



# MEDLEY IN TOURISM



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## PROSPECTS OF WELLNESS TOURISM IN KERALA IN THE POST PANDEMIC PERIOD

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### Abstract

The Covid-19 Pandemic has indeed resulted in diverse transformations in the life of human beings all around the globe. The Pandemic period was indeed a learning experience for man. The Pandemic Period and the subsequent lockdowns in different parts of the world has taken a heavy toll on the physical and mental well – being of people. There has been increasing reports of rising mental pressure, anxiety and stress among people in the post pandemic world. With the reduction in covid-19 cases and the relaxation of the international travel restrictions, tourism activities are slowly resuming back to normal. One of the most promising types of tourism which has huge prospects in the context of the current circumstances is wellness tourism. It is because of the fact that measures and interventions to improve health and mental wellbeing are being given more priority by people these days. It is expected that wellness tourism will be the most sought after tourism products in the near future. Though Wellness Tourism have been one of the commonly preferred Tourism types in India, it is expected that there will be more arrival of foreign tourists in the recent years exclusively for wellness tourism. In this context, the present study attempts to examine the prospects of wellness tourism in the Indian state of Kerala in the post pandemic period.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Tourism, Well- Being, Wellness Tourism, Post Pandemic Period.

## Introduction

Tourism Sector was one among the major sectors which has been severely affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic. Tours and Travels planned by travel enthusiasts all around the world were cancelled with the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic (Vasudevan, 2020). This has resulted in widespread economic loss in terms of foreign exchange earnings and domestic earnings to the nations world-wide. However, with the introduction of Covid-19 vaccination drive in countries, the state of world affairs are getting back to normal. Though Tourism sector has not been able to kick start its operations with the intended pace as compared to the other sectors, still it is resuming back to normal. It is an undeniable fact that the preferences and priorities while taking travel decisions by tourists will definitely be different in Post - Covid Period as compared to the Pre-Covid period. It is expected that the tourists will give more priority to ensuring safety, hygiene and health in their travel on account of the changed world scenario as a result of the Covid Pandemic (Goyal, 2020). It is also expected that there will be a change in the different types of tourism preferred by tourists around the world on account of the recent circumstances, people all over the world have started giving more importance to the promotion of physical and mental health and well-being. Concerns about increasing immunity levels to getting protected from diseases like the Covid -19 has been become very common these days. Thus, a proactive approach to protecting one's health and staying fit has become popular these days. This is the scenario where Wellness Tourism has gained importance.

Wellness Tourism simply refers to the travel undertaken to promote physical, psychological and mental well-being ("Wellness Tourism," 2022b). Wellness Tourism is often used interchangeably with Medical Tourism or Health Tourism these days. However, the terms are quite different. While medical tourism refers to the travel to other countries undertaken to seek healthcare services to treat a health condition or a specific illness or ailment, wellness tourism includes travel to pursue activities or to promote overall mental and physical wellbeing of individuals (Wellness Tourism, 2022a). Wellness Tourism is basically a preventive and proactive approach which is pursued by tourists to maintain health, improve or prevent diseases and improve the overall well-being. It is voluntary and non-medical in nature (Wellness Tourism, 2022a). According to a study by the Global Wellness Institute, Wellness Tourism will grow at an average annual rate of 7.5 percent by 2022 which is higher than the annual growth rate of overall global tourism (6.4 percent) (Tankha, 2021).

India is known as the Land of Ayurveda (Flynote, 2020). Ayurveda Industry in India has huge potential for development in the future. The Industry which was valued at

335 Billion US Dollars in 2019, is predicted to reach a valuation of approximately Rs. 1042.07 Billion by the 2025 (James, 2022). The Wellness Tourism in India is particularly driven by the Ayurveda Industry. Kerala, fondly referred to as "God's Own Country" among the Tourists is one of the most sought after destinations for Well tourism in India. Hence, the present study attempts to study the prospects of Wellness Tourism in the state of Kerala in the post pandemic period.

## Objective of the Study

- To examine the prospects of Wellness Tourism in Kerala in the post pandemic period.

## Discussion

Kerala is a state in South India which is always praised by the world for its immense scenic beauty and culture. The beautiful paddy fields, back waters, vast stretches of sandy beaches, lush green forests, waterfalls, hill stations, the favorable climate, monsoon, the rich culture and traditional art forms make Kerala a well-known and most sought after tourist destination spot in the world. These peculiarities of the state provides scope for various kinds of tourism activities like Back water Tourism, Beach Tourism, Wild-life tourism, Eco- Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Pilgrim Tourism, Medical tourism and Wellness tourism.

Over the past decade, Kerala has also become one of the preferred tourist destinations for medical tourism especially by foreign tourists on account of various reasons like low cost treatment, better quality hospitals, qualified and experienced doctors and medical staff (Deepu et al., 2020). In addition to the medical tourism, there has been an influx of foreign and domestic tourists to various wellness centers and resorts in the State.

Kerala is considered as one of the forerunners of Ayurveda based Wellness Tourism Destinations in India (Flynote, 2020). Realising the Potential of Wellness Tourism, the Hotels and Resorts in Kerala are also getting incorporated with facilities to promote wellness tourism such as Ayurvedic treatments, Yoga, Spa facilities, meditation and so on. As Ayurveda has gained wide acceptance from the foreign tourists around the world, majority of wellness centres are conducting wellness programmes which are based on Ayurveda. Kerala has a number of wellness centres and resorts located in the Districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Kochi, Kollam, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Kottayam and Palakkad.

