

europaean Spa

THE NO.1 MAGAZINE FOR SPA AND WELLNESS



Issue 53 | August/September 2016 | www.europeanspamagazine.com



AUTHENTIC WELLNESS

Global Wellness Summit reveals industry predictions

APHRODITE'S ISLAND

Inside two of Thanos Hotels' sumptuous Cypriot spa resorts

A MATERIAL WORLD

High-performance uniforms and textiles in our Expert Guide

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Celebrating a first year of success for Spa at Ramside, UK

New horizons

We highlight some of the key trends that have been identified for discussion at this year's Global Wellness Summit in Kitzbühel, Tyrol, from October 17-19

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In preparation for the much anticipated 10th annual Global Wellness Summit (GWS), the event's organisers have produced a new set of trend forecasts for Europe that aim to provide a focus for all international leaders and visionaries working in the trillion-dollar global wellness industry.

As a pioneer of the concept of holistic wellness in a spa setting, Europe remains the largest spa, wellness tourism and beauty market in the world, and among the insights to be highlighted by the GWS is a surge in the development of eastern European wellness properties from the Baltic-to-the-Black-Sea nations.

Within the broader emerging field of wellness, European resorts will deepen their focus on authenticity in a shift towards nature, healing and new stages of self-transformation. Also among the predictions is a strategy shake-up for the

European beauty market, which will be enhanced by new hi-tech approaches, powered by high-touch protocols.

The trends highlighted here are set to be conversational catalysts at the GWS in Austria this October, where the future of the global wellness market will be analysed by looking back through the lens of history.

While Europe has long been hailed as the world's wellness leader, it has experienced some recent stasis in terms of innovating new and creative wellness offerings. European Wellness 2.0 is predicted to see more private investment in on-site-sponsored European spas, as well as the emergence of new, innovative wellness retreat concepts.

European Spa shares this forward thinking with an outline of the best trends for our ever-evolving industry.

www.globalwellnesssummit.com



Mountain healing: Spa guests will focus on authenticity and a shift towards nature, as exemplified by meditation programmes run by the Posthotel Achenkirch in the Austrian Tyrol.

Image courtesy of Healing Hotels of the World/Posthotel Achenkirch





Spa innovation spreads throughout Europe

A surge in wellness properties and the first chain of hot springs resorts are envisaged as European spa consumers seek monastic-style peace and mini-kurs



Going deeper into authenticity

Dr Franz Linser, founder,
Linser Hospitality



As the European consumer faces unprecedented levels of stress and 24-7 'digital noise', pressured lifestyles mean we don't feel 'well' anymore, which is creating new desires for uncompromising peace and a need to be closer to nature.

This increasing demand will lead European spa resorts to shift from amenity-driven luxury, with everything from resort design to treatments and fitness experiences shaped to provide intense authenticity, and nature providing a new stage for self-transformation.

Wellness retreats will appear on mountaintops, deep in the woods and snow, on the water, under the stars, and in the form of treehouses or houseboats. Spas, treatments and saunas will burst out from the basement, reborn as 'nature cocoons'.

Developing retreats in former monasteries, such as Schloss Mondsee in Austria and Eremito in Italy, is a tangible trend for future European wellness destinations – calm, simplicity, wild nature, spirituality and profound self-seeking will be front and centre.

Rise of the mini-kur

Anna Bjurstam, vice-president, spa and wellness,
Six Senses; owner, Raison D'Etre



Spa bathing and venturing on serious 10-day or longer kurs (or cures) have been a long-established way of life in Europe, and this time-honoured custom is now emerging as a much more succinct option for busy Europeans.

The rise of the mini-kur will provide concentrated options for 2-3 hour bathing rituals, spa treatments, nutrition advice, movement instruction, relaxation, meditation and mindfulness encapsulated in just one or two days, rather than the more time-intensive traditional kurs.

The 'wellness staycation' concept, which has been popular in Scandinavian countries for some time, will expand across Europe. Taking the waters and visiting spa resorts will occur over a briefer period because active Europeans are short on time, and there is also growing unease about air travel, so they are staying closer to home.

