

THE WELL-RESTED TRAVELLER

Sleep tourism sounds like an anomaly. Who sleeps on an exciting trip you have been planning for weeks or months, right? But you will be surprised to learn that travellers prioritise rest & relaxation (R&R) over hectic sightseeing fuelled by FOMO.

By BINDU GOPAL RAO

Several research reports, as well as observations of modern lifestyles, indicate that many Indians are sleep-deprived or have trouble getting quality sleep.

Bengaluru-based IT professional Ramesh Rao had a life that most people would dream of: a senior position at a reputed IT firm and a comfortable home where he lived with his family. Yet, something was amiss. He constantly felt tired, although his medical reports showed no problems. It was only when he looked more closely at his routine that he realised he was sleep-deprived. Constant mobile-phone use and a hectic schedule meant that he was sleeping for only a few hours.

"I was shocked when I realised and made several lifestyle changes, including restricting screen usage for at least half an hour before I slept, as well as adding walking to my routine before bed. I have seen significant improvement in





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: A nature-framed retreat creates calm before sleep; water and greenery soften the sensory environment; a sleep mask signals the transition from day to rest; and a quiet, light-filled room supports uninterrupted sleep.



my health,” he says.

Rao is not alone. Sleep deprivation is a reality that needs to be addressed more deliberately.

REST MATTERS

Amid busy daily schedules, sleep is often deprioritised. At home, it can be difficult to disconnect from work, screens and everyday responsibilities. Travel offers a break from this routine, and luxury travellers are increasingly seeking destinations and stays that provide meaningful rest and recovery.

“Sleep debt arguably carries the highest cost, as its cumulative effects can significantly impact both physical and mental wellbeing. Sleep and wellness-focused holidays provide guests with a dedicated environment to rest, recover and disconnect from the distractions of everyday life,” says Anil Chadha, Managing Director, ITC Hotels Limited.

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This shift suggests that travellers often define a vacation not as an opportunity to do more, but as a chance to recover, recharge and return feeling physically and mentally restored. As awareness of sleep's role in overall wellbeing grows, hotels are investing in personalised solutions that help guests achieve consistent, restorative sleep.

"Guests are accustomed to highly personalised experiences across every aspect of their lives, enabled by technology and data-driven insights. Hotels can provide a sleep sanctuary that addresses the five senses and helps to create a relaxing space for sleep," adds Chadha. "Beyond creating an environment conducive to rest, underlying sleep disorders and medical conditions require professional clinical assessment and intervention."

