

About India

India is a vibrant country with a diversity that very few countries in the world can match. It has different meanings and interpretations for different people. For some the attractions are the varied culture and heritage and for some it is the land of religion and a complete spiritual experience.

India: Land of Diverse Attractions

India offers an amazing variety of experiences and adventures. From the beautiful Himalayas in the North to the plateaus, tropical rain forests, sandy deserts and palm fringed beaches in the South – India provides a staggering number of topographical variations. Equally enchanting is the cultural diversity of India, which is the result of the coexistence of a number of religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Sikhism and many more. The towering temples in South India which are easily identifiable by their ornately – sculptured exteriors and interiors are associated with great many crafts and performing arts of the region. In Western India lies the desert of Kutch, where the tough lifestyle is made vibrant by a profusion of jewellery and ornamental embroidery. In the north is the Himalayan range which makes the state of Jammu and Kashmir, probably the most beautiful place in the world. Then there are the Colourful tribal lifestyles of the north –

eastern states of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh.

For those who are interested in sightseeing, India offers an unending choice. In north India the foremost attractions are Agra, the city of the Taj Mahal and Kashmir with normalcy fast returning to the state. Ladakh, which showcases one of the best living traditions of Tibetan Buddhism in the world today, with its hilltop monasteries and colorful way of life, is also a sure shot attraction for tourists. Another region tourist's love is the state of Rajasthan for its forts and palace hotels. In the West, The Gateway of India is a popular sight in Mumbai. Goa's coastline provides endless sun-drenched crescents of sand and facilities for parasailing, yachting, windsurfing and deep-sea diving. In the South, the temple towns of Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram and Thanjavur are big attractions. The state of Kerala is also high on the priority list visitors to India for its remarkable heritage of performing arts, Ayurveda healing centers and the breathtaking natural beauty of its backwaters. In addition to the innumerable sites that India offers, to many it also offers spiritual attainment. Holy cities like Rishikesh, Varanasi and Haridwar are constantly receiving a number of tourists who are over whelmed by the spirituality that India has to offer.

Progress in the Industrial Sector

India has made considerable economic progress since its

Independence. Most noticeable are the expansion and diversification of production both in industry and agriculture. New technologies were introduced in many industries. Industrial investment took place in a large variety of new industries. Modern management techniques were introduced. Entirely new classes of entrepreneurs have come up with the support system from the Government, and a large number of new industrial centers have developed in almost all parts of the country. Over the years, the Government has built the infrastructure required by the industry and made massive investments to provide the much-needed facilities of power, communications, roads etc. A good number of institutions were promoted to help entrepreneurship development, provide finance for industry and to facilitate development of a variety of skills required by the industry as well as agriculture. The Government also followed a policy of encouraging indigenous industries and provides them all facilities and encouragement. As a result, we now have a widely diversified base of industry and an increased domestic production of a wide range of goods and services.

In 1991, India threw open the industrial sector to greater international and domestic competition. Financial systems have been strengthened and India is well developed. India in recent years has emerged as one of the leading destinations for investors from developed countries.

Supporting infrastructure facilities are also being made available. The country has the largest railway network in Asia and the second

largest in the world under a single management. Roads are taking developmental changes to the most remote corners of the country.

Inter-university centers and consortia for advanced studies were fast becoming active centers of learning. Their success, it has been observed, is based on a rare combination: scientific knowledge and the readiness to test and match it to folk wisdom. India has stepped into the new millennium with great confidence.

India therefore can be defined as a land where humanity has lived since ages; where different religions, societies, cultures, languages have interplayed with each other in harmony; a land which has seen the best and the worst of everything; a land where religion means more than their name; a place where nature has bestowed itself in all its colors to end it all a land which shall remain itself till eternity.

India's Growth in Medical Tourism

India is emerging as a preferred spot for medical tourism. The Government of India, State tourism boards, travel agents, tour operators, hotel companies and private sector hospitals are exploring the medical tourism industry for tremendous opportunities. They are seeking to capitalise on the opportunities by combining the country's popular leisure tourism with medical tourism.

Why only India?

The Indian medical tourism industry, growing at an annual rate of 30 percent, caters to patients chiefly from the US, Europe, West Asia and Africa. Although in its nascent stage, the industry is outsmarting similar industries of other countries such as Greece, South Africa, Jordan, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore. In 2004, 1, 50,000 medical tourists have visited India.

The medical costs in India are one-tenth of the costs in western countries. For instance, a heart surgery costs \$6,000 in India as against \$30,000 in the US. Similarly, a bone marrow transplant costs \$26,000 in India as compared to \$2, 50,000 in the US.

Foreign patients throng Indian hospitals to pass up the long waiting lists and queues in their native countries. Indian hospitals provide immediate attention to patients rather than asking them to wait for several months like in most western countries. Further, foreign patients need not tackle insurance and national medical systems in India as they have to in their native lands.

India offers the best treatments in modern medicine as well as in traditional methods of treatment such as Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Naturopathy and Yoga. India's private hospitals have gained international recognition for their facilities, diagnostic centers and best work force. Their technology and procedures are on par with hospitals in developed nations. Foreign patients can get package

deals including flights, transfers, hotels, treatment and post-operative vacation for their medical visits to India. Many foreign patients prefer to combine their leisure and relaxation visits to India with healthcare.

The Government of India has declared that treating of foreign patients is legal. It is encouraging medical tourism in the country by offering tax breaks and export incentives to participating hospitals.

There is ground for further vast growth

The medical tourism industry in India is presently earning revenues of \$333 million. Encouraged by the incredible pace of growth exhibited by the industry, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and McKinsey have predicted that the industry will grow to earn additional revenue of \$2.2 billion by 2012. Govt. of India is also supporting by quick visa processing, improved flight connectivity and infrastructure development

With a view to facilitating the medical tourism industry to achieve the targets and to give greater momentum for its growth, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare together with the Ministry of Tourism of the Government of India has set up a Task Force. The Task Force evaluates the opportunities in the industry and formulates a policy for accrediting healthcare institutions in India. The accreditation programme is aimed at classifying health service providers on the basis of infrastructure and quality of services offered. It is expected to

standardize procedures and facilitate foreign patients in selecting the best hospitals.

Meanwhile, several hospitals in the country are seeking to take advantage of the booming medical tourism industry. They are investing largely in acquiring equipments, size and skills. The hospitals are in a row to acquire international accreditation, improve their standards and integrate their services by tying up with tour operators, airline carriers and hotel companies. Hospitals also allow foreign patients to pay through credit and ensure proper support services to foreign patients after they return to their native countries.