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Medical Tourism: A Promising Market for India

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The industry is expected to reach $13 billion by 2026 in India



Medical tourism, also known as health tourism or global healthcare, refers to the practice of traveling to another country for the purpose of receiving medical or wellness treatment. It is a growing trend, and India is one of the leading destinations for medical tourists, along with countries such as Thailand, Singapore, and Mexico.

Medical tourism in India, in mid-2020, was estimated to be worth around $9 billion which places India in the tenth position in the Global Medical Tourism Index. Nearly 2 million patients visit India every year for various medical treatments. As per experts, corporate hospitals would earn 10-15% of their total revenue from medical tourism in the pre-COVID period, and it fell to 5-6% due to the pandemic. However, it is soon expected to rise to pre-COVID levels and even beyond. With support from the government's Heal in India initiative, the industry is expected to reach $13 billion by 2026.

Key drivers for Medical Value Tourism (MVT)

- Lack of quality healthcare providers especially in resource-constrained countries
- Long waiting-time e.g. patients with inadequate infrastructure or high reliance on 'crowded' public facilities
- Better reliability and credibility of healthcare facilities through increasing popularity of accreditation
- Sustained marketing initiatives by hospitals as well as host nations
- Increased demand for alternative therapy and rejuvenation
- Access to information with the increasing penetration of internet
- Increase in propensity to travel largely through better connectivity

India is the most preferred country for medical tourism due to its low-cost yet high-quality medical treatment in world class facilities. For example, a hip replacement surgery in the United States can cost upwards of $40,000, while the same surgery in India can cost as little as $10,000.

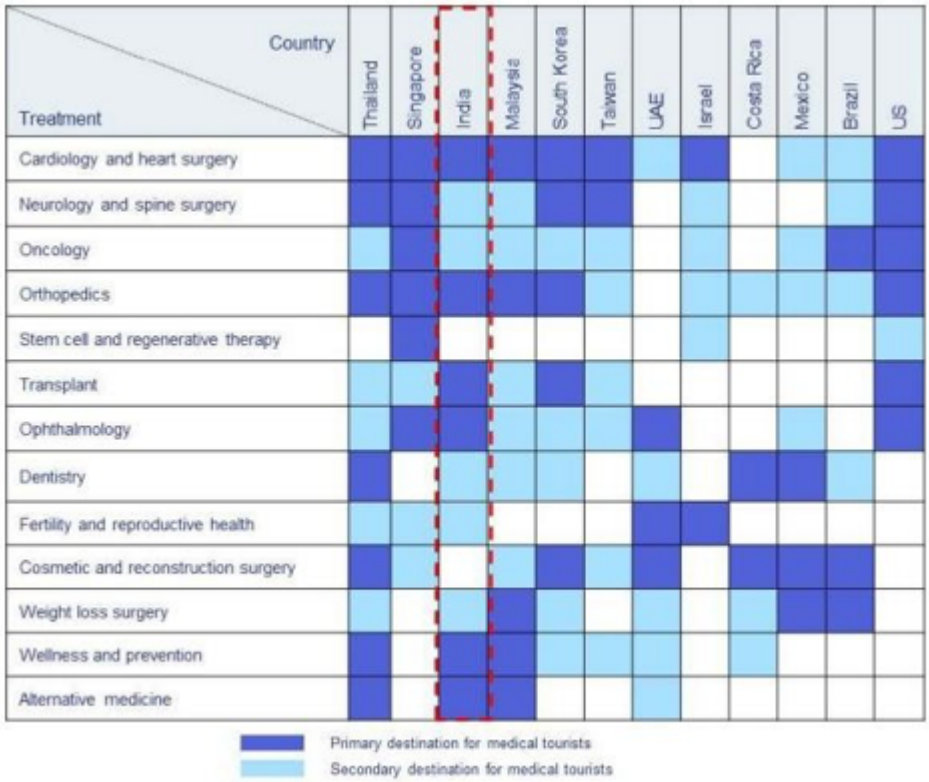
Other reasons include minimum waiting period, premium hospitality services, easy air connectivity and more. India had been featured on the list of top destinations with best hotels for wellness across Asia in the year 2015 and ever since this industry has seen a boom. Five cities i.e. Goa, New Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Chennai are said to be the best to relish a rejuvenating experience through wellness and medical tourism centers in India.

Top five medical tourism destinations in India and preferred hospitals in respective city:

Location	**Preferred hospitals**
Delhi/NCR	Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, Fortis Escorts, Max Healthcare, BLK Hospital, Artemis, Medanta
Chennai	Apollo Hospital, Fortis Malar, Billroth, MIOT International, SRM Hospital
Mumbai	HN Reliance, Jaslok, Saifee, Lilavati Hospital, Hinduja National Hospital, Breach Candy Hospital, Dr L H Hiranandani Hospitals, Nanavati Hospital, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital,Bombay Hospital and Medical Research Center
Goa	Wockhardt Hospitals, Manipal Hospital
Ahmedabad	Apollo Hospitals International, HCG Multi Specialty Hospital & HCG Cancer Centre, Narayana Multi Speciality Hospital, Shalby Hospital, Sterling Hospitals

Nations driving Indian MVT

Most of the tourists are from Asian or African countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Indonesia and Kenya, among others. Bangladesh and Afghanistan continued to be the top countries from where the maximum number foreign tourist arrivals for medical purpose was seen. In 2017, about 2.21 lakh tourists from Bangladesh; which is almost 50% of their total medical tourists visited India for medical reasons. Likewise, the number of medical tourists from Afghanistan stood at 55,681 in 2017. Other countries from where large numbers of medical tourists came to India include Kenya, Camaroon, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Iraq, Oman, Maldives, Yemen, Uzbekistan and Sudan.



In conclusion, India is a popular destination for medical tourism due to the high quality of healthcare services available at affordable prices. The country is known for its skilled medical professionals and state-of-the-art hospitals, making it a top destination for a range of medical treatments including organ transplants, cosmetic surgery, dental care, and traditional practices such as Ayurveda and yoga.

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