

SPA RESORTS IN UTTARAKHAND - A CASE STUDY OF ANAND SPA RESORT

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ABSTRACT

India being a vast and diverse country has always something to offer to everyone. Its glorious traditions and rich culture are linked with the development of tourism. The increasing economic importance of tourism has captured the attention of most countries.

“Health is not everything, it is the only thing.” India the land of beauty believes in the amalgamation of health and beauty. Owing to this, spa and resorts of India have become success stories in the recent past. Most of the spa and resorts of India make a perfect getaway with an extensive menu of beauty treatments, integrating the traditional Indian systems of Ayurveda with the more contemporary Western spa approach. The spa experience strives to achieve the ultimate harmony between the physical and the mental realms of the individual. At the Spa and Resorts of India tourist can experience the magic of the healing mineral waters and rejuvenating spa treatments.

The state of Uttarakhand (Dev Bhoomi) has fast emerged as a major tourist destination endorsed to its richly endowed natural grandeur. This quaint state provides tourists a breathtaking panoramic view of the Himalayas with a source like Gangotri and Yamunotri regarded as the physical and spiritual life basis of India. With unique focuses on the traditional Indian sciences of Yoga and Ayurveda, Uttarakhand can be fashioned as the skillful synthesis between age-old therapies and modern spa technology. The personalized therapy and activities programs can be intended to meet individual needs and health goals - de-stress, detoxification and cleansing, deep relaxation, anti-aging, weight & inch loss, while also offering guidance in the areas of nutrition and exercise.

Through this paper an attempt has been made to understand the potentiality of such resorts in Uttarakhand, thus helping the state in earning more foreign exchange. The paper is based on secondary data and the information has been sourced from books, newspapers, journals and white papers, industry portals, government agencies, monitoring industry news and developments.

INTRODUCTION

The word “spa” may be derived from the Walloon word “espa” meaning fountain. This, in turn, came from the name of the Belgian town spa, where in the 14th century a curative, thermal spring was discovered. Spa may also originate from the Latin word “spagere” (to scatter,

sprinkle, moisten) or may be an acronym of the Latin phrase “sanitas per aquas” (health through water). In Britain, the word spa is still used, whereas in the rest of Europe the term “thermal waters” is preferred. Bathing in thermal water for therapeutic purposes has several descriptions (for example, taking the waters, balneotherapy, spa therapy,

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hydrotherapy), and these are more or less interchangeable.

Taking the waters used to be a popular treatment for a wide range of diseases in classical times. The Greeks preferred baths in fresh water from natural resources, although bathing in the sea (thalassotherapy) was also applied. Initially, bathing was confined to the more wealthy people in private baths, but soon public baths were opened. The baths were considered sacred places and were dedicated to several deities.

In Homeric times, bathing was primarily used for cleansing and hygienic purposes. By the time of Hippocrates (460-30 BC), bathing was considered more than a simple hygienic measure. It was healthy and beneficial for most diseases. Hippocrates proposed the hypotheses that the cause of all diseases lay in an imbalance of the bodily fluids. To regain the balance a change of habits and environment was advised, which included bathing, perspiration, walking and massages. The baths were combined with sports and education, the precursors of the gymnasium.

Influenced by Greeks, The Romans built their own thermal baths at mineral and thermal springs. A military presence was often the key to development of such a spa resort. Spas served not only for recuperation of wounded soldiers but also as rest and recreation centers for healthy soldiers. In contrast to Greeks, who took the waters after intensive physical exercises, the Romans considered the baths more important for socializing, relaxation and worship; medical treatment was also applied extensively. Spa treatment consisted of applications of water to afflicted parts of the body, immersion of the whole body in the water, and drinking excessive quantities of water.

By the 19th and 20th centuries, many rheumatologists acknowledged the medical significance of bathing.

Throughout the ages the interest in the use of water in medicine has fluctuated from century to century and from nation to nation. The world has viewed it with different opinions, from very enthusiastic to extremely critical, and from beneficial to harmful. Today, spa therapy is receiving renewed attention from many medical specialties and health tourists, and having a revival.

“Health is not everything, it is the only thing.” India the land of beauty believes in the combination of health and beauty. Owing to this spa and resorts of India have become success stories in the recent past.

