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**Topics** 

interest from foreigners 06:10 IST

**luxury retreats** 

enquiries from overseas to

Ananda in the Himalayas, a destination spa resort in the foothills close to Rishikesh, has witnessed an all-time high Hospitality industry | luxury hospitality | luxury tourism market Ritwik Sharma | New Delhi | Last Updated at March 25 2022

Open skies bring flood of

Niraamaya, which runs wellness retreats and private

residences

doors for overseas visitors and the country went

**ADVERTISING** 

Two years ago, this week, the reality of a

As elsewhere, Covid-19 went on to wreck

first pandemic year, the fear of the virus

tourism and hospitality in India. But while the

restaurant industry reported degrowth in the

triggered a renewed interest in wellness. And

luxury retreats have not only held off challenges

faced by a pandemic-crippled industry, but are

anticipating a rise in demand with the resum-

from various countries have written to us des-

cribing a void they have experienced these last

two years where they could not continue their

He adds that the luxury brand has received a

especially for its panchakarma- (an Ayurvedic

technique) and meditation-based programmes,

emotional cleansing and rejuvenation after such

a challenging period. "Starting March-end, we

expect a very buoyant demand from clients

from the US, Western Europe, West Asia and

A financial hub like Mumbai is already seeing

pent-up demand from foreign business travel,

Hotels & Resorts. However, she believes that

the real impact for leisure tourism would be

November to February. "In long-haul markets

such as the US, there is certainly interest in the

returning guests from the US in my hospitality

operations under Araiya Malta in the European

witnessed during the winter season from

cultural, heritage, wellness and adventure

destinations in India. I am already seeing

business in Europe," says Nair, who runs

nation, apart from three resorts in India.

Allen Machado, CEO, Niraamaya Wellness

particularly from the UK, US and West Asia —

are showing willingness to return to India. The

war in Ukraine, however, has dimmed interest

"If international flights open up, we will see a

particularly in the second and third quarters of

Kohima) and private residences (in Goa, Kerala

visitors were from abroad. Post-Covid, that was

reversed to more than 90 per cent in favour of

revenue model, and effect a drop of up to 40-50

good inflow and resurgence July onwards,

Niraamaya runs wellness retreats (four in

and Karnataka). Earlier, 80 per cent of its

domestic clients, who are extremely price-

sensitive. Niraamaya had to restrategise its

There has been a major shift in how people

choose their holidays, with hygiene and safety

measures, less crowded destinations that are

within a driving distance, and healthy cuisine

Jose Ramapuram, executive director of Evolve

forming a trend that is here to stay, says

Back Resorts, which got in touch with its

foreign travel operators and destination

far as inbound tourism is concerned".

management firms after a gap of nearly two

years, expects overseas traffic to pick up only

from October "as we now enter an offseason as

"We are, however, experiencing demand from

long-distance travellers from within India," he

adds. "During the pandemic, we found a lot of

(where Evolve Back has three properties) and

acquired its first international property in Cen-

situated, had no domestic demand and catered

only to the international market. Following the

pandemic, for two years, it had few guests. But

Ramapuram, and Evolve Back is seeing a rise in

the African nation has now opened up, says

Back in India at Ananda, which offers the

luxury of retreating to a secluded 100-acre

guidance, one-on-one sessions of yoga and

meditation, or tailormade gourmet meals.

At Araiya's 38-room Palampur resort in

Himachal, overlooking the Dhauladhar range,

as part of its new offerings are village walking

tours and hikes in the mountains with trained

guides from the neighbouring local community.

These, besides boutique experiences, especially

for intimate family gatherings and celebration.

Besides those who drive to the hills from places

in the North within a four- to six-hour radius,

there is an increased willingness to take single

She cites a study by online travel firm Expedia

last year, which suggested that the top drivers

of value for people when booking hotels were

cancellation policies and ease of refunds. She

expects this trend to continue, even as luxury

resorts expect increased demand with Indian

runs daily flights to all three

guests pursuing longer term

Ayurvedic rejuvenation,

wellness programmes such as

panchakarma, holistic or yogic

require a minimum of one and

detox or dhyana meditation, which

As normalcy returns, there is also

sense of community and sharing of

wellness experiences among guests.

greater interest in returning to a

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resorts. And, as people preferred

exclusive experiences, it introduced

enhanced cleaning measures, flexible

flights such as from Delhi to Dharamshala, Nair

guest — be it wellness assessment and

forest estate reserved only for resident guests,

the highlights include personalisation for every

regional travellers from within Karnataka

In November 2019, Evolve Back had also

tral Kalahari. Botswana, where its resort is

per cent in tariffs.

Machado.

nearby states."

international demand.

Kerala, one in Bengaluru and another in

this financial year," Machado says.

from CIS (Commonwealth of Independent

Retreats, says their overseas clients -

States) countries, he adds.

points out Amruda Nair, director of Araiya

glut of enquiries from overseas recently,

reflecting the twin needs of physical and

annual wellness programme."

other regions," he adds.

ption of regular international flights, come

into lockdown.

pandemic sneaked up on India as it shut its

Ananda in the Himalayas, a destination spa resort in the foothills close to Rishikesh, has witnessed an all-time high interest from foreigners after the issuing of tourist visas recommenced in December 2021. Mahesh Natarajan, chief operating officer of IHHR Hospitality Ananda, its owner company, says, "Several of our regular Ananda guests

Sunday.

private guided activities over shared ones. The big shift for patrons at wellness retreats has been a more long-term focus on health. For Ananda, this has led to a substantial growth in

three weeks.

industry

Wellness in focus Due to apprehension among guests to take taxis post-Covid, Evolve Back introduced helicopter rides. It

tourism finally opening up.

points out.