

EUROPEAN HEALTH TOURISM INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

The logo for 'hti NEWS' features the word 'hti' in a white, lowercase, italicized serif font, followed by 'NEWS' in a white, uppercase, sans-serif font. A white curved line arches over the 'hti' portion. In the top left corner, there is a green leaf icon with three leaves, partially enclosed by a white arc.

hti NEWS

Issue 7 | 2022

Sustainable Tourism:
How Health Tourism
Offers Address
New Guests

Health Clusters:
A Vehicle for
Creating Shared Value

Wellness and Spa Tourism:
Nine Lessons Learned
From the Pandemic

Expensive Energy:
Economic Disaster,
Driver of Change,
or Both?



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Dear Readers,

The world has changed, and tourism is changing with it. The last two years brought about previously unimaginable changes, so that countries are still trying to recover from and deal with a range of global and local technological, societal, geopolitical, energy-related, and climatic challenges. We have all recognized the need for mutual support and help. After all, the pandemic has impacted all the segments of the tourism sector, including suppliers, operators, and related industries. At the same time, it has served as a catalyst for identifying existing deficiencies and trends. Among these trends we can find an increase in the demand for sustainable and domestic tourism, a shift to digitization, and a new awareness of health and environmental issues.

Never before in our history, have the health, medical, and wellness tourism sectors in particular had a better opportunity to raise their services to an even higher level of relevance, professionalism, and revenues. Let us take advantage of this unique opportunity and reconsider our target markets and offerings while taking into account the new dimensions of e-health and digital communication. Tourism, and especially health tourism, have the potential to improve health and wellbeing for both consumers and communities.

We invite you to benefit from our precious HTI network while reading the latest news and the most relevant insights!

Best regards,
Anke Andrea Sponer
Editor-in-Chief
HTI NEWS Magazine



About HTI

A network of top professionals and health tourism industry thought leaders from the private and public sectors.

HTI is the leading hub for doing health travel and tourism business in Europe that brings together medical, spa, and wellness professionals, buyers, service providers, associations, and destinations at events and projects supported by prominent European and global organizations. The vision of "Your health tourism industry partner" expresses its commitment to provide excellent service to our clients and partners. Since 2011, HTI has been enabling global stakeholders to stay on top of the trends, to exchange and grow their knowledge, and to establish close industry networks to generate new business opportunities. It represents a source of education and business intelligence, while at the same time serving other industries related to travel for medical care. The head office is based in Croatia, while all activities are carried out in close collaboration with HTI representatives in Germany, Italy, Russia, Türkiye, UAE and GCC, Egypt, China, the USA etc. Besides organizing health tourism events and exhibitions, HTI focuses on B2B meetings with buyers, leadership gatherings, educational sessions, and social networking, always promoting a personal approach.

<https://hticonference.com/>

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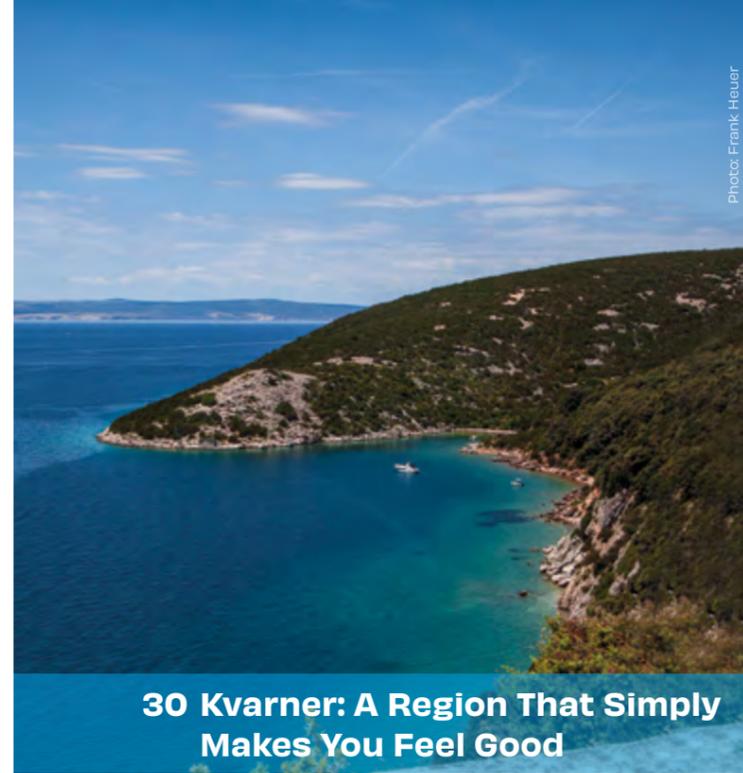
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HEALTH TOURISM EVENTS

Jan. 30 – Feb. 2, 2023:	Dubai Health – Dubai, UAE
February 20 – 22, 2023:	Advantage Healthcare India (AHCI) – New Delhi, India
February 23 – 25, 2023:	Hestourex Congress & Exhibition – Antalya, Türkiye
March 7 – 9, 2023:	ITB – Berlin, Germany
March 9 – 11, 2023:	AMTEX – Oran, Algeria
April 5 – 8, 2023:	EMITT – Istanbul, Türkiye
May 4 – 5, 2023:	1 st Health Travel International Conference – Edipsos, Greece
May 8 – 10, 2023:	IMTEC – Muscat, Oman
May 24 – 27, 2023:	B2B Medical Encounters – Milan, Italy
October 4 – 6, 2023:	SPA-CE B2B Tradeshow – Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic
October 4 – 6, 2023:	European Spas Congress – Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic
October 5, 2023:	ESPA Innovation Awards Gala – Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic
October 20 – 22, 2023:	African Medical Tourism Congress – Tunis, Tunisia
October (TBC):	CIHT Conference – Crikvenica, Croatia
November 9, 2023:	International Congress on Thermal Tourism – Nancy, France
November 16 – 17, 2023:	EMT European Medical Tourism Congress – Chianciano Terme, Italy
November (TBC):	International Health Congress of Islamic Countries – Teheran, Iran

More events and information:

<https://hticonference.com/health-tourism-events-calendar/>



ESPA
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RELAXING AND HEALING BY NATURE

European Spas Association

Promoting balneology, spa medicine, wellbeing and a healthy lifestyle in Europe as a curative and preventive approach using natural remedies and education.

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Join us
at the

27th Annual ESPA Congress & B2B SPA-CE Workshop

4 – 6 October 2023, Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

HEALTH – QUALITY – INNOVATION

ESPA Congress

Promoting the exchange of experiences, best practices and know-how

ESPA Innovation Award

Promoting excellence and innovation in the spa business

E-library of Balneology

Exclusively dedicated to evidence-based medical studies

EuropeanSpas Certification Boosting

International transparency and fairness in competition

The European Spas Association was founded in 1995 in Brussels as an umbrella spa industry organisation representing 20 European countries with natural remedies.

Find out more about ESPA
Scan the QR code





European HTI Summit

HEALTH AS A NEW CURRENCY?

Hosted by Member of the European Parliament István Ujhelyi, the 6th Edition of the European Health Tourism Industry Summit took place in the European Parliament in Brussels on Dec. 8th 2022. Over 50 high-level industry experts from 21 countries showcased how health tourism is driving the post-covid era.

Author: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine, Photos: HTI Archive

The by-invitation-only B2G and B2B event gathered representatives of the European Parliament and leading experts of both private and public sectors from the medical, thermal, and wellness tourism sectors, including medical service providers, travel agencies, facilitators, and other stakeholders. The schedule allowed room for networking and discussing challenges and opportunities in building up destinations of health in addition to the informative presentations.

The speakers emphasized the unique opportunities for health tourism, even more so in the post-covid period, and the importance of national and international collaboration between key institutions, experts in health tourism, and tourism destinations. The pandemic has boosted the transformation of tourism into a sustainable concept focused on better quality of life. With its natural resources, thermal heritage, and advanced medical care, Europe offers a wide range of

health tourism services geared to European guests and patients, but also to global travelers. Applying the cross-border directive helps European citizens benefit from health-related products, reduces inequalities in access to healthcare, and empowers cooperation among EU countries.

The conference was moderated by host member of the European Parliament (EP), **István Ujhelyi**, Vice President of the Transport and Tourism Committee, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, Member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, and Special Ambassador of the UNWTO. Together with the members of the attending European Parliament (MEP), he welcomed the guests.

PROGRAM

The official program presented greetings and speeches by **Jan Fluxa**, Deputy Minister of Regional Development of the Czech Republic, the EP's presiding country, and **Julia Simpson**, President and CEO of the World Travel, and the Tourism Council (WTTC).

Alessandra Priante, Director for Europe of the Worlds Travel Organization (UNWTO) and **Eduardo Santander**, Director of the European Travel Commission (ETC), assured their further support for HTI's activities via video messages as they couldn't attend in person.

MEP's **Jordi Solé** from Spain and **Elena Kountoura** from Greece, who represent the values and development of health tourism in the EP, provided insights into health tourism and the development of health tourism. **Thomas Segretain**, Policy Officer of the European Commission, discussed ways for co-implementing the transition path for tourism.

Indian's health tourism development plans were presented remotely by **Lav Agarwal**, State Secretary in the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare of the Republic of India. He highlighted the importance of the connection between preventive and curative health tourism in India and the initiative to bundle the activities of India and European countries in the field of health tourism and development of same.

David Boucher, Chief Partnership Officer at the Bumrungrad International Hospital of Bangkok, shared information about the activities of one of the leading hospitals in Thailand.

Before proceeding to the networking session, the program was concluded by greetings from **Ivana Kolar**, organizer of the summit and partner in the organization of the summit, **Csilla Mezösi**, Secretary-General of the European Spas Association (ESPA), and **Simone Zagrođnik**, Executive Director of the European Heritage Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA).

HTI AND SUMMIT PARTNERS

For many years, HTI events have gathered organizations and delegates from more than fifty countries, high-level public officials and professionals in health, medical, spa, and wellness tourism. Once again, leaders of the European partners of HTI hosted leadership networking sessions for organizations such as the European Spas Association (ESPA), European Historical Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA), European Association of Private Hospitals (UEHP), and other prominent organizations. The HTI Summit was held in person again for the first time in two years. However, it is important to note that the 2021 online edition successfully brought together stakeholders devoted to reinforcing the development of Europe as a health destination and showcasing great examples of health tourism destinations.

The event was supported by ESPA as an organizational partner, the Croatian National Tourism Board as an event partner, Croatian Airlines as an official airline partner, the Foundation of Healthcare and Wellness Promotion, and India as the official EHTI Summit networking partner, since it was hosted by MEP **István Ujhelyi**.



ESPA CONGRESS IN SLOVAKIA

The 26th Congress of the European Spas Association took place in the Slovakian spa town of Piešťany September 21 - 23, 2023. For the second time, the SPA-CE Spa & Wellness Workshop was an integral part of the congress, as was also the 100th anniversary celebration of the Slovak and Czech Republic's Spa Association. The ESPA INNOVATION AWARD 2022, one of the most prestigious awards in the health & spa industry, was given to winners in eight categories.

Author: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine



Innovation Award in the Thermia Palace

Attended by 120 participants from 17 European Spa member countries and five overseas countries representatives, the ESPA Congress highlighted the importance of the European Spas Association for sharing knowledge and fostering expertise. This was also shown by the attendance of high level guests such as the Deputy Minister of Health of the Czech Republic and the Minister of Transport and Construction of Slovakia. In the wake of the COVID crisis, European natural health spas now play an integral role in post-COVID rehabilitation and contribute to improved health and the prevention of diseases.

Hosted by Slovakia Travel, the event provided a wide range of expert lectures, roundtable discussions, presentations of best practices, as well as a guided tour to the main attractions of the Island Piestany Ensana Health Spas, one of the largest European medical spa centers of its kind. A workshop for mayors of European Spas member countries, such as Germany, The Netherlands, Iceland, and also from Slovakian and Czech spa destinations, rounded off the program.

The congress kicked off with the **celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Slovak and Czech Republic's Spa Association**, after which the expert part of

the program focused on two topics: perspectives of medical spa programs in the European health care systems (medical results from European Spa members) and child health, prevention and after-care treatment for cancer, robotics in rehabilitation, long-COVID treatments, and spa medicine - new offers for health-oriented travelers and a new generation of patients. Keynote speaker F. Linser talked about transformation in health tourism products, and Laura Powell explained how to break through perceptions and stereotypes, especially with regard to the North American market. The presentations showcased the integral role of European wellness and balneotherapy offers in preserving good health and in sharing the perspectives of travel agencies. President of ESPA Thierry Dubois pointed out the growing demand for mental health care and how the congress can contribute to this trend.

The event also included the annual SPA-CE Experience with SPA-CE, a boutique Spa & Wellness Workshop, which has become an esteemed business platform for conducting personal meetings among European thermal spa resorts and tourist agencies specialized in spa-and-health travel. The workshop was attended by 16 providers



Thierry Dubois (President ESPA)

from 7 countries who convened with 19 hosted buyers representing agencies from nine countries. Nearly 200 meetings took place during the event.

The next edition of ESPA Congress and SPA-CE will take place in the renowned Czech health and spa destination, Karlovy Vary, October 4 - 6, 2023.

"Spas are among the most attractive tourism products in Slovakia. Therefore, we are very proud that Slovakia was chosen to host the 26th Congress of ESPA in the Spa of Piešťany, Ensana. The ESPA Congress ranks among the top events dedicated to the topic of medical spas. It is an excellent opportunity to establish personal business contacts with representatives of spas, spa and wellness centers from Central Europe, and buyers from the priority target markets. For us, SLOVAKIA TRAVEL - the national organization for the support of tourism in Slovakia, as the main partner of the event, the spa industry is a priority topic for the development of tourism in Slovakia, the cooperation between Slovakia and ESPA will continue in the future."

Lucia Matvija, Head of the Tourism Department, SLOVAKIA TRAVEL

ESPA Innovation Award

The Slovakian hosts enchanted attendees with a rich cultural program, networking, and superb local cuisine from the Trnava region. One of the highlights was the Gala Event European Spas Innovation award ceremony in the iconic Grand Restaurant of the five-star Thermia Palace. On September 22, the competition announced the winners in 8 categories.

The ESPA Innovation Award competition recognized the best and most innovative ideas and services in the health and spa industry for the eighth year in a row. The goal is to award businesses and individuals who developed new, more effective, and sustainable approaches at spa destinations, hotels, medical centers, and health resorts,

as well as new spa programs, concepts, products, and scientific research.

The President of the Expert Jury, Gunnlaugur K. Jónsson, chaired the evaluation of the projects along with five other members and representatives from medical universities, research centers, tourism business, and design specialists.

Dr. Siyka Katsarova, head of the competition: *"The competition is an indicator of quality and innovation in the European Health & Spa industry. We are proud that the quality of the competition has been improving year on year."*

More information:
www.europeanspas.eu

THE WINNERS:

- Best Spa Destination: Terme Tuhelj Glamping Village, Croatia
- Special Jury Awards: Slovenia Green Wellness Route, Slovenia
- Best Medical Spas: La Roche Posay Thermal Resort "Thermes du Connétable", France
- Special Jury Awards: Savoy Westend Hotel & Medical Clinic, Czech Republic
- Innovative Spa Hotel: Hot Springs Medical & SPA Hotel, Bulgaria
- Special Jury Awards: TISA Spa Resort and Aqua Park, Romania
- Innovative Spa Concept: Balvanyos Resort, Romania
- Special Jury Awards: Terme 3000 - Moravske Toplice, Slovenia
- Health Spa Program: COVID recovery program of the Heilsustofnun Rehabilitation Clinic, Iceland
- Special Jury Awards: Strimon Garden Medical SPA Hotel, Bulgaria
- Spa products: The Eclipse outdoor cabin by Alpha Industries, Belgium
- Special Jury Awards: Darkov Spa, Czech Republic
- Spa Education: Terme Sveti Martin - Healthiness program, Croatia
- Medical Spa - Scientific Research: Institute of Spa and Balneology Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic

Congratulations to all the nominees and winners!

The competition organizers have already opened registration for 2023. You can enter your project by clicking on the following link:
<https://europeanspas.eu/espa-innovation-award/>

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON THERMAL TOURISM

The conference held in Ourense, Galicia at the end of September brought together speakers and delegates from around the world to discuss key aspects of this increasingly important sector. The participants examined three main subjects under the headings of "Tourism", "Heritage", and "Experience", reflecting the breadth of the 'thermal tourism' offer, especially with a view to historic thermal spa towns.

Author: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine



Opening in the Teatro Principal

"The Thermal Congress", as it has become known, was hosted by the Province of Ourense and attracted 277 delegates and speakers from 22 countries. It was intended as a follow up to two previous thermal tourism conferences held in Galicia in 1999 and 2011. EHTTA secured the support and participation of the UNWTO for this event as part of its work package in 2022, as well as sponsorship and hosting from the Province of Ourense and the Xunta de Galicia.



EHTTA GSTE Board in the Provincial Palace

The official opening ceremony, which was accompanied by Galician melodies performed by traditional Galicia pipers in full regional costume, was held at the magnificent theatre in Ourense. The VIP guests gave short presentations introducing their organizations:

Manuel Baltar (President of the European Historic Thermal Towns Association and President of the Ourense Province), **Miguel Mirones** (President of ICTE and the Spanish Spa Association), **Thierry Dubois** (President of the ESPA European Spa Association), **Stefano Dominioni** (Executive Secretary, Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, Council of Europe), **Stefan Szirucsek** (Chairman of the Board, Great Spa Towns of Europe Association represented by **Paul Simons**, (General Secretary), **Prof. Francisco Maraver** (International Society of Medical Hydrology (ISMH)), **Gonzalo Pérez Jácome** (Mayor of Ourense), **Mar de Miguel** (President of the Board of the Affiliate Members of UNWTO) and **Alfonso Rueda** (President of Xunta de Galicia).



Traditional Galicia Pipers

Three panels: Heritage, Tourism, Experience

The Heritage Panel, moderated by **Mario Crecente**, President of the EHTTA Scientific Committee, focused on various initiatives, from the most prominent spa towns represented by Saratoga Springs and the Great Spa Towns of Europe World Heritage Site to the struggle of a group of students to save the Baile Herculane project in Romania.

