Senses Vana in Dehradun, part of IHG Hotels & Resorts' Six Senses portfolio, includes a Mindful Menopause programme as part of its wider personalised retreat model. The retreat combines wellness screening and consultations with guided nutrition, Ayurveda, yoga, Tibetan Medicine, natural healing and daily treatments.



NOURISHMENT. SERVED MINDFULLY.

Aujasya by The Leela is the brand's signature wellness programme, where mindful nourishment, movement and restorative rituals come together in effortless balance. Rooted in Indian wisdom and designed for modern living, it invites guilt-free indulgence and celebrates the joy of being well.



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Scan to know more

Swastik Wellbeing Sanctuary, a comprehensive wellness entity, offers women's health and fertility care in a 51-acre healing destination in Peacock Valley, Khadakwasla, Pune, which opened in November 2024 in the Sahyadri foothills.

The retreat is built around five Vihars covering cave-style villas, Ayurveda and naturopathy, meditation, sound healing, yoga, reflexology, nature walks and community spaces. Set amid 15,000 native trees, it offers 16 personalised wellness and healing programmes, including Panchakarma, stress balance, digital detox, weight, gut, sleep, cardiac, and pain. Partnerships with wellness institutions and clinical outcome tracking add depth to its approach.

Age, sex, medical history, culture, lifestyle and personal circumstances all influence what wellbeing means for an individual.

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM TAKES CENTRE STAGE

Burnout, anxiety, poor sleep and constant digital stimulation have made nervous-system regulation one of the fastest-growing areas of modern wellness.

The Global Wellness Summit's 2026 forecast describes 'neurowellness' as a movement spanning clinical devices, sleep technology, breathwork, touch therapies, yoga, neurofeedback and environments designed to reduce sensory strain. The most interesting shift is the recognition that the body cannot recover properly when it remains in a persistent state of alert.

This is influencing hotel design and retreat programming. Lighting, acoustics, temperature, scent, room controls and the pace of an itinerary are increasingly considered part of the wellness experience.

Duncan So, Founder of Burnout Recovery Accelerator, has highlighted that burnout can manifest as compulsive scheduling, guilt about rest, and an inability to tolerate stillness. A packed wellness itinerary can recreate the pressures guests are trying to escape. The new luxury may therefore include permission to do less.

THE BACKLASH AGAINST OVER-OPTIMISATION

The rapid growth of wearables, glucose monitors, biological age tests, and sleep scores has made health more measurable than at any previous point. It has also made wellness psychologically demanding. Consumers are questioning a culture in which every



Yoga Stretch Session. Image Courtesy: Diana Light, Pexels

meal, heartbeat, night of sleep and physical response becomes another score to improve.

Pleasure, emotion and sensory experience are consequently returning to the centre of wellness. Social bathing, dance, music, creativity, nature and shared meals are being recognised as important forms of restoration.

ELE|NA, led globally by Heidi Grimwood, Senior Vice President of ELE|NA, has used movement, meditation, sound and social connection to make wellness feel more inclusive. Ridhira Retreat in Gandipet, founded by Ritesh Mastipuram, Founder of Ridhira Group, has similarly brought yoga, sound healing, music and nutrition into a shared retreat environment.

These initiatives illustrate a significant correction. Wellness can be purposeful without becoming joyless.

LONGEVITY MOVES INTO THE HOME

Wellness is moving beyond clinics, hotels and retreats into residential design.

Wellness real estate was the fastest-growing part of the global wellness economy between 2019 and 2024, recording average annual growth of 19.5 %. Longevity residences are now emerging as a category that incorporates preventive care, air and water quality, movement, nature, community spaces, diagnostics, and ambient health technology.





Ocean Side Aerial Yoga. Image Courtesy: Thrs

This changes the role of architecture. Homes and communities can support or undermine health through walkability, light, noise, materials, ventilation, access to greenery and opportunities for social contact.

The trend is particularly relevant to hospitality and branded residences.

ASIA BECOMES THE WORLD'S WELLNESS LABORATORY

Asia's wellness economy reached approximately US\$2 trillion in 2024 and recorded annual growth of 9.3 %, placing it among the world's fastest-expanding regional markets.

Asia brings together ancient systems of prevention and a rapidly developing medical and technological sector. Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, meditation, yoga, herbal healing, and nature-based practices now sit alongside advanced diagnostics, regenerative medicine, and digital health. This meeting of foundational wisdom and innovation is central to the future of global wellness.

Ananda in the Himalayas in Uttarakhand, India, offers personalised programmes combining Ayurveda, yoga, meditation, nutrition and traditional Oriental therapies.

Bhutan Spirit Sanctuary exemplifies this destination-led model by connecting Traditional Bhutanese Medicine with monastic landscapes, meditation, village life, food and cultural activities. Chiva-Som in Thailand combines medical wellness, fitness and holistic care.

The Farm at San Benito, Philippines, offers doctor-led programmes and plant-based cuisine. Banyan Tree Spa Lijiang, China, combines Naxi cultural influences with traditional Chinese healing therapies, and COMO Shambhala Estate, Bali, Indonesia, delivers expert-led wellness journeys.

Preferred Wellbeing recognises hotels that have thoughtfully integrated wellbeing into the guest experience through authentic, place-based, and experience-led offerings.

INDIA'S HOTEL GROUPS TURN WELLNESS INTO A BRAND SYSTEM

India's leading hospitality companies are increasingly treating wellness as a brand platform rather than a department confined to the spa.

Aujasya by The Leela is the group's signature wellness programme, rooted in the Sanskrit idea of "vigour of life." Launched in 2022, it brings together food, movement, mindfulness, sound, sleep, spa therapies and cultural experiences across The Leela's hotels. Its 2026 expansion includes curated meal programmes, wellness retreats and the first Aujasya by The Leela Spa at The Leela Palace Jaipur. Key offerings include millet-forward menus, Vitality Breakfast, Sampoorana meal plans, guided yoga, meditation, wellness workshops, and a 90-minute Signature Ritual.

Taj Hotels (Indian Hotels Company Limited) has expanded J Wellness Circle across India, grounding many experiences in Ayurveda, yoga, meditation, and the five elements within destination-specific treatments. Its current Wellness and Innergise experiences signal a move towards complete restorative journeys. Atmantan offers doctor-guided programmes that blend Ayurveda, naturopathy, functional medicine, and yoga to achieve holistic transformation. Some properties are adopting longer-format care, including Taj Wayanad Resort & Spa and Gateway Bekal.



Hot Stone Therapy Promoting Relaxation. Image Courtesy: Engin Akyurt, Pexels

Sterling Holiday Resorts integrates wellness through its Subuthi Spa network and Sterling Palm Bliss, its dedicated wellness resort in Rishikesh. Subuthi, available at about 20 resorts, offers Ayurvedic therapies such as Abhyanga, Shirodhara, Pizhichil and Njavarakizhi. Sterling Palm Bliss Rishikesh adds yoga, panchakarma, Jyotish, sattvic vegetarian cuisine, detox programmes and curated wellness meals.

Hilton Hotels' wellness footprint in India is shaped by refined urban retreats where spa care, movement, recovery and quiet luxury are woven into the stay. Conrad Bengaluru offers Conrad Spa with treatment rooms, sauna, steam and ice fountain facilities, while Conrad Pune combines spa therapies, a salon, outdoor pool and fitness centre for a fuller restorative pause. Hilton Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park adds Tattva Wellness, with massage therapies and calming treatment spaces.

Marriott International has created one of the clearest lifestyle systems in which food, sleep, movement, work, and play are organised as connected pillars. In India, this is supported by properties such as JW Marriott Sahar Mumbai, Westin, and resort properties in Sohna, Jaipur, and the Himalayan foothills, among others.

IHG Hotels & Resorts offers a wide range of wellness programs, including dedicated fitness-focused hotels, luxury spas, and in-room yoga amenities across its properties in India. The brand's Indian wellness expression is reflected in the Six Senses Vana and Six Senses Barwara retreats, which operate as a complete wellness environment in which assessment, food, traditional medicine, daily practice, accommodation, and sustainability form a single system.

Radisson Hotel Group's Indian properties demonstrate a more locally adapted model. R The Spa at Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport now adds Ayurveda to its expansive 20,000-square-foot wellness offering. Ayur at Radisson Blu Hotel & Suites GRT

Chennai offers personalised Ayurvedic journeys informed by the balance of doshas and koshas, while other Indian Radisson properties offer yoga spaces, traditional massage and restorative spa care.

ITC Hotels has extended wellness beyond its Kaya Kalp spas through indoor air quality measures and its research-led Sleep programme. Kaya Kalp – The Spa itself combines Ayurveda, yoga and therapies at properties including ITC Mughal, ITC Grand Bharat and ITC Grand Goa, among others.

Accor combines several interpretations across its Indian brands. Raffles Udaipur places nature-inspired rituals and emotional well-being within a private island setting on Udai Sagar Lake. Sofitel Mumbai BKC provides an urban spa model, while Novotel Goa Resort & Spa combines a nature-led resort environment with a Turkish hammam.

The move to wellness as integral to living is well put by Ranjit Batra, CEO, Ventive Hospitality, with several hotels in Pune and the Maldives, "The global wellness economy has reached 6.8 trillion dollars, four times the size of the pharma industry, and it is heading towards 10 trillion dollars by 2029. Prevention, longevity and everyday health have now moved into the mainstream. In hospitality, wellness is now moving towards several clear directions."

He adds, "Sleep is better treated and is now fully a science. Food is becoming increasingly connected to nutrition and metabolic health. Recovery is coming from performance sports. Longevity is becoming more personalised and measurable. At Ventive Hospitality, we no longer see wellness as an amenity. We see it as the next measure of hotel relevance, because the future of luxury is not just where you stay, but how you feel when you leave."

The common direction is significant. Wellness is no longer reserved for destination retreats. It is entering urban business hotels, luxury palaces, family resorts and branded residential thinking.

A BETTER STATE OF BEING BECOMES THE NEW LUXURY

The global wellness industry is moving in several directions at once. One direction is scientific and highly personalised, built around diagnostics, longevity clinics, preventive medicine and experimental geroscience. Another is cultural and place-led, drawing upon traditional healing, food, spirituality and nature. A third responds to nervous-system exhaustion through quiet, sleep, touch, joy and emotional repair. These approaches need not compete.

As the global wellness economy approaches US\$10 trillion, its influence will reshape homes, cities, workplaces, travel, healthcare and everyday living. Health is no longer simply a measure of well-being; it is becoming the ultimate expression of luxury.

