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Ananda in the Himalayas

Ancient ways in a brave new world



Its guest list reads like a global who's who, from Deepak Chopra and Oprah Winfrey, to movie stars Uma Thurman, Edward Norton, Will Smith and Josh Hartnett. Even even the king and queen of England have spent time basking in the healing energies of Ananda in the Himalayas, a dedicated wellness retreat in the mountains above the town of Rishikesh, where the Beatles (among others) went to discover enlightenment in the birthplace of yoga and meditation.

Founded on Ayurvedic and yogic principles, Ananda offers the real deal in terms of full-service wellness. And, beyond the property, there are evenings spent watching the Ganga Aarti along the riverbank, affording moments of quiet, communal stillness. Treks, nature walks, and immersion in local culture extend this connection further, while world-class wellness facilities and conscious gourmet cuisine support the purpose of restoration.

"The profile of wellness travellers has shifted fundamentally over the past two decades," says Mahesh Natarajan, Ananda's COO. "In our early years, guests came largely for relaxation and respite from daily life. Today, they arrive with defined health goals and want to address concerns that span chronic stress, hormonal imbalance, sleep disorders and early-onset lifestyle conditions." He says visitors are genuinely committed to outcomes that extend beyond their time in the Himalayas.

top left Ananda is built around the restored Viceregal Palace of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal on a 100-acre estate overlooking the Ganges River valley.

left and top right A focus at Ananda are Ayurvedic treatments, ancient knowledge optimised in combination with modern science. **right** Yoga and meditation are practiced in Ananda's Hawa Mahal pavilion.

Natarajan believes that this shift "reflects a broader move from short-term relief to sustained, transformative change".

"Wellness has evolved from a lifestyle trend into a mainstream health priority, and the definition of luxury has changed alongside it," he says. "Luxury today is no longer defined by opulence or escape alone, but by measurable, enduring transformation: longevity not only in years, but in the quality of those years, built on physical strength, mental clarity, emotional stability, and a sense of balance."

He says wellness has moved from being "an occasional indulgence" to "an ongoing investment". This is fuelling movement toward slower, more intentional travel. "Guests return to us with greater regularity and purpose, choosing longer stays over short-term fixes, and committing to programmes built for sustained results rather than momentary relief."

He says Ananda's wellness programmes are shaped around a guest's specific health profile. Stress, sleep disturbances and weight management remain among the most common complaints, reflecting the pressures of modern life, alongside continuing

demand for support with mental fatigue, burnout, and metabolic imbalance.

"Every programme goes beyond surface-level rejuvenation to address the root causes of imbalance," Natarajan says. "Upon arrival, consultations with our lead physician and experts in Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, nutrition, yoga, meditation, physiotherapy and emotional healing translate these findings into a daily schedule of therapies, fitness, breathwork, and curated meals, built around each

guest's biomarkers and goals."

He says what sets Ananda apart is its blend of heritage with clinical rigour.

"What is often described as new is frequently rooted in ancient tradition. While relaxation remains a natural outcome, the focus lies in achieving lasting transformation supported by measurable results. Guests leave not only rested but with improved biomarkers, sustainable lifestyle practices, and a clear roadmap for maintaining vitality and longevity well beyond their stay."

