

Importance of a Sustainable Ayurvedic Holiday Experience

The concept of Health/Wellness tourism has become popular over the last few decades. The evolution of the basic change in this ideology is synonymous with the changing customer mind sets. The trips are made with the motivation to improve their mental as well as physical well-being. The search for spiritual wellbeing is also becoming increasingly relevant to the guests making these holidays.

India has established itself as a dominant healthcare destination. The attraction lies within the ability to provide low cost treatments that are comparable to western standards and also because it immerses the guest in rich tradition, witness outstanding geographical features and experience different cultures. The perceived image destination of India is linked to being exotic and mystical. The destination has also been able to live up to the expectations by being able to create unique products.

One such unique product is Ayurveda – A natural life science that has gained considerable momentum over the last decade. Kerala has had the good fortune of being uniquely positioned to take advantage of being the birthplace of this Holistic School of Medicine.

The interest from European markets have peaked and travellers from other parts of the world are slowly being exposed to the benefits of an Ayurvedic Treatments.

One of the most interesting aspects of an Ayurvedic Holiday is the ability to generate repeat clients. Most establishments that offer a complete package have on an average of 50% to 60% of repeaters staying with them. This combined with an average stay of 14 nights certainly offers unmatched yearly occupancy figures and minimizes unutilized room nights.

However, in order to create a compelling experience that draws this kind of loyalty, the holiday experience has to be sustainable and unique. There has to be a certain depth and clarity to the experience being offered.

Furthermore, most establishments that offer such experiences are frequented by mature travellers that truly understand the meaning of sustainability. These are individuals that have the ability to travel compulsively and have no qualms about spending time and resources for enlightening themselves on their mental and physical wellbeing. Any individual that stays in a property for more than 14 nights will certainly understand if the product being offered is sustainable or not. From a hospitality perspective it may be possible to disillusion a guest for a day or two (Short stays), however after more than a week or two, these guests will be able to judge and determine exactly how the establishment functions and runs.

The Experience of creating an Ayurvedic Holiday is one that focuses on having a relentless approach on a day to day basis by the whole team. The ability to create a Sustainable Ayurveda Holiday is highly rewarding and it relies on having an extremely motivated and genuine work force. It is essential for a number of factors to come together for this flawless delivery to take place. Essential to this; is understanding the guests and realizing their thought process on a cultural as well as a practical aspect.

In my opinion it is important to create a closed hospitality eco system; in the sense that all services being provided are handled and executed directly by the establishment. A few examples of this would include:

- Sourcing of Fruits and Vegetables locally (>10km Meal) or from an organic farm run by the property.
- Traditional Ayurvedic Oils has to be prepared in house to ensure pristine quality.
- Individual Language Translations by Native Language Speakers during Doctors Consultation's or for other interactions.
- Involvement of the guests in various daily activities that showcase the real flavour of the locality.

These are just a few aspects that have been mentioned to give you an understanding of what it takes to create a Sustainable Ayurvedic Holiday. Additional to this, there has been a high demand for the combination of an Authentic Ayurveda Treatment in a Sustainable beach setting. This preference of course is limited to travellers that are also specifically interested in a beach destination.

In order to really understand the mind frame of travellers who are keen on Ayurvedic Health Holidays it was interesting to note the high relevance of recommendations from friends and family. This key attribute outweighs recommendations from the Travel Agents as well as online recommendation sources.

Thus, we can see that the guests who are experiencing this product develop a high emotional attachment presumably through the results achieved. It is indeed a personal journey and this reflects the value given to direct recommendations.

To summarize it is observed that the Ayurveda Tourism market has been growing rapidly due to an influx of quality tourism establishments and aggressive marketing campaigns. However, this success and momentum has been able to sustain itself primarily because of the high customer retention. The traditional science of Ayurveda has proved itself over thousands of years, it is now up to the hospitality leaders to assemble the right combination and prove it to the world.

An Article By,

Joseph Kodath

Director

The Nattika Beach Ayurveda Resort.