The central promise is no longer simply escape or indulgence. It is a longer life lived with greater health, meaning, connection and freedom.

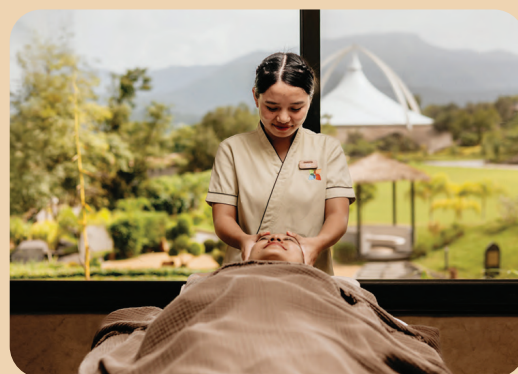


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AYURVEDA

A MORE BEAUTIFUL ENTRY INTO HEALING

An ancient system steps into the spotlight.

TT BUREAU

Ayurveda has never lacked history, influence or devoted followers. What it is gaining now is a new level of attention, one that comes with harder questions, closer scrutiny and a demand for greater clarity.

Research is becoming central to that shift. India's Ministry of Ayush is strengthening policy, education, and professional practice, while universities and specialist institutes are examining classical formulations, therapies, and their relevance to contemporary public health.

The World Health Organisation has also introduced global benchmarks for training and practice. Its Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar is bringing evidence, safety and international collaboration into sharper view.

The science is still evolving, which makes this moment especially important.

ANCIENT SYSTEM, NEW SETTING

The first surprise is often the setting.

A traditional therapy may now unfold inside a restored palace, a tropical pavilion or a glass-walled room overlooking a Himalayan forest. Sri Lanka places oil rituals amid coconut groves and low-slung architecture. Kerala pairs clinical depth with monsoon gardens and the medicinal scent of leaves warming in treatment kitchens. Dehradun brings a restrained, modern elegance, where stone, silence and carefully controlled views make serious wellness feel less intimidating.

None of this changes the central discipline. The luxury lies in how completely the guest is held by the experience. The architecture creates a softer threshold. What follows may still be demanding.

THE DOCTOR IS THE NEW CONCIERGE

At most retreats, the doctor knows more about your stay than the guest relations team does. The process may begin before arrival with a medical history, health questionnaire, or video consultation, followed on-property by a closer look at sleep, appetite, digestion, energy, stress, movement, medication, and past injuries.

The language is ancient, but its purpose is highly personal. Prakriti describes the body's underlying constitution; vikriti, its present imbalance. Agni refers to digestive and metabolic capacity, while ama is linked to incomplete digestion and accumulation. Nadi Pariksha uses the pulse to read patterns within the body, and Dinacharya explores the daily rhythms of waking, eating, moving and sleeping.

THE TREATMENT MENU, RECUT

The Ayurvedic treatment menu is getting a smarter edit. Therapies once presented as exotic rituals are now woven into focused programmes for sleep, digestion, muscular recovery, stress, digital fatigue and emotional release.

Abhyanga, the rhythmic application of warm oil, may anchor a sleep protocol or recovery



Herbal Medicine Ingredients. Image Courtesy: Nataliya Vaitkevich, Pexels

sequence, with the oil selected for the guest's constitution, season and current condition. The steady stream of liquid that is Shirodhara remains the cinematic star, now framed around rest, mental quiet and decompression.

Takradhara offers a cooler variation using specially prepared buttermilk or another prescribed liquid. Kizhi brings warmth through bundles of herbs, leaves, or powders pressed rhythmically across the body, often within mobility and physical recovery programmes. Pizhichil is the most visually dramatic: warm medicated oil flows over the body as therapists move in synchrony. Beautiful to watch, certainly, but always guided by a physician.

Udwarthanam is a vigorous application of herbal powders connected to the circulatory and metabolic processes. Marma therapy uses traditional vital points with touch, breath and body awareness. Nasya, administration of medicated oil through the nasal route, is strictly under medical supervision.

And then there is Panchakarma, perhaps Ayurveda's most loosely used word. A three or five-day stay can offer a meaningful introduction to its food, oils and daily rhythms, creating space to pause, sleep and reset. Complete Panchakarma is a different



A Serene Sound Bath Session. Image Courtesy: AI25.Studio Studio, Pexels



Massage Therapy Session. Image Courtesy: Anna Tarazevich, Pexels

proposition: an intensive, carefully staged journey through preparation, supervised procedures and gradual recovery.

Real transformation rarely fits neatly between Friday check-in and Monday breakfast.

FOOD BECOMES THE PRESCRIPTION

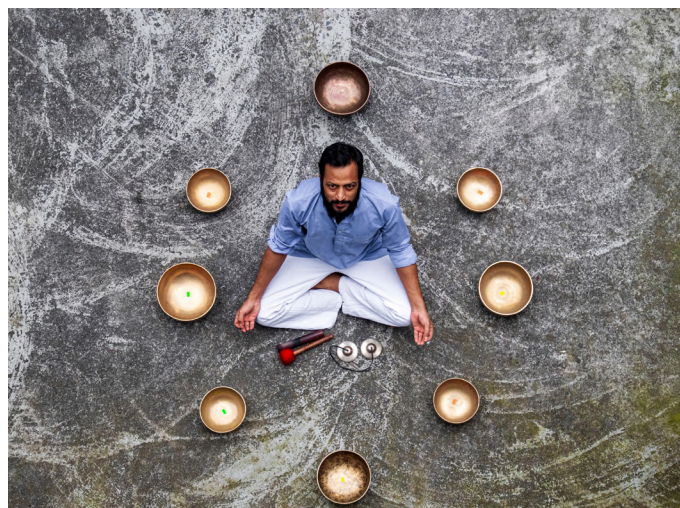
The kitchen may reveal Ayurveda's new mood more clearly than the treatment room. Forget the predictable parade of raw salads, chia pots and cold-pressed juices. Here, food arrives warm, seasonal, and closely attuned to digestion.

The medicine is part of the menu. Every plate is influenced by appetite, constitution, climate and stage of treatment, and portions, spices and meal times are carefully adjusted by doctor and chef. The six tastes – sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent and astringent – make balance. Herbal waters and digestive infusions punctuate the day. Medicated ghee can be used in moderation and lighter foods prepare the body for cleansing, with simple preparations soothing it back gently afterwards.

Kerala brings coconut, gourds, local grains and monsoon herbs. Rishikesh offers sattvic restraint, while Sri Lanka adds native greens and island spice. The bowls still look beautiful, glowing with pumpkin, lentils, beetroot and greens against brass, clay and banana leaf. The real luxury, though, is how the body feels two hours later.

A GEOGRAPHY OF THE NEW AYURVEDA

Across the region, Ayurveda is taking on the mood of the landscape around it.



Man Meditating Surrounded by Singing Bowls. Image Courtesy: Anup Panthi, Pexels



Shirodhara, Deep Mental Relaxation Therapy. Image Courtesy: Trinaya.co.in

Haridwar presents its institutional face. At Patanjali Yogpeeth, hospitals, education, yoga and research form part of a vast organised ecosystem. It is Ayurveda at scale, far removed from the intimacy of a private retreat.

Kerala remains the clinical heart. Here, herbal medicine and oil therapies belong to a living culture, supported by long treatment lineages, specialised physicians and deep knowledge of Panchakarma. It is also the place where questions of accreditation, authenticity and medical discipline become impossible to avoid.

Rishikesh adds the spiritual layer. Ayurveda sits beside yoga, pranayama, meditation and Vedantic thought. The river, the hills and the ordered rhythm of the day give the journey a more introspective quality.

Dehradun represents the polished integrative retreat. Ayurveda may coexist with natural healing, nutrition, movement work, Tibetan medicine, physiotherapy and selected diagnostic tools. It speaks fluently to the globally travelled guest without losing the central role of the physician.

Goa offers the gentler entry. Shorter programmes mix Ayurveda with yoga, sea air, tropical living and a more relaxed style of hospitality. It is ideal for introducing new habits, though the line between an enjoyable reset and a medical programme must remain clear.

Karnataka brings another expression. SOUKYA, outside Bengaluru, combines Ayurveda with naturopathy, yoga, homoeopathy and other complementary approaches inside a residential health setting. Near Mysuru, the Indus Valley Ayurvedic Centre draws on classical treatment traditions within a quieter, nature-led environment.

Sri Lanka carries its own Ayurvedic history, institutions and medicinal traditions, shaped by island plants, local therapies and a distinct culinary language. Further afield, Ayurveda has travelled into Nepal, South Africa, Russia, Switzerland and wellness destinations across the world.

Its international success will depend on how intelligently it travels. Architecture may change. Menus may evolve. Treatment rooms may become more beautiful. The central standards cannot become negotiable.

Ayurveda's most compelling new expression is not a glossy reinvention. It is a more graceful way into serious care.

The brass bowl can stay. It simply no longer has to carry the whole story.



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BETWEEN PRAYER WHEELS AND PAINTED WALLS

Across India, monasteries preserve art, faith, learning and stillness, offering travellers a meaningful pause today

TT BUREAU

Constant stimulation. The constant pull into a hundred directions, everything fighting for our attention- that is getting more and more fleeting by the day. The outcomes are blatant and need no introduction: burnout, overstimulation and accumulating fatigue, all of which untethers us from our own being, our own life.

THE PEACE OF PASSING THROUGH

Long before mindfulness became part of the modern wellness vocabulary, monasteries had already organised entire communities around it. Their courtyards, prayer halls and libraries were designed for lives shaped by study, ritual and reflection. Visitors may arrive seeking quiet, but what they encounter is something richer: a culture that has practised stillness for centuries.

In Spiti Valley, Tabo Monastery sits close to the valley floor, its earthen buildings blending into the surrounding landscape. As the eyes adjust to the dim temple interiors, murals and clay sculptures begin to emerge. The experience cannot be hurried. Details appear gradually, encouraging the visitor to remain still and look carefully. Tabo's painted walls preserve conversations between Indian, Tibetan and western Himalayan artistic traditions, turning the complex into a living archive of Buddhist thought.

Alchi Choskor in Ladakh carries a similar historical depth. Its temples, developed around the eleventh and twelfth centuries, contain some of the Himalayan region's most remarkable paintings. Rich colours, elaborate figures and Kashmiri artistic influences recall an era when scholars, craftspeople and translators travelled across mountain kingdoms.