Paul Simons, Secretary General of the Great Spa Towns of Europe explained the European Spa concept, UNESCO, and the Great Spa Towns of Europe, while **Alane Ball Chinian**, Director of the Saratoga Capital District Region, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation presented strategies for revitalizing the Saratoga Spa State Park. The panel concluded by presenting information about the revival of the Sidi Harazem thermal baths complex, Fez (Morocco) by **Dana Salama**, Architect at the Aziza Chaoui Projects and a case study on the role of cultural heritage for thermal tourism of the Huaqing palace in Xi'an (China) presented by **Feng Jian**, Vice President of the ICOMOS International Conservation Center Xi'an.

The Tourism Panel discussion was held in the courtyard of the Provincial Palace, which will soon be transformed into a thermal spa hotel with its own source of hot Ourense water. During a panel discussion moderated by **Emma González**, Managing Director of INORDE, the panel participants

gave insights into Ourense itself as the Thermal Capital of Galicia (**Armando Olea Bouzo**, Vice Mayor of Ourense), Thermal Destinations in Argentina (**Oscars Suárez**, Director of Markets), Inprotur (Instituto Nacional de Promoción Turística de Argentina) and 150 years of unified existence of Budapest, presented by **Ildikó Szuts** (Hungary), CEO Budapest Spas cPlc.

The final day of the Congress took place at the Expourense exhibition center where the Termatalia thermal exhibition was taking place. **Simone Zagrodnik**, EHTTA Executive Director, moderated the Experience panel. The opening speech on Converting Experiences to Transformations was held by **László Puczkó** (Hungary), Health Tourism Worldwide Life Founder. This was followed by **Marion Vansingle** (France), Project coordinator Thermauvergne, who presented opportunities for better public policies in the area of spas and showcased best practices of innovative thermal offers within the InnovaSPA project. **Javier Soto** (Spain), General Director Caldaria Group and **Boris Bánovský**, Medical Director at the Piestany Spa Slovakia, Ensana Hotels provided insights into their business. The panel concluded with a presentation on Crossing European Cultural Routes by **Nava Castro Domínguez**, Director of Galicia Tourism.

The program ended with "hands-on" workshops with Miguel Gallego, Head of Marketing at the European Travel Commission, Ivana Kolar, European Health Summit Director and others.

Highlights: Glasgow Declaration and the first Thermal Ambassador

EHTTA President, **Manuel Baltar**, signed the Glasgow Declaration, with **Juan Carlos Baena** of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Affiliate Members Department looking on. This is a follow-up to an important Memorandum of Understanding with the UNWTO signed in Madrid. **Alane Ball Chinian**, Director of the Saratoga Capital District Region, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation became the first official Thermal Ambassador for the European Route of Historic Thermal Towns.



Thermal Ambassador Alane Ball Chinian

During the congress, EHTTA took over the Cloister of San Francisco to celebrate World Tourism Day on September 27th. The topic of “Rethinking Tourism” was perfect for the conference with its emphasis on the relatively new topics of “thermal tourism” and sustainability.

Nava Castra from Galicia Tourism, along with other partners, spoke about World Tourism Day and joined in the festivities organized by local entertainers.

Truskavets, Ukraine, was accepted as a new EHTTA member with delegates giving Mayor of Truskavets **Andriy Kulchinsky** a warm welcome during the proceedings in Ourense.

Les Accros du Peignoir is a movement and a lifestyle developed by EHTTA Associate Member, La Route des Villes d'Eaux du Massif Central. EHTTA President and Governor of the Province of Ourense, Manuel Baltar, welcomed the “Bathrobe Addicts” movement to Ourense, at an event at the Termas de Outariz, where bathrobes were of course the new “office-wear”!

EHTTA announces next Congress on Thermal Tourism

The next International Congress on Thermal Tourism will take place in Nancy (France) from 8 – 11 November 2023, and will be linked to the annual ‘French days of Thermalism’.

The host city of Nancy is opening a new thermal complex in spring 2023, after a 120 million Euro program of investment. The long-awaited “Nancy Thermal” in the center of the city of Ducal, also known for the Place Stanislas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, provides the organizers with a good reason to welcome international delegates to a thermal congress. The Nancy metropolitan area, located in the heart of the Grand Est Region, is the most European of France’s regions bordering 4 countries, and is a great choice for the next location for the congress. It is hoped that the Thermal Congress will become an annual event.

“For us, it is very important to keep the positive spirit and continue the discussion started in Ourense this year,” said Manuel Baltar, EHTTA President. “We have demonstrated that this is a subject that is



“Bathrobe Addicts” from Ourense, Emma González and Manuel Baltar with Eric Brut (Route des Villes d'Eaux du Massif Central)

becoming increasingly important to wellness and health tourists, and as a sector, we need to be ready to welcome them. Sharing best practices, discussing new trends, and improving our offer is essential if our historic thermal towns are to compete with purpose-built destinations. We know that we have a very attractive and unique combination of wellness, heritage, landscape, gastronomy and architecture in our towns, but we cannot be complacent, so meeting together as a sector more regularly is going to be very important as we move into an era of mindful post-pandemic, environmentally sustainable travel”.

The European Historic Thermal Towns Association is an Affiliate Member of UNWTO and is the only Cultural Route of the Council of Europe associated with UNWTO.

More information:
<https://thethermalcongress.com>

“THERMAL TRAVELS” – EHTTA'S MARKETING CAMPAIGN WITH VISITEUROPE

The European Historic Thermal Towns Association, which is certified as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, ran an awareness-raising campaign in co-operation with the European Travel Commission this summer. The campaign targeted the public in the German-speaking European markets and on the North American East Coast.

The story of the contribution of historic thermal towns to Europe’s shared history and memory is one that has its roots in Roman times and even earlier, when people travelled long distances to benefit from healing springs. The cultures, traditions, and societies of these towns changed over the centuries and have become part of our way of life in Europe today. They offered the

first health services and charitable services, were the first tourism destinations, drove and promoted innovation and creativity, and developed a centuries-old and unrivalled tradition of hospitality.

Today, spa towns are sought-after as places of peace and calm, with green spaces and fresh air - perfect for post-COVID travelers. Slow food and local gastronomic treats contribute to a relaxed pace of life, surrounded by elegant architecture, groomed parks, and vast forests covering the rolling hills which surround the towns.

“Arriving in one of our historic thermal spa towns, perhaps by train, to immerse yourself in the spa culture of Europe is the perfect way to start your “thermal travels”

and to follow in the footsteps of famous visitors from the past. Whether you are seeking relaxation and wellness or have come to witness world-class cultural or sporting events, you will not be disappointed!” says Simone Zagrodnik, Executive Director of the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA). Or as the campaign points out: “After a relaxing treatment at the spa, take a cable car to the top of the mountain to enjoy the view at sunset or meander through quaint shopping streets, before enjoying a concert or even a game of chance in the casino. Thermal travel in Europe combines a unique mix of heritage, culture, wellness, architecture, and landscape. We invite you to relax – in your bathrobe of course – and enjoy our unique way of life!”

The graphic includes logos for The European Route of Historic Thermal Towns, Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, and the Council of Europe. The text reads: "Immerse yourself in the spa culture of Europe" and "#ThermalTravels Discover more at thermaltravels.com". Logos for Europe and VisitEurope.com are also present.

EXPENSIVE ENERGY:

ECONOMIC DISASTER, DRIVER OF CHANGE, OR BOTH?

The sharp rise in energy costs poses enormous challenges for the tourism industry: Providers need to prepare for difficult times and develop strategies to adapt to the changing conditions, with an emphasis on the short term rather than the medium term.

Author: Prof. Dr. Georg Christian Steckenbauer, Dean of the European Campus and Professor of Economy in Tourism Management, Deggendorf Institute of Technology, Germany



Photo: Prof. Dr. Georg Christian Steckenbauer

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These new conditions are having a direct impact on the health and wellness sector where spas with high energy consumption face an uncertain future. Will they be able to continue to offer pools, saunas, steam baths, and comfortable room temperatures? Not only are these considered essential components of classic indoor wellness, they are also an important extra that many hotels offer their guests and are crucial for businesses in the health tourism industry.

A snapshot from the industry

A survey of the wellnesshotel.info platform (Thematica GmbH, 2022) of a small group of 76 establishments in German-speaking countries provides some indications: Two thirds of the establishments are relying on technical optimization in the area of energy and one third has reduced room temperatures or shortened their opening hours. As many as 17% are considering decreases in water temperature.

Even if the results are not representative of the whole industry, we should take the indications seriously: Many businesses do not consider technical optimizations alone to be sufficient and assume that measures negatively affecting the quality of their products and services with noticeable effects for guests will ultimately be unavoidable.

Nevertheless: Across the media, we currently find reports of saunas and spas closing (Municipal, 2022). The effects this will have on customer satisfaction, and thus on numbers of visitors, remains to be seen and naturally depends on the products and services offered. In the field of health and wellness tourism, where spa areas are usually the “backbone” of the offers, such drastic measures will inevitably lead to massive drops in customer satisfaction.

Technical and organizational measures

According to a survey conducted by DEHOGA in September 2022, energy costs as a percentage of sales are 15% or more for about one-fifth (20.1%) of businesses in the hospitality industry, and more than 20% for one in eleven (9.2%) (Food Service, 2022).

On its website www.energiekampagne-gastgewerbe.de DEHOGA provides businesses with extensive information, materials, and checklists showing potential energy-saving measures that businesses can take and provides them with support in implementation (DEHOGA, 2022). This includes spa areas, where technical measures (insulation, heat recovery) and structural measures can help achieve cost savings. However, organizational changes involving the guests and the entire team are also important steps that can be taken immediately.

Technology + organization + product development as a formula for dealing with skyrocketing costs

All in all, realignment will probably have to take place in many areas – this may also include innovations that are not related to the current energy price crisis: There will be no way around all the technical measures to reduce consumption and increase efficiency that are feasible and make sense economically. A technical evaluation and analysis of economic feasibility should be performed beforehand. All these measures aimed at bringing technical equipment up to the current state of the art and help save energy will be needed



in any case, to assure a responsible use of resources. The current explosion in energy prices particularly impacts the issue of the economic viability of technical renovations: Measures that did not seem pressing economically while energy prices were low have suddenly become urgently necessary. This has prompted businesses to reassess their priorities.

Organizational measures, such as shorter opening hours, closing parts of the premises, services, or individual facilities, can be effective in decreasing energy consumption and costs in the short term. However, these measures are risky, as they directly impact customer satisfaction. In the worst case, they may trigger a negative development that Grönroos (2016) refers to as the “strategic management trap”: Savings that have a direct impact on the quality of service perceived by the customer lead to dissatisfied customers and employees, damage the company’s image and cause further declines in sales – in an intensifying downward spiral. Organizational measures – closures, cuts in services, reductions of quality – must

therefore be examined very critically before they are implemented. It is important to check whether they will have a detrimental effect on the customer experience and how they will be perceived.

Accompanying communication explaining the reasons doubtlessly is another key component. Incentives for customers to save resources and energy may lead to a corresponding change in behavior. Such measures from the field of behavioral economics are called “nudges.” “Nudging” as a method of influencing behavior without prohibitions was already proposed over a decade ago by Thaler and Sunstein (2008) as a way to promote socially desirable behavior in very different domains. The effectiveness of this strategy in reducing household energy consumption was investigated in a study published by Ruokamo et al. (2022): The study used households in Finland as an example to investigate whether “typical” methods of nudging, such as

communication and visualization of energy consumption in combination with energy saving tips and benchmarking with other consumers, positively influence their usage behavior. The results showed savings of around 10% and were thus very promising.

Nudges are a suitable method to promote sustainable behavior among guests (cf. Dolnicar 2020). However, this requires the development of a strategy adapted to the business and the general situation. These approaches are worth pursuing further: changing customer behavior toward more

responsible and economical use of energy is also a prerequisite for the success of other measures and must therefore be a fixed component of a bundle of measures at the operational level. If the guest is not actively involved, there may well be a risk that savings measures will be cancelled out by increased consumption. Or, to the point: Only if the guest is involved and feels responsible for saving energy will operational measures be successful and, above all, accepted by the guest. Strategies adapted to the businesses and the actual conditions must therefore be developed in order to

actively involve the customer and positively influence their behavior.

Development of new health tourism offers and products that rely less on energy-intensive hardware and, instead, increasingly incorporate outdoor and nature-based elements also offers significant potential.

In summary, skyrocketing energy prices have put enormous pressure on the tourism industry, forcing it to take action. In order to achieve savings of a relevant magnitude, most businesses will need to adopt a combination of technical and organizational measures. These must be well-considered and carefully planned and communicated to the customer so as not to risk unjustifiable losses in the perceived product quality and thus permanently damage the company’s image. Approaches to changing customer behavior may also be valuable, as may also the development of alternative offerings that are less energy-intensive.

Above all, it will be important to tackle these problems quickly, without further delay, and to view the changed general situation as a driver of the – urgently needed – transformation of the (health) tourism industry towards more sustainability, thriftiness, and resource conservation.

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NINE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC

As the ports are now opening up to travel and much so to health travelers and wellness seekers, we should look deeper and come up with lessons learned so that we can feel our way to the future of wellness tourism.

Author: Sherif Hassan, MD, International Healthcare Consultant, the USA

Looking back over the past few years it's delightful to realize that tourism is prospering and that its proven resilience has been tested and proven by tough economic crises, terrorism, regional conflicts and, since 2019, a global pandemic. Time and again, travel has bounced back and was even more successful than before. This also applies to wellness tourism. However, there are new trends that must be taken account of, as our past struggles and knowledge have taught us:

I. THE HYBRID MODEL WILL BE MORE PREVALENT:

Instead of wellness tourists visiting a wellness resort, the wellness practitioners and experts will travel to attend to their clients in their home country. Or they will meet with them at another destination where they can utilize the assets and the unique resources of that third party location or country.

2. TRAVELERS WILL HAVE DIVERGENT NEEDS:

While most people hope to depart from a wellness vacation more relaxed and rejuvenated than when they first arrived, that's often where the commonalities in wellness travel end.

For example, if a traveler is looking for a spiritual reboot, they may consider visiting a holy place or a temple where they can receive blessings and pray or wish for the best, good health, and forgiveness. Forest bathing and mountain trekking resorts have modified their activities based on the traveler's goals, capabilities, and preferences.

Programs for special events are available with destress wellness stays after the loss of a loved one, a breakup, or even political events. It is interesting to know that a resort in Aruba was the first to offer Election Disconnection stays, providing guests with wellness experiences to escape the election whirlwind of 2020.

Some getaways are even geared to defined groups as women's health retreats for help with infertility, PMS, and menopausal issues, as well as a cleanse retreat, complete with acupuncture sessions, detox, and a personalized health plan.

With technology development and remote work in addition to changes in border control and visa systems, we now have digital nomads. Although they are not really your typical health tourists and are still of a younger-than-average age, they have own healthcare needs that are different from the typical health tourist and must be catered to.

3. MORE CONCRETE FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE APPROACH:

It is notable that, as we dig deeper into disease processes, new understandings are evolving. We are now witnessing more and more new therapeutic modalities like grounding or earthing. There is a growing

awareness of physical therapy and exercises and how treatment can enhance regeneration, preservation, and recovery of the brain and nerve cells in addition to resetting the mind.

There will be a need to deploy evidence-based approaches to regulatory measures for endorsing treatment protocols and certifying facilities, providers, and coaches.

4. DIGITAL HEALTH:

Technology in medicine with the proliferation of apps and medical devices will play a special role in facilitating patient education and remote monitoring.

Consumer care through telehealth and client care via virtual reality will become evermore prevalent, as will also simulated patient guidance and administration of therapy sessions, especially those involving neurological disorders and mental health.

5. OPTIMIZING THE MICROBIOME:

New frontiers in medical research have shown us that the microbiome is the major contributor to our immunity. An impaired gut microbiome is virtually linked to multi-various and seemingly disconnected diseases. The blend varies between heart disease, neurological disorders, allergies, respiratory disease, and even mental disorders. There will be greater role for treatments based on changing the landscape of the gut microbiome, which in turn could lead to disease reversal and prevention.

6. ESOTERIC TESTING AND A PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH:

Whilst management of acute medical disorders remains the main focus of healthcare, attention to wellness and prevention is

lagging behind. Esoteric testing allows the analysis of rare substances or molecules that is not performed during a regular office visit or in routine clinical lab testing. This type of testing is the cornerstone to wellness. However, as technology continues to expand laboratory testing, tests that are considered "esoteric" today may become routine in a few years. As mainstream medicine matures, we will witness increased use of these types of tests, especially in the area of wellness.

7. SELF-CARE:

That is the greatest educated consumer lesson learned from the pandemic. There is so much that can be achieved by the cooperative, wellness-literate, and actively participating consumer, and that would translate to better outcomes.

8. THE HIDDEN ADVANTAGE:

Small players in wellness tourism might have an advantage over the large brands. The shift toward niche and tailor-made wellness travel offers a competitive advantage to smaller players in the wellness space. Larger hotel groups and hospitality companies may have a hard time adapting to accommodate niche offerings, due to their hierarchy and the time it can take to implement the changes and the need to appeal to a broader audience.

9. DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

Wellness resorts will probably look into more creative measures in utilizing their resources, for example, by having different themes in their residence, such as a luxury contemporary accommodation, a spiritual part, a mountainous hideaway, and a fourth section with wilderness-style camping. There will be a greater inclination to decentralized wellness facilities with the

establishment of urban bathhouses and municipal wellness playgrounds. Wellness hotels and resort partnerships with a local wellness establishment would be a smart way to help visitors feel connected to the local environment and not have what is described as a commercialized generic experience.

TAKE-HOME POINTS:

Looking ahead, enhancing wellness tourism's future will depend on these five pillars:

1. Understanding changing consumer behaviors and new industry segments towards wellness. These will impact the development and promotion of tourism destinations, market products, and program development, as the quest for wellness will only continue to grow across all demographic and psychographic groups.
2. Building sustainability as the core for wellness tourism advancement.
3. Preparing for the direction changes in the wellness travel segment and the appearance of new outbound markets. At the same time, never forgetting about the new wellness hotspots, which will continue to flourish in the wellness travel segment going forward.
4. Technological advances and how they will accelerate the way wellness is perceived and delivered across sectors.
5. Destinations are building back better and smarter, and we should exploit the immense potential posed by emerging economies in the coming decades.