Most of the spa and resorts of India make a perfect getaway. At the Spa and Resorts of India you can experience the magic of the healing mineral waters and rejuvenating spa treatments. At these spa and resorts of India you can enjoy pure luxury with the world’s best specialists in spa treatments and wellness all under one roof. Breathe fresh air; experience the joy of living with nature. Get pampered by the spa specialists and then return to everyday life, refreshed and rejuvenated.

Travel and tourism are among the world’s fastest growing industries and are the major source of foreign exchange earnings for many developing countries. The increasing economic importance of tourism has captured the attention of most countries. India being a vast and diverse country has always something to offer to everyone. Its glorious traditions and rich cultural are linked with the development of tourism. Foreign tourists love to visit the place for its spiritual importance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify potentiality of spa resorts in Uttarakhand.

2. To bring forth the activities that are taken care of in Ananda Spa Resort.
3. To explore the possibilities of enriching people by providing them employment.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on secondary data and the information has been sourced from books, newspapers, rural journals and white papers, industry portals, government agencies, monitoring industry news and developments. Some data have been collected through the prominent spa resorts to develop a conceptual framework.

UTTARAKHAND – A RIGHT CHOICE FOR SPA RESORTS

Lying in the North of the vast & bountiful expanse of India & cradled in the awesome beauty & calm serenity of the stately Himalayas, Uttarakhand- The Devbhumi (Land of Gods) is the most popular pilgrim and tourist center. Uttarakhand is a sacred pilgrimage destination of different religions including the world fame Badrinath –Kedarnath-Gangotri- Yamunotri **Char Dham** of

Hindus, Hemkund sahib of Sikh and seekers for spiritual fulfillment. The queen of Hills, Mussorie and Lake district of India, Nainital are in Uttarakhand.

The state of Uttarakhand has fast emerged as a major tourist destination. This could be attributed to its richly endowed natural splendour. This picturesque state provides tourists a breathtaking panoramic view of the Himalayas with a source like Gangotri regarded as the physical and spiritual life source of India and the other holy river Yamuna source (yamunotri). It is a source of so many sulphur springs, which are having the medicinal value. Uttarakhand right from inception has pledged to emerge as a tourism power.

According to statistics maintained by the Tourism Board (Uttarakhand), the estimated tourist visits in State during 2006 were about 18.99 million by domestic tourists and 0.1 million by foreign tourists. However the data have the inherent problem of non uniform coverage and aggregation of non comparable sources, still it shows an indicative trend of visitors.

Table-1: Comparative Estimates Of Tourist Visits In Uttarakhand

| Year | India (Million) | | Uttarakhand (Million) | | Percentage Share (%) | |
|------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|
| | Domestic | Foreign | Domestic | Foreign | Domestic | Foreign |
| 2001 | 234.20 | 5.42 | 10.37 | 0.055 | 4.43 | 1.01 |
| 2002 | 269.60 | 5.16 | 11.37 | 0.056 | 4.22 | 1.09 |
| 2003 | 309.04 | 6.71 | 12.58 | 0.063 | 4.07 | 0.95 |
| 2004 | 366.22 | 8.30 | 13.34 | 0.075 | 3.64 | 0.90 |
| 2005 | 390.47 | 9.94 | 15.92 | 0.093 | 4.08 | 0.93 |
| 2006 | 461.16 | 11.4 | 18.99 | 0.096 | 4.12 | 0.84 |

Source: Uttarakhand Tourism development master plan 2007-2022, final report

The annual rate of growth of domestic tourist visits in the state during the period 2001 to 2006 was 12.9 % as against 14.5 % in case of all India estimates. Similarly, for foreign tourists the growth rate

achieved was 12.0 % as against 16.0 % for the country as a whole.

The target growth rate is considered to be current national growth rates for the

next five years, and if achieved it will translates into almost doubling of both domestic and foreign tourist visits by 2011 and again doubling them by 2017. Given below is the projected tourist visits for the near future including 2007 and 2008.

Table-2: Projected Tourist Visits In Uttarakhand

| Year | Projected Tourist Visits (Million) | |
|------|------------------------------------|---------|
| | Domestic | Foreign |
| 2007 | 21.747 | 0.112 |
| 2008 | 24.900 | 0.130 |
| 2009 | 28.511 | 0.150 |
| 2010 | 32.645 | 0.174 |
| 2011 | 37.378 | 0.202 |
| 2012 | 42.238 | 0.227 |
| 2013 | 47.729 | 0.254 |
| 2014 | 53.933 | 0.284 |
| 2015 | 60.945 | 0.318 |
| 2016 | 68.867 | 0.356 |
| 2017 | 77.820 | 0.399 |

Source: Uttarakhand Tourism development master plan 2007-2022, final report

The major source market of international tourists visiting the state are USA with 12.9 % share followed by Israel having 11.9 % then Australia- 11.9% and subsequently from countries like Italy, Germany, Nepal, Canada, Korea, France, UK, Sri Lanka, UAE, Russia, Switzerland etc. as per the estimates derived from selected tourist centers on a quarterly basis.