Alchi no longer functions like a large residential monastery, yet it retains a powerful contemplative atmosphere. Visitors stand before images created centuries ago and recognise how art once carried philosophy across regions where books, teachers and ideas travelled slowly.

Monk Meditating Surrounded by Lush Greenery. Image Courtesy: Cottonbro, Pexels

WHEN PRAYER BECOMES A SOUNDSCAPE

Monastic calm is not always silent. It may arrive through many voices chanting together, the sounding of a bell or the deep vibration of ritual horns across a courtyard.

At Tawang Monastery in Arunachal Pradesh, prayer unfolds on a monumental scale. Standing above the valley, the complex remains central to Monpa cultural and religious life. Monks study, conduct ceremonies and gather inside its assembly hall, where rows of reciting voices build a rhythm that can be felt physically.

A traveller entering during prayer may understand none of the words. Understanding is not always required. The repetition, breath and collective concentration create their own order. Attention settles on the rise and fall of the chanting, the rustle of robes and occasional silence between recitations.

Thiksey Monastery in Ladakh offers another similar encounter. Its white buildings rise in tiers above the Indus Valley, while temples and prayer halls hold images, ritual objects and the monumental figure of Maitreya. Early morning is especially atmospheric. The building slowly fills with light as monks begin their prayers, and the landscape beyond seems briefly connected with the rhythm inside.

At Hemis, monastic expression can become far more dramatic. During its annual festival, masked dancers cross the courtyard accompanied by drums, cymbals and long horns. The movement is disciplined, symbolic and rooted in religious teaching. Here, calm can appear through repetition, ritual order and the complete attention of the performers.

MONASTERIES THAT THINK ALOUD

Some of India's most important Buddhist monasteries also function as centres of advanced learning. Their daily life is shaped by intellectual discipline as much as meditation.

At Bylakuppe in Karnataka, Sera Jey and Sera Mey continue Tibet's great monastic university tradition. Drepung Loseling follows a related scholarly lineage at Mundgod, another Tibetan



Buddhist Prayer Stupa in Namche, Nepal. Image Courtesy: Marina Zvada, Pexels

settlement in the state. In these institutions, philosophical debate remains a central method of education.

For visitors expecting complete silence, this energy can be surprising. Yet the atmosphere is intensely focused. Debate turns learning into a physical and communal activity, bringing together speech, gesture, reasoning and sustained concentration.

Namdroling Monastery at Bylakuppe adds another dimension. Its principal temple, popularly known as the Golden Temple, draws visitors through its monumental gilded images and richly decorated interiors. Beyond the public temple, however, lies one of India's major centres of Nyingma Buddhist learning.

Thousands of monks and nuns belong to the wider Namdroling community, with many engaged in formal study. Its monastic and nunnery institutes teach Buddhist philosophy, canonical literature, Tibetan language, religious history and other subjects through structured courses and examinations.



Main Temple (Dukhang) of Tawang Monastery with Buddha in lotus position. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Hemis Festival, Ladakh. Image Courtesy: Saurabh Chatterjee, Flickr

The southern Indian setting is significant. Tibetan monastic culture took root amid Karnataka's greenery, creating a spiritual and educational landscape far removed from the high plateaux and Himalayan valleys usually associated with Tibetan Buddhism. Monasteries, colleges, nunneries, prayer halls and residential quarters developed within this new environment, demonstrating how a displaced tradition could adapt geographically while preserving its intellectual and spiritual foundations.

SACRED MEMORY AFTER DISPLACEMENT

Several of India's major monasteries carry the memory of institutions rebuilt after exile. Their significance lies not only in what stands today, but in what had to be carried across borders: texts, ceremonies, teaching systems and lineages.

Namgyal Monastery in Dharamshala remains closely associated with the Dalai Lama. Originally established in Tibet during the sixteenth century, it was re-established in India after 1959. Its monks train in philosophy, meditation, ritual and sacred arts, preserving practices connected with the religious responsibilities of the Dalai Lama.

A visit to the Tsuglagkhang area can feel very different from entering an isolated mountain monastery. Pilgrims, residents, monks and international visitors move through the same space. Prayer wheels turn. People walk slowly around the complex. The monastery exists within the daily life of the Tibetan exile community, carrying spiritual continuity through disruption.

Rumtek in Sikkim tells another story of lineage restored. The modern Dharma Chakra Centre became the principal Indian seat of the Sixteenth Karmapa and an important centre of the Karma Kagyu tradition. Its prayer halls, sacred objects and monastic institutions preserve a religious inheritance displaced from Tibet.

Mindrolling Monastery in Dehradun carries the heritage of one of the great Nyingma institutions into a new setting. Its monastic college, temples and Great Peace Stupa form an extensive centre of scholarship, ritual and devotion. The monastery also reflects the contribution of female teachers and practitioners, widening the familiar account of Buddhist institutional life.

THE MONASTERY AS A REGIONAL HEART

Elsewhere, monasteries hold the cultural memory of entire regions.

In Sikkim, Pemayangtse, Dubdi, Tashiding and Rumtek belong to a wider sacred geography. Pemayangtse preserves the state's Nyingma heritage through religious art, scriptures and ceremony. Dubdi stands near Yuksom, closely tied to the early history of the Sikkimese kingdom. Tashiding's stupas, prayer stones and flags create a pilgrimage landscape where movement itself becomes devotional.

Tawang performs a similar role for the Monpa people. Tabo remains inseparable from Spiti's Buddhist identity. Hemis and Thiksey continue to shape Ladakh's ritual calendar.

TO SLOW DOWN

In the end, the value of these monastery visits and meditation retreats lies less in escaping modern life than in briefly stepping outside its habitual pace. A few quiet minutes beside a prayer hall, several days within a disciplined retreat, or a longer period of study can reveal how deeply distraction has shaped daily experience. These places do not promise instant serenity, nor will every practice suit every traveller. Their gift is more measured: silence, structure and the chance to pay attention again.



WHERE CONNECTIONS UNLOCK POSSIBILITIES

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THE FOREST SINGS TO BIRDSONG



Bird Watching, Semuliki. Image Courtesy: Serengeti National Park

The wild is becoming travel's most compelling wellness space, rich in silence, beauty and depth

TT BUREAU

Luxury travel has spent years refining comfort and privacy. Yet a quieter indulgence now has equal appeal: time among trees and bird-rich landscapes. Travellers are stretching stays and seeking places where concentration can settle. Wellness may begin beside a dawn wetland or during an unhurried forest walk. In such settings, attention becomes a pleasure instead of an obligation.

India's travel patterns reflect this change. Longer holidays and single base stays are gaining ground, while elaborate multi-city itineraries lose some appeal. Indian travellers also accept higher spending on comfortable, sustainable journeys with a gentler pace. Six-night and nine-night breaks now feel more attractive than a hurried circuit. Luxury lies partly in having enough time.

India's wellness tourism market already reaches tens of billions of dollars. Domestic travellers drive much of the demand, with interests extending beyond Ayurveda and yoga retreats. Forest immersion, silence and birding now share the same conversation.

This newer language of restoration feels refreshingly modest. Travel once carried dramatic promises of reinvention. A single journey supposedly repaired grief, clarified purpose and transformed a life. Nature-centred wellness works on a smaller scale. Better sleep, lower stress and clearer concentration are more believable aims.

THE ART OF LOOKING UP

Birdwatching offers one of the clearest examples. Birding can seem specialised, complete with binoculars and field guides. In practice, it is an exercise in attention. A person stands still, listens, looks again and waits. The mind stays occupied without feeling overloaded.

In one university experiment, participants completed weekly birdwatching sessions and general nature walks, while another group followed its usual routine. Both activities boosted well-being. Birdwatching produced stronger gains in well-being scores and larger reductions in psychological distress. Learning how birds move, sound and behave may deepen the effect.

Birdlife also brings nature closer. A forest holiday may require planning, but birding can begin outside a balcony window, in a city park, beside a neighbourhood lake. Citizen science events have drawn thousands of new participants across India. During the Great Backyard Bird Count, Indian birders submit tens of thousands of checklists and record more than a thousand species.

Those lists carry emotional value and scientific weight. Each sighting may reveal migration timing and changing population patterns. A quiet morning at a lake can contribute towards a much larger ecological record.

India offers an extraordinary range. Winter wetlands near Kochi and Cuttack hold migratory waders. Scrub landscapes near Alwar reward patience with raptors and dry country bird species. Himalayan oak and rhododendron forests carry mixed flocks through layered foliage. In the Northeast, birding can shape an entire journey, though the best itineraries keep ambitions light. One good sighting may be enough.

BENEATH THE GREEN CANOPY

Forests work differently. They do not demand identification. Their effect is broader, almost atmospheric. Filtered light, softer sound, cooler air and shifting textures reduce the mental crowding that follows urban life. Japanese forest bathing has given this practice a recognised framework, though similar forms of slow woodland immersion exist across many cultures.

Evidence around forest therapy is increasingly substantial. Reviews link forest exposure to lower anxiety, improved mood, and benefits across the cardiovascular, metabolic, immune, and nervous systems. Randomised studies report reductions in blood pressure and salivary cortisol compared with urban settings. In one recent eight-week pilot, regular forest bathing was linked to lower systolic blood pressure and cortisol levels.

Psychologists use the phrase soft fascination for this state. Leaves moving in light, water passing over stone and birds crossing an open sky hold attention gently. The brain's more effortful systems take a pause. Concentration may return with less strain, while mood often improves without any demand for forced positivity.

A COUNTRY WRITTEN IN GREEN

Indian landscapes bring their own character. Western Ghats trails carry the essence of wet bark and leaf mould. Himalayan forests shift between pine brightness and deep deodar shade. Sal woodland has a different density, while the shola forest feels enclosed and ancient. A thoughtful retreat uses these distinctions in place of applying a generic wellness script.



Long Tailed Tit. Image Courtesy: Daniil Komov, Pexels

The best experiences remain simple. A guide may lead a short sensory walk, then allow silence. Guests might sit near a stream, watch changing light, or revisit the same trail at another hour. Repetition becomes useful. A path walked early in the morning feels different after rain and near dusk. Slowly, place replaces programme.

Guests begin to notice how the temperature drops beneath the foliage and how birdsong changes after sunrise.