BEAUTIFUL WELLNESS DAYS IN BADENWEILER GERMANY

Located on the sunny side of the southern Black Forest in the heart of the Markgräflerland, Badenweiler offers soothing thermal waters, wellness, a mild healing climate, regional Baden cuisine, the nearby Alsace region and the idyllic vineyards of the Markgräflerland.

Advertorial: Badenweiler Tourism, Germany

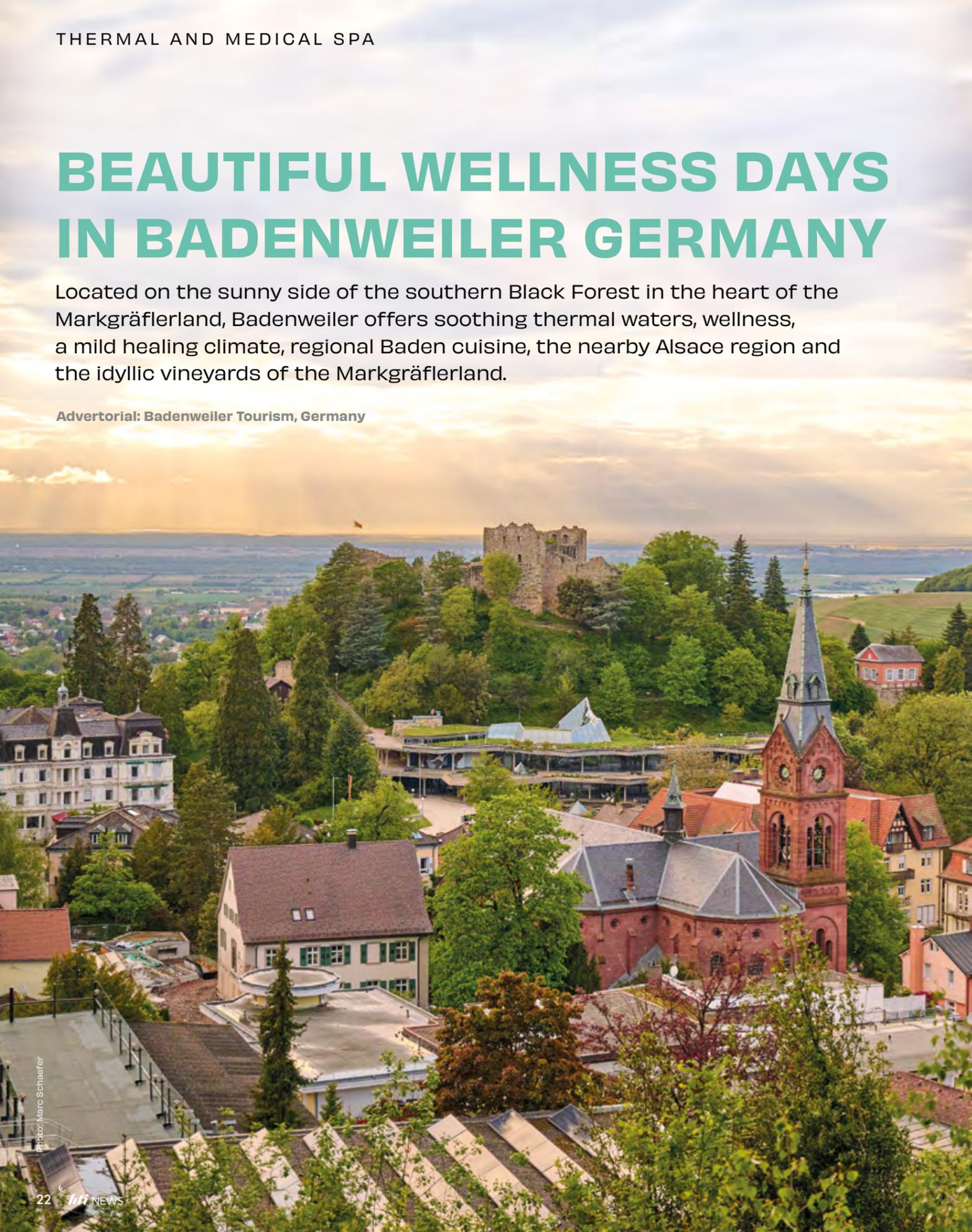


Photo: Marco Schaefer

Enjoy sheer delight in Badenweiler! Always a memorable experience: Hiking and cycling through blooming nature, a walk on the panoramic paths around Badenweiler or through the spa gardens with magnificent scenic overlooks at the Vosges View and the Badenweiler Castle. Or you can visit one of the many nearby wineries or simply lean back and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere. If you are seeking relaxation, Badenweiler is the perfect choice! For example, take a siesta under the venerable redwood trees in the spa park!



Photo: Daniel Sommerhalter

BOTANICAL AND CULTURAL TREASURES IN THE BADENWEILER KURPARK

While Badenweiler's spa park, the Kurpark, is known for its rich diversity of tree species, it also offers numerous cultural treasures. For example, the Roman bath ruins, one of the largest and most important thermal ruins north of the Alps. Not far from the spa park, slightly below and next to the Sportbad, you will find the Park of the Senses. There, 21 exhibits invite you to embark on a sensory journey and rediscover your senses of touch, sight, perception, smell and balance.

'GESUNDHEITSOASE' BADENWEILER

A health oasis with a long health spa tradition. Spa treatments, modern therapies, treatments from the Far East, wellness – some of the numerous options for revitalized health and enhanced well-being. Sometimes, just a few days in nature may be sufficient to regain strength and vitality. At the Badenweiler spa resort, you will find a wide range of options for giving your mind and body a boost. You will be supported by highly qualified doctors, therapists and specialists. Badenweiler's history as a thermal spa resort began in the Roman times. The thermal water with its beneficial health effects was already discovered back then, giving the spa town a very long tradition. One that we continue to honor and develop today.

IMMERSION IN THE CASSIOPEIA THERMAL SPA

The Cassiopeia Thermal Spa with a bathing area covering 1000 square meters, saunas with a view of the spa gardens, a Roman-Irish bath and a wellness oasis offering health and wellness treatments from the Orient and Occident is the crown jewel of Badenweiler. It is fed with natural thermal water from the Badenweiler Roman Spring. The water collects valuable minerals on its long journey to the artesian spring in Badenweiler. A bath in the warm water is soothing and relaxing and can alleviate back pain, joint pain, stress and fatigue symptoms.

ART AND CULTURE

Badenweiler is also known for its art and cultural events. This is readily apparent when looking at the list of renowned authors, artists and aesthetes who have stayed in Badenweiler. Anton P. Chekhov, Stephen Crane, Emil Bizer, René Schickele, Annette Kolb and Hermann Hesse appreciated the tranquility and the exposed location as motivation for their creative work. Badenweiler is committed to this tradition. The famous Badenweiler Literature Days, organized by the



Photo: Christoph Nertz.jpg

renowned local philosopher and writer, Rüdiger Safranski, to take place from October 5 to 8 in 2023, are just one example

GUEST SERVICE

The free Badenweiler KONUS Guest Card allows you to travel free of charge by bus and train everywhere in the region from Basel to Karlsruhe and in the Black Forest (except on IC/ICE/ trains and mountain cable cars and cog railways). This way, you can simply hop on the bus in Badenweiler or leave your car at the train station in Müllheim and take the train to go shopping in Freiburg, or to the museum city of Basel.

Tip:

Subscribe to www.badenweiler-tourismus.de, our monthly newsletter with the latest offers, special deals and information.

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SPA THERAPY & COVID-19 ON THE EUROPEAN MARKET

A study and evaluation of best practices in European medical spas.

Author: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine

There are around 17 million individuals across the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region who suffered from the long-COVID syndrome in the first two years of the pandemic, with a duration of symptoms of at least three months in 2020 and 2021. Women are twice as likely to develop the syndrome (IHME, 2022). The study offers a first overview of the current promising outcomes of post-COVID and long-COVID treatment at European health resorts, providing a basis for further in-depth evaluation.

STRUCTURE

The study, which was initiated by Interreg InnovaSPA in 2022 in collaboration with the European Spa Association as an implementing partner, was divided into three phases: Firstly, health providers were asked about their post-COVID programs. The second phase of the study consisted of quantitative and qualitative research. A survey was given to selected players in the European thermal spa sector in order to assess post-COVID treatment and evaluate best practices concerning "SPA THERAPY & COVID". In addition, the feedback from customers who had tested these offers was analyzed. Finally, interviews were conducted with a selection of eight European countries that are active in the thermal spa market: France, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Romania.

KEY SYMPTOMS

Patients who suffer longer than usual from an SARS-CoV-2 virus infection report a wide range of health impairments. According to the World Health Organization, this condition occurs independently of prior hospitalization. As reported by providers, patients, and interview partners during the study, the dominant symptoms are: fatigue, pain, tiredness, headache, asthenia, dyspnea, loss of sense of smell, respiratory problems, musculoskeletal problems, neurological problems, cardiovascular problems, psychological issues such as mental health problems, and sleep disorders.

In detail, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate a variety of symptoms associated with COVID-19: fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, joint and chest pain, brain fog, depression, muscle pain, headache, fever, heart palpitations, inflammation of the heart muscle, abnormal lung function, severe kidney injury, rash, hair loss, smell and taste disorders, sleep issues, memory and concentration difficulties, anxiety, and mood changes. These symptoms are most likely caused by a reduced or absent response from the immune system, relapse or reinfection with the virus, inflammation or a reaction from the immune system, deconditioning or post-traumatic stress (CDC, 2022).

PROGRAMS

According to the study 54% of the programs had a duration of one to two weeks and 33% of three weeks. Patients who stayed longer did so because their condition improved only gradually, and financed the additional treatments out of pocket. Providers reported that more than two-thirds of the patients sought treatment four to 12 weeks after infection and 30% more than 12 months after infection.

50% of the patients paid the costs of the treatments themselves. Several patients came from primary or secondary care hospitals. In more than half of the countries surveyed, financial support was available for post-COVID patients in medical spas. In some countries, medical spas not only focus on classic balneological therapeutic entities, but also provide medical rehabilitation programs. The majority of patients belonged to middle and older age groups (45-74 years), but there was a limited number of younger patients. This was in correlation with the answers received from the providers: 86% of patients were 41-60 years old and 12% older than 60 years.

Based on the providers' feedback, the most effective therapies in post-COVID treatment were: local healing waters (natural mineral and thermal waters), bioclimatic conditions

(sea or mountain climate), pelotherapy, peloid therapy, physical therapy, CO₂ gas/mofette treatment and psychotherapy. Patients especially valued inhalation/aerosol therapy, physical therapy, methods of physical medicine, natural healing waters (external or internal use), climate-therapy, natural healing peloid (fango-mud peloids), and psychotherapy. Some of the interview partners added as key programs: psychotherapy, physical medicine, group activities, exercises (dry or wet activities), oxygen therapy, inhalations (aerosol-therapy), salt (healing) cave, and mofette (just in Romania).

STUDY RESULTS

There are differences in financing between programs, which affects the number of patients. In some countries, spas seem to play a major role in medical rehabilitation within their national social security systems. The national health insurance systems predominantly finance the treatment of patients who are sent to medical spas for a medical indication. Often, more generic, not well

specified programs had been integrated into existing structures of health care provision to obtain quick and successful market access.

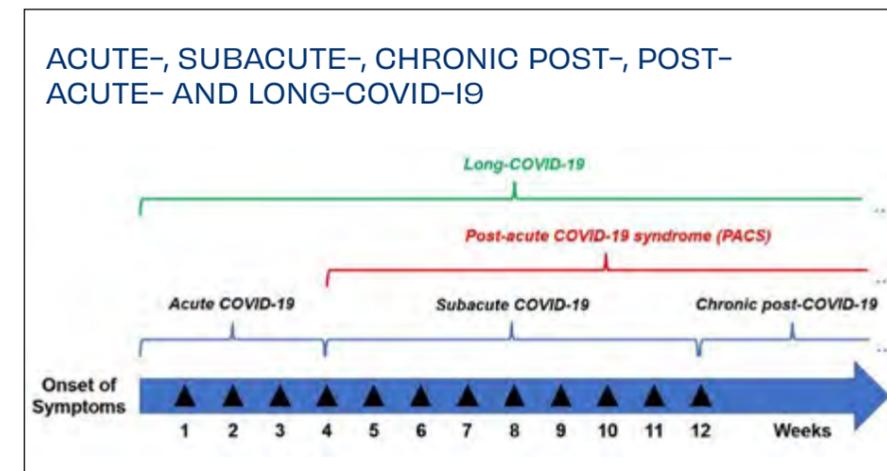
It turned out that facilities which provide services within the respective national health service typically get patients "transferred" by means of a gate keeper organization (e.g. a long-COVID center) or service (e.g. practitioners or clinics). In contrast, clients paying for programs out of their own pocket may have gone through some sort of treatment provided by the national health care system before and suffered from more subtle, yet subjectively unacceptable symptoms.

Since natural resources differ widely between spas, post-COVID programs are based on different protocols and apply the environmental conditions and specificities of the respective country. The most effective therapies are related directly to the dominant symptoms of the patients treated in a medical spa facility:

- Inhalation (aerosol therapy) – e.g.: Czech Republic and Slovakia,
- Physical therapy – e.g.: Latvia, Luxembourg, France, Slovenia, Slovakia
- Other forms of physical medicine – e.g.: Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia.
- Psychological interventions to foster self confidence
- Social interaction (therapeutic modules offered as "group therapy").

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Communicate the holistic health approach of thermal spa resorts in Europe based on their natural healing therapies/environments, emphasizing the quality of their competent medical staff and the specifics of spa treatment: "social disintegration", personalization of treatment, absence of iatrogenesis, potentially long-term treatment, and economic benefits for patients, payers, and society.
- Continue lobbying to national health authorities/health insurance providers for better recognition and co-financing of thermal spa therapies for post-COVID rehabilitation and long COVID treatment. Increase awareness of the programs among patients and practitioners.
- Scientifically evaluate the interest in thermal treatment of long COVID and identify a profile of target groups. Set up a working group of the thermal spas involved in the provision of these services to encourage exchange, feedback, and improvement.
- Develop personalized, tailor-made, multi-dimensional programs to treat the mental physical, social conditions of patients.



Graphics: Szekanez – Vályi-Nagy (2021)

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HOW TO BUILD A MEDICAL TOURISM DESTINATION

Ever more countries and regions are looking for ways to enter the lucrative market of health and medical tourism. What are the crucial, but often neglected, aspects and key considerations for success?

Author: Christian El-Khoury, Head of Consulting, MESIC International Patient Service GmbH, Germany



Photo: Christian El-Khoury

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Not only a benefit to healthcare practitioners, the carry-over to other industries can entail a considerable economic boost for all participants. While the provision of quality healthcare services certainly plays an important role in attracting travelers for health and medical purposes, it is by no means enough. Without a general understanding of the industry, its stakeholders, and an adequately sized approach, it will be difficult to establish an actual medical tourism destination.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL TOURISM

While health and medical tourism as a business have been garnering a lot of attention in recent years, they are by no means a new phenomenon. Europe has a rich history of spa towns, which reaches back hundreds of years and still provides a main source of income for many towns and cities. Mentioning this serves a greater goal than reminiscing on the good old times, as we can learn a lot from what has been done in the past. Even then, spa towns combined general health-promoting features with medical applications. Today as well, we are witnessing stakeholders shifting more towards health tourism than focusing solely on medical tourism. Health tourism includes several different segments, such as medical tourism or wellness tourism. Medical tourism specifically refers to diagnostics, treatments or protocols, initiated and supervised by a medical professional, in most cases doctors. In the following

article, we will explore the benefits of establishing a medical tourism destination, the value of backing it with a strategy and how these evaluations influence your budgeting, planning, and daily operations, independently of your position in the industry. The same applies to wellness destinations and other health tourism segments, which may perhaps not always be specifically mentioned in the following for the sake of better readability.

"A PLACE TO WHICH ONE IS JOURNEYING"

As defined by Merriam-Webster, a destination is "a place to which one is journeying [...]". And a place is what we have to focus on. Not a specific country or city, but rather any place as opposed to any specific medical provider. Few hospitals can attract patients from abroad by themselves and without being part of a destination that actively drives this industry forward. These hospitals usually have a strong Unique Selling Proposition (USP) and are global leaders, be it through the use of new and innovative technologies, many years of experience with certain diseases or a historically well-maintained reputation. Since most medical and health providers do not



Photo: iStock.com/AndreyPopov

have such a strong USP, they cannot be the target of the journeying, but instead are part of a place, an infrastructure, which, through the combined strength and efforts of all the participants, can compete on a global scale. These infrastructures don't build themselves; it is up to the stakeholders to create them. The first step in doing so is to understand who these stakeholders are and what their role is.

THE STAKEHOLDERS OF MEDICAL TOURISM

Hospitals and doctors are stakeholders in medical tourism. They actively participate in the industry by providing their services to patients from abroad and often establish new services or offers specifically for them. They are also the most obvious beneficiaries of medical tourism, since their work is at the core of medical travelers' decision to journey. This also includes rehabilitation providers and smaller clinics.

Next on the list of stakeholders are other health providers, pharmacies, wellness hotels, spa facilities, nursing services, and

medical transportation services such as air ambulance services. They all benefit from the carry-over that medical tourism has to their respective industries. For example, patients get treated at a hospital nearby and purchase the medications on their prescription at a local pharmacy. Should patients require assistance in moving between medical providers, medical transportation services come into play, and if they need to move larger distances while under medical supervision, air ambulance services are the right provider.

Where there are tourists of any kind, traditional tourism stakeholders such as hotels, gastronomy businesses, and transportation services will be required. However, their service portfolio might have to be adapted, since the needs of medical tourists are different from traditional travelers. Especially hotels have played a significant role in benefitting, supporting, and promoting medical tourism destinations by expanding their services to cater more towards the needs of patients.