Uttarakhand has the distinction of being visited by a large percentage of female visitors unlike several other destinations in India. In terms of age profile Uttarakhand is visited by relatively younger tourists, which added as an

advantage to the state to offer spa packages as is preferred by them.

About 60.2 % of the international tourists were in the age group of 25-34 .

The purpose of visit of foreign tourists in percentage distribution is given in the table- 3.

Table-3: Percentage Distribution of Foreign Tourists by purpose of Visit

| Purpose | Number | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Holiday/Sight seeing | 117 | 49.8 |
| Business/ conference/ meeting | 21 | 8.9 |
| Education | 14 | 5.9 |
| Health/ Yoga etc., | 44 | 18.8 |
| Pilgrimage/ religious Function | 39 | 16.6 |
| Total | 235 | 100 |

Source: Uttarakhand Tourism development master plan 2007-2022, final report

The trend in itself shows that health/ yoga out beats pilgrimage/religious function and is the second major purpose of visit. Considering all these figures a bright future for Spa Resorts can be seen in Uttarakhand.

For the spa and resort package of Uttarakhand, a tourist can get away to a memorable break that promises to be an unforgettable escapade. Tourists may enjoy a wholesome, holistic experience that leaves them refreshed and rejuvenated for another bout of life. They have a number of choices like Meditation, Yoga, stretch exercise, workouts and other relevant body treatments. The Spa and

Resort packages of Uttarakhand include free consultation and guidance on the premises with the fitness experts in the field of fitness, Yoga, Naturopathy, Ayurveda, Allopathic Medicine, Stress consultants and Dieticians.

Spa and Resorts of India take a holistic approach to well being, balancing body and mind and soothing away the cares of the everyday world. An à la carte menu of treatments and indulgences draws on classical therapies, complemented by our exclusive Indian treatments, some based on indigenous ingredients.

Ananda Spa Resorts is one of the paramount examples to explicate the approach in India.

ANANDA-SPA RESORTS

Swirled in the blessed mists of time, nestled in the Himalayas, Ananda is a world class Spa and resort. Once the residence of the Maharaja of Tehri Garhwal, the palace and precincts now invite the leisure, lifestyle and business traveller. This is a place where one can rediscover tranquility in an enviable destination, soaring above the holiest river in India, the Ganges and the spiritual sanctum of Haridwar and Rishikesh. Tourists love to experience the lifestyle of royalty, wandering through the palatial sweep of gardens and tarry at the Tea Lounge, playing billiards at one of the oldest tables in India, perusing through priceless tomes in the Maharaja's 100 year old Library spending a refined evening attending exclusive soirees in the gracious Ballroom. Organising empowering seminars and meetings at the Spa, incorporating the positive vibrations of the environment and facilitate synergy in the state-of-the-art boardrooms are other fascinating aspects of Ananda.

At the Ananda there are 20 treatment rooms with specialised areas for Ayurveda, Oriental and European systems of holistic health, a team of qualified nutritionists, Western & Ayurvedic physicians, spa therapists with knowledge of ancient Indian sciences and modern western treatments - all gently guide tourists towards a better lifestyle.

The 21,000 square foot spa offers an extensive menu of over 79 body and beauty treatments, integrating the traditional Indian systems of Ayurveda with the more contemporary Western spa approach. The spa experience strives to achieve the ultimate harmony between the physical and the mental realms of the individual.

With unique focuses on the traditional Indian sciences of Yoga and Ayurveda, Ananda Spa creates the skillful synthesis between age-old therapies and modern spa technology. The personalized therapy and activities programs is designed to meet individual needs and health goals - de-stress, detoxification and cleansing, deep relaxation, anti-aging, weight & inch loss, while also offering guidance in the areas of nutrition and exercise. In the Viceroy's Palace, there are also rooftop boardrooms and terraces with panoramic views, an amphitheatre, temple and landscaped gardens.