People will embrace these much shorter, but still transformational 'just being' experiences throughout European spas from Tylösand Hotel & Spa in Sweden to Fredrichsbad in Baden Baden, Germany.

Building from the Baltic to the Black Sea

Alla Sokolova, co-owner and general manager,
IWC Balans



Eastern European nations have some of the most established wellness cultures on Earth, but they've flown under the radar and that's about to change.

An eastward wellness renaissance is taking place from the Baltic to the Black Sea and further out to the Asian Caspian Sea, with resort development in this region set to reveal little-known wellness traditions to the world, such as 'pirth' bathing.

As former Soviet republics regain their footing, leading global wellness brands, including Six Senses in Kazakhstan and Chenot Palace in Azerbaijan, are making moves in a region that boasts centuries-old spa and bathing culture alongside the modernisation of huge former-Soviet medical-wellness health resorts.

The Kemeru Wellness Village & Hotel in Latvia is a great example; a former 19th-century bathhouse under Tsar Nikolai I, and a Soviet-era health resort, this historic wellness community is located within a national forest and will include a five-star hotel and clinic, with programmes from balneotherapy to fertility treatments.

Thermal springs working up steam

Andrew Gibson, vice-president, spa and wellness,
Fairmont Raffles Hotels and Resorts



One rising trend to look out for is the first true chain of branded hot springs properties, which is to stretch from Poland in the north to Moldova in the south of Europe.

These will be fantastic thermal water retreats that successfully integrate medicine and wellness, while capitalising on eastern Europe's abundant natural springs and kurs. They will combine long-established medical-wellness retreats and culturally rich cities in countries such as Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Private companies will work closely with state tourism departments to create safe destinations with reduced risk and, once developed, this property network is likely to become the world leader in hot springs wellness provision.

As the thermal springs movement gathers steam, we can look to national tourism boards or groups of countries banding together to promote this new 'Hot Springs Road' that will wind its way from Budapest to the Karlovy Vary spa town in the Czech Republic.

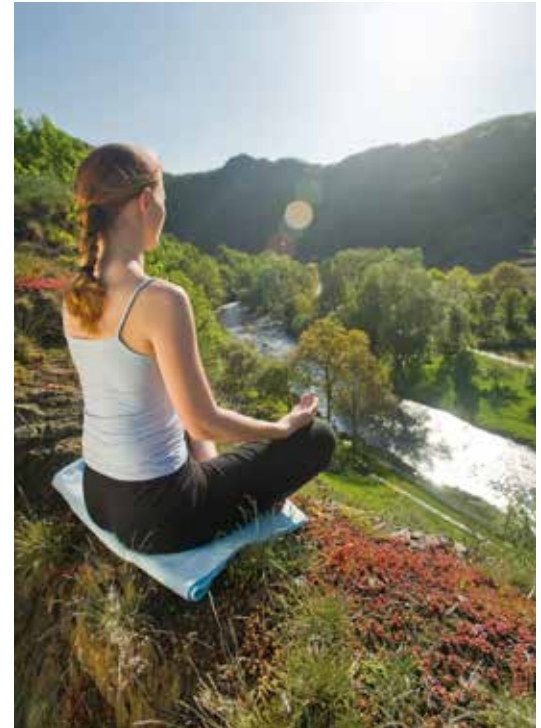


Clockwise from far left: Some of the finest healing traditions of Europe are gaining wider recognition worldwide: bathing in the unique healing waters at Tamina Therme Bad Ragaz, Switzerland; Piešťany mud treatments at Irma health Spa, Piešťany, Slovakia; Guests enjoy mini-kurs at the Tylösand Hotel and Spa, Sweden; off-the-grid digital detox and modern day monastic retreats are gaining popularity at converted monastery Eremito Hotelito Del Alma, near Parrano in Italy





From left: Locally sourced ingredients and seasonal produce with true provenance are prepared at The Brasserie, Pennyhill Park Spa; wellness tourism is set to outgrow the overall sector in European countries such as Germany



Entering a new world of wellness

From food regulation to the economic impact of Europe's fastest growing tourism sector

Wellness will be legislated

Thierry Malleret, co-founder/author of the Monthly Barometer; founder, Global Risk Network at the World Economic Forum



Thierry Malleret

With obesity tripling in many European countries since the 1980s, according to World Health Organisation statistics, the sheer cost of this epidemic means that more European nations will start taxing unhealthy food and beverages and the laws will expand to 'bad' fats such as palm oil.

