
Sri Lanka's spas give an unrivalled sense of well-being

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As many as 6,500 registered Ayurveda practitioners, many of whom have undergone a seven-year course followed by two years in a conventional hospital, are now catering to the needs of an increasing numbers of tourists to Sri Lanka. In addition to the Ayurveda clinics, many luxurious hotels and beach resorts have a spa or massage centre. The principles and techniques of this ancient medical approach are still being used to promote a sense of relaxation and rejuvenation, as part of a pleasurable holiday.

Ayurveda is believed to have originated at the foothills of the Himalayas in northern India more than 3000 years ago. 'It is the oldest and most holistic medical system available on the planet today and is widely used in Sri Lanka,' says Dileep Mudadeniya, Managing Director of the Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau (SLTPB).

Ayurveda uses leaves, flowers, barks, roots and berries to cleanse the blood and the body of impurities. 'It is the traditional system of medicine practiced in Sri Lanka. Ruins of ancient hospitals with medicinal baths and toilets dating back to the 4th Century BC can be seen even today in the ancient capital of Anuradhapura in north central Sri Lanka,' adds Mudadeniya.

The basis of Ayurveda is the belief in a combination of five basic elements forming three types of energy within the body: vatha (a combination of air & space), pitha (fire and water) and kapha (earth and water). Ayurvedic practitioners believe that illness arises when these energies are out of balance, and work to restore harmony.

Among the newest to offer in-house Ayurvedic therapy for visitors is Ayurveda Pavilions in the coastal fishing town of Negombo. The first health holiday resort to be established on the west coast of the country, it provides a quiet and peaceful environment for providing preventive and curative treatment with the help of a team of highly qualified Ayurveda practitioners.

Accommodation is provided in small villas with modern facilities including luxurious bathrooms and featuring traditional architecture creating a village atmosphere for the visitors. Outdoor baths in a small courtyard in each villa allows visitors to enjoy herbal baths in the privacy of their own pavilions.

There are many luxurious Spas featuring Ayurvedic treatment around Sri Lanka, many of them along the western coast. Barbery Reef Ayurveda Resort in Beruwala has been a pioneer, providing Ayurveda treatment for over two decades.

'The importance of Ayurveda is underscored by the fact that a separate ministry has been established to develop the country's traditional medical system,' says Mudadeniya. 'The Ministry of Indigenous Medicine overlooks the several Ayurvedic Hospitals and over ten thousand registered ayurvedic physicians in the country,' he adds. Each physician has to undergo a seven-year training period before being allowed to practice.

The holistic approach to health, where body, mind and soul are inextricably linked, seeks to balance the body's energies to ensure good health and a feeling of well-being. A comprehensive treatment includes massage, herbal baths, oil treatment and a special diet, as well as meditation, yoga and music.

Ayurveda is used to treat everything from stress to diabetes, migraine, asthma, arthritis and high-blood pressure, to help boost the immune system and even help in delaying the ageing process.

Ayurveda's pharmacopoeia of preparations includes a vast range of leaves, roots, bark, resin, spices and fruits. Used with the experience of 3000 years, the ingredients of Ayurveda continue to work their restorative and healing magic, and can easily be experienced by visitors to Sri Lanka.

For any visitor, the wild natural beauty of the country including scenic waterfalls, spice and tea plantations, bird and wildlife reserves and tropical jungle excursions are experiences that would remain as cherished memories. The Ayurvedic Spa experience will be something tangible to take away. (Courtesy : Ameinfo)