Ananda Adventure includes trekking, white water rafting, nature walks, visiting the wild elephants of Rajaji national park, and elephant photo safaris at nearby Chilla National Park. With golf turf imported from the United States for the greens and tees, the six-holes, par three-course incorporates an independent driving range, perfect for private lessons. Small but perfectly formed, the golf course on its Himalayan axle is nonetheless challenging.

Spa at Ananda

Ananda offers a unique blend of therapeutic treatments based on traditional Indian practices of ayurveda,

yoga and meditation. The spa also offers the latest European and Thai treatments to purify the body and soothe the senses.

Facilities at Ananda Spa Resort

| Spa Rooms | No. of Rooms | Features |
|-------------------|--------------|---|
| Treatment Room | 20 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Separate beauty treatment salon · Kama Suite for a couple with Jacuzzi, Sauna and massage. |
| Relaxation Room | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hydrotheraphy facilities: steam, sauna, Jacuzzi, Kneipe foot bath, cold plunge, showers, locker and changing rooms. |
| Consultation Room | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Outdoor heated lap pool and Jacuzzi · Gym: 16-station life fitness gym with cardio, strength training and aerobics facility. |

Amenities at Ananda Spa Resort

| Name of Service | Uniqueness |
|---------------------|---|
| Spa Boutique | Showcases a fine collection of silk, wide variety of music, books, Ananda wears, art objects, herbal teas and other organic food, skincare and cosmetics. |
| Yoga and Meditation | At Ananda helps to achieve a state of passive alertness that transcends the every day level of thought and distraction. |
| Yoga Pavillion | A majestic open-air marbled floor shelter with gold leaf ceiling fresco, surrounded by a still and peaceful water pool at the south end of expansive palace lawn. The intimate setting excellent location to view the sunset and is ideal for individual instruction or private meditation. |
| Viceregal Hall | The hall is ideal for more active forms of yoga. A tranquil hillside garden is tucked just outside the valley's ridge- a perfect refuge for Himalayan tea after an invigorating yoga session or peaceful meditation. |
| Board Room II | Glassed on four sides, this intimate indoor setting commands impressive view of the mountains. |
| Winter Garden | Adjacent to the Ma Anandmayi Abode, this outdoors area overlooks a dense grove of sal trees. The tranquility of the spiritual leader's former presence enhances the yoga session. |
| Hill Theatre | Terraced Hill Theatre offers a view of the foothills and palace. |

Ananda has received many awards like: Spa finders top 10 spa's in Asia, Conde Nast Traveller Readers Spa award 2009 for being 4th in Overseas spa retreat etc., which in itself shows that it has world class facilities very much enjoyed by tourists.

EMPLOYMENT FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

The Spa resorts will attract a lot of tourist resulting into the benefit of local people. The project can not be successful without the help of local people. It has been observed that communities located near major spa and natural attraction sites, should have the opportunity to participate in tourism related to the attraction. These communities can provide accommodation, food and beverages shops, shops of other items, Uttarakhand specialties shop, transportation and guide services and other tourist facilities and services. Concrete financial benefits are obviously an important part of such a partnership. Most important, local communities must have a final say about how much and what kind of tourism develops in their areas, considering which the state government has introduced the Public Private Partnership (PPP) concept.

Thus, training them should be an essential part of planning such tourist attractions, which will give employment to the local people at large scale. The involvement will also assist local communities with health care, education and with maintaining local traditions. The adequate participation from locals will encourage the residents of those areas to conserve the culture and fauna & flora. It will result into the increasing of overall standards of living due to localized economic stimulus provided for an increased visitation to the site. Similarly, environmental benefits accrue, as local communities will be persuaded to protect

natural environments in order to sustain the tourist for the special purpose.

Therefore, the sustainability of nature based health and spiritual tourism should depend on the support of local communities and should be based on the ethic of care for the whole community of life which will emphasize that development is people- centered and conservation based.

CONCLUSION

Realizing the fact that tourism in Uttarakhand is fundamentally reliant on the prevalent magnificence of natural resources and biodiversity, the hospitality industry can find out the elucidation in Spa resorts and meditation center. It offers tremendous potential to generate foreign exchange earnings, employment and other economic and social benefits.

The value of Spa business to society is the wealth and employment it creates and the saleable services it provides to the domestic and foreign tourists to satisfy their needs and demands from the nature. Finally it could be said that Uttarakhand being one of the pilgrim and spiritual state has the potentiality to be a Spa attraction of India.

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