There are intense battle-lines between governments and huge multi-national companies, known as 'Big Food', which are fighting back against the new legislation, but European manufacturers will continue to reduce the amount of sugar in their products to pre-empt governments, as they also rebrand and re-engineer around 'healthy' or 'wellness' foods.

Nestlé, Europe's biggest corporation and the world's largest food company, looks to be taking a radical path; redefining itself as a scientifically-driven 'nutrition, health and wellness company' with plans that its foods will be the vehicle for an entirely new type of medication, both preventive treatments and traditional medicine, rewriting what 'food' and 'pharmaceuticals' could be in the future.

Growth of wellness tourism

Jean-Claude Baumgarten, chairman and CEO, CREWE Associates



Jean-Claude Baumgarten

Tourism will continue to have a very strong economic impact in Europe, and wellness tourism will grow even faster. As the continent moves towards a service economy, tourism has greater absolute value than sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing or chemicals – and it represents nearly 60% of Europe's entire retail sector.

With vastly increased stress, an ageing population and the new quest for 'total' wellbeing, European wellness tourism will grow significantly faster than its tourism market overall, which is set to rise 2.8% per year over the next decade, outpacing annual economic growth of 1.9% and making it Europe's fastest growing market except for the financial sector.

Global Wellness Institute research estimates a 7.3% annual growth rate between 2012-2017 and the wellness travel outlook is very positive in mature northern and central European nations, with faster increase in southern European countries such as Italy, Spain and Portugal, provided their economies continue to strengthen their recovery, and is bullish for the rest of developing Europe.



Looking forward to a beautiful future

New mega-category to shape marketing strategies as hi-tech procedures intensify high-touch spa menus

Beauty from the inside out

Jacqueline Clarke, wellness research director,
Diagonal Reports



Jacqueline Clarke

While the legacy global beauty culture is largely a European creation, the mega-trend unfolding in Europe is wellness-as-beauty or 'beauty from the inside out' – a philosophy and aesthetic that is set to shake up the marketing strategies and sales monopolies of big cosmetic and skincare houses.

The European wellness-as-beauty wave will inspire new categories that re-cast beauty as self-care and prevention as opposed to 'cosmetic repair', presenting an array of functional solutions along with a boom in the natural and organic.

Two French companies illustrating this are L'Oréal, with its Vichy and La Roche-Posay brands, and Pierre Fabre, with Avène, showing how wellness creates a new mega-category: healthcare for the skin. These products offer the European heritage wellness of mineral springs water. In the future almost every European company will adopt a 'wellness-as-beauty' vocabulary and approach – whether it's active cosmetics or dermocosmetics. Crucially, with this shift will come a greater emphasis on evidence.

Tech-driven beauty set to energise Europe

Michael Schummert,
CEO, Babor



Michael Schummert

The near-medical, hi-tech, device-driven and more invasive beauty procedures are a booming market in the Americas and Asia, and they are about to become more so in Europe.

We will see European hotel spas meet their guests' demand for increasingly sophisticated 'results-driven' treatments using all methods of cutting-edge beauty technology, which may start with computerised skin analysis, followed by an intensive microdermabrasion peel, ultrasound therapies or needling.

At European spas, a 'holistic' approach won't just mean extending yoga, meditation or nutrition to massage services, it will mean adding hi-tech beauty to the already high-touch menus.

However, the international differences will remain huge; while Asia and the US embrace ever-more-invasive procedures, central Europe, for example, is only just getting accustomed to microdermabrasion and ultrasound. This means a unique balance will need to be struck for the European beauty consumer who wants high-impact results, but typically won't accept any downtime after a treatment. ●●●●●