Other relevant stakeholders are tourism authorities, state-owned regional marketing offices, other public authorities, and education providers. Destination marketing offices play one of the most important roles in promoting medical tourism destinations: Besides allowing access to certain structures that they are familiar with and providing budgets, they are one of the few stakeholders that can lend a greater sense of legitimacy.

Medical Tourism Facilitators: Playing a crucial role in medical tourism, they are among the core stakeholders of the industry. As expressed by the term, their function is always to facilitate between hospitals and patients. Ideally, the facilitation extends to screening for adequate providers, help with communication, troubleshooting, patient protection, and follow-up assistance. However, they are also the key to one of the grave pitfalls the industry has, which is the inherent conflict of interest (COI) that exists in the industry.

International Patients: They are at the core of all active stakeholders' market-related activities. They are the customer, courted by healthcare providers, destinations, and facilitators. At the same time, they are the most vulnerable participants, not only due to the nature of medical procedures in general, but also due to the fact that they are in a different country, jurisdiction, and culture.

Domestic Patients: More often than not completely ignored, they are probably the most relevant stakeholder. Notable exceptions aside, domestic patients usually make up the large majority of internationally successful medical providers. Solely focusing on the influx of international patients is usually not a sustainable business model. Healthcare providers should at all times keep in mind that domestic patients were there before international patients, and will be there long after as well.

SEGMENTS OF MEDICAL TOURISM

Medical tourism is not a homogenous market. The reasons behind a patient’s decision to travel abroad to receive medical services are diverse. Due to the high cost of travelling and receiving medical treatment abroad, the market used to be dominated by rather affluent patients whose target was to receive the best treatment available, or at least better treatment than that available domestically. As international travel has become cheaper, more markets have become accessible, thus leading to the development of new segments.

The variety in segments has led to new demands and challenges. Stakeholders thus need to understand these segments and their respective demands, as they will have to adjust their marketing to them. Choosing the segments a destination wants to cater to depends largely on what it has to

offer and what defines and differentiates it. Furthermore, the segments are not mutually exclusive, with some destinations successfully targeting quality-oriented patients, while others focus on cost awareness, either within the same healthcare provider or through a combination of these.

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Drivers for medical tourism on a global scale are often farther reaching than one would assume. The general assumption about the success determinants for a medical tourism project usually does not consider more than USPs and the budget involved. In all seriousness, stakeholders underestimate the actual drivers of medical tourism. The graph below shows some of the factors that influence medical tourism. While it is by no means comprehensive, knowing how to navigate the industry based only on these provides a competitive advantage.

There are some obvious drivers that we cannot influence, and any attempt to do so would certainly be futile. As we will discover later, other drivers can only be influenced indirectly. The key is focusing on what is within a stakeholder’s range of competence, while bearing in mind the other elements in strategic planning and time factors.

UNDERSTANDING DEPENDENCIES/VULNERABILITIES

Developing a medical tourism destination entails a substantial financial commitment. Embarking on that road without a proper understanding of market dynamics and unwittingly building dependencies that influence your success to the point of control, is unadvised.

In medical tourism, the main dependency relates to the reliance on medical tourism facilitators. This is most commonly

observed in the hospital-facilitator-relationship where the dependency on referrals can be detrimental to entire destinations and impact all the other participants. One type of dependency occurs when a destination caters to only one of the segments. That is not always avoidable, but in many cases, risk diversification can already start on a source market level. So even though you might only cater to quality-oriented customers, as opposed to the cost-oriented segment, you should engage different source markets instead of relying on the source markets you are used to historically. What sounds like an obvious solution is not often implemented. Especially in destinations that focus on the quality-oriented segment, where hospitals focus on one or maybe two regions, owing to these markets’ historical share. The reason is mostly two-fold. Risk diversification by source market diversification requires additional staff that has an understanding of the culture, language, and peculiarities of these new markets. Launching the required market activities and facilitating in-house capability is costly. Another reason for the lack of source market diversification is the reliance on referrals, i.e. facilitators. If the respective partners are not sufficiently diversified in terms of risk, this directly translates into your organization’s risk profile. It is the stakeholder’s responsibility to ensure resilience against disruptions and crises, as well as to take the necessary steps to avoid overexposure to single consumer groups, regions, or industries.

This is where another type of dependency arises: Referral partners. As mentioned earlier, a reliance on third parties that facilitate the influx of international patients through their market activities and promotional efforts or business relationships causes the stakeholder to lose control over their business. The patient-facilitator relationship is so strong that the facilitator’s opinion is often valued more than the opinion of the



Photo: iStock.com/peopleimages

medical professionals involved. While there are circumstances where this interaction provides benefits and protection to patients, it fundamentally causes stakeholders to lose control over their business and overexposes them to a single or only a few sources of revenue.

Destinations are well-advised to position themselves at the core of their own business. That means that they know and understand the patients who travel to their destination and are in charge of the main drivers. All the main market activities should be initiated by the stakeholders and actively designed in a consortium. This of course allows room for individual approaches, but the main functions are independent of single players and thus more sustainable - if managed correctly.

DESTINATIONS NEED A USP

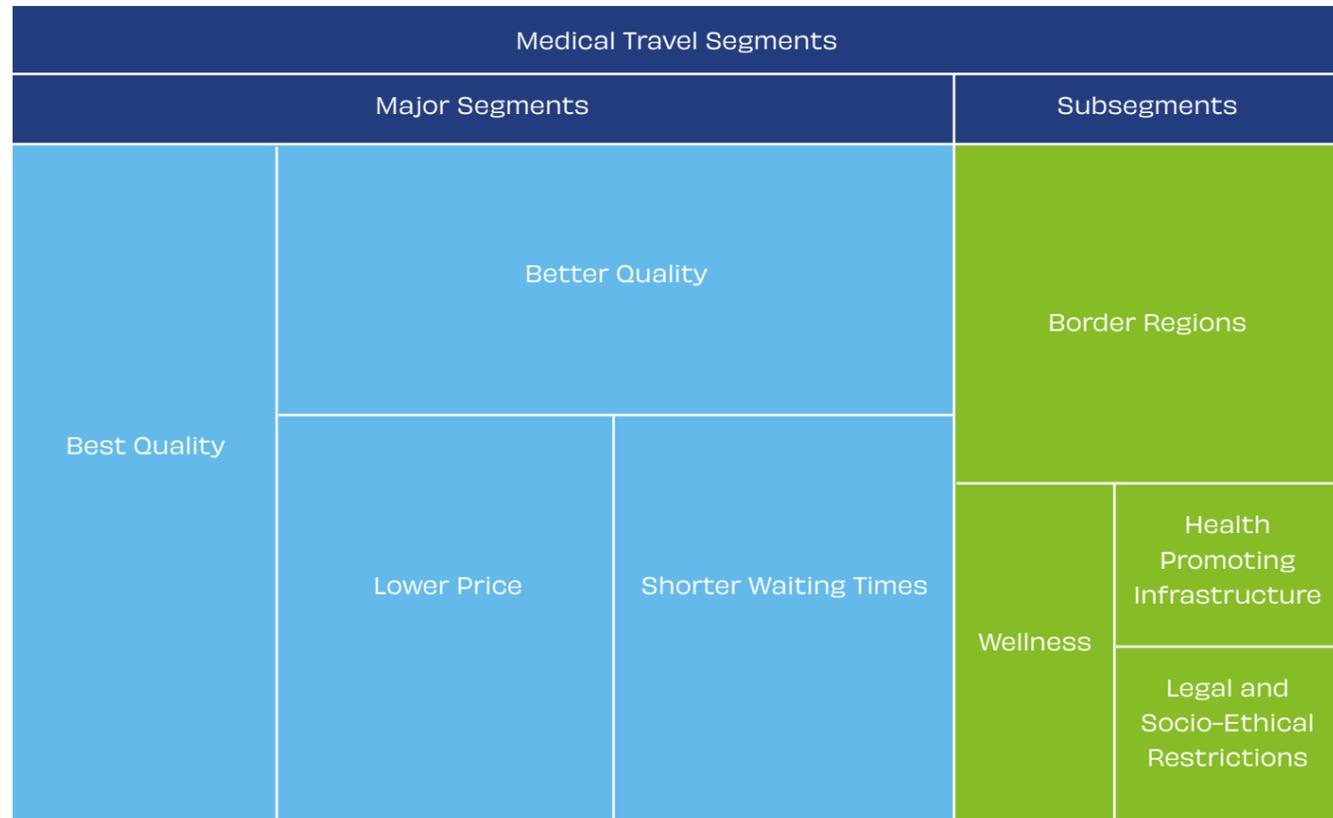
Without a USP, any participant in the market will be struggling to reach undecided customers and fully dependent on third parties such as facilitators. Their entire business comes to a halt when another destination appears, or at the whim of their major referrers. It is not a position to envy, but rather to avoid. With respect to Porter’s Generic Competitive Strategies, they are usually in the lower cost segment and are working with a USP that they are neither aware of nor are seeking.

This might be geographic proximity or a legal environment that allows certain procedures prohibited in their source markets.

A USP is not a magical attribute that gets bestowed upon a destination. Often a result of happenstance, it can be drafted and created like a strategy. This is not an easy task, but one that deliberately positions a destination and develops activities for branding, marketing and further improving it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGY

All the prior aspects must be considered when drafting a strategy. Most of the major medical tourism destinations have a combination of strategies, which are more than the sum of the individual component strategies. A good medical tourism strategy is a roadmap, which, with expert consideration of the source markets and USPs and a masterfully tailored brand, enables destinations to be the target of the patient’s journey. Well-positioned and able to communicate the offer, it will be able to sustain the influx of patients to a degree of financial viability. Leaving occurrences of medical tourism in a given destination up to chance is not advised. The industry requires specific regulations and mechanisms of quality control, as well as measures for long-term improvement.



Graphics: Christian El-Khoury, 2022



Kvarner

A Region That Simply
Makes You Feel Good



Photo: Frank Heuer

Treat yourself to a well deserved break from the daily routine and revive your body and spirit. Discover Kvarner – your destination for a value-added vacation.

Advertorial: Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster, Croatia

Take a deep breath – that is the first thing you will inevitably do when you arrive in Kvarner: Inhale and fill your lungs with the crystal-clear air, scents of aromatic herbs and the taste of sea salt. The beginning of your experience with the unique recipe for amazing health

that doctors have been prescribing since the late 19th century.

As a proven recipe against stress and the consequences of everyday challenges, Kvarner offers a mild Mediterranean climate and natural beauty stretching from the seaside to the high mountaintops, supported by top health experts, the sumptuous local cuisine and accommodations of the highest standards. Get away from everyday obligations and permanently change your lifestyle in Kvarner.

The Kvarner region includes the cities of Rijeka and Opatija and their suburban ring, Gorski Kotar, the coastal area and the



hinterland of the cities of Crikvenica and Novi Vinodolski and the islands of Krk, Cres, Rab and Mali Lošinj. The Kvarner region is located where the Adriatic Sea makes a sharp cut into the continent, making for a unique blend of Mediterranean flair and European elegance. It is known

Photo: Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

as a popular holiday destination that places great value on modern services and facilities, while preserving the beauty of the stunning natural landscape. The blend of the coast, islands and mountains in this region creates a memorable experience found nowhere else in the world. The three seemingly different, but closely linked landscapes here have given Kvarner its motto: “Diversity is beautiful.”

The perfectly clear, salty sea in Kvarner contains all the healing minerals for effective detoxification and skin regeneration. While swimming in the sea, you benefit from a large electromagnetic field that naturally charges and balances the human energy system. Kvarner also offers a healthy dose of vitamin D through 200 sunny days a year, leading to enhanced brain function, a reduction of inflammatory processes, improved muscle strength and immunity and helping to prevent depression and anxiety. And when we add fresh, clean air to the sea and the sun, enriched with small particles of sea salt, aromatic herbs and essential oils, all the prerequisites for a healthy environment are created – the so-called Kvarner Effect.



Photo: Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster



Photo: Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

For centuries, these natural healing factors have been helping to prevent and treat various diseases and restore good health and quality of life. Thanks to the clean, salty sea and air, lush vegetation and thermal waters, Kvarner has been a top destination for many years for people who are seeking to revive their health and mind set. Today they can look forward to seawater treatments (thalassotherapy), various spa treatments, specialized hospitals and wellness clinics as well as outstanding experts to help them achieve a new sense of well-being. There are also internationally recognized dental practices operating independently or integrated into hotels. In Kvarner, you can change your habits of living and regain energy by having comprehensive diagnostic tests and nutritional counseling performed. You will be completely safe in the trusted hands of proven experts, who are equipped to provide you with the very best treatments to relieve tension and stress.

Strengthen your body and mind and enjoy the diversity of Kvarner for a healthier tomorrow. From pearly white pebbles, crystal clear sea and lush green vegetation to high mountains offering stunning views, you will find the perfect conditions for Various types of active holidays: Enjoying the beach, swimming, diving, sailing, hiking, mountaineering or cycling – you can individually choose how you will enjoy the natural beauty to the maximum and at what rhythm and speed. This region, synonymous with diversity, offers a

vacation paradise for all generations, and its mystery and countless surprises will encourage you to come back again and again to discover something new with each visit.

But what would a perfect vacation be without quality dining? The Mediterranean and continental pre-Alpine climates meet here and produce the unique combination of food and drinks that are characteristic of Kvarner. In Gorski Kotar, you will find



Photo: Frank Heuer

berries, mushrooms, game, freshwater fish and frogs, while the Mediterranean foods such as fish, crabs (Kvarner shrimp), shellfish, Mediterranean wild herbs, island lamb, sheep and goat cheeses, cottage cheese and prosciutto are found on the coast and the islands. Kvarner is the region with the highest concentration of top restaurants that prepare meals only from prime, fresh, seasonal and local ingredients. It is here that the unmatched combination of the sea and mountains creates the original scents and flavors of the Mediterranean, just as they have been known for centuries.

www.kvarnerhealth.com



Photo: Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

FLASHLIGHT AUSTRIA

HTI Magazine talked to Susanne Kraus-Winkler, Mag., State Secretary of Tourism, Austria, about health tourism in Austria

Interview: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine



Photo: Nadine Studeny Photography

Susanne Kraus-Winkler
State Secretary of Tourism
at the Federal Ministry of
Labor and Economics

She has many years of experience in the Austrian hospitality sector and is a founding partner of the LOISIUM Wine & Spa Resort Hotel group. Kraus-Winkler already worked in her parents' business in Großenzersdorf near Vienna alongside her studies in business administration. She was later elected industry spokesperson of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, a position she held for over 25 years. From 2015 to 2018, she was responsible for industry issues at the EU level as President of HOTREC in Brussels. After that, she held a position as Chair of the Austrian Hotel Industry Association until 2022 when she was sworn in as State Secretary of Tourism.

In Austria, too, health tourism stands for a successfully expanding and reputable industry. Over 830 million health tourism trips are made within Austria or to other countries.

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the European Travel Commission (ETC), health tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism segments worldwide. This is being driven by an increase in health awareness and demographic change. The health tourism offers has expanded as a result of longer life expectancy, medical progress, increased health awareness, and the growing relevance of quality tourism. Physical health, mental well-being, and personal enjoyment are top priorities here.

HTI News Magazine:

Which health-oriented offers do vacationers in Austria use?

Susanne Kraus-Winkler:

The focus varies, depending on age: Younger people tend to prefer combinations offering pleasure while older folks tend to put health at the forefront. The middle-aged group, in turn, considers mental well-being to be especially important. In line with these developments, the term "health tourism" refers to a wide range of different offers – from wellness in thermal spas to medically oriented trips, or even to spa and rehabilitation centers.

According to Tourismus Monitor Austria, 9 percent of all winter vacationers book a wellness or beauty vacation.

The travel motive of "doing something for your health" is particularly important to around one in four German vacationers, corresponding to around 14 million people. Although health is rarely the stated reason for a vacation, it is usually a factor that plays a role alongside many others. Thus, there are many tourists who make use of health-related products and services or are interested in doing so when they go on vacation.

HTI News Magazine:

How has travel behavior changed?

Susanne Kraus-Winkler:

Whereas a few years ago, a health vacation focused on pampering and taking time out from everyday life, today's guests are looking for a long-term change – whether it's detoxing, losing weight, or managing stress. The pandemic has certainly also played a major role in these changes, as many people experienced more pressure in their working lives during this period, with some even suffering from burnout or depression.

Staying physically fit and mentally balanced is therefore first and foremost in a lifestyle where vacations play an essential role. As a comprehensive tourism location, Austria is perfectly positioned to meet these changed needs.

HTI News Magazine:

What would you like to focus on in destination development?

Susanne Kraus-Winkler:

As elsewhere, sustainability is also an important topic in tourism. In order to be successful in the long term, we have to strike a balance between visitors' needs and the concerns of the local population. This is of key importance, as we should not be managing tourism exclusively in the interest of our visitors, but rather in a manner that also provides the regional population with a good source of income and good quality of living.

„ZAGORJE – HEALTH AT HAND“ HEALTH TOURISM CLUSTER

The cluster brings together professionals from the medical, tourism, university and other related sectors with the aim of creating and offering distinctive and competitive health tourism services.

Advertorial: Zagorje Tourism Cluster, Croatia

Zagorje is one of those places that take your breath away at first glance. If you stop on one of the hills and look around, you will see picturesque green hills adorned with medieval castles, "hiže" country houses with vineyards and winding roads lined by vineyards. And this is only one part of what Zagorje has to offer. As you continue exploring Zagorje, you begin to realize that "bregi", the green Zagorje hills, hide much more than just rich history and nature – they have a powerful healing impact on both your body and soul.



Terme Tuhelj

Photo: Nina Jerčnik

Thanks to its diversity and uniqueness, Hrvatsko zagorje is attracting an ever increasing number of visitors from Croatia and abroad. Besides its rich history and natural beauty, Zagorje boasts abundant thermal water springs. All this makes it ideally suited as a health tourism destination, one of the fastest growing in Croatia. This prompted professionals in the



Specialized hospital of St. Catherine

Photo: Archivna Specijal Hospitala St. Catherine

health and tourism sectors to establish the "Zagorje – Health at Hand" cluster with the aim of creating distinctive and competitive health tourism services through collaboration, knowledge and skills.

Health tourism in Hrvatsko zagorje is a perfect blend of professional, high quality health services and excellent gastronomy and tourism.

