



ASIA: INDIA

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What is making news in your country when it comes to spa and wellness?

There is renewed interest in Yoga and Ayurveda across the entire country. Indians, who once sidestepped these ancient sciences are now re-embracing them, once again making them their own.

What is happening in your country when it comes to wellness and tourism and/or medical tourism?

Medical tourism is big business in India (Dollars of Attraction), and in many places it is the stand-alone institutions offering cosmetic surgery. However, a number of places have combined that with holistic spiritual alternative treatments to assist an individual to recover faster from the surgery. Plastic surgery is an easily accessible option in India by which people can get those socially desirable features. Skin whitening in Asia has already crossed the \$2 billion mark and is an exponentially growing procedure. People in the west are aware of what they want to achieve from a stay in a wellness centre. However, with the financial crisis hitting Europe hard, it is the emerging markets of Russia and China, and lately also the United States, whose citizens are traveling to India to avail themselves of the spas which cater to wellness, as well as those which offer cosmetic surgery.

Please give us one sentence to describe the latest developments in your country for each of these spa categories:

What is happening with hotel spas?

Operators are now very much more aware of the need for properly trained staff. In the past, people were hired and not trained, and were allowed to work on guests raw, without the slightest awareness of health and safety and hygiene standards. Now, with the Ananda Spa institute in Hyderabad offering internationally recognized qualifications, hotel spas have been able to raise their standards two-fold.

What is happening with Destination Spas?

There is one true destination spa in India which encompasses all the criteria mentioned above, and that is Ananda in the Himalayas. Many destination spas per se have sprouted up all over the country; however they are missing one or more of the core components which would make them a true destination spa. For example, internationally trained staff, water treatments, location, ambience, yoga, Vedanta, International and Ayurvedic treatments.

What is happening with Hot Spring Spas?

Unfortunately all hot springs are Government controlled and therefore no private spas offer hot spring therapies.

What has been the general attitude about investing in the spa/wellness arena in 2013?

There does not seem to be any slowdown in the number of day spas, which are cropping up all over India's biggest metro cities, even during the financial slow-down. The day spa market has seen by far the biggest increase, where owners are combining beauty with wellness and under-the-knife procedures. The problems arise when the owners have the money to invest but lack the knowledge to run a successful spa business. Spa design is in its infancy in India, hence many mistakes are made at the design stages which affect the customer journey and guest satisfaction, and thus the bottom line.

Looking back at the past four decades of spa and wellness, what would you consider “a defining moment?”

Ananda in the Himalayas being voted the world no 1 spa on numerous occasions, putting India on the world map with regard to destination spas, proving that India can lead the world in the wellness industry with regards to staffing, training, health and safety, location, infrastructure, as well as being the birth place of the sciences of Yoga, Meditation and Ayurveda.

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