

WELLNESS TOURISM

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Introduction. Health and wellness tourism is now an international trend set by the health conscious consumers seeking to enhance their well being through their travel experiences. This type of consumer seeks to look and feel better, to lose weight, to slow the effects of aging, to relieve pain or discomfort, to manage stress, or to partake in the use of natural supplements like vitamins and minerals to improve their health.

Wellness tourism is travel for the purpose of promoting health and well-being through physical, psychological, spiritual, or emotional activities.

Wellness is a state of health which comprises an overall sense of wellbeing and sees a person as consisting of body, mind and spirit. Lifestyle and self-responsibility for health are paramount in the quest for a better quality of life. Wellness is the optimal state of health of individuals and groups. This definition takes us beyond the transformation of the individual through self-development and personal fulfilment towards a sense of social responsibility. The concept of wellness takes this idea even further and includes domains such as physical, mental and spiritual health, self-responsibility, social harmony, environmental sensitivity, intellectual development, emotional well-being, and occupational satisfaction

The wellness industry encompasses everything from spa, food and nutrition, complementary and alternative medicine, to active-aging, and fitness, to workplace wellness, medical and wellness tourism. With regards to tourism, spa and wellness tourism are often considered synonymous and the same can be said of medical and health tourism. Yet all four have unique and different meanings and are manifested in various ways around the world. There are two focal concerns of wellness:

- The realization of the fullest potential of an individual physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually and economically.
- The fulfilment of one's role expectations in the family, community, place of worship, workplace and other settings long-term. Travel can make us happier three ways: 1) with the anticipation and planning of the trip 2) enjoying the vacation 3) relishing the memories that often last a lifetime. Tourism can enhance our well-being and quality of life, especially if we do it regularly enough, and we may even experience moments of joy. Research studies suggest that going on trips can affect meaningful change, increase work productivity and as importantly, improve health by enhancing sleep and remarkably, decreased the incident of heart disease. These benefits can be enhanced significantly if we engage in health or wellness tourism specifically. That is to say, we travel with the explicit aim or principle motivation of improving our physical and mental condition. This can include improving emotional well-being, such as stress reduction and calming the mind, as well as healing or rejuvenating the body.

Conclusions. Wellness tourism is one of the fastest growing forms of international and domestic tourism and is in step with consumer and stakeholder interest in the burgeoning wellness industry. This trend is not expected to change in the coming 5-10 years. Wellness goes beyond relaxation and is a key element of lifestyle, which is a significant opportunity for the travel and tourism industry, since people following a wellness lifestyle will look for similar services when they are travelling. Wellness tourism is more than spa tourism and includes healthy cuisine, specific fitness or body-mind-spirit regimes, active-ageing or longevity programs, learning, adventure, spiritual enlightenment, personal growth and has the ability to enhance lives

References:

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