The cluster systematically and actively works on encouraging synergy processes with a focus on improving the range and quality of the overall health tourism offer of Hrvatsko Zagorje. This is done through joint marketing activities in order to increase capacity utilization and reinforce the reputation of the "Zagorje – Fairy Tale at Hand" as a health tourism destination.

The cluster currently has 25 members, which include public and private institutions from four different sectors – health, tourism, science and education.

<https://zagorjehealth.hr/en/>

Members of the cluster

- Krapinske Toplice Specialty Clinic for Medical Rehabilitation
- Stubičke Toplice Specialty Clinic for Medical Rehabilitation
- Zabok General Hospital
- Hospital of Croatian Veterans
- Akromion Specialty Clinic
- Magdalena Clinic
- St. Catherine's Specialty Clinic
- Boić Polyclinic and Daily Hospital
- Tuhelj Thermal Bath
- Villa Magdalena Hotel
- Kaj Hotel
- Jezerčica Hotel & Camp Thermal Spa
- Matija Gubec Hotel, Aquae Vivae
- Krapina-Zagorje County Community Health Centre
- Krapina-Zagorje County Pharmacy
- Krapina-Zagorje County Institute of Emergency Medicine
- Krapina-Zagorje County Institute of Public Health
- Optana 22 d.o.o.
- Vlatka Fuchs-Crčić Specialist Orthodontics Practice
- Zagorje Zub Dental Polyclinic
- Pajurin Dental
- Bedekovčina Secondary School
- Pregrada Secondary School
- Zabok Secondary School
- Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management

THE HEALING POWER OF SLOVAKIAN SPAS

The mineral springs in Slovakia can be enjoyed in healing spas, many of which have successfully revived their glorious tradition and transformed themselves into modern resorts.

Author: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine



Despite its compact size, Slovakia is extremely diverse. Nature, people, and historical development in particular, have gradually divided the country into separate regions, each with a unique name. Among the most famous regions is Liptov in the north with cultural and historic monuments from different periods. Spiš, which is also in the north, is characterized by the typical Carpathian landscape, and Orava in the northwest is a haven for hikers and cyclists. You can also find untouched nature with wonderful traditions, specialties, and culture in Gemer or the Horehronie region. The little-known destination offers visitors the opportunity to get off the beaten tourist path and discover old castles, caves, hot springs, and traditional architecture.

Moreover, Slovakia is endowed with underground riches, whose healing powers and beneficial effects on the human organism rise to the surface in the form of numerous mineral springs. Historically, they were considered miraculous thanks to their ability to cure diseases and restore health. The spas in Slovakia are among the highest quality and oldest in Central Europe.

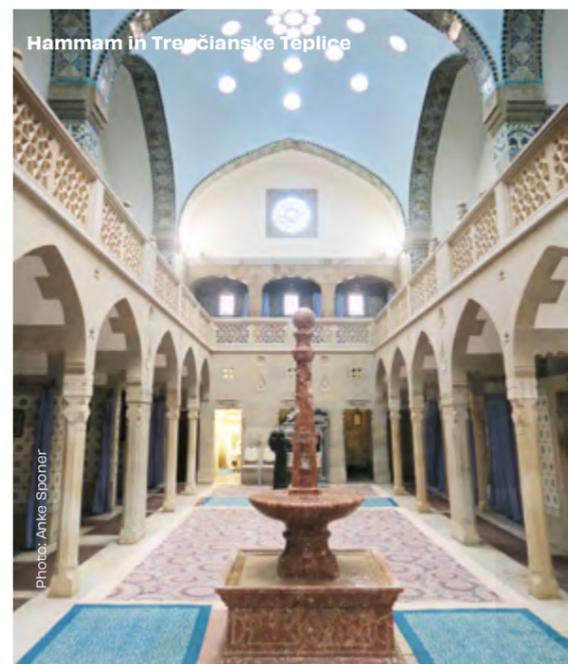
Probably one of the most famous spas is Piešťany, which has become known not only for its thermal mineral water, but also for its healing sulphuric mud. Here, the ENSANA Spa and Health hotel provides guests with medicinal geothermal water and sulphuric mud with extraordinary therapeutic effects in inflammatory disorders. Besides health and relaxation, the town also offers cultural activities and numerous sports options.

The Rajecké Teplice spa enchants its visitors with its exclusive antique atmosphere, the historic and modern spa town of Turčianske Teplice, its unique treatment, the so-called Turčianske Teplice Gold Cure, as well as with its well-known medical treatments for kidney diseases. In Bojnice, you can find one of the most beautiful castles in Central Europe. The spa and medical treatments are specialized in neurological and motor disorders.

Two European spa resorts surprise visitors with unique attractions: Sklené Teplice boasts a cave steam bath called Parenica, and Trenčianske Teplice is a historic spa town with hotels dating back to the period of the Habsburg monarchy and parks and old bathhouses, such as a unique Turkish bath called Hammam.

The exceptionally clean mountain air of the Vysoké Tatry (High Tatra mountains), which is home to several climatic spas, supports the treatment of respiratory diseases.

More information:
State Budget Organization
SLOVAKIA TRAVEL
info@slovakia.travel
www.slovakia.travel



On October 23, 1987, the Council of Europe declared the Camino de Santiago (Way of St James) the first European Cultural Route. The “Vía de la Plata at Thermal Spas” in the province of Ourense (Galicia- Northwestern Spain) offers a route of slightly over one hundred kilometers that entitles you to obtain your “Compostela”, the certificate received upon completion of the route at the Pilgrim’s Office in Santiago de Compostela once you reach the famous Cathedral. Besides the option of walking the Camino de Santiago for religious and/or spiritual reasons, the province of Ourense offers the perfect combination of nature, culture, and thermal waters. At the end of each stage of this “Thermal Camino de Santiago” you will be able to look forward to luxurious relaxation in spas and/or outdoor thermal spaces.

“TOWN OF THE BURGAS”

The last hundred kilometers of the Vía de la Plata begin in the town of Ourense, readily accessible by high-speed train from Madrid in 2 hours and 15 minutes. Also known as the “Town of the Burgas”, the thermal capital of Galicia is where medicinal mineral water flows out of the earth at a temperature of approximately 67° C. “Las Burgas”, a historic thermal water spring, is located in the old town. On the banks of the Miño river, you will also find the Ribera Termal, a path of approximately 5 kilometers that connects up to seven natural spaces where you can soak in natural thermal water. In the province of Ourense, you can currently visit seven spas, including the Hotel Balneario

THERMAL HOTSPOT OF GALICIA: OURENSE

You can enjoy Ourense’s natural resources and the local wine and gastronomy at any time of the year, in a territory where two cultural routes converge.

Advertorial/Photos: INORDE – Province Tourist Office, Spain

de Laias, which has been recommended in combination with the Camino de Santiago. Here, you can take a thermal bath or receive relaxing treatment for your feet and legs.

The Vía de la Plata has its origin in a set of Roman roads that linked the southwest with the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. It enters Galicia through the province of Ourense and crosses Spain from south to north. Already in Galicia, the Camino will allow you to discover an exceptional cultural and natural heritage.

A Prominent Heritage Site and Wine Tourism

Oseira Monastery: This is a royally founded monastery located in the municipality of San Cristovo de Cea. Its existence has been known since 1137, but it became dependent on the Cistercian Order in 1141. With its characteristic ogival Romanesque style,

More information:
<https://www.turismodeourense.gal/en>, <https://www.caldaria.es/laias/>
<https://www.iberia.com/es/combined-train-plane-ticket/>
<https://santiagoways.com/en/camino-de-santiago-routes/the-via-de-la-plata-from-ourense>

it is considered one of the masterpieces of Cistercian architecture on the Iberian Peninsula.

Pan de Cea: This refers to a bread that has been prepared by hand and baked in the ovens of the village of San Cristovo de Cea since the 18th century. It is the first bread in Europe to obtain the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) in 2004. You can participate in a “Cea Bread-Making Workshop” at A Boa Migalla establishment.

The thermal province in the interior of Galicia boasts all of four of the five Wine Apellations of Origin that exist in the region, which every year present refined quality wines and liquors. They are defined by their native grape varieties such as the “Treixadura”, “Godello”, “Mencía”, “Caíño” or “Sousón” – among others – that are grown in the Denominations of Monterrei, Ribeiro, Ribeira Sacra, or Valdeorras.



THE BEST EUROPEAN PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN 2022

The first edition of the EPHA Awards took place at Páteo da Galé in Lisbon in June 2022.

Author: Ilaria Giannico, Secretary General, UEHP – European Union of Private Hospitals, Belgium



From left to right: Pedro Libano Monteiro and Cátia Costa (Hospital da Luz), Christian Egle (EY) on behalf of Iris Vollert (Heiligenfeld Clinics), Luis Mendicuti (ASPE) on behalf of Hospital Recoletas Campo Grande, Paul Garassus (UEHP President), Oscar Gaspar (APHP President), Annabelle Neudam (4QD – QualitätsKliniken), Florian Rossiaud-Fischer (Hôpital de la Tour), Dott. Ranucci (IRCCS Policlinico San Donato)

The ceremony, held under the High Patronage of the President of the Portuguese Republic aimed to showcase and support innovative and outstanding European health projects. 72 applications from hospitals of 10 European countries were submitted and then evaluated by an independent international jury. The EPHA was organized by UEHP – The European Union of Private Hospitals and APHP – The Portuguese Association of Private Hospitals, in partnership with EY.

A special award was also given to Romanian and Polish hospitals for their role in the humanitarian support given to the wave of refugees from the war in Ukraine.

Óscar Gaspar, president of APHP:

“European private hospitals are increasingly becoming essential knowledge centers focused on the health of our citizens. Clinical innovation, proximity, and the relationship

with the patient and the development of prevention strategies in health are some of the areas rightly distinguished this year. The efforts of private hospitals and the commitment of all the teams involved show our concrete response to the needs of patients and to the current health challenges.”

Paul Garassus, president of UEHP:

“These awards are the perfect example of the capacity of initiative of Portuguese private hospitals. In the history of the private hospital sector, Lisbon shall be remembered as a milestone of affirmation of what we are doing across Europe, namely, providing excellence in care to our citizens.”

The second edition of the European Private Hospitals Awards will take place in Lisbon on 25th May 2023. Get in touch if you want to know more or to become a sponsor!

Contact for information:
secretarygeneral@uehp.eu

The winners are:

Best Prevention Initiative: **HOSPITAL RECOLETAS CAMPO GRANDE (SPAIN)**

For preventing the surge of health problems on an individual level, as well as the wide spread of communicable diseases.

Best Patient-Centered Initiative: **DAS REHAPORTAL – QUALITAETSKLINIKEN.DE (GERMANY)**

For improving the patient experience throughout the entire journey, not only by improving the healthcare service provided, but also by meeting the patients' needs and expectations.

Greenest Hospital in Europe: **FUNDACIÓN INSTITUT GUTTMANN (SPAIN)**

For promoting a friendlier and more sustainable environment.

Model of Clinical Innovation: **IRCCS POLICLINICO SAN DONATO (ITALY)**

For promoting significant improvements in the healthcare services provided, as well as the clinical outcomes for patients.

Most Advanced Hospital in Value-Based Healthcare: **HÔPITAL DE LA TOUR (SWITZERLAND)**

For promoting new ways of measuring and paying for healthcare that will contribute to improving the quality of the services provided and access to new types of therapies.

Workplace Excellence: **HOSPITAL DA LUZ (PORTUGAL)**

For promoting better workplace conditions and environment, with proven results in optimizing the organizational performance and collaboration between professionals.

News Coverage of the Year: **HEILIGENFELD CLINICS (GERMANY)**

For best news coverage associated with a healthcare sector initiative.

Company Profile: Global Medical Top Partners (GMTP)

MEDICAL TOURISM SERVICES PROVIDER IN GREECE, ALSO GAINS PRESENCE IN DUBAI

The GMTP group is specialized in healthcare treatments and rehabilitation for international patients.

Author: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine

GMTP represents clinics and rehabilitation centers in Greece & Dubai by arranging treatments for international patients. The group provides comprehensive services for medical tourists, including visa support, flights and transportation, accommodation in fully furnished apartments meeting the patient's individual needs, arrangement of doctor consultations and other medical appointments, psychological support, guidance before, during, and after treatment, as well as medical aviation.

GMTP has offices in both Greece and Dubai where it and has connections to the best hospitals and clinics and collaborations with the biggest health care centers. This enables GMTP to offer comprehensive and customized healthcare solutions from top specialists.

The group offers programs for both adults and children covering various medical conditions, treatments, and rehabilitation in the fields of neurosurgery, heart surgery, oncology, orthopedic surgery, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, stem cell therapy, CP, among many others. The doctors are leading experts, with degrees from renown Greek, European, and American Universities. Patients can rely on extensive experience and expertise ranging from the treatment of seriously ill patients (including vegetative state), stem cell treatment and from invasive to noninvasive treatment and rehabilitation. They work in world-class medical facilities equipped with state-of-the-art medical equipment and advanced technology in line with European quality and safety standards.

Case 1– Neurosurgery:

A 10-year old Ukrainian girl with aplasia, subluxation, cervical myelopathy, and spastic tetraparesis. Surgery: occipital-cervical joint decompression and fusion of occipital C2-C4-C6. The previous instability disappeared.

Case 2 – Stem cell treatment:

A 26-year old Russian man, paraplegic. He has fathered a child, and his general condition has improved significantly.



Case 3 – CP surgery:

A 15-year old Russian girl with CP and tetraplegia with severe spasticity. Surgical intervention achieved spastic pronation, carpal and hand flexion, and tendon lengthening.

Case 4 – Epilepsy:

A 15-year old Russian girl with severe epilepsy, tetraplegia. Treatment achieved complete control of seizures, she is now able to independently walk and eat, and her speech skills have improved significantly.



Sam Awad

Founder & CEO, GMTP

Sam Awad deeply believes in a holistic medical approach, setting up high-quality medical services with excellent results, and always respecting patients' feelings and problems. The GMPT team helps patients psychologically and physically to overcome difficulties that may come up throughout rehabilitation and in the return to normal life. Sam takes part in all the phases that the patient goes through and stands by them, helping and always proposing the best solutions. In the course of 10 years of work in medical tourism and 29 years in general tourism, Sam has established collaborations with numerous medical centers and clinics in both Greece and the UAE. GMTP currently has over 20 employees and a team of more than 100 doctors of several specialties cooperating as one team.

www.gmtpgroup.com

THE VIEW FROM NORTH AMERICA

A main reason why traditional European health spas may be finding it challenging to attract a North American clientele lies in the nuances of language. In essence, the European and North American definitions of “health spa” are oceans apart.

Author: Laura Powell, International Wellness Tourism Consultant and Journalist, the USA



Laura Powell
International Wellness Tourism
Consultant and Journalist

Laura is an international wellness tourism consultant and journalist. She started her career 30 years ago, when she developed CNN’s travel programming. After moving into the consulting arena, she has worked with clients ranging from the World Travel & Tourism Council and the Global Wellness Institute to the American Hotel & Lodging Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. She currently specializes in working with destinations and properties to develop wellness tourism strategies and products.

www.laurapowell.com

To most Americans and Canadians, a health spa is a place to be pampered, whipped into shape, provided with lifestyle tips for improving their health or a combination of all of the above. It’s a wellness tourism experience, all about relaxation and prevention, rather than a sojourn in search of medical treatment. What’s more, the concept of medical tourism, if it exists at all in the American mind, is largely confined to images of patients hopping borders in search of cheaper prices for complicated procedures.

Medical tourism or health tourism as it is practiced in much of Europe falls somewhere between those concepts. Frank Halmos, Ensana chief executive officer, provides a concise definition. “Medical spa operators,” he says, “use a combination of natural resources like thermal waters and mineral-rich mud with expert medical knowledge to offer treatments supporting the health of guests.” This concept dates back centuries in Europe, as ailing patients would travel to healing spas, where doctors would harness natural elements to treat a range of health conditions relating to muscles, bones, organs, metabolism, and the skin.

Because of their tried and true healing techniques, many European spa operators bridle at the notion of being deemed wellness facilities. But for operators looking to attract

the North American market, a little wellness will go a long way. Integrating things like yoga and meditation, healthy cooking classes, lifestyle programming and the like into the programming mix, or reframing existing offers, like mud baths and massages, as wellness products, might be the enticements needed to get new clients on board.

At the same time, adding wellness options could also be of benefit to traditional medical patients, who would be able to complement their treatment with increased knowledge about self-care practices and health enhancement measures.

THE NEED FOR NEW MARKETS

In much of Europe, state budgets have tightened. That means the insurance reimbursement process has become less reliable, and medical spas are increasingly focusing on self-paying guests to keep things going. Halmos notes that Ensana, the largest medical spa operator in Europe, doesn’t think accepting insurance is a good long-term strategy. As a result, Ensana is focusing on the free market and looking to grow its international business.

If the continent’s largest spa brand is incorporating the strategy, it’s certainly a concept other operators might consider. Of course, not all medical spas may need to, or want to, attract North American clients. But for

those that do, medical spa operators should think about messaging their marketing and their onsite programming.

Frankly, the European concept of a medical spa doesn’t exist in America. A medical spa in the United States, for example, is a place that injects Botox and provides other elective cosmetic procedures. That said, what European medical spas offer is something many North American health travelers would utilize, if they just understood the concept. Therefore, European spa operators need to drive visitation through education and marketing.

EDUCATE THEM ONLINE

Since most North Americans don’t know about European-style medical spas, the first step is education. In developing education tools, consider both potential clients and travel agents who book wellness/health holidays. Work with an umbrella organization like the European Spas Association (ESPA), a regional spa network, or your national tourism office in this effort. Produce online glossaries defining key treatments and what they are designed to heal. Consider developing a comprehensive on-line assessment and booking tool that is searchable by type of ailment, destination, length of stay offered, languages spoken, and other relevant criteria. That way, a potential client who is suffering from a particular ailment can easily pinpoint the best option.