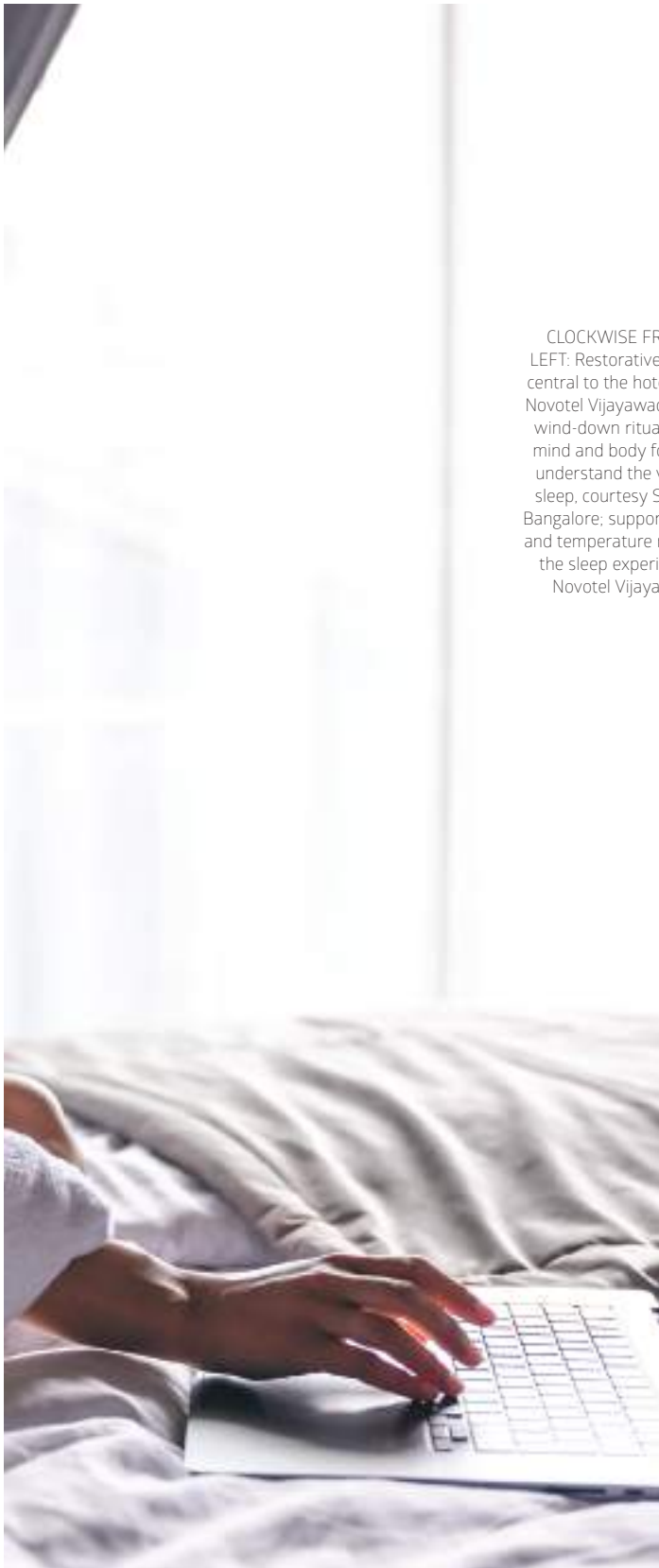
TRAVEL WELL

People often choose destinations based on what happens between eleven at night and six in the morning. Sleep has moved from being an amenity to a reason for the trip, and hotels have followed. The idea of the staycation has also evolved. Guests are no longer looking only for a good room, a comfortable stay or good food. They want experiences that allow them to slow down and switch off.

"Travellers are not choosing holidays only to recover from exhaustion or the pressures of everyday life. They are also looking for experiences that offer the comfort of home while giving them a break from their usual routine," says Manish Pathak, General Manager, Novotel Vijayawada Varun. "A sleep-focused experience is really about comfort. I feel you can truly enjoy your sleep only when you are completely at rest and your mind and body feel that they can switch off. Lighting, sound, temperature, room design and even evening rituals can change the overall sleeping experience. So, it is not just about having a comfortable mattress. It is about creating a space where you naturally feel at ease and ready to rest."

For several guests, six to eight hours of uninterrupted rest is no longer merely a basic expectation. A good night's





CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM
LEFT: Restorative sleep becomes central to the hotel stay, courtesy Novotel Vijayawada Varun; simple wind-down rituals help prepare mind and body for sleep; guests understand the value of quality sleep, courtesy Sheraton Grand Bangalore; support, pressure relief and temperature regulation shape the sleep experience, courtesy Novotel Vijayawada Varun.



sleep can be as valuable as any other hotel experience, with personalisation becoming an important part of delivering it.

“Personalisation is increasingly an important part of luxury hospitality. What guests want in terms of pillows, temperature, lighting and their evening routine does not have a single answer,” says Gaurav Tokas, Director of Rooms, Sheraton Grand Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway. “Technology and guest preference data can help hotels understand these needs and offer more choice. But I don’t think technology should be the experience itself. It’s about using it smartly to reduce friction and provide more comfort. The next evolution of personalised hospitality will be about understanding what is important to each guest and making it easier to accommodate those preferences throughout their stay.”

DESIGNING FOR SLEEP

Elements such as lighting, sound, temperature, room design and evening rituals come together to influence sleep.

“Each element acts on a different physiological system. Put them together, and the effect is significantly larger than any single factor on its own. Lighting governs melatonin.

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Warm, dim light in the evening supports the hormonal shift towards sleep; blue-spectrum light delays it, sometimes by hours. Sound affects arousal thresholds; even signals below conscious awareness keep part of the nervous system on alert. Temperature is probably the most underestimated factor of all; the body needs its core temperature to drop slightly before deep sleep can begin, which is why a properly cool room tends to improve sleep architecture in ways people notice immediately,” says Dr Narendra K. Shetty, Chief Wellness Officer at Kshemavana.

Room design influences something more subtle: the subconscious sense of safety. Soft textures, low visual complexity and natural materials can help create a calmer environment.

“Evening rituals function as behavioural anchors, signalling to the nervous system that the active phase of the day is done. Layer all of this across a three-to-four-hour pre-sleep window, and you stop just falling asleep; you fall into something genuinely restorative,” adds Shetty.

MATTRESSES MATTER

The conversation around mattresses has moved beyond simply asking whether one is soft or firm. It is often about how a mattress works with their sleeping position, body and overall sleep routine, with greater attention to comfort, support and sleep quality.