WELLNESS LEAVES THE SPA

Luxury properties have begun recognising this. Some now design days with fewer activities, guided natural history walks, outdoor meditation and prolonged spans without digital interruption. The most convincing versions avoid turning nature into decor. Local guides, conservation groups and nearby communities become part of the experience, bringing knowledge no imported wellness vocabulary can match.

Good design helps, though restraint matters. Rooms may open towards forest views, while paths invite short walks without crowding the land. Silence gains value when it feels natural, not staged.

Nature-based travel also changes companionship. Families can walk together without constant conversation. Couples



Image Courtesy: Diane Helentjaris, Unsplash



Scarlet Macaw. Image Courtesy: C Perret, Unsplash

share silence without awkwardness. Solo guests gain a gentle structure for reflection. Birding allows company and solitude within the same hour.

Sound plays a role, too. Controlled research has found that birdsong can reduce anxiety and paranoia, while layered traffic noise may worsen negative mental states. Even recorded calls can shape mood. In a wild setting, sound carries more depth: wingbeats over water, distant drumming, insects, gusts through grass.

CARE FOR THE WILD

Responsibility matters, especially around sanctuaries and wetlands. Low voices, small groups, safe viewing distances and

respect for established trails protect breeding and feeding sites. Healing claims lose credibility when wildlife pays the price. Care for guests and habitat belong in the same model.

Sensitive operators increasingly work with naturalists, village guides and conservation organisations. Part of the guest experience may support habitat restoration, local education and community monitoring. Smaller parties disturb less and notice more. Sometimes the most sensible choice is leaving a bird unseen.

THE WILD WE HOLD WITHIN

None of these demands extreme remoteness. A local park, garden and urban lake may offer meaningful contact, especially when visits become regular. A few days in a forest-edged lodge can reset habits that continue at home: morning walks, closer listening, less screen use and greater comfort with silence.

The strongest nature journeys do not promise a new self. They offer a steadier one. A traveller returns with better rest, calmer attention, an easier pace and a few remembered sounds. Perhaps there is also a favourite bird, a well-known trail, a new habit of looking upward.

For luxury travel, that may be the deeper shift. Exclusivity once meant distance and spectacle. Increasingly, it can mean quiet, privacy, ecological richness and unclaimed hours. A dawn chorus over a wetland, a slow path beneath tall trees, the sudden lift of a flock can feel even more restorative than a crowded itinerary.



Bird's Nest Pool Villas. Image Courtesy: Keemala Phuket Resort



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STEAM, STONE AND SACRED VALLEYS

India's hot springs blend healing heat, sacred ritual and wild landscapes into a restorative wellness journey

TT BUREAU

Across India, more than 300 geothermal springs rise through ancient fault lines, many of which are scattered across the high Himalayan belt. Steam curls above river valleys, temple pools and remote mountain trails, bringing mineral warmth into some of the country's wildest landscapes.

At Manikaran, boiling springs meet pilgrimage beside the Parvati River. Kheerganga rewards a forest trek with a steaming hilltop soak, while Tapovan rests beneath the Garhwal Himalayas, and Gaurikund offers warmth along the cold ascent towards Kedarnath. Here, thermal bathing becomes part adventure, part ritual and part deep physical release.

HEAT IS THE NEW HEALING

India's relationship with heated water began long before thermal wellness became an international trend.

Across the country, hot water rises naturally through rock and geological fault lines before emerging beside temples, mountain rivers, forests and remote settlements. These springs have served as places of prayer, bathing, physical comfort and social connection for generations. Their stories belong to local medicine, folklore and everyday life.

Today, those traditions feel newly relevant. Travellers are looking beyond the treatment room towards experiences that restore the whole person. A thermal spring engages the body, softens the senses, quietens the mind and draws attention back towards landscape and community.

As thermal bathing becomes one of wellness culture's most compelling trends, India's natural springs reveal a deeper language of restoration shaped by warm mineral water, mountain air, forest silence and centuries of communal ritual.

Steam drifts over a stone pool as cold Himalayan air settles into the valley. Bare feet move carefully across the damp surface. Sulphur sharpens the air, unfamiliar for a moment, then oddly grounding. The body enters slowly. Ankles, knees, waist, and shoulders. Heat gathers around the skin. Muscles release. The breath drops deeper.

There are no biometric screens, complicated treatment menus or shelves of products promising transformation. Water, geology, temperature and time set the pace. That elemental simplicity now sits at the centre of one of wellness culture's strongest healing movements. Thermal bathing has returned through sauna ceremonies, communal bathhouses, mineral pools, and hydrothermal experiences shaped by warmth, cooling, silence, and rest.

THE RETURN OF HEALING HEAT

Modern wellness has rediscovered what bathing cultures have understood for centuries: heat changes more than body temperature. Across contemporary wellness retreats, thermal bathing now forms part of a wider sequence of warming, cooling and recovery. Steam, mineral pools, saunas and cold plunges appear alongside breathwork, scent, music, silence and periods of stillness.

India brings something distinct to this movement. Its heat comes through the land. Water travels through rock and minerals before reaching the surface, emerging with different temperatures and concentrations of sulphur, calcium, magnesium and other elements. Every spring carries its own mineral character.

The landscape is equally present. A soak in Ladakh unfolds beneath bare mountain faces and an immense blue sky. In Odisha, thermal water meets forest sound and thick greenery. Near Manali, it flows beside a temple, accompanied by bells, prayer and conversation. Water, weather, terrain and culture come together in ways no indoor wellness circuit can recreate.

WHERE THE BODY SOFTENS

The first change is physical. Warmth encourages tense muscles to release and may ease sensations of stiffness. Buoyancy carries part of the body's weight, giving joints and tired limbs a temporary lightness. Water pressure surrounds the skin in a continuous physical embrace.

The minerals add another layer. Sulphur, calcium and magnesium occur in different proportions, giving each spring a distinct composition. Research has explored mineral bathing in relation to joint discomfort, selected skin conditions, relaxation, sleep and cardiovascular responses.

The experience, however, extends beyond chemistry. Thermal bathing works through accumulation: heat, pause, altered movement, the steady pressure of water, outdoor air and freedom from interruption. Together, they invite the body out of its habitual tension. The breath slows. Shoulders descend. The jaw unclenches.

This explains why thermal bathing sits so naturally beside breathwork, meditation, slow movement, sleep programmes and nature immersion. Each speaks to the same desire for release from constant stimulation. A quiet walk settles the senses before bathing. Gentle movement prepares the body. Breath awareness deepens the immersion. Afterwards, herbal tea, a light regional meal, low lighting and an early night carry the feeling forward.

The soak becomes part of a wider arc. Heat opens the body. Silence clears mental noise. The landscape creates distance from routine. Sleep completes the sense of return.

Holistic wellness often speaks of a connection between body and mind. Thermal bathing makes that connection tangible. The body enters first, and the mind gradually follows.



Bendru Theertha. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Vashisht Temple Near Manali, Himachal Pradesh. Image Courtesy: India Water Portal, Flickr

FIVE SPRINGS, FIVE HEALING MOODS

India's hot springs resist a single wellness template. Each carries its own atmosphere, traditional knowledge and social meaning.

Panamik: Healing in the High Himalayas

In Ladakh's Nubra Valley, Panamik is a meeting of mineral steam, autumn colour and the bare grandeur of the Karakoram mountain range. Its sulphur springs bring warmth to a landscape that feels remote, elemental and deeply still.

Panamik's springs emerge within a landscape of cold air, immense mountains and profound quiet. Here, thermal bathing meets Sowa Rigpa, the traditional medical system practised across the Himalayan region. Local initiatives have already explored the relationship between the springs and this wider culture of healing.

An Amchi-led consultation places the bath within a more complete understanding of the guest. Altitude, digestion,

food, hydration, rest and individual constitution all enter the conversation. Mineral bathing sits beside gentle body therapies, meditation and learning centred on Himalayan medicinal traditions. Local grains, broths, herbs, and seasonal produce continue to create a sense of place at the table.

Sowa Rigpa brings cultural depth to Panamik's thermal identity. Guided by trained practitioners, the tradition connects the spring to a much broader understanding of balance, nourishment, and the human body. In this high-altitude setting, healing arrives through warmth, knowledge, food, and an unhurried pace.

Yumthang: Warmth Against Snow

Known as the Sikkim Valley of Flowers, Yumthang lies within the Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary, where more than 38 varieties of rhododendrons colour the landscape between March and May.

Yumthang's thermal identity is written through contrast. Geothermal water meets high altitude cold. A mountain river cuts through the valley. Snow, wind and immense Himalayan scale sharpen the sensation of warmth against the skin. The experience begins before the body enters the pool. A silent walk through the valley clears the senses. A short thermal immersion brings the body into sharp awareness of temperature and



Manikaran Lake. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Hot Water Springs at Vashisht Temple, Manali. Image Courtesy: Manali Tourism



Hot Spring at Tatopani. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

altitude. Afterwards come warm wraps, steady breathing and a simple local broth or tea. The valley does not sit behind the wellness experience. It is the experience.

Jakrem: Wellness Belongs to Everyone

Jakrem rests amid the soft folds of Meghalaya's Khasi Hills, surrounded by deep green forests and quiet valleys. This picturesque village is a scenic delight.

But Jakrem's famous hot springs open a whole new story. Its sulphur springs, set in lush surroundings, invite the visitor to an other-world experience of bathing compartments, seasonal gatherings, and local routines. People arrive for warmth, physical ease, conversation and familiarity. The spring belongs to community life before it enters the language of wellness tourism.

That character gives Jakrem particular importance within the thermal movement. Healing here feels shared, familiar and accessible. People soak, talk, return and gather again. Heat becomes a shared resource, and restoration grows through warmth, routine and human connection.

Taptapani: The Forest Holds the Silence

Taptapani rests deep within the forested green folds of the Eastern Ghats in Odisha's Ganjam district. Wrapped in dense foliage and the silence of the hills, it is known for the warm sulphur spring that rises naturally from the earth amid greenery and long traditions of spiritual and medicinal belief.

The forest changes the emotional register of the experience. Bird calls replace the spa soundtrack. Wind moves through leaves. The mineral pool becomes part of a larger field of sound, scent and shade. Thermal bathing here naturally belongs alongside forest walks, guided silence, and simple plant-based food. Rest remains open and unstructured. Guests read, sleep or sit outdoors without being hurried towards the next activity.

Taptapani also carries both cultural memory and scientific interest. Local beliefs about sacred and medicinal water are part of the spring's identity, while research offers another lens into the physical responses associated with mineral bathing.