WOO THEM WITH WELLNESS

However, as we all learned during the pandemic, sometimes online education just doesn’t cut it. Therefore, another option in the education process could be getting clients on site through attractive wellness offers, while gently familiarizing them with the medical opportunities. But to entice them with this “wellness first” approach, operators need to meet North American clients in the middle. It’s as easy as providing more health enhancement/lifestyle options and reframing medical practices

The vast expertise of a medical spa’s staff should make it easy to add health enhancement options, including lifestyle programming around issues such as weight loss, healthy eating, and stress reduction. Add classes about some of the holistic practices used in what Dr. Boris Bánovský, medical director of Piešťany and Smrdáky Health Spa Hotels in Slovakia, calls “traditional Western medicine.” As most medical spas are located in nature areas, get wellness guests outside. After all, North Americans already expect that a health-based vacation includes access to nature. So, add more options for exercising in nature, be it through hiking, biking or kneipping. Supplement those with outdoor yoga and meditation sessions.

At the same time, reframe your existing treatments. Mud baths, hydrotherapies, and massages can all be recategorized and placed into a wellness menu.

In other words, blur the lines between what in North America is considered holistic wellness tourism (a term not highly esteemed in the European health spa community) and pure medical tourism. Another advantage —these types of wellness options appeal not only to long-haul guests, but also to younger Europeans looking to prevent the chronic problems that ail their parents.

When the international client is onsite, make sure to offer tours of your medical facilities in order to demystify them. Showcase your price list as well. Those from the United States in particular will be amazed by the low cost of treatment compared to what’s available back home.

Believe me, once these new clients discover all of the benefits of health tourism European-style, they are quite likely to be convinced to come back for longer, more lucrative medical-oriented visits.



HEALTH FROM FINLAND?

Finland, the happiest nation in the world, known for its high-quality education and Santa Claus, is not a top-of-mind destination in medical travel. Yet, Finland has been working on health travel systematically for over a decade.

Author: Päivi Antila, Manager, Regional Partnerships (Lapland), Health and Educational Travel, Visit Finland



Päivi Antila

LEADING RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

Finland invests significant amounts yearly in health-related education and research. The results of medical research have influenced treatments around the world through technological innovations from heart rate monitors to intrauterine devices. Medical technology is one of the biggest and fastest-growing segments in the area of high-tech exports for Finland. Due to its unique genotype and first-rate biobanking system, Finland has also distinguished itself in the area of genetic research. This explains why the health care sector has especially attracted international investments from global pharmaceutical and health tech companies such as Bayer and GE Healthcare.

STAR TREATMENT IN ORTHOPEDICS

Orthopedics and traumatology are the largest surgical subspecialties in Finland. The results of Finnish sports medicine and joint replacement surgeries have received high accolades from the international media. The level of scientific clinical expertise is high, as testified by the number of publications in TOP15 international scientific orthopedic journals. Many Finnish orthopedists are international opinion leaders and trusted by the brightest stars of the sporting world.

FAST RESPONSE TO CANCER

According to the latest CONCORD-3 study, the 5-year survival rate for most cancer patients in Finland is among the highest in the world. Finland is the 3rd best country



in Europe in treating prostate, breast and adult brain cancer. For example, 93.2 % of patients with prostate cancer live five years after the first diagnosis. Two out of three cancer patients are cured, and many more are able to enjoy good quality of life. It is no wonder that the largest number of international patients spanning over 60 nationalities arrive in Finland for cancer care.

COLLABORATION AS A KEY TO SUCCESS

On a global scale, Finland is still a young medical travel destination. The number of foreign patients remains relatively low due to the small number of health service providers actively promoting their services to international customers. On account of the high demand from domestic patients, not all service providers are actively looking for new customer segments. However, with a population of only 5.5 million inhabitants, the domestic market cannot provide long-term growth prospects for the health care service industry.

Visit Finland is actively working on a national level to develop Finland as a health travel destination. Being a relatively small and as yet lesser-known destination in medical travel, collaboration between different stakeholders and service providers is vital. Only with a unified message and attractive, diverse product offering, will Finland be able to capture the future medical traveler's attention.

<https://www.visitfinland.com/en/>

IS TECHNOLOGY THE KEY DRIVER OF MEDICAL TOURISM?

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that we are ready for the rapid adoption of new technologies. In the future, innovative technology will increase differences in the quality of medical services all over the world, which in turn will be an important factor in boosting medical tourism

Author: Anna Bialk-Wolf, PhD, President of the Institute for Research and Development of Medical Tourism, Poland

New technologies constitute a recognized reason for traveling abroad with the intention to obtain medical treatment. Clinics with modern technological solutions and state-of-the-art equipment successfully attract patients from other countries. However, new dimensions of development in this area are an important booster for medical tourism of the future. It is realistic to assume that a new era of innovation has arrived.

Innovative solutions not only create new products and treatment options, but also propose completely new opportunities for attracting patients. When analyzing the role of technology in medical tourism, we should start with **telemedicine**. It is well known that telemedicine can be viewed as an important part of the medical tourism product. Moreover, it allows us to create new solutions for a patient (such as teleconsultation) or to achieve trust during the first contact with the clinic (by discussing health issues from a distance during a teleconference). Secondly, the **application of digital technologies** has opened up a new spectrum for helping patients with serious illnesses. Genetic therapy, which is currently one of the most flourishing fields in medicine, also plays a decisive role in the acquisition of foreign patients. The use of **artificial intelligence** has a multidimensional impact on medical tourism. On the one hand, big data analysis makes it



Anna Bialk-Wolf, PhD

possible to discover new cause-and-effect relationships, resulting in new and more effective therapies. AI allows us to better tailor offers to the needs of the individual patient. These needs may relate to the treatment process itself or to non-medical preferences, such as the destination or the type of accommodation.

Technology as a medical tourism driver goes far beyond telemedicine, new equipment and medicines, which are often the reasons for traveling abroad. It is very likely that breakthrough innovations will emerge, which might, for example, involve non-invasive solutions in diagnostics. This in turn can open up new segments for the

patient. Non-invasive diagnostics can be conducted while the patient is staying at a business hotel, for example, by using a SoRest mattress equipped with sensor coating, microphones, radar for tracking chest movements and sets of sensors that monitor humidity and the patient's temperature. This innovative device for the diagnosis of sleep disorders is one of many examples that which may revolutionize the future of diagnostics. Many other medical devices boast a high level of sophistication and benefit. These include wearable devices that can constantly monitor the patient without inconveniencing the patient. New technological advances will likely result in a decreased need for patient mobility. Ever more procedures and even rehabilitation treatment can be carried out remotely.

The important role of technology in medical tourism can change how it is promoted. Already today we can observe multiple challenges to organize big events in the field of medical tourism. The focus of the activities we aim to promote will also change. "Tech-celeration" will propel medical tourism even faster in the future.

More information about technological solutions for medical tourism, can be provided by the Institute for Research and Development of Medical Tourism. <https://ibirtm.pl/en/o-instytucie/>

HEALTH CLUSTERS – WHEN DO THEY SHOW RESULTS?

Health (tourism) clusters are a new trend in business with the aim to attract more patients. They have appeared because of the growing demand for collaboration between institutions providing health and/or medical services and due to their goal of promoting their services beyond their regions.

Author: Ivan Rendulić, CEO RexRea, Croatia

IMMERSION IN THE CASSIOPEIA THERMAL SPA

The concept of health clusters is based on the idea that such collaboration would lead to better results when compared to individual companies working on their own. The concept of clustering was invented by Michael Porter in 1985, but its first use was already reported as far back as 1847 by Sir John Kirkland. It has been used for many years by local governments and businesses around the world. However, health clusters are still rare.

Clusters are good for the economy, they are good for the environment, and they can create synergies that will bring growth. Growth generates income and employment. Clusters provide opportunities to generate new products and services that do not exist today.

Therefore, it is important to have clusters enabled by governments at all levels: local, provincial/state, and national.

The most important argument in favor of clusters is their ability to transform business into a form that is more competitive and sustainable.

Clusters are a way of doing business, and they can be applied in various sectors, including health care services and pharmaceuticals. They do not need special legislation, but rather changes in the mindset of the people responsible for management decision-making processes within enterprises (both public and private).



Graphics: Ivan Rendulić

WHY ARE CLUSTERS IMPORTANT? THE ANSWER SEEMS OBVIOUS – FOR COMPETITIVENESS AND GROWTH.

Clusters are important, because they are a central part of an economy’s competitiveness and growth.

They can help to enhance exports, employment, and innovation by facilitating collaboration between companies, universities, and research institutes. They also encourage regional economic development that may not have been possible without them.

DOES THE SAME APPLY TO HEALTH CLUSTERS?

The question is, what is a health cluster? Is it an organization that works to promote healthcare services within a region, is it an innovation hub for new technologies and R&D in healthcare, a complex B2B network working to develop omni-channel collaboration, or a simple B2C promotional tool? The answer: It can be all the previously mentioned.

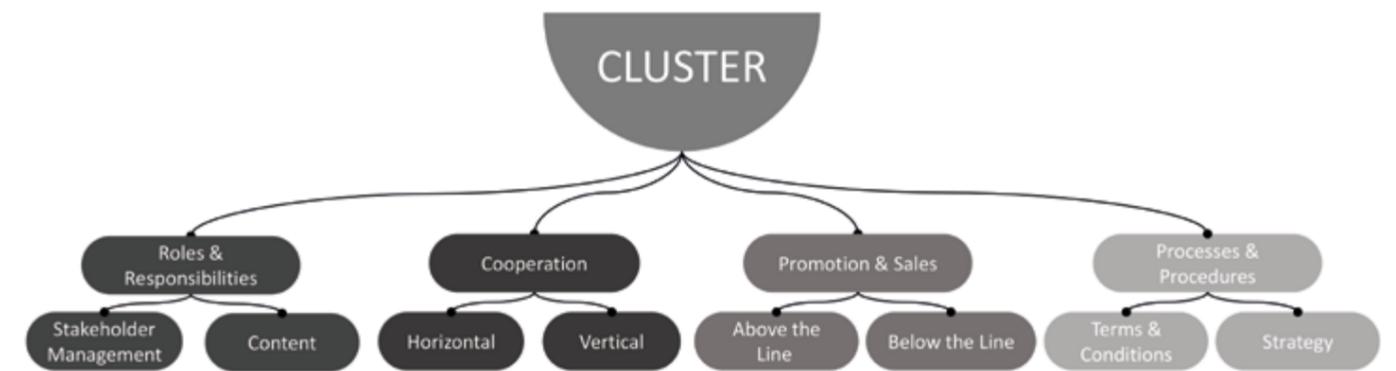
The definition of a health cluster is not determined by the question of what, but rather of why. The goal of the cluster is what defines it and determines how it should be developed and managed. That is why we have a wide range of clusters in the healthcare industry, some of which are focused on health tourism and attracting patients from abroad, while others work on strengthening their collaboration and developing new promotional strategies.

The Turkish Healthcare Tourism Development Council, which actively promotes Türkiye as a destination for healthcare travel, is an example of a successful health cluster. When we look at the development of Türkiye within the last 20 years, we can see significant results in promoting this country as a healthcare hub that welcomes international patients. This is doubtlessly a result of successful collaboration between different stakeholders ranging from governmental to private, a model that can be and

should be followed by other destinations looking to promote their health tourism offer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a stop to the health travel industry, or better to say, it restarted the industry with new challenges and expectations. Such events show us clearly how important clusters are. What has changed in the post-covid period is that travel is not the same as it was before. Patient expectations have changed, the need

for medical services has shifted as people are dealing with long-COVID symptoms and attaching more importance to their health than in the pre-COVID period. This change requires flexibility and a bit of forward thinking, but most importantly, active collaboration between healthcare providers and all their partners. Clusters that had such active members were able to adapt to the situation and quickly respond to new market needs.



Graphics: Ivan Rendulić

WHEN DO HEALTH CLUSTERS PRODUCE RESULTS?

Even in the United States, health clusters are a relatively new model for healthcare, and they still have a lot of room to grow. The first US-based health clusters were established less than 10 years ago, but there are now over 200 across the country. Health clusters are formed when groups of healthcare providers join to pool resources and create a more efficient system for delivering quality care.

Health clusters have many stakeholders: patients, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, insurance companies, hospitals and more. Each of these stakeholders has different needs and responsibilities within the organization.

The role of a health cluster is not solely to attract more international patients Its role is much broader, and so are the benefits, which include:

- Increased collaboration between cluster members
- The creation of new business opportunities that attract more investments
- Improvement of health standards within the cluster member’s country

- The promotion of medical services within the local population
- The development of resilience to external threats and risks

The recently announced ZagrebMed initiative is a new addition to the cluster approach of doing business. It helps leading private healthcare providers based in Zagreb, Croatia to work together on jointly and actively promoting medical services and encouraging patients from Europe to explore the treatment options they offer.

SHARING IS CARING

Health clusters are brand ambassadors, paving the way for their members on the international market by growing visibility, attracting patients, creating trust, and supporting collaboration with different international stakeholders.

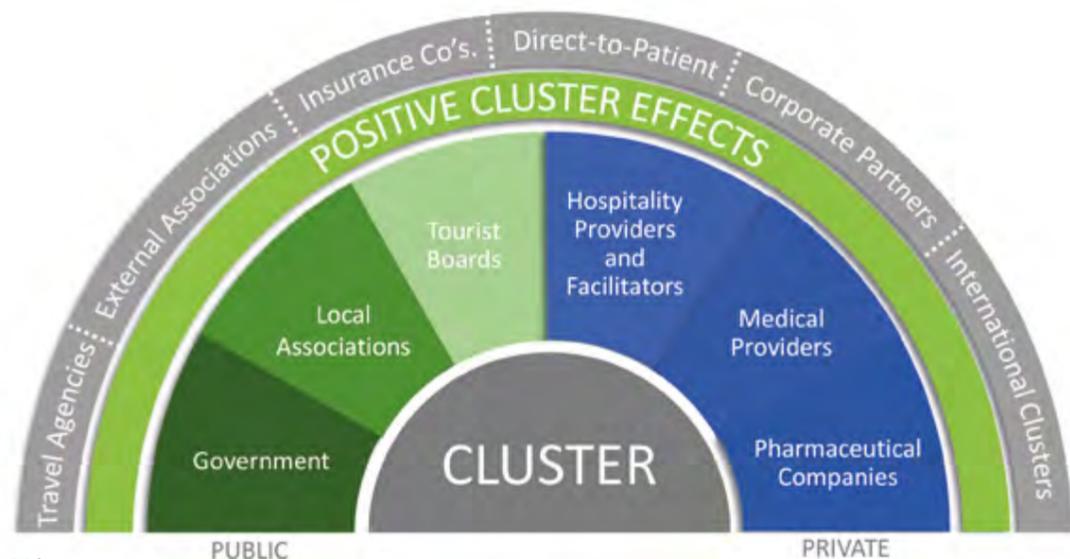
The key to success for any cluster, particularly for health clusters, is understanding the concept of being stronger by working together rather than competing against each other.

Stakeholder management is a critical element of any health cluster. In order to understand and engage stakeholders, it is essential that the health cluster understands who it is and what its interests are. This can be done through stakeholder analysis, which involves identifying stakeholders and their interest in the project, as well as understanding how those interests will affect the cluster's goals.

Participants are an important part of a health cluster. They provide information on how they feel about the project and where they see gaps in implementation or opportunities for improvement. They also serve

as a means for the health cluster to reach out to new stakeholders who may not yet be involved in the project.

Health care is entering a new era where online and offline worlds are merging, and there are many opportunities for health care companies to flourish. It is important for hospitals, clinics, doctors' offices, and other health care organizations to get ahead of this trend by making sure they have a site that works well on mobile devices and provides a seamless experience between the digital environment and their physical location.



Graphics: Ivan Rendulić

SILK ROAD SAMARKAND – THE NEWEST ADDITION

As reported by IMTJ, Silk Road Samarkand, Uzbekistan's brand-new tourist cluster, is now open to visitors and offering wellness services.

It is a multi-purpose resort for commercial, cultural, medical and gastronomic tourism. The large-scale project symbolizes New Samarkand and new opportunities for travelers. It was made possible by a public-private partnership between the National Bank of Uzbekistan and private investors.

The cluster is a physical hub for a complete experience offering wellness, gastronomy, culture and attractions, all in one place.

POSITIVE RESULTS CAN BE EXPECTED AFTER THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF OPERATION.

The Kvarner Health cluster is a story that began 8 years ago and has shown significant success. It started as a collaboration between several medical facilities in the Croatian region known for excellent dental

clinics and thalassotherapy centers that were more than a 100 years old. Today that cluster has more than 30 active members and hosts the traditional yearly CIHT conference, which is the key regional event for health tourism.

The history of clusters shows that they take time to develop: Positive results come after 2-3 years of operation - these are not years lost, but rather time needed to build successful collaboration between members of the cluster that maximizes their potential and thus offers a competitive advantage.



Cluster example: KVARNER HEALTH TOURISM CLUSTER

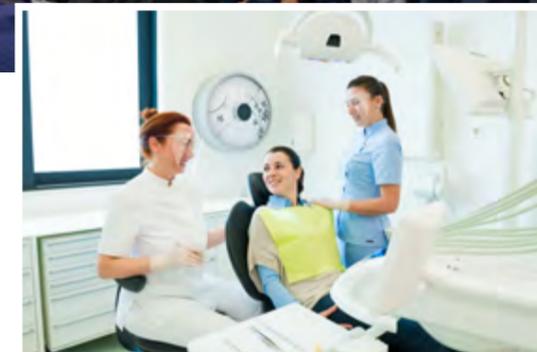
Founded in 2014 with 37 members and more than 9,500 employees, the cluster has become a well established health tourism cluster. It was even recognized internationally with the IMTJ award in 2016.

Author: Anke Sponer, HTI News Magazine
Photos: Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

The cluster unites players in the healthcare sector, ranging from private and public medical and dental players, including the largest Croatian pharmaceutical company, to the tourism industry with hotel chains, travel agencies, and tourist boards, as well as two departments of the University of Rijeka.

The activities were initiated with the aim of connecting all the stakeholders in the health tourism segment and the health industry in general so they could collaborate in setting up quality standards and developing, promoting, and improving the relevant products and services. The region offers unique geographic advantages such as its proximity to the coast, islands, and mountains with good accessibility.