The current wellness packages offered by wellness centres and resorts in Kerala are designed according to the needs and preferences of tourists. Wellness packages



includes packages for rejuvenation, slimming, body purification, beauty treatments, stress reduction and management treatments, immunity boosting programmes and so on (Nair, 2019). Rejuvenation packages basically includes spas which are often provided with the traditional Panchakarma treatment in Ayurveda. Stress relieving wellness Programmes mainly includes Yoga and Meditation (Nair, 2019). These are mainly aimed at purification and revitalization of the mind and body. In addition to this, the beauty treatments based on Ayurveda are also provided to the wellness travellers. To make wellness tourism packages more interesting and attractive, resorts are also providing packages that combine cultural, spiritual culinary and backwater tourism along with the wellness tourism (Nair, 2019)

## **Prospects of Wellness Tourism in Kerala in the Post -Pandemic Period**

### **• Rise in number of Foreign and Domestic tourist arrival**

Though health tourism and wellness tourism were two commonly sought after tourism products, their demand is likely to rise in the near future. Today, people are so concerned about health that, taking a holiday just for the sake of better well-being, nutrition and rejuvenation is not uncommon these days (Tankha, 2021).

Kerala is one of the important destinations where ayurvedic treatments are being provided with quality and professionalism under the supervision of qualified medical practitioners. Many resorts and hotels in Kerala are already geared up for promoting wellness tourism. They provide the tourists with the facility of a medical consultant for evaluating their current health status and to undergo further ayurvedic treatments as considered necessary. In addition to this, Yoga, Meditation, Spa facility have also become common in resorts and wellness centres in Kerala these days. Health and fitness is being given a lot of emphasis today by people all over the globe as a consequence of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The physical, mental stress and psychological problems resulting from the Covid-19 has also led people to look for diverse ways to mitigate this issue. Wellness programmes and retreats are increasingly becoming promoted as the effective solutions to these issues faced by the people. Hence, if wellness tourism is given proper focus and assistance by the government, it will lead to a rise in inflow of both foreign and domestic tourists from other states to Kerala.

### **• Boost to the Domestic Economy in Kerala**

If wellness tourism is given ample focus by the State Tourism Department in Kerala, it will definitely benefit the Indian Economy in general and Kerala Economy in particular. Promotion and Popularity of Wellness tourism will lead to increase in the emer-

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gence of more wellness centres in the state other than the existing resorts and hotels where wellness tourism is promoted as an add-on facility. This will eventually lead to increase in employment opportunities both direct and indirect. It will directly provide employment to medical practitioners, yoga practitioners, staff providing the service of ayurvedic treatments and indirect employment opportunities to the local community providing sources and supplies for the operation of the wellness centres.

### • Conversion of Secondary Wellness Tourists to Primary Wellness Tourists

There are two types of Wellness Tourists namely Primary and Secondary Wellness Tourists. Primary Wellness Tourists (Wellness Traveler) are those who undertake travel with a prime objective of seeking wellness packages whereas secondary wellness tourists (Wellness Visitor) are tourists who undergo wellness programmes as they wish to maintain wellness while travel for the purpose of leisure, business or other kinds of travel. These include activities like getting spa, massage or availing the services of gym at the hotel or resort of stay (Wellness Tourism, 2022a). Promotion of Wellness Tourism in Kerala will definitely lead to the conversion of the Secondary wellness tourists to Primary Wellness Tourists. It is because, the tourists will purposefully plan the travel for pursuing wellness tourism in Kerala.

### • Rise in Wellness Vaccations to Kerala

Medical Tourism is one of the main purposes of visit of many foreign and domestic tourists to Kerala. Health Vaccations among foreign tourists to Kerala have become a trend these days owing to the low cost and high quality treatment (Deepu et al., 2020). It is interesting to note that many tourists also undergo wellness programmes before their departure. This highlights the fact that wellness programmes and services are already being demanded by tourists along with health oriented travels to Kerala. Hence, it is expected that there will soon be inflow of tourist for Wellness Vaccations to Kerala similar to the current trend of Health Vaccations.

### • Creates market for other types of tourism in the State

Wellness Tourism will also enable the state to attract tourists both foreign and domestic to undertake other types of tourism activities like Cultural Tourism, Eco Tourism, Pilgrim Tourism, Responsible Tourism, and Culinary Tourism in addition to the Wellness Tourism Packages. Thus other kinds of Tourism initiatives will also get benefitted along the Well Tourism initiative in the State. Ultimately this will lead to the generation of earnings through diverse tourism packages for the State Economy in general and the local communities in particular.



## Conclusion

Kerala has immense potential in developing Wellness Tourism owing to the wide popularity, acceptance and credibility of Ayurvedic treatments offered by the State. However, Wellness Tourism is not getting the required extent of promotion as received by Medical Tourism in the State. Hence, the State tourism department of Kerala should give more attention to developing more number of wellness centers in different parts of the State by giving financial and marketing assistances. The registration of wellness centres must be made mandatory and registration must be provided only after ensuring that only professionals with mandatory educational qualification and experience are employed both in the field of administration of the wellness centers and in the treatment facilities offered. In addition to this, registration must also be subject to measures to ensure the safety, hygiene and privacy of tourists. It is envisaged that if time-bound programmes for the development of Wellness Tourism is implemented by the Kerala State Government and the Department of Tourism, then Kerala will undoubtedly become the Hub of Wellness Tourism in India in the near future.

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