Vashisht: Healing in Company

Set above the Beas River, three kilometres from Manali, Vashisht carries the quiet charm of an old Himalayan village. At 2,050 metres, sulphurous hot springs rise beside centuries-old

wooden temples, while cafés and narrow lanes lend the village its easy, free-spirited rhythm.

These hot spring waters beside the historic Vashisht temple offer a deeply different experience. People enter for bathing, prayer, physical comfort, routine and companionship. Temple bells sound nearby. Voices rise and fall. Water moves continuously through a space shaped by sacred life and communal habit.

Contemporary wellness often presents isolation as the route to restoration. Vashisht reveals another form of healing: the ease of shared ritual. Wellbeing grows through community as naturally as it does through solitude. The temple, the water and the customs surrounding them remain intertwined. The water is sacred, social and alive.

WELLNESS WITHOUT THE WHITE ROBE

Wellness travellers are increasingly drawn towards experiences that feel rooted rather than staged. Naturally heated water, local custodianship, cultural histories and landscapes beyond indoor recreation offer a form of luxury grounded in authenticity and rarity. Geology, culture, food, ritual and community remain part of the same encounter.

The newest wellness treatment is arriving without a therapist, a product shelf or a robe embroidered with initials. It simply asks the traveller to enter the water and become still. As thermal bathing becomes wellness culture's latest healing trend, India's most evocative expression of it is already rising through stone.



Volcanic Hot Spring. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons



Elderly Man Teaching Pottery in a Workshop. Image Courtesy: Vitaly Gariev, Pexels

CRAFTING A QUIETER MIND

Creative practice creates sensory presence, emotional space and freedom from constant performance pressure

M GOUTHAM

Art is among the oldest human impulses. For millennia, people marked walls, shaped vessels, dyed cloth, carved wood, and made objects for daily use, ritual, memory and pleasure. In today's world, where our minds are spread too thin by stress, screens, and constant stimulation, walking down the ancient lanes of art offers a way to reconnect and ground ourselves.

This is a world of wellness practices that deals with clay that bends under our fingers, knives that carve through layers of wood, and soap, needles and paintbrushes. Here you meet art on its own terms and experience how it can promote wellbeing through grounding, self-expression, slowness, play and community.

THE BODY COMES BACK INTO THE ROOM

Grounding is often described as a return to the present, yet the instruction to "be present" can feel frustrating when the mind is

anxious or exhausted. Art offers a gentle, practical, and a more intuitive way to ground oneself.

The mind does not become empty. Instead, its activity gathers around a material task. Rather than circling through several worries at once, attention narrows to the next line, stitch and fold. The repeated movement creates rhythm, while the material offers immediate feedback and keeps the senses engaged.

Pottery, weaving, charcoal drawing, embroidery and botanical sketching can therefore become forms of mindfulness in motion. They bring awareness back through touch and movement, allowing presence to develop through participation rather than effort alone.

This is what makes creative grounding so accessible. It does not demand perfect stillness or complete control over thought. It simply invites the body back into the room and gives the mind somewhere real to settle.

THE LUXURY OF TAKING TIME

Many traditional crafts resist haste. Clay must dry. A pot must survive firing. Paint layers need time to settle. Weaving develops thread by thread, while mosaic work advances one fragment at a time. To engage in them is to refuse yourself instant gratification.

That refusal can feel almost luxurious. Contemporary life rewards speed, immediate results and an insatiable urge for productivity. Creative work introduces a slower measure of progress. The maker must stay with the process, even when the final object remains uncertain.

This acceptance of uncertainty can be restorative. It reminds the maker that participation matters even when outcomes cannot be guaranteed.

For people living with burnout, that change can be significant. A hand built bowl or carved block progresses according to the material's pace. The maker is no longer racing the clock. For a while, the clock becomes less important than the work.

PLAY, CHOICE AND THE RETURN OF AGENCY

Adults often enter creative spaces carrying embarrassment. Years of scrutiny have taught them that creativity must produce something attractive, technically skilled or publicly useful. Play interrupts that expectation.

Practices like blind contour drawing ask a person to sketch without looking at the page; the idea of perfection is inherently foreign to such practices. While puppet work, masks, collaborative murals and temporary installations allow people to create without needing every result to last, bringing together a community of like-minded individuals.

Making also restores choice. The artist decides the colour, scale, texture, arrangement and point of completion. They can erase, repaint, reshape, cover or begin again.

These decisions may appear small, but their psychological meaning can be considerable. Stress, illness and exhaustion often leave people feeling acted upon by forces beyond their control. Creative work allows them to become authors of a process. The maker experiences themselves as someone capable of shaping, responding and altering.

REPAIR, BELONGING AND MAKING TOGETHER

Some of the most powerful creative practices begin with damage. Visible mending like sashiko reinforces torn fabric while allowing the repair to remain seen. Mosaic forms a larger image through fragments. Repaired ceramics can preserve the history of a break instead of disguising it completely.

These practices offer a philosophy of healing. Recovery does not always mean returning to an untouched earlier state. A person may carry evidence of grief, illness or disruption while building strength around it.



Handmade Soap with Flower Design. Image Courtesy: Sydnee More, Pexels

Quilting circles, communal weaving, group pottery studios, public murals and collaborative installations bring people together around a shared task. Participants work beside one another without the pressure of constant social performance.

Traditional craft carries this sense of belonging even further. Madhubani, Gond and Warli painting, Kalamkari, kantha, basketry, block printing, ritual floor art and regional pottery traditions hold endemic relationships with land, family, belief, labour and inherited knowledge.

Engaging with these practices can create continuity across generations and a deeper connection with place.



Free Hand Embroidery. Image Courtesy: Cottonbro Studio, Pexels



Knitting. Image Courtesy: Sam Lion, Pexels

CREATIVITY WITHOUT PERFORMANCE

To engage in creative wellbeing, one must resist the urge to make art an arena for achievement.

The pressure to post finished work, improve quickly, sell objects or produce something beautiful can recreate the same anxiety the practice was meant to soften. Art does not need an audience to matter.

In times of such pressure, it would do well to remember how even legends like Leonardo da Vinci often took years to finish their work. Even professional artists across the world would confess to the piles of unfinished work they have, experiments that failed and venues that they have

never explored. And these are people who have made art their life and livelihood.

Creative wellbeing begins when the maker stops asking whether the work is good enough and starts noticing what happened while making it. Perhaps attention deepened, the body relaxed or an hour passed without the usual mental noise. The object may remain unfinished, yet the practice may already have done its work.

A MATERIAL FORM OF WELLNESS

Art cannot solve every form of distress, nor can a creative workshop replace professional care when deeper support is needed. Creative practices offer something modern life often withholds: direct contact with the senses, freedom from instant results and permission to proceed without certainty. It asks its participants not to fixate on the result but lean into the act of creation itself.

It could just be 20 minutes you spare for yourself, picking up a simple practice, even as simple as scribbling an object already in the room. Learning new skills is deeply beneficial for your mind by itself. But learning to accept your slightly uneven bowls and paintings that you never completed is learning to accept the imperfections. Yet during the making, something else may have occurred.

The mind slowed enough to notice. A feeling found a shape. The body returned through touch and movement. Time widened. Choice became possible again. This is a wellness held in the palm, pressed into clay, carried through thread, and slowly carved out with patience.



Artists Making Modern Street Art. Image Courtesy: Alexander Nadrilyanski, Pexels

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FRANCK MULLER
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WOVEN WELLBEING: INDIA IN EVERY THREAD

What the skin wears, the mind feels. Travel changes the wardrobe, but exceptional clothes change how the traveller inhabits every new destination

TT BUREAU

The most memorable clothes in a suitcase are rarely the most theatrical. They are the pieces that hold their shape after a flight, breathe through a humid afternoon, soften during a long drive and still feel right at dinner. A good travel wardrobe understands that elegance begins with ease.

Consumer taste is moving beyond the old checklist. A growing number of wardrobes are being built around mood, visual coherence and the emotional character of a destination.

Cloth is the first landscape the body encounters each day. Prior to the view outside the window, the fragrance of a hotel lobby or the coolness of a marble floor, there is fabric: its weight on the shoulders, its movement around the legs, the way it releases heat or traps it. Style arrives later. Sensation comes first.

The nervous system reads fabric with exceptional exactness. Research using EEG has begun to map how textile surfaces produce different patterns of sensory responses. Softness, smoothness and non-prickliness are tied to comfort, while irritating textures can increase distraction and agitation.

That relationship between fabric and feeling is attracting attention across fashion psychology, textile research and wellness. Studies suggest that softness, smoothness, breathability and freedom from itch can shape mood, concentration and physical calm. Rough surfaces, clinging synthetics and trapped heat can become a low-level source of strain.

A garment that works well does more than flatter. It creates harmony between skin, movement and attention, allowing the mind to settle into itself.

Jamewar Kashmiri Weaved Pashmina Sari With Beautiful Pallu. Image Courtesy: Ajio



A Artisan Weaving a Colorful Carpet. Image Courtesy: Abhyuday Majhi, Pexels

THE INTELLIGENCE OF EASE

India's handloom traditions have understood this for centuries. Their beauty is found not only in their motifs or provenance but also in an intimate knowledge of climate and daily life. Khadi allows air to move through the irregular yarn. Jamdani appears almost weightless, its motifs floating across a sheer ground. Chanderi carries a crisp luminosity while remaining light on the body. Pashmina offers heat without heaviness. Linen, hemp and ramie bring a cool, dry touch in tropical heat.

Textile science now explains what generations of wearers have known instinctively. Linen and hemp often permit greater airflow and conduct heat away more efficiently than dense cotton constructions. Ramie and banana fibre blends can improve moisture movement. Weaving and finishing remain essential, yet the principle is simple: cloth that lets the body breathe helps the mind settle.

TOUCH HAS ITS OWN LANGUAGE

Luxury has often been measured through rarity, embellishment and craft. It can also be measured through the absence of irritation. A beautifully cut garment that scratches, clings or overheats has failed. True refinement begins where textile meets skin.

Clothing also changes how people inhabit a role. The theory of enclothed cognition proposes that garments influence thought and behaviour through sensation and symbolic meaning. In experiments, participants wearing a coat described as a doctor's coat performed better in attention tasks than those who wore the same coat under another description or merely saw it nearby.

The garment mattered. So did the story attached to it.

