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Wellness Tourism Geography

Wellness tourism involves travelling with therapeutic and health purposes, as well as prevention of various diseases. There are three main types of wellness resorts: balneological, mud and climatic. The main factors of balneological resorts are natural mineral waters. Mineral waters help to treat the diseases of gastrointestinal tract, cardiovascular, nervous and musculoskeletal systems. Mud resorts are attached to the fields of therapeutic mud (peloids). Mud therapy is useful in the pathology of the joints, nervous system and gynaecological diseases. Climatic health resorts are based on weather factors used with treatment and prophylactic purposes.

Transitional resorts are different from three major types of the resorts. They use more natural therapeutic factors.

The main areas of therapeutic and health tourism are in Central and Eastern Europe as well as Western Europe. The socialist countries also have a rich tradition of spa industry and a wide range of healing climatic resources.

In Russia, in the northern part of the Caucasus, there is a pool of mineral water. There is a group of the spa resorts “the Caucasian Mineral Waters”.

The Black Sea resorts of Ukraine such as Yevpatoriia, Yalta, Feodosiia and Alushta are popular among the tourists of CIS.

The Czech Republic is a leader in balneological treatment among all European countries. Karlovy Vary is the largest and most well-known Czech health resort. Every year it is visited by about 50 thousand people from more than 70 countries for the treatment and about 2 million tourists. The resort has 12 sources. “Vrzhidlo” is the most powerful among them. Chemical composition of Carlsbad mineral water contains sodium, sulphur and sodium chloride. Apart from Karlovy Vary there are Teplice Spa, which is the world’s first radon spa, Jachimov sanatorium, Marianske

Lazne, Frantiskovy Lazne, Luhacovice and Janske Lazne resorts in the Czech Republic.

Hungary is the main competitor of the Czech Republic in the European market of wellness tourism. It is rightly called a zone of thermal baths. Tourist flows rush in Budapest and Lake Balaton. One of the attractions of Budapest is considered the eastern bath.

Poland can present balneological and climatic resorts to the market of wellness tourism. The main seaside resorts are Swinoujscie, Kamien Pomorski and Kolobrzeg; they are located on the Baltic coast. Mountain climatic resorts of the country are concentrated in the Sudeten Mountains and the Carpathians.

Wellness and health tourism is developing in Bulgaria, Romania and the former Yugoslav Republics. These countries have access to the warm seas and offer wellness programs mainly in the resorts of seaside climatic type. In addition, Croatia has opened an exclusive field of naftalan, variety of oils which can be used in medicine. Slovakia is gradually changing the image of the country of ski tourism.

Western European countries differ from others by the deep traditions of resort business. There are resorts of world importance: Baden-Baden and Wiesbaden in Germany, Vichy in France, Bath in England, Spa in Belgium, etc.

The overwhelming majority of the resorts in Western Europe are concentrated in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They are presented by two main types: balneological and climatic. In Germany there are Baden-Baden and Wiesbaden, the most well-known spa resorts are Badenweiler and Baiersbronn Wildbad, Bad Homburg, Aachen and others. Among climatic spas there are mountain or forest resorts (Quedlinburg, Oberhof, Fussen) and coastal resorts (Wangerooge Dame, Travemünde Heiligenhafen, Flensburg).

Austria is proud of its numerous resorts. Balneological resort Badgastayn is the most famous. It is located in the south province of Salzburg, in the valley of Gastein. It is based on hot radon sources which help to treat the diseases of nervous, cardiovascular, bronchi-pulmonary systems, musculoskeletal, hormonal disorders.

Switzerland is popular as the direction of therapeutic tourism. The Swiss and foreign guests visit balneological resorts (Baden, Bad Ragaz) and especially mountain climatic resorts (Arosa, Davos, St. Moritz, Zermatt, etc.) due to the well-deserved reputation among the visitors. Crans-Montana is a large phytotherapeutic centre.

The market of wellness tourism in Southern Europe is represented mainly by Italy. Its balneological resorts are focused in the north-east of the country in Emilia-Romagna region and on the island of Ischia, which are not only rich in thermal waters, but also in therapeutic mud.

Spain, Portugal and Greece attract tourists with climatic seaside resorts which are known as recreational and entertaining areas.

Wellness and health tourism is underdeveloped in Northern Europe. Seaside climatic resorts of Denmark and the Netherlands, lakeside resorts in Norway, Finland and Sweden are predominantly internal value.

On the American continent the undisputed market leader in wellness tourism is the USA. The main type of North American resorts is balneological. Famous resorts rich in mineral waters are Mammoth Springs, Heber Springs, Hot Springs which are located in the southern and central parts of the United States, in the state of Arkansas. Climatic resorts of Long Beach in the suburbs of New York, Hatteras on the Atlantic coast, in the state of North Carolina, Miami Beach, Florida, San Diego and Santa Cruz in California are also popular.

Tourists also visit Israel resorts such as Ein Bokek, Ein Bukek, Ein Gedi, Neve Zohar and others. The Dead Sea has a unique combination of natural healing factors – thermal mineral waters, therapeutic mud and biometeorological special conditions.

In South Asia, East and Southeast Asia wellness and health tourism is poorly developed. Alternative medicine, herbal medicine and acupuncture are not so attractive for the foreign tourists.

Australia has all natural resources necessary for health tourism. Large balneological resorts Daylesford, Mork, Springwood are concentrated in the south-east of the mainland. Climatic seaside resorts in Australia are also known in the

world. Gold Coast, Daydream Island, Cairns are considered an ideal place for the rest and treatment.

In Africa wellness and health tourism is gaining momentum. Resorts of Tunisia have growing popularity.

On the northern coast of Africa there are seaside climatic resorts. In Egypt there are Hurghada, which is recognized as a tourist centre on the Red Sea, Sharm el-Sheikh, which is a resort of international class, Dahab and Nuweiba. In Morocco there are Agadir, Mohammedia, Tangier, Al Hoceima, etc. On the coast of the Indian Ocean seaside resorts of Kenya are located; there are Mombasa, Keepin, Malindi, Lamu, Kilifi, etc.

The market of wellness tourism is changing at present. Traditional resorts are becoming increasingly multifunctional wellness centres designed for a wide range of consumers. It can be explained by the growing numbers of people who want to keep fit and need rehabilitation programs.

Currently a global market of medical services is formed with infrastructure (health management, accreditation bodies, agencies, wellness tourism and tour operators, specialists in the field of medical travel). Wellness tourism remains one of the most promising trends in tourism industry.

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