The Cluster seeks to implement its strategy through the preservation of the quality of natural healing methods, the availability of human resources, the quality of the environment and infrastructure, the principles of social sustainability, and the development of destination management. The joint mission and vision are to brand the Kvarner region in the area of year-round service provision in four areas: preventive and personalized medicine, lifestyle medicine, rehabilitation (physical and mental), and active and healthy aging. Certification criteria branding the region as a "Destination of Health and Quality of Life" have been created through the regional model. Over 250,000 guests have stayed in the Kvarner region and obtained health tourism services over the past 3 1/2 years, including the period affected by the COVID-19 infection.



Health tourism as an economic branch of the so-called "smart specialization" of the region forms an important segment in the health sector. The cluster has created quality requirements for the inclusion of a larger number of businesses, newly created value, and jobs, as well as additional improvement of the quality of services for local citizens.

The cluster also organizes the Crikvenica International Health Tourism Conference which, in its 10-year tradition, has established itself as one of the most prestigious health tourism conferences globally. This B2B conference gives participants the opportunity to develop collaborations in the health sector and in the segment of health tourism in particular.

Kvarner Health is also recognized at the international level. In 2016, it won an award as the Health and Medical-Tourism Cluster of the Year, and in 2018 and 2020, it reached the finals together with the national clusters of Malaysia and South Korea – the undisputed world leaders in the field of health tourism.

www.kvarnerhealth.com

Health Clusters:

A VEHICLE FOR CREATING SHARED VALUE

Looking ahead to meeting different societal demands as well as achieving success as a health cluster, healthcare leaders are looking to creating shared value to drive economic success.

Author: Elizabeth Ziemba, JD, MPH, Regional Director Temos, the USA



Photo: Elizabeth Ziemba

Elizabeth Ziemba, JD, MPH
Regional Director Temos

Elizabeth is a pioneer in the fields of wellness, health, and medical travel with a track record of success in consulting, training, & workshops around the world. She established Medical Tourism Training in 2009 dedicated to the specific needs of the sector. In her role as the Regional Director for Temos International Healthcare Accreditation, Elizabeth is committed to improving access to best practices designed to raise the standards of clinical and non-clinical services provided by hospitals and clinics.

Health clusters have emerged as a tool for economic development with health and medical services at its core. The role of clusters has changed over time due in part to the complexity of social challenges including economic woes, climate change, and strained public trust in business and government.

STARTING WITH THE BASICS

The leading global guru of cluster economics, Prof. Michael E. Porter of Harvard Business School, defines clusters as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries and associated institutions (e.g., universities, standards agencies, trade associations) in a particular field that compete but also cooperate.” (Porter, 2000, pp. 15-34).

The overall objective of a cluster is economic development based on a core set of competing and collaborating entities that offer the same or similar types of services. Other goods and services are offered by secondary and tertiary organizations that assist and support the core entities to operate efficiently and more competitively as a group, much like the adage, “A rising tide lifts all ships.” When a cluster is functioning optimally, jobs are created, infrastructure is improved,

businesses are growing, and economic benefits accrue to the community at large. (Ziemba, 2019).

Health clusters in health and medical travel have had a rocky road with few thriving and growing such as the Health Cluster Portugal, while others operate solely as marketing vehicles for their members and others have failed to launch.

Where is the path forward for health clusters? One possibility is engaging in Creating Shared Value.

WHAT IS “CREATING SHARED VALUE”?

According to the Harvard Business School Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Creating Shared Value (CSV) consists of “Corporate policies and practices that enhance the competitive advantage and profitability of the company while simultaneously advancing social and economic conditions in the communities in which it sells and operates. CSV value is not corporate social responsibility, philanthropy, or even sustainability, but a new way to achieve economic success.” (Harvard Business School, 2022) Substitute the word “company” with “health cluster” and the concept becomes clear.



Photo: iStock.com/AscantXmedia

CSV for health clusters is particularly relevant because they are focused on delivering a basic and important service: healthcare. The current demands on healthcare providers globally as the world moves into the next phase of the COVID pandemic include financial stresses, staffing shortages, emerging competitors, and continuing access issues. The pandemic has shown the need for an innovative approach to healthcare delivery. Shared value offers a framework that is suited to access to healthcare and to a comprehensive, cross-sectoral approach that is compatible with the cluster structure.

THE PATH FORWARD

The CSV concept is not new (Porter, Kramer, 2011, pp. 62–77). It has been employed in the corporate world for more than a decade with examples of success in sectors including healthcare, primarily in the pharmaceutical sector led by Novo Nordisk, (Novonordisk, 2022) Eli Lilly, and Novartis (Smith, 2016) Health clusters have been slow to adopt CSV principles, but a few examples, such as the European Cluster (Franco et al., 2022), have made strides.

Perhaps CSV is an idea before its time and health clusters needed to evolve before moving ahead to a more complex and sophisticated model. Given the state of

healthcare globally and the significant role that health clusters can play in delivering better services, CSV is a new path forward.

Tools are available to guide health clusters to develop strategies that can succeed. Case studies exist to convince cluster leadership and members that CSV is compatible with the rationale behind developing clusters. It can drive economic development.

Most importantly, CSV can deliver better healthcare to more people while creating greater value for society. Isn't it time to achieve these goals?

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HEALTH TOURISM AS A ROLE MODEL FOR CROSS-COUNTRY COLLABORATION?

Health tourism should be viewed as a trade and an avenue to improving relationships and collaboration between countries. It is a vehicle for increasing tourism in general, thereby enhancing economic growth and improving the relationship between nations.

Author: Sherif Hassan, MD, International Healthcare Consultant, the USA

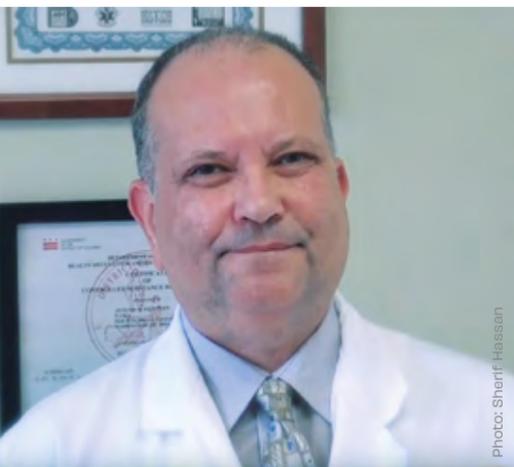


Photo: Sherif Hassan

Sherif Hassan, MD
International Healthcare Consultant

Sherif is an international functional medicine physician with patients and clients in six continents. He is a consultant and medical examiner for federal United States government agencies and an expert witness for law firms in malpractice and personal injury cases. Sherif is an algorithm writer for integrative medicine AI treatment programs and digital therapeutics.

The health tourism industry has grown by leaps and bounds over the past decade as governments and gubernatorial entities have sought new domains for sustainable growth.

As a result of globalization, international tourism has been growing faster than at any other time in the past. The growth of international tourism is regarded as a contributor to the development of the economy, social cooperation, politics, and cultural relations.

Over the past decade, tourism authorities and community leaders have begun to consider medical tourism a significant industry with the potential to broaden the existing forms of tourism, enhance local health care systems, improve the economy, increase tax revenues, and create employment opportunities. Medical tourism is market-driven, it is shaped by the arduous synergy of a myriad of economic, medical, social, and political forces.

With the global trends of longer life expectancy, individuals, especially baby boomers and the silver generations, are paying more attention to health and quality of life. The world today is very different from the last millennium. The current technologies provide the means for instantaneous transmission of information and data, which in turn has created a pivotal shift to the digital world.

International travel for healthcare, increased travel between countries, and elevated health awareness and healthcare expectations have contributed to making health tourism a growing industry in many countries. In 2020, the largest medical tourism market in the US was estimated at US \$18 billion, and this figure is projected to reach US \$31.2 billion by 2027. The international medical tourism market is expected

to grow to USD 131.35 billion by 2025, with an average annual growth rate of 20%. With these predictions of growth and in view of steps taken by governments to increase their market share in this arena, there are new rising star destinations for health tourism such as Dubai, India, and Singapore.

However, the pandemic and economic whirlwinds caused by war and politics have led to massive confusion and changes. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the socio-economic and political stability of countries. In 2020, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) predicted that about 62 million jobs would be lost (18.5%) worldwide, and the travel and tourism industry's GDP contribution would be decreased by 49.1%. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic played a role as a retardant of the growth of the health tourism market between 2020 and 2021.

With changing economies and climate change with effects on the patterns of disease, particularly infectious diseases, making future epidemics and pandemics more likely, we must search for ways to tackle these issues in the context of global healthcare.

Although the COVID 19 pandemic is by no means over, it is clear that we are in a transition phase to COVID-19 becoming an endemic disease. This is a window of opportunity to deploy early recovery measures in the health tourism industry with a focus on the following areas:

Key Points to Augment Health Tourism

1. Government and private sector support in infrastructure development to enhance health tourism destination development, including facilitation of border crossings by reducing administrative hurdles and visa requirements.
2. Multilingual personnel and staff development to serve more markets for in bound health tourism.
3. A flexible, customized approach
4. Treatment packages.
5. A more holistic financing approach to healthcare facilities involved in health tourism.
6. Diversified services and ancillary care.
7. Competitive pricing.



Photo: iStock.com/netaim on works

HEALTH AT THE HEART OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

The pandemic has clearly shown the importance of health in the development of tourism and has led to an increasing awareness of health among consumers. The demand for sustainable, health-related travel offers to enhance wellbeing are continuing to trend. Moreover, previous trends have been reinforced. A great potential for transforming services to cater to the needs of health-conscious guests.

Author: Anke Sponer, General Manager of CSI Consultancy for Sustainable Initiatives, Germany



Photo: Anke Sponer

Anke Sponer
General Manager CSI Consulting
Publisher European HTI Magazine

Anke is an expert for communication and initiatives in (health) tourism. She is active in local and international associations, conferences, and scientific research groups. Anke founded CSI as a one-stop shop for marketing services in the field of health and tourism. Before, she ran Aviareps Tourism Germany, headed the Marketing and Press Department GSA of Disneyland Resort Paris, and worked in the areas of radio, TV, publishing. She graduated in business administration and hotel management.

Tourism has slowly restarted and has become a stronger, more innovative, inclusive, and sustainable sector. Tourists are increasingly demanding more sustainable and responsible tourism options. Travel choices such as domestic travel or destinations closer to home, preference for shorter trips as well as a higher average spending per trip have become more popular due to travel limitations during Covid. (UNWTO, 2021). These range from coastal tourism, cultural tourism, nature-based and rural tourism and business tourism to a well-developed health-tourism infrastructure (the umbrella for medical and wellness tourism) (WHO, 2022).

THE NEW RELEVANCE OF HEALTH

These changes in consumer behavior now place sustainability, health and safety, authenticity and a local character at the center of the major travel trends that will continue to shape tourism in the aftermath of the pandemic. Fostering the sustainability of the tourism sector with health as the key factor would improve the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health and the overall conditions required for a healthy life (WHO, 2022). Therefore the crisis has presented an opportunity to rethink health and tourism and shape a more resilient, sustainable and

inclusive tourism sector for the future. Both the health and tourism sectors now need to strengthen their cooperation and coordination at all levels with a view to placing health high on the tourism agenda and improving community health, the environment, and economies (WHO, 2022). Putting health at the center of tourism development provides an invaluable opportunity to make health tourism even greater and more relevant. Not only that, the demographic development towards a higher average age and digitization are driving this trend and broadening the offers with more and more new health tourism products going live in the European markets, but also globally.

POTENTIAL FOR NEW HEALTH OFFERS

The new role of health in tourism offers a unique opportunity for hospitals, health hotels and rehabilitation centers to develop new treatment services and to sharpen their branding to meet this trending demand. Still, there is a relatively huge untouched potential of patients and guests, as most consumers are not aware of health-related tourism offers even though many would be interested in them. Therefore, one of the key challenges is to consistently change and courageously restructure health offers along with communication, so that it is derived

from consumer needs and focused on these. If not yet developed, health service providers will set up specific new treatments to strengthen mental health and to overcome Long Covid issues. Moreover, prevention is gaining importance as a result of an increasing number of widespread diseases such as obesity, burn-out and cardiovascular and general mental diseases. Many medical providers and health centers are still too focused on their existing pre-pandemic products instead of adapting and sharpening their capabilities towards the new consumer behavior and demand. At the same time, they are under pressure with regard to higher energy costs and increased competition, even in the field of health tourism.

All the more reason to rethink product portfolio and communication by answering the following questions along the marketing process:

Have the market conditions changed?
Are there e.g. new suppliers or technological solutions that can be utilized? What about the competition and their portfolio? Consider the new role of health in developing a sustainable tourism portfolio.

Do the goals need to be adapted ?
Is the market and volume still the same, what about the target groups: patients, investors, partners? Identify new potential consumers by reconsidering their needs: Business models must be adapted specifically to improve both efficiency and customer centricity. How is the current brand and positioning seen by guests?

What strategies can be put in place to sharpen positioning and branding?
How to renew or differentiate offers, treatments, pricing? Leverage the digital competence of the patients and utilize the pandemic digitization push. Transform traditional models by enhancing the measurement and collection of data, by creating e-health treatments and by implementing digital communication linked to artificial intelligence.

Finally tactics can be defined:
A communication concept along the guest's journey before, during, and after medical treatments driven by story-telling and target-group specific content. Communication tools, consumer touchpoints, timing, and media channels needs to be adapted flexibly and agilely.

HYGIENE FACTORS

However, some key prerequisites must be met when offering health related services, and these have remained the same during and post pandemic:

- Even more details and transparency of what the treatments and included services are about.
- Highly flexible booking conditions, free-of-charge cancellation options, and insurance to cover last-minute changes of travel plans, no matter for what reason travelers cancel their trip.
- Strict on-site hygiene standards and safety protocols to guarantee a healthy and secure stay.

These key conditions mirror the basic needs of today's travelers even though they are no real motivators to travel. They are rather to be understood as "hygiene factors" comparable to Frederick Herzberg's "Motivation-Hygiene Theory". Guests expect these environmental givens, and if hospitals or health hotels do not ensure them, all their marketing efforts will have been in vain.

HEALTH DIMENSIONS IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

No sustainability without health: The interconnection between health and tourism is multifaceted: multiple health benefits and impacts are linked to several different forms of tourism.



Graphics: World Health Organization, Putting health at the heart of tourism development in small countries of the WHO European Region, 2022

Sources:
World Tourism Organization (2021) The Economic Contribution of Tourism and the Impact of COVID-19, preliminary version. Madrid: UNWTO, pp. 19, 21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284423200>.

World Health Organization (2022) Putting health at the heart of tourism development in small countries of the WHO European Region. Policy brief. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe, pp. 5, 8, 11, 18. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

HERA European Spa Research Project: LOCAL HISTORIES AND EUROPEAN ENTANGLEMENTS

Over the last three years, the project investigated how the European spa town, with its characteristic institutions such as the baths, the sanitarium, the grand hotel, and the Kurpark, developed into a genuinely transnational public space.

Author: Dr. Christian Noack, Associate Professor at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands



Photo: Christian Noack

Dr. Christian Noack
Associate Professor at the
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Christian is associate professor at the University of Amsterdam, where he teaches in the East European studies chairgroup. His research interests are the past and present of tourism and travel in Europe, transnational memory and heritage and the history of the Soviet Empire. In geographical terms, he focuses on Russia, Ukraine, and Poland. Christian leads this research project.

Today, the transnational heritage of the European Spa culture is both celebrated and endangered. While the successful bid of eleven 'Great Spa Towns of Europe' for UNESCO World Heritage status in 2021 attests to the former, hundreds of other spas across the continent are ceasing to function as places of thermal cures, tourist destinations, and stages of social interaction. Others are struggling with the complexity of the material and immaterial dimensions of spa heritage.

The joint research project, 'The European spa as a transnational public space and a social metaphor', is funded by the HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) initiative of the European Union. Two historians and two literary scholars from the Universities of Amsterdam, London, Lund, and Berlin teamed up to develop a broad array of local research projects across Europe and supplemented these with in-depth case studies of selected spa towns. These lay bare the entanglements that facilitated the spread of the concept across Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries and how, slightly later, influenced the shape of seaside and climatic resorts as well.

Travels of Austrian Empress Elisabeth (Sissi) through European Spas, visualized in the project's nodegoat database.

On the basis of their research, the project members entered a wealth of data into their project's database, <https://www.theeuropeanspa.eu/crowdsourcing/index.html>. They opened this up to 'crowd sourcing' in 2021, inviting local experts and practitioners to add their knowledge about the European spas' historical and institutional development into the database. The database, built in the nodegoat technology environment, allows participants to visualize and map pan-European and local developments over time on interactive maps.