“Back and stomach sleepers may require stronger support, while side sleepers often look for a more adaptive surface that cushions the shoulders and hips without compromising support,” says Mathan Subramaniam, Co-founder and Managing Director, Royaloak Furniture. “There is also greater awareness around maintaining the sleep environment. Allowing a mattress to breathe, regularly vacuuming it, rotating it to prevent uneven wear and avoiding moisture build-up can all contribute to maintaining its comfort and hygiene. In India, particularly in warmer and more humid markets, we also see greater attention to

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LEFT: A treatment at Kshemavana creates space to slow down and reset.

CENTRE: The Sleep Boutique at ITC Royal Bengal turns pillow choice into part of the sleep experience.

RIGHT, TOP: Warm wood and traditional detailing give Kshemavana its restorative character.

RIGHT, BELOW: At Kshemavana, the setting itself becomes part of the pause.



breathability and temperature management.”

Sleep science is moving mattress design away from a one-size-fits-all approach, with greater consideration of sleeping position, pressure points, body weight and spinal alignment. Zoned support, for example, can reinforce the lower spine while allowing greater cushioning around the shoulders.

“Material innovation is another important part of this evolution. Memory foam can contour to the body and distribute weight, while pocket-spring systems provide responsive support and greater airflow. Natural latex offers a combination of durability and breathability, while hybrid mattresses bring together different materials to balance support and comfort,” adds Subramaniam.

RELAX RIGHT

The definition of a holiday is becoming much more personal. For some guests, it may mean exploring a new city; for

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others, it may mean having the time and space to slow down. Whether travelling for a high-stakes business trip or a leisure retreat, however, sleep remains central to the experience.

“Rest is the foundation that allows you to show up at your best—whether that means stepping into a morning boardroom with a sharp, clear mind or fully immersing yourself in a new destination. We see guests choosing experiences that allow them to disconnect, whether it is a spa treatment, breakfast in bed or an uninterrupted night’s sleep. That shift tells us that wellbeing is no longer separate from travel,” says Biswajit Chakraborty, General Manager, Four Seasons Hotel Bengaluru at Embassy ONE.

Personalisation is also moving into areas that affect how guests feel, with hotels capturing preferences and sharing them across teams.

“If we know that a guest prefers a particular pillow or a lighter meal before sleeping, we can prepare for the same even before they arrive. Our pillow menu, for instance, offers a range of options to suit different sleep preferences, including a hypoallergenic body pillow designed to cradle you through the night; a high-density foam pillow for balanced support; an orthopaedic pillow that promotes proper neck and spine alignment; and our feather pillow, featuring a signature blend of down and feathers for a soft, comfortable sleep experience. Technology helps us remember these details, but ultimately, it is our people who turn that information into genuine hospitality,” adds Chakraborty.

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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:
A spa treatment creates a deliberate pause between activity and rest; Royaloak’s Italian Comfort Luxe mattress combines gel-infused memory foam with pocket springs for cooling, pressure relief and support; rest begins before lights-out, as the pace of the day gives way to stillness.





THE SLEEP SUITE

What makes a hotel room genuinely good for sleep?

A short checklist:

■ **The right temperature:** A cool, well-regulated room can make a significant difference to sleep quality.

■ **Light control:** Blackout curtains, dimmable bedside lighting and minimal blue light help create the right environment for winding down.

■ **Sound:** Good insulation, quiet air-conditioning and the option of white noise can reduce overnight disturbances.

■ **The bed:** Mattress support, pillow choice and breathable linen all affect comfort.

■ **A personalised wind-down:** From herbal tea and lighter evening meals to a bath ritual, small details can help signal that the day is over.

■ **No friction:** Controls that are easy to use—from lighting to temperature—matter more than complicated in-room technology.



EXPERIENTIAL AND RESTORATIVE

The rise of sleep tourism reflects a broader shift in traveller priorities. Modern travellers often value personal wellbeing, restoration and intentional downtime. “When a guest wakes up after a genuinely deep, uninterrupted rest, physically restored, mentally clear, and emotionally settled, that stays with them in a way that a room upgrade doesn’t. The shift towards experiential and restorative luxury has been building for years. Sleep is its most honest expression because it can’t be staged or photographed. Either you sleep well, or you toss and turn in the bed. Properties that consistently deliver genuine sleep quality earn a loyalty that no points programme can replicate. Eight hours of real rest, the kind that repairs something, is probably the most straightforward luxury hospitality has ever offered,” says Shetty.

Rather than seeking only sightseeing or indulgence, many travellers look for experiences that help them disconnect, recharge and improve their overall quality of life. It also highlights a growing awareness that wellness begins with fundamental needs such as quality sleep, making rest and recovery an important part of the travel experience. J