A tailored jacket can sharpen posture and focus. A robe can signal release. Crisp linen may create composure. A favourite shawl can make a strange hotel room feel familiar. Travel clothing carries an aspirational charge, allowing one to dress with greater colour, sensuality, or freedom than ordinary routines allow.

Yet fantasy only works when the body agrees. The dramatic dress that cannot survive a warm evening will remain unworn. The linen set that moves easily through breakfast, a gallery visit and sundowners becomes part of the journey.

THE RITUALS WE WEAR

Clothing has always helped mark transitions. Work clothes, home clothes, sleepwear and ceremonial dress divide the day into mood-based territories. The act of changing becomes a brief ritual, giving shape to time.

The pandemic made this clear. As commuting disappeared, remaining in pyjamas muddled the boundary between exertion



Image Courtesy: Last Chance Textiles



Weaving Jamdani at BSCIC Jamdani palli, Narayanganj. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

and rest. Dressing for work restored a sense of beginning. Changing again at day's end created a sense of closure.

Travel is full of similar thresholds. Soft layers worn on a flight give way to clothes chosen for arrival. Swimwear announces leisure. Evening dress alters pace and posture. Sleepwear signals retreat. A change of fabric can shift the mind before the itinerary does.

Sacred clothing makes this power visible. Catholic robes communicate purity and authority. The traditional dhoti and angavastram of Hindu priests suggest ritual cleanliness and continuity. Buddhist kasaya robes express renunciation. The Jewish tallit wraps the body in remembrance. Islamic robes and caps evoke modesty. The Sikh dastar carries identity and accountability. Shinto priests wear white as a sign of purity.

Each tradition has its own theology, yet cloth performs a shared function. It prepares the wearer for a role and tells others how that role should be read.

INDIA'S EMOTIONAL COLOURS

Indian dress gives emotion a visible form. White, in many Hindu communities, is associated with mourning, simplicity, and detachment. Plain cloth, modest silhouettes and reduced ornament allow grief to occupy the centre. The absence of colour becomes part of the ritual.

Celebration answers with saturation. Red, marigold, green and gold animate weddings and festivals with ideas of fertility, prosperity and auspicious beginnings. Banarasi brocade, Kanjeevaram silk, and Bengal's red-and-white sari traditions do more than decorate the body. They establish the mood and make the wearer part of the ceremony.

Warm shades are associated with energy, while blues tend to support calmer states. Yet culture gives colour its deepest charge. A shade carries memory, faith, family, and place long before it reaches a mood board.

THE MEMORY INSIDE CLOTH

Handloom carries another form of care: continuity. Slubs, softened edges, minor dye variations and changes in weave reveal the presence of a maker. Industrial production removes such irregularities. Handwoven cloth enables them to stay as evidence of time and touch.

These details deepen attachment. A handloom kurta softens with every wash. A sari gathers weddings, journeys and family rituals into its folds. An inherited Pashmina may carry the memory of a person and the atmosphere of a winter long gone. Chanderi can recall a grandmother. Banarasi can hold the emotional temperature of a wedding decades after the music has ended.

Such garments rarely feel disposable. They are repaired, aired, folded carefully and passed on. Their value increases through use because memory enters the fibre.

For travellers, this gives a more compelling idea of what a souvenir is. Ajrakh holds the geometry and colour language of Kutch. Ikat preserves the discipline of resist-dyed yarn. Jamdani carries the delicacy of Bengal. Pashmina holds the high-altitude knowledge of Kashmir.

A wardrobe built around such pieces can remain compact and expressive. Fewer garments, chosen for breathability, utility and emotional value, reduce the fatigue of excess choice. They travel naturally between sacred sites, city lunches, resort terraces and formal evenings.

The best travel clothes act like soft architecture. They shelter without enclosing, support without restricting and adapt without losing identity. They help the body meet a place with greater ease.

Long after a journey ends, photographs may preserve the view. Cloth preserves something more intimate: the temperature of the day, the rhythm of movement, the ceremony of dressing and the feeling of being entirely at ease in one's own skin.



Handwoven Pashmina Shawls. Image Courtesy: ahujasons



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MARTIAL MASSAGE TRADITIONS OF INDIA



Chavitti Uzichil. Image Courtesy: Kerala Tourism

How India's martial traditions treat strength, healing, discipline and self-awareness as parts of the same practice

TT BUREAU

India's martial traditions have long envisioned themselves as a path to a person's physical, mental and spiritual development. Practices such as Kalarippayattu, Varmakkalai and Kushti were designed to temper the body while also cultivating concentration, restraint, resilience and inner discipline. Massage and allied recovery methods were also incorporated within this wider philosophy, supporting mobility, healing and endurance while reinforcing the importance of care. Training, recovery, breath, devotion and self-awareness became closely intertwined, turning martial practice into a path towards the holistic development of the individual across body, mind and spirit.

A HOLISTIC PRACTICE

These traditions did not train the body as an isolated instrument. Strength had to remain mobile, awareness had to sharpen under pressure, and martial skill had to be governed by self-control. In the era of sedentary lifestyles, martial arts serve as threads that maintain our connection to our bodies, developing balance, mobility, endurance, and coordination.

In Kalarippayattu and martial arts like Silambam and Adimurai that are connected to Varmakkalai, repeated movement drills, breathing practices and meditation help cultivate physical command and focused attention. Over time, consciously learnt sequences became fluid, instinctive responses.

Kalarippayattu and Silambam also share the history of being associated with battlefields and being banned by the British during the colonial era, as they were used in armed struggle against them. Yet they survived despite the oppressive forces desperate to erase them, carrying the cultural pride along with the traditional wisdom and medicine that had taken root along with them through the ages. Both of them are seeing a strong cultural resurgence and support from various levels of the government.

Traditional Wrestling follows its own integrated discipline, shaped by exercise, diet, rest, devotion, conduct and service within the akhara. Strength is prized, yet ideally accompanied by humility and respect for the guru and fellow wrestlers. It remains instantly recognisable within Indian culture. Earthen akharas, dangals, and the disciplined figure of the pehlwan continue to carry associations with strength, restraint and local pride.

KALARI UZHICHIL

Kalaripayattu asks the body to move with unusual freedom. Low stances flow into kicks, turns, leaps and weapon sequences. Power must arrive quickly, yet the body is ever flexible. Hips, shoulders and spine need mobility, while the limbs must remain responsive through repetitive training.

Kai uzichil, performed with the hands, uses controlled pressure according to the recipient's condition and, within its traditional Ayurvedic framework, individual constitution. While the most visually striking is chavitti uzichil, in which the practitioner works with the feet while holding an overhead rope. The rope provides balance and allows body weight to be regulated carefully. This is a skilled practice that can easily apply deep pressure. Pressure is shifted and reduced according to the area being treated.

Massage also allows the teacher to read the student's condition. Tightness, swelling and imbalance that are noticeable through touch. Since the gurukkal has already observed the student during stances, kicks and weapon practice, the body on the massage floor is understood in relation to the body in motion.

Beyond massage, Kalari chikitsa, which has now transcended the training grounds, encompasses a broader tradition of injury care developed to meet the physical demands of Kalaripayattu. Depending on the lineage, it may include medicated oils, herbal preparations, bandaging, poultices, manual manipulation and methods used for sprains, bruising, joint injuries and other training-related strains; while also incorporating the wider ayurvedic traditions of Kerala. Its purpose is not only to ease pain but also to restore movement, support recovery, and help the practitioner return safely to training.



Woman Making Kizhi For Ayurvedic Treatment. Image Courtesy: Kerala Tourism

VARMAKKALAI

In Tamil Nadu, Varmakkalai represents one of India's clearest unions of martial training and healing. It is not a single fighting style in the conventional sense, but a wider system centred on varmam, the body's sensitive or vulnerable locations.

Its martial branch is commonly associated with Varma Adi or Adimurai, which can include bare hand strikes, kicks, blocks, grappling, locks and throws. In some southern Tamil lineages, Silambam, or cilampam staff training, also forms part of the curriculum, though the relationship may vary between schools.

Within the lineages documented in Kanyakumari, martial instruction takes place in the kalari, while treatment traditionally occurs in the vaittiyacālai. The same asan, or teacher, may move between both spaces, training students in combat while treating injuries and other physical complaints.



Woman Performing Silambam. Image Courtesy: Nimalan Sugumaran, Pexels



Women Practising Kalaripayattu. Image Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

Students learn by observing treatment, assisting the teacher and experiencing massage themselves. Practitioners may use the hands, feet or wooden implements, depending on the area, the condition and the degree of pressure required.

Administering such treatments also contributes to martial conditioning. Varmakkalai practitioners traditionally value strong hands for forceful massage as well as combat, while the work involved develops endurance useful during staff practice. Students may strike plantain or bamboo stems to strengthen the hands and practise focused contact. Exercises such as crushing neem kernels between different finger combinations develop individual finger strength and control.

PEHLWANI MALISH

In North India's akharas, massage forms part of the wider culture of the Pehlwanis, or traditional wrestling. Wrestlers train through squats, push-ups, rope exercises, weighted clubs and grappling on the earth. Strength matters, but so do mobility, endurance and the ability to return to training after repeated exertion.



Kushti. Image Courtesy: Huzaifa Irfan, Pexels

Malish, often performed with mustard oil in the Banaras akharas, could include vigorous rubbing, pressure massage, forearm strokes and, in some routines, carefully controlled use of the feet. Techniques vary between gurus and akharas. Massage here is understood as helping the wrestler remain supple and strong while providing structured relaxation after physical fatigue.

The same wrestlers who test one another in the pit also participate in one another's recovery. Pehlwani's ideal body is powerful, integrated and supple rather than defined by isolated muscles. Malish supports that ideal while reinforcing humility, respect and fraternity.

Even with its storied past, many of the historic akharas struggle with patronage in the wake of urbanisation. The growing dominance of mat wrestling and commercial gyms threatens to separate these traditions from their communal roots that gave them meaning. Its contemporary value lies not only in muscular recovery, but in the reminder that strength was once sustained collectively: wrestlers trained, rested and cared for one another within the same physical culture.

STRENGTH MEETS CARE

At a time when wellness is increasingly shaped by devices, data and performance targets, these traditions return attention to touch, observation and human connection. They remind us that strength goes beyond the strain the body can withstand and the force it can produce. In the long run, health and strength also depend on how the body is intelligently restored, how mobility is preserved and how injuries are prevented. The pursuit of fitness and strength needs you to rest, recover and learn to extend the same to others.