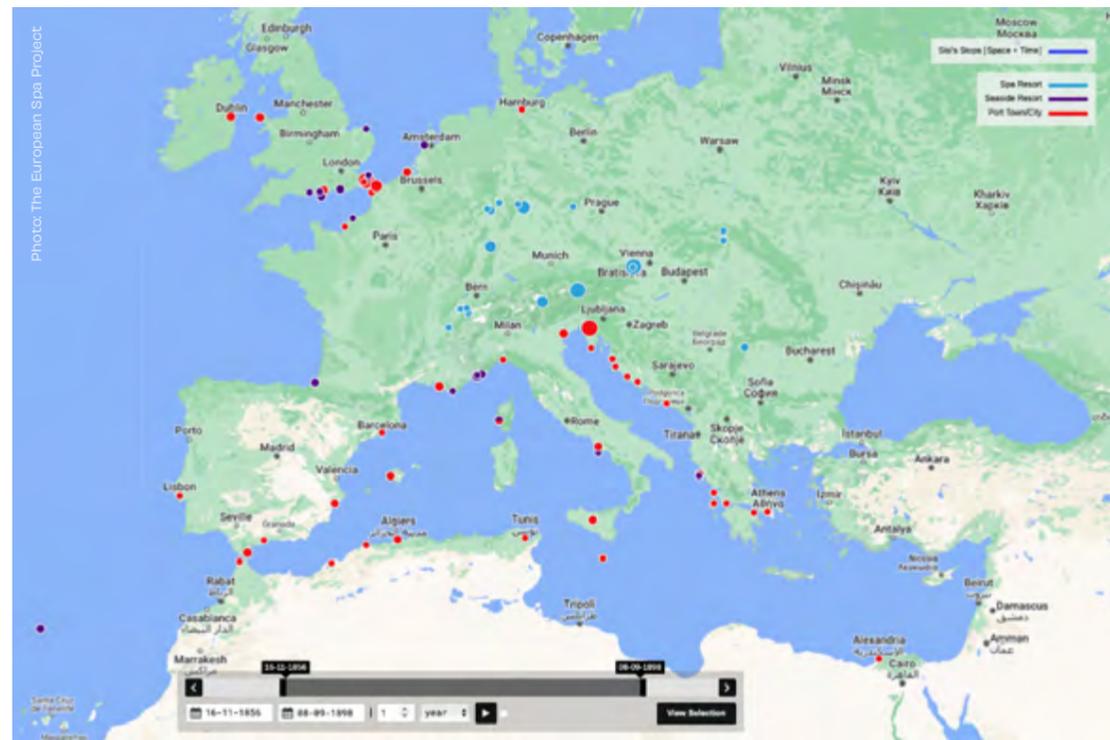


Photo: The European Spa Project

Two basic working hypotheses of the project, as reflected in the title, are (1) the understanding that the European spa has been a very important place politically in which both transnational encounters and national agendas take shape; and that, (2) throughout its existence, it has served as a social microcosm and metaphor. In the course of the project, both of the hypotheses were corroborated to an extent that exceeded the researchers' expectations. Another important hypothesis of the project was that the spas struggled to retain this cosmopolitan function in the longue durée. Indeed, the emergence of nation states and welfare states and the opening up of the spas and sanitariums for the 'masses' characterized the development of spa life and spa culture in the 'short' 20th century (1917-1989). The end of state-backed financing of spa cures in both Eastern and Western Europe in the 1980s and 1990s caused the economic demise of many resorts. That said, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s, discourses of health and hygiene pervaded social thinking. Not just in the authoritarian regimes of the time, i.e., the Soviet Union, Fascist Italy, or Nazi Germany, the spa, and the sanatorium in particular, were utilized as utopian (or dystopian) metaphors for the



„Winding down“ art intervention (artist Sarah Dillon) in the historic Kneippbad of Friedrichsbad (Baden-Baden, Germany, 2022), inviting to contemplate on the ambivalence of relaxation and escapism.

Photo: The European Spa Project

body of society in general. The project's researchers also noted that the social opening 'for the masses' changed (or 'profaned') the character of the spas. Whilst keeping the pan-European character in terms of their appearance, they definitely lost their importance as transnational public spaces.

Together with partners from different spa towns and spa organizations, the researchers tried to pinpoint these findings in a virtual exhibition that carved out the core elements of European spa culture, using local experiences and testimonies. This exhibition is offered for free to interested parties in the shape of printable posters in pdf format.

Moreover, the project looked at the representation of, and reflection on, spas and spa culture in fictional and non-fictional literature. The researchers traced the emergence and spread of 'spa literature' as an important genre in 19th century European culture, and the transformations it underwent in the 20th and early 21st centuries. They accomplished this with a massive corpus of fictional and non-fictional works, the quantity of which by far exceeded their

initial expectations. This enabled them to map spa literature and spa reading across and between several European locations and cultures, highlighting their various links and cross-references. These included hitherto less studied texts in Bulgarian, Catalan, Croatian, French, Polish, Swedish and Ukrainian and texts by both female and male authors. They also traced the development of a new sub-genre of 'sanitarium literature' emerging around the turn of the 20th century, which was closely related to the emergence of the social health policies described below. Of course, the most famous representation of these was Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, which continues to serve as a source of information for contemporary cultural productions, from Wes Anderson's films to the latest novel of Nobel prize winner Olga Tokarczuk. The team of researchers from the HERA project invited young artists to reflect on the meaning of spa culture through their own artwork.

The researchers also produced a series of podcasts on a virtual visit to the spa using quotes from European spa literature to guide the listeners. They can be downloaded for free on the website:

<https://www.theeuropeanspa.eu/materials/podcasts/index.html>.

Key learnings: The HERA project asked what this important body of transnational (and often intangible) cultural heritage may mean for a reevaluation of spas as health resorts from the perspective of the early 21st century. As mentioned above, there is an important element of nostalgia for the bygone splendor and cosmopolitan character of the spas on the one hand and a prevalent new, highly commodified, and individualized concept of ‘wellness’ that does not require the costly maintenance of the material and immaterial spa heritage on the other hand.

What is more, the concept and the practices of the European spa were put to a serious test by the COVID pandemic and the requirements of ‘social distancing’ during most of the project. The researchers noted somewhat contradictory developments when considering this development in relation to the question about the future of European spa towns: (1) An increasing commodification of preventive health care due to growing health awareness resulting from the pandemic, leading to further medicalization of the resorts (‘medical wellness’), and (2) a re-orientation of spa officials as well as state health policies with regard to both prophylaxis and aftercare (for example, in connection with long COVID). Obviously, a new awareness of spas as publicly accessible places of health prophylaxis and rehabilitation developed during the pandemic, while the competition in the highly commercialized ‘wellness industry’ continued.



Photo: The European Spa as a Transnational Public Space
Photograph by Henrike Schmidt

“Wandelhalle” (Promenade), Bad Oeynhausen



Photo: The European Spa as a Transnational Public Space
Photograph by Henrike Schmidt

“On the Red Carpet to Health”, Wiesbaden

The researchers and their partners are currently using this as a basis for a new research project focusing on four important aspects of Europe’s spa heritage in the 21st century. They plan to (1) monitor the opportunities and challenges of the UNESCO-protected ‘Great Spa Towns’ that were selected with a focus on the transfer of (2) best practices to hitherto less protected spa destinations. They expect to use the results to (3) contribute to theoretical and practical debates on how to deal with the challenging complexity of the tangible and intangible heritage of European spa culture. Last but not least, they (4) aim to address the need for a more comprehensive reevaluation of European spa heritage, including the hitherto largely ignored 20th century legacies.

GREEN SPAS AND PHARMACIES

How Healing Forests can add value to tourist destinations

Advertorial: BioCon Valley® GmbH, Germany

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is one of Germany’s sixteen federal states and is located in the far northeast of the country. It is rich in natural and multifaceted landscapes. Located on the Baltic Sea, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has more than 2,000 km of coastline. It also boasts Germany’s largest inland lake, the Müritz. With assets like these, it is no wonder that Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is one of the top tourist destinations in Germany. This includes health tourism, which, in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, is more than wellness and relaxation on the beach. A health vacation in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, individually tailored to your personal and health requirements, offers the essential components for achieving enhanced health: healthy food, appropriate exercise, and relaxation.

The first “International Congress on Forest and its Potential for Health” held at the seaside spa of Heringsdorf in 2017 prompted Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s wide-range of health tourism offerings to expand even further. Experts from all over the world, including experts in forestry, physicians, therapists, and other professionals, came together to explore how the numerous beneficial effects of forests could be used for prevention, therapy, and enhancement of health and well-being. Their thoughts and conclusions were summed up in the concept of “Healing Forests”.

Healing Forests can be understood as designated forest areas used to treat certain health conditions. Treatments in the forest, accompanied by trained therapists, are suitable for positively affecting the course of diseases and controlling the symptoms caused by them (tertiary prevention). Chronic diseases can be alleviated (palliation). In contrast to an ordinary forest, the suitability for therapeutic use is guaranteed in a Healing Forest.

Three healing forests have been designated in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern since 2017 and have since enriched and supplemented the local offerings in health and spa tourism. Six further healing forests are currently under development.

To promote internationalization of the Healing Forest concept, the “International Certification Office Healing Forest” (ICO) was founded in 2021. It is funded by the Ministry of Economics, Infrastructure, Tourism and Labor of the Federal State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and run by BioCon Valley® GmbH, the Health Economy Cluster Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The goal of the ICO is to support interested forest owners around the world in developing Healing Forests meeting the high standards elaborated in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. For this purpose, the ICO has established a procedure and a standardized certification system according to which



Photo: BioCon Valley GmbH

„Kreideküste“ National Park Jasmund

forests worldwide can be assessed and certified as soon as they meet the criteria of a Healing Forest.

The general idea behind the “Healing Forest” international certificate is to create an internationally recognized quality seal that guarantees forests of a specified quality and standard to make them suitable for therapeutic use. Therefore, whenever you see the unique “Healing Forest” seal and certificate, you can be sure that the forest meets the corresponding high standards and requirements. This makes the “Healing Forest” certificate a quality promise that can be trusted worldwide.

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www.bioconvalley.org
www.healing-forest-certification.org

SLOVENIA'S GREEN WELLNESS ROUTE

A new way to combine culture, wellness, and cycling through a sustainability-minded country



Author: Alex Crevar, Slovenia. **Photos:** Matevž Hribar, SLOVENIA GREEN Consortium

Over the past few years, Slovenia's tourism industry has been enthusiastically creating cycling routes that combine all of the best elements of travel: rich culture, active adventure, respect for communities, and mental and physical wellness. Arguably one of the most successful and exciting of the routes created, the Slovenian Green Wellness Route (SGWR) was launched last summer.

The SGWR is a bicycle route that makes it easy for travelers to take advantage of the country's assets: unmatched scenery and terrain, sustainable and responsible travel, amazing history and culture, topped with local food and wine. And, at the end each day, the bike ride ends with a session in one of the country's world-class spas — members of the Slovenian Natural Spas Association — with rejuvenating treatments for mind, body, and soul. The route, which caters to all skill levels, is ideal for cyclists on touring bikes and e-bikes alike.

The SGWR showcases many of the destinations within the Association of Slovenian Natural Spas Association, which works

tirelessly to keep its 13 members — the top spas in Slovenia — focused on best practices with Slovenia Green tourism and making guests feel at home.

“What this wellness route does is provide travelers with a way to enjoy Slovenia on an intimate level,” says Iztok Altbauer, managing director of the Slovenian Spas Association. “Cyclists get to see our country and its traditions at a speed that allows for real discovery.”

The route weaves through the peaceful countryside of Eastern Slovenia that is blessed with abundant natural thermal water. It passes through Slovenia Green-certified locations where travelers can experience gorgeous landscapes. The terrain offers levels of difficulty to satisfy every cyclist's needs, from beginners discovering the joy of using their own power to fuel an incredible vacation and those seeking leisurely cycling to the more adventurous on the lookout for new challenges.





Q&A

Experts' Chatroom:

One question – multiple answers

HTI News Magazine interviews experts about health tourism

Some examples of how to deal with the new energy challenges:

How are your business and/or services affected by the energy crisis? If so, what measures are planned?

Here, in “the world’s most sustainable country,” the SGWR always keeps in mind that it is the power of its communities and their unique cultures that make this Central European nation so magnificent. Travelers are provided with all the information they need for a relaxing and revitalizing vacation at the therapeutic spas scattered across Slovenia.

The Slovenia Green Wellness Route, which is actually a loop, begins in Slovenia’s capital, Ljubljana. The route first leads north toward Kamnik before heading east to Maribor and then through the Pannonian Region before heading south across the Drava and Sava Rivers. Some 16 days later – for those who decide to travel the entire route, – the loop eventually winds back to

the Slovenian capital. Cyclists can choose to do the entire route or portions of it by using Slovenia’s convenient train system.

The SGWR is a route providing visitors with an unforgettable holiday experience, complete with awesome natural scenery, rich food and wine, green-certified destinations, and Slovenia’s healing thermal waters. However, as always, the real star of this tour through Slovenia is the Slovenian people, who welcome the opportunity to share their lives and country with travelers from all over the world.

<https://slovenia-spa.si/>



Sam Awad
CEO & Founder of GMTP –
Global Medical Top Partners

In our role as medical tourism specialists, we represent clinics and rehabilitation centers by arranging treatments for international patients. Our company has been deeply affected by the energy crisis in the provision of these services. Accommodation costs have gone up and the costs of rehabilitation treatment and surgery have to new highs.

As a small company, we are trying not to pass the burden on to the patient, for example, by offering them a 5-10% discount on all our services. Making the patient feel safe and confident is of paramount importance, prompting us to cover the major share of the higher costs resulting from increases in energy bills. These new prices reflect the lack of stability in the financial system and purchasing power of our clientele, which is declining daily. We are making every effort to restore our patients’ confidence while at

the same time taking care not to jeopardize our company’s standing and sustainability. This is a very delicate and challenging balancing act that we are determined to perform successfully.



Dr. Anne Rabes
Manager of the Healing Forest
International Certification Office
BioCon Valley® GmbH

In contrast to other businesses in the industry, the energy crisis has of course only affected the “Healing Forest” product to a minor extent. It doesn’t take any major energy resources to use forests as a natural resource for medical therapeutic purposes. Even though the preparation and maintenance of the forest requires energy, the amount needed is limited. In addition, the use of a Healing Forest is less about technology and more about people. In particular, trained forest therapists are indispensable for ensuring that the health-promoting

effects of the Healing Forest are optimally used.

Classic health tourism offerings such as wellness, spas, and the like are very energy-intensive in terms of operation (heating, lighting, etc.). In this respect, Healing Forests can increasingly be used as a complementary “product” in the future, enabling destinations to offer guests alternative options. With only a minimum of energy consumption, a Healing Forest can be used for medical and health tourism all year round, with each season having its own peculiar charm.

The energy balance of a Healing Forest is consistently positive: Establishing a certified Healing Forest is not energy intensive compared to other “products” in the field of tourism. The forest is already there and, depending on the initial situation, only minor interventions are needed to prepare it for use as a Healing Forest.

Especially in times of crisis, people like to reflect on the beauty of nature and decelerate, for example, while recharging their batteries in the forest. Healing Forests are an alternative sustainable concept for energy and resource saving tourism.



Photo: Iztok Altbauer

Iztok Altbauer
Director Association of Slovenian Natural Spas

In Terme Krka and most other spas, business are consistently ensuring a sustainable reduction of energy costs and regularly carry out energy checks. Much has been done in recent years to reduce energy and save natural resources.

At Thermana, for example, several measures have been taken in line with Eco Daisies and the Slovenia Green label. This includes investments in renewable resources as well as initiation of construction of the first solar power plant on the roof of the Thermana Park Hotel. A second solar

power plant that will also provide shade in addition to the generation of electricity is being built on an outdoor parking lot next to the Park complex.

However, in some businesses, such as Sava Tourism, the higher energy costs have not yet been felt as intensely, because are still using energy products with lease agreements that were concluded before the energy crisis. Here, several energy-saving measures have been implemented in recent years as part of a more sustainable concept of operation, and such as energy-saving light bulbs, waste compression, and energy rehabilitation in buildings involving heat insulation and energy systems. In the long term, the focus will be on the introduction of new alternative energy products, such as solar energy for the preparation of hot sanitary water, and additional use of geothermal energy.

At ZREČE THERMAL SPA, effective monitoring of the consumption of raw materials and energy products has been prioritized and steps have been taken to quickly and effectively adapt to the actual conditions, this including energy management and optimization of operational processes. Neverthe-

less, due to the significant increase in costs, mainly in connection with energy products and raw materials, businesses have been forced to adjust their prices for individual packages and programs with increases averaging 7 % compared to the start of the summer season in June 2022.

Tourism providers are also working on proposals to the state to mitigate cost increases in the tourism industry.



Photo: Dr. Sophie Chung

Dr. Sophie Chung
Founder and CEO of Qunomedical, a Digital Health Company

Fortunately, we only feel the effects of the energy crisis indirectly through inflation on the patient side and higher energy costs for hospitals. Inflation also means that we are reaching new customer groups, because patients are becoming more price-sensitive overall. This is a big opportunity for our platform to grow further, as we provide broad access to cutting-edge medicine at a fair price.

On the hospital side, our new Qunosuite software is playing out its advantages. With Qunosuite, we enable patient relationship management and thus help hospitals to attract and retain patients with the help of software without significantly increasing costs. With both our platform and our software, we pursue the vision of a better and more humane healthcare experience.

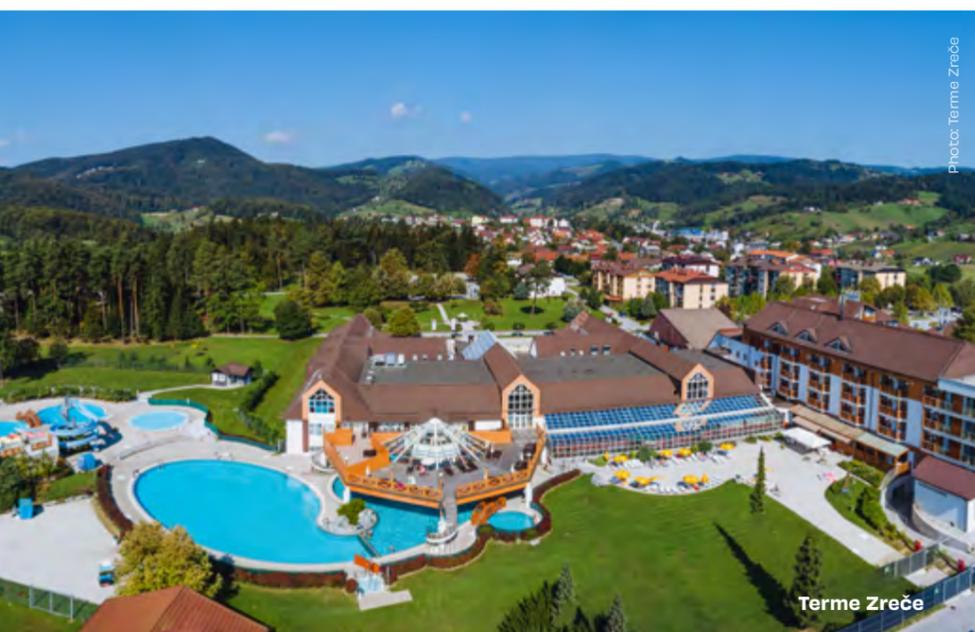


Photo: Terme Zreče

Terme Zreče



PROUD OF OUR PARTNERS



THANK YOU

I FEEL
SLOVENIA



SLOVENIAN
SPAS

Now
is the right time
to visit the
Slovenian Spas!

Strengthen your health,
mind and body and rise
your immune system.



www.slovenia-spa.si