



## Exploring Wellness Tourism in Sri Lanka: An Ethnographic Perspective

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### Abstract

Wellness tourism focuses explicitly on travel in maintaining or improving one's well-being, and exhibited superior performance compared to general tourism, seeing a growth rate of around twice as fast on a global scale. This may be primarily attributed to an increasing inclination towards embracing a wellness-oriented lifestyle, a growing interest in immersive travel experiences, and expanding the global middle class. Sri Lanka's cultural wellness programs, Ayurveda and Hela Wedakama, integrate Indigenous features of Sri Lanka with wellness practices, making them appealing to well-being-oriented travellers. The wellness tourism industry in Sri Lanka faces gaps in product development and marketing and a lack of variety in wellness offerings. While Ayurveda and traditional healing practices are prevalent, research on how to integrate them into modern tourism packages is limited. This study aims to analyze the tourists' behaviour and combine traditional practices of wellness tourism with modern trends. This research is constituted as a cross-sectional ethnographic study. The data were gathered through purposive sampling by interviewing ten tourists from three different countries who participated in wellness tourist activities in Sri Lanka. The data gathering was incorporated with digital ethnography to ensure data triangularity. The analysis indicates that wellness tourism encompasses those seeking to engage with nature and society sustainably and responsibly. Wellness tourists frequently incorporate lifestyle modifications, including embracing more nutritious meals, engaging in regular meditation, or integrating holistic techniques into their everyday routines. They intend to engage with local communities, particularly in the context of traditional wellness practices, while being mindful of cultural sensitivity. Wellness travellers strive to improve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being by actively pursuing relaxation, stress reduction, detoxification, and treatment for specific health conditions. This result provides significant insights for academics, regulators, and industry stakeholders.

**Keywords:** Tourists, Tourism industry, Travel experiences, Wellness tourism

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