Nevertheless, these traditions continue to negotiate with the present to remain relevant as combat becomes sport, massage becomes wellness, healing becomes clinical therapy, and ritual becomes performance. Their cultural value lies in remembering that these elements once belonged to a larger way of shaping, sustaining and caring for the practitioner.

HOMAGE TO EPIC WARRIORS MINUTE REPEATER

– Alexander the Great



The 18K 2N yellow gold dial is engraved by hand, its *taille-douce* lines recalling the spears of Alexander's army.

A softly blurred enamel scene brings Alexander and Bucephalus to life on the battlefield.

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REST

CHECK IN, SWITCH OFF

The newest luxury holiday comes with fewer plans, deeper sleep and permission to disappear

JEET BHATTACHARYA



At 10 pm, the room has already begun preparing for sleep. The lights have slipped into amber, the bed has cooled, the curtains have sealed out the city, and a phone is spending the night inside a felt box. Tomorrow contains breakfast, perhaps a swim, and a long stretch of nothing. The guest has travelled hundreds of miles for the rare pleasure of being left alone.

In the city, rest has become harder to access and harder to protect. A free hour is full of messages and errands, news alerts and the theatre of availability.

The holidays can be the same cadence, in better settings: five restaurants booked, three neighbourhoods explored, a sunrise departure and photos waiting to be sorted. The trip is over, the inbox is full again, and the traveller needs two quiet days to recover.

TOO TIRED TO EXPLORE

Sleep tourism is growing as exhaustion has become background noise. The global market for sleep tourism will reach nearly US\$149 billion by 2030, with annual growth exceeding 12%. Travellers buy distance from habits that keep them alert – late light, traffic, constant decisions, irregular meals and the expectation of instant response.

There is a physical logic to the mood. The body clock is affected by light and darkness, meal times and movement. The World Health Organisation recommends that noise levels in bedrooms be kept below 30 decibels to ensure good sleep, and that normal room lighting in the evening can suppress melatonin and delay sleep. That's whisper levels.

People are choosing destinations that can offer conditions their homes rarely reproduce. Real darkness. Low ambient noise. Clean air, a stable daily rhythm and enough space for the nervous system to settle. The attraction is strongest for travellers whose work and social lives happen through screens. A remote coast, alpine valley or forest lodge creates a boundary from work.

THE ROOM HAS BECOME A SLEEP MACHINE

The rest of the hotel room is becoming a private climate system. Circadian Lighting mimics natural daylight, with increased brightness after waking and a warmer tone in the evening.

Temperature-controlled mattresses pre-cool before bedtime and can be adjusted on each side. Tap blackout glass to adjust opacity. Acoustic seals, thick wall layers and sound masking systems bring the room closer to the 30 decibel target.

The smartest technology does not ask the guest to wear something. Pressure and ballistocardiography sensors in smart beds can detect movement and estimate heart and breathing rates by detecting minute vibrations in the mattress.

Overnight monitoring is developed with contactless radar and flexible pressure sensors. The room can sense restlessness, warm the mattress near waking or modify airflow.



Image Courtesy: Somnox Sleep, Unsplash

Sound is becoming more accurate. Neuroacoustic loungers use layered audio and vibration to slow the perceived speed of thought. Breath-responsive soundscapes become gentler as the breath settles.

Emerging closed-loop auditory systems provide brief sounds at specific moments in the sleep cycle. There is evidence that timed auditory stimulation can modulate slow-wave activity, but the results are mixed.

The luxury is invisibility. A weary guest doesn't need another shining dashboard or a morning score that turns sleep into a performance review. The room should work quietly, then vanish.

TRAVELLING ON BODY TIME

Rest Travel is changing the itinerary. Jet lag usually happens when crossing more than three time zones, as your internal



Woman Relaxing by a Warm Fireplace with a Dog. Image Courtesy: Yulia Kovts, Pexels



A Man Sits on a Camping Chair by a Serene Mountain Stream Surrounded by Lush Greenery in Kashmir. Image Courtesy: Rubaitul Azad, Pexels

clock is not in sync with local time. Several days before you leave, new programmes begin, gradually preparing sleep patterns and meals for the destination. Timed daylight, controlled evening light, and measured naps and meal windows help the body settle more quickly upon arrival.

The day has a softer rhythm. Morning light is before email. Breakfast is still flexible. Exercise is done at a time of day when energy levels are naturally higher. The evenings get darker, quieter, and less socially heavy.

Guests can select in advance when they want to wake up and how much interaction they want, so that service, housekeeping and meals can work around them. Decision fatigue subsides as the stay requires fewer questions.

People travel purely to rest because their homes contain unfinished tasks. A destination creates a boundary. Someone else manages the room temperature, food, timing, noise and small logistics. The traveller experiences the rare pleasure of being cared for without being constantly addressed.

WHERE REST HAS AN ADDRESS

Silence has been made an experience in Finnish Lakeland and Lapland, with forest cabins, dark winter skies, silent sauna sessions and guided naps in hammocks among the trees.

Official tourism listings include two-hour silent sauna sessions and retreats with little talking at meals, forest walks and evenings. The quiet feels roomy, not vacant.

Another version of the reset is offered by Iceland. Long darkness, geothermal bathing and remote villages shaped by slow travel characterise winter.

The restorative pleasure is simple. Warm water, cold air, a low horizon and an early night. Serious blackout design is required

in summer, as daylight can extend as late as midnight, and the ability to control light is part of the room's luxury.

In the Swiss Alps and the Dolomites, rest comes with thermal waters, car-free villages and bedrooms that look out over vast, silent landscapes. Mountain stays are about acoustic calm, natural materials, private saunas and open afternoons. The peaks provide the visual drama as guests walk, bathe, read and sleep.

The Maldives is out of the familiar honeymoon script. Sensory control is the theme of private-island getaways that include silent immersion, digital-detox programs, phone-free days, and sleep journeys. The ocean provides a constant soundtrack, villas offer privacy, and service handles practical decisions. To the person packed into a room in the city, one horizon, no travel time, is medicine.

Japan is precise and temperate. Refined inns, hot-spring bathing, quiet meals, and forest therapy can be found in Nagano, Hakone, and the forest fringes of Kyoto. About 67% of Japan is forest, providing an enormous scope for slow, sensory travel. Walk. Sit. Listen. Soak. Sleep. The experience asks for nothing.

India has 2 different rest maps. Luxury wellness stays in the Himalayan foothills around Dehradun and Rishikesh use forest air, river air, yoga, sleep consultations, and carefully structured days to slow the tempo. Kerala's backwaters and coastal retreats offer warmth, rain, water views, Ayurvedic care, and humid afternoons made for surrender.

THE CHICEST PLAN IS NO PLAN

For all the sensors, the circadian intelligence, the responsive design, the boldest luxury is still an empty afternoon. No treatment at 3 or at 4 P.M. No guided ritual. No dinner, requiring a change of clothes. A book remains open on the same page. Lunch drifts away. Sleep comes with no brand name.

The finest rest holiday sends the guest home without a grand reinvention. The reward is quieter and more useful: steadier energy, sharper attention and a new understanding of how tired life had become. The phone lights up again. The calendar fills. Yet the traveller returns with something rare, elegant and increasingly expensive.



Waking Refreshed, Restored and Beautifully Recharged. Image Courtesy: Medpsychhealth



BIANCHET ULTRAFINO MASERATI

THE BEST VIEWS COME WITH A BREW

The new generation drinks more thoughtfully, seeking origin, wellbeing, and experiences worth remembering

TT BUREAU

Across India, tea, coffee, and wine are part of a wider travel story. Estate stays, guided tastings, vineyard lunches, café trails, and home brewing have given familiar drinks a stronger sense of place. Interest is not limited to flavour. Consumers also want context. They also want a well-being value to the story. They want garden names, growing regions, processing methods, and an honest account of what each drink offers.

This shift is visible in cities and holiday destinations alike. Loose-leaf tea now shares shelf space with white tea, oolong, and herbal blends, while speciality coffee drinkers discuss roast profiles, altitude, processing, and fermentation.

Many premium coffees are described through a vocabulary once associated mainly with wine. Jamaica Blue Mountain is prized for its notes of chocolate, nuts and citrus, while Hawaiian Kona offers caramel sweetness, gentle fruitiness and a bright, clean finish.

Wine drinkers are becoming equally attentive to grape variety, vintage, terroir and ageing. A cool-climate Pinot Noir may reveal red fruit, earth, and spice, while a barrel-aged Chardonnay can offer citrus, vanilla, and toasted oak. Buyers are choosing better bottles in smaller quantities, often connecting them with food, travel and a stronger sense of place. Price still matters, but knowledge, provenance and experience now carry equal importance.

This growing curiosity is also changing hospitality. Menus are becoming more descriptive, staff are more knowledgeable, and tastings are more accessible, helping guests understand each drink without making the experience feel like a formal lesson.

SLOW SIPS, QUIET BENEFITS

Tea and coffee have gained popularity worldwide due to growing health research. Large studies associate moderate intake with lower risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and early death. The results do not turn either drink into medicine but support a balanced view of daily consumption, aimed towards well-being.

Meta-analyses involving hundreds of thousands of participants link 1½ - 2 cups of tea each day with roughly 9-14% lower all-cause and cardiovascular mortality. Green and oolong teas contain catechins such as EGCG. Randomised trials also report modest boosts in energy expenditure and fat oxidation, with some studies noting reductions in abdominal fat.

Coffee has an even larger research base. Reviews used in international nutritional advice link 3-5 cups of coffee daily to lower risks of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and premature death. Similar associations appear among caffeinated and decaffeinated drinkers, which suggests that polyphenols matter alongside caffeine. Some meta-analyses link each additional cup to an estimated 7% lower risk of diabetes.

Wine needs a more careful reading. Red wine polyphenols have shown possible benefits involving lipids, insulin sensitivity,



Image Courtesy: Evilin Silva, Pexels

and vascular function. At the same time, public health guidance is clear that alcohol carries risk at every level. The most credible approach centres on measured servings, food, water, and regular alcohol free days.

TEA, STEEPED IN PLACE

Tea remains India's most familiar drink, but the premium market has changed how many people understand it. Single estate teas, white teas, oolongs, herbal infusions, and botanical blends now appeal beyond specialist circles. Some buyers seek flavour. Others are drawn by associations with calm, sleep, digestion, or immunity.



Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve Tea Plantation. Image Courtesy: Rainer Halama, Wikimedia Commons

Regional identity gives tea much of its character. Darjeeling is known for floral notes and a light muscatel quality. Assam offers body and strength. Nilgiri teas often feel bright and fragrant. Kangra is a quieter discovery. Boutique producers increasingly share the garden, elevation, plucking season, and maker, giving the drink a clearer connection with the land.

A good tasting can explain more than an elaborate menu. Leaf size, rainfall, altitude, oxidation, and harvest schedule all influence the final product. Once those details become visible, the cup feels less familiar and more specific.

Tea travel builds on that interest. Estate stays across Darjeeling, the Dooars, Munnar, and the Nilgiris place guests inside working landscapes. A typical day may include a garden walk, a factory visit, a guided tasting, and a regional meal in a planter bungalow. Some properties also offer yoga, nature walks, or spa treatments.

COFFEE FINDS ITS CEREMONY

India's speciality coffee scene has grown quickly, especially in major cities. Filter coffee continues to hold a central place in southern homes and restaurants, while a younger audience has embraced estate names, roast profiles, fermentation styles, and manual brewing.

Cafés have helped build that interest. Many now work as meeting spaces, reading rooms, informal offices, and creative venues. Cupping sessions, brewing workshops, poetry events,

and design gatherings bring people back for more than just the drink.

Speciality beans often cost several times more than conventional coffee, but buyers accept the premium when traceability and flavour feel convincing. Home brewing adds another layer. Grind size, water temperature, and timing all shape the final cup, giving the drinker a direct role in the result.

Coffee travel brings this knowledge into the landscape. Coorg, Chikkamagaluru, Wayanad, and Araku offer plantation stays surrounded by forest, rain, birdlife, and shade trees. Guests may walk through the estate, learn how cherries are picked, and compare washed, natural, or honey processed coffees. Many retreats pair these experiences with local food, hiking, and long breakfasts on verandahs.

WINE AND THE GRACE OF MODERATION

Wine is still a small part of India's alcohol market, though its influence is larger than its volume. It belongs naturally to long lunches, intimate celebrations and food-led evenings, appealing to drinkers who value flavour, provenance and experience over volume.

Nashik has built the strongest travel identity around wine. Beyond the cellar door, vineyards have grown into complete leisure destinations, with resorts overlooking the vines, guided tastings, harvest experiences, concerts, pairing dinners and unhurried afternoons shaped by the landscape. Nandi Hills and Akulj have broadened this emerging wine map, bringing their own elevations, soils, and individual producer stories.

The view slows the pace of the occasion, while conversation moves naturally towards grape varieties, rainfall, soil, harvest conditions, and vintage. This slower rhythm also suits changing attitudes towards alcohol. Affluent Indian consumers are increasingly exploring periods of abstinence, lower consumption and more selective drinking. Wine sits comfortably within this pattern when poured with a meal, shared across a table and enjoyed over time.

THE RITUAL BECOMES THE DESTINATION

Hotels and resorts have begun shaping entire experiences around the cup and the glass. Tea libraries invite guests to linger over aroma and origin, in-room brewing kits turn a quiet morning into a private ritual, and coffee bars, sommelier sessions, and estate-led menus bring a deeper sense of place to the table.

Beverage travel holds its appeal because flavour becomes inseparable from season, culture and landscape. A walk through a tea garden reveals the patience behind a familiar cup. A coffee estate brings shade trees, rich soil, rainfall and biodiversity into focus. At a vineyard, the view across the vines gives new meaning to the bottle waiting at lunch.

Often, the journey reaches its finest moment before the first sip, when mist hangs over the rows, the air carries the scent of leaves and earth, and the landscape quietly reveals how flavour is born.



Vintage Wine Cellar. Image Courtesy: yağiz uçal, Pexels



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4D Laser Light Therapy Mask. Image Courtesy: JOVS Beauty, Unsplash

THE INTELLIGENT RETREAT

As biometric mirrors, AI health coaches and data-led Ayurveda enter luxury travel, the next great wellness journey may begin with a scan and end with a deeper question: who owns the intimate information gathered along the way?

CHANDRUTPAL DAS BORO

A guest steps into a marble bathroom after a long flight. The mirror does more than reflect. Within seconds, it detects subtle changes in facial blood flow and produces estimates of stress, cardiovascular health, metabolism, and biological age. Nearby, a smart scale maps a dense constellation of biomarkers. The lighting shifts into a programmed recovery sequence, while an app adjusts the evening meal, sleep ritual and next morning's training session.

The scene sounds like speculative hospitality, yet its building blocks already exist. Longevity mirrors, body scanning, metabolic wearables, LED masks and multi-therapy pods are moving diagnostics beyond specialist clinics.

This signals a significant change in the world of premium travel, as Wellness is transforming from a treatment room scented with sandalwood to an intelligent layer throughout the entire stay.

THE SUITE BECOMES A SANCTUARY OF DATA

Hotels have spent decades perfecting the visible language of wellbeing with hushed spas, thermal pools, sleep menus, yoga decks and restorative cuisine. Technology now promises to make those experiences responsive. A resort could use sleep patterns, heart rate variability or metabolic information to recommend a gentler workout, a circadian lighting schedule, a tailored massage or a different breakfast.

The most sophisticated version begins before arrival. Guests complete digital consultations, connect wearable devices, and share goals related to sleep, recovery, fitness, or stress. The property then builds a programme around those signals. After departure, virtual coaching and app-based guidance extend the relationship, transforming a 3-night retreat into a longer personal wellness pathway.

This continuity has a strong appeal for travellers who do not want their routines to disappear at check-in. It also suits members' clubs that combine fitness, spa, work, and social life, where data can quietly personalise training and recovery.

Yet the finest technology may be the least theatrical. Sensors can regulate temperature without demanding attention. Smart rooms can support sleep through light, sound and air quality. A spa therapist can receive useful information without turning the guest into a dashboard. True luxury lies in reducing friction instead of surrounding a tired traveller with more screens.

ANCIENT SYSTEMS MEET ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

India offers one of the most intriguing settings for this convergence because its wellness identity already rests on living traditions. Ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy view health through patterns, rhythms, constitution, food, movement and daily behaviour. Technology is now attempting to translate those ideas into digital consultations, AI recommendations, wearable feedback and personalised programmes.

India's wellness technology ecosystem has been estimated at about 12 billion dollars, with roughly 2,000 start-ups and close to 200 funded companies. Growth is being driven by



PragyaEdu. Image Courtesy: YOGNAYUR

smartphone access, urban stress, lifestyle-related illness and a rising appetite for preventive care. Fitness and nutrition platforms now sit alongside ventures that present Ayurveda, yoga, and naturopathy through contemporary interfaces.

Kerala-based WellnessLoka shows how technology can act as a bridge into traditional travel experiences. The platform curates more than 3,500 retreats with around 250 verified gurus and properties. Physical audits, unedited imagery and specialist consultations help travellers assess quality and authenticity remotely. Short retreats combining meditation, yoga, and Ayurveda also make the journey more accessible to guests who are unable to commit to a long therapeutic stay.



PragyaSphere Core AI Engine. Image Courtesy: YOGNAYUR



Electric Mirror. Image Courtesy: Savvy Smart Mirror



Smartwatch Health Tracking App. Image Courtesy: Eschenzweig, Wikimedia Commons

Other platforms, including Healthyatri and YOGNAYUR Wellness, are part of a broader movement that packages traditional knowledge through booking systems, online content and AI-assisted personalisation. HealthifyMe and Ultrahuman represent their data-intensive edge, where AI coaching and metabolic rings turn behaviour into continuous feedback.

For the luxury traveller, the most compelling Indian retreats may be those that resist a crude choice between heritage and innovation. A physician's trained observation, a carefully prepared oil, an intelligently designed meal and a discreet biometric reading can coexist. Technology can improve continuity, interpretation and access. It should not flatten a complex healing tradition into a colourful dosha score generated in seconds.

RECOVERY LEARNS YOUR RHYTHM

One of the most attractive ideas in wellness technology is rhythmic health. Instead of treating every hour as interchangeable, new tools examine circadian cycles, sleep quality, hormone-linked patterns and periods of physical or mental energy. This has obvious potential in travel, where jet lag, irregular meals and disrupted sleep can unsettle the body.



Vagus Nerve Wellness. Image Courtesy: Sensate

A thoughtful retreat could use this information to time movement, rest, light exposure, food and treatments with greater care. Cold plunges, infrared saunas and contrast therapy are also becoming sensorised, allowing temperature, duration and recovery responses to be adjusted to the individual. Full-body scans offered by companies such as Neko and Prenuvo push the proposition further, promising earlier detection of metabolic risks and serious disease.

Here, the boundary between wellness and medicine becomes delicate. A resort can host diagnostics, yet a result is only as responsible as its interpretation. Guests need clarity about which readings are clinically validated, which are lifestyle indicators and when a qualified doctor must become involved.

THE PRICE OF BEING KNOWN

Personalisation requires information, and wellness data is unusually intimate. Sleep, mood, fertility, stress, eating habits, location and mental health can reveal far more than a room preference. Critics of digital wellness warn that platforms may collect, profile, share or monetise this material while presenting the interaction as self-care.

The concern becomes sharper when apps fill gaps in mental health support. Digital tools can widen access, yet they can also privatise care and shift responsibility onto the individual. Gamified tracking may encourage useful habits, but it can also create anxiety, comparison and a sense that every meal, mood and missed workout requires measurement.

Luxury hospitality has an opportunity to set a higher standard. Consent should be specific and understandable. Guests should know what is collected, who can see it, where it is stored and when it will be deleted. Declining data sharing should never result in a worse experience. Human practitioners must be able to question an algorithm, while cultural knowledge must not be reduced to raw material for a platform.

A MORE HUMAN FUTURE

The future of wellness travel will not be defined by the greatest number of devices. It will belong to places that use intelligence with restraint. The best retreats will know when to scan and when to stop measuring, when to offer insight and when to leave a guest alone beside a river, beneath a forest canopy or in the quiet of a treatment room.

Technology can make wellbeing more continuous, preventive and personal. India can bring something especially valuable to that future: traditions that understand health as a relationship between body, mind, food, season, community and place. The real promise lies in allowing modern tools to support that wisdom without claiming to replace it.

The next luxury may be a suite that understands your sleep, a retreat that remembers your recovery and a journey that continues long after departure. Its deepest measure of success, however, will remain profoundly analogue: do you return home feeling more fully yourself?



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