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Passport to Well-Being

Health-minded jetsetters are finding more and more high-end resorts creating unparalleled packages that offer rejuvenation and transformation.

BY JORDI LIPPE-MCGRAW

At most high-end resorts, a spa is as standard as Egyptian cotton sheets and concierge services, but it's no longer enough to only offer massages and detoxifying skin treatments. Wellness is the new wealthy and discerning jetsetters are looking for higher level spa services—and are willing to spend to get exclusive access.

According to the Global Wellness Institute, health-minded tourism revenues grew to \$563.2 billion from \$494.1 billion in just two years.

"High-end healing is on the rise as travelers are now seeking vacations and moments that can help them relax, destress, detox and allow time to connect with their self," says Rakhee Lalvani, VP of Taj Hotels corporate team. "The more hyper-connected we get with the rise in technological innovation, the more the need to switch off and retreat to a spa."

But the term spa is so general. After all, what hotel doesn't have at least one treatment room for facials and massages and space for yoga? That's why major hospitality players in the saturated market are looking for ways to stand out. That has bred a new trend-within-a-trend where luxury hotels are offering elevated and exclusive wellness experiences only available at their properties.

Some destinations are setting a higher bar by welcoming just a limited number of guests at any one time. For example, the Golden Door in Escondido, California only allows 40 guests per week to attend. The Ranch Malibu hosts just 18 guests at a time for their wellness retreats, and COMO Shambhala in Bali has under 50 rooms available, all of which are privately perched in the jungle.

Another method of appealing to clients is by offering access to big names in the wellness industry who host retreats, create classes, or develop spa treatments, allowing visitors to become immersed in their teachings.

The Four Seasons, for example, has rolled out programming across their portfolio: The Four Seasons Ho-

tel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills enlisted famous energy healer Jeannette von Johnsbach to perform BioMeditation balancing energy services during which she removes guests' negative energetic blockages. And the Four Seasons Hotel New York Downtown just launched a Resident Healer Program where they rotate offerings from world-renowned healers like Deganit Nuur, creator of The Nuurvana Method, Rashia Bell, creator of The Cristalline, and Snow Shimazu, creator of Air Beautiful.

"Our guests may be sleep deprived, overworked, jet-lagged, tech-obsessed, overindulged city dwellers that want a balance of traditional and new innovative experiences, and it's our job to provide creative offerings that deliver," says Tara Cruz, the spa director at Four Seasons Hotel New York Downtown. "Our Resident Healing sessions will allow you to gain new insight, new perception, and clarity. All unique sessions provide a one-of-a-kind experience that creates a sense of balance and understanding."

Montage Hotels & Resorts recently announced a partnership with celebrity wellness coach Kelly LeVeque while The Spa at The Ritz-Carlton, Los Angeles collaborated with California-favorite House of Intuition to create crystal healing therapies for guests. The Mandrake Hotel in London enlisted celeb-favorite practitioner Louka Leppard to create a Tulayoga program for the property that combines massage, inverted yoga, meditation and the use of breath to release withheld emotion, physical tension, and stress. "A treatment with Louka is one of the most calming and restorative experiences I have had in a long time," actress Sienna Miller once boasted.

But more than just having big names in the wellness industry attached to big names in the luxury hospitality industry, high-end properties across the globe are going out of their way to be the star attraction for people who travel to cater to their wellness fantasies.

Inkaterra Hacienda Urubamba, a contemporary hotel located in the heart of Urubamba Valley, offers many authentic Andean

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SOPHISTICATED TRAVELLERS ARE LOOKING WELL BEYOND THE RESORT SPA, SEEKING TO RETURN FROM HOLIDAY FEELING LEANER, FITTER AND MORE MENTALLY ACUTE.”

—SAMANTHA GEE



The Zemi Beach House
Hotel & Spa in Anquillo
recreates the bathing
rituals practiced by the
indigenous Taino Indians





The Mandrake Spiritual Wellness Center at the Mandrake Hotel London (top), and The Spa at The Ritz Carlton, Los Angeles (bottom), offer healing therapies administered by celeb-favorite wellness gurus.

wellness experiences and treatments. For example, guests can partake in the Payment to the Earth ceremony—an ancient ritual for giving thanks to the Andean gods, performed by a local shaman—and a unique Pachamanca dining experience when a traditional Peruvian dish is cooked underneath the ground.

Rosewood Mayakoba just introduced the Marry Oneself Journey. The four-day personal retreat focuses on self-love, was inspired by ancient Mayan traditions, and is designed to re-connect guests with their inner selves. The personalized luxury experience includes a series of guided rituals led by the hotel's resident shaman and spa experiences, culminating with a ceremony of self-commitment.

Zemi Beach House Hotel & Spa in Anguilla recreated the bathing rituals of the Taino Indians, who are indigenous to the island. And Taj Hotels offers locally-inspired services at their signature Jiva Spas, like the saffron-infused bath at Taj Usha Kiran Palace, which is accompanied by live classical music akin to ancient royal traditions undertaken before an important coronation or wedding ceremony.

Even Las Vegas, the City of Sin, is jumping on the wellness wagon. The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas is one of only three hotels in North America to have a traditional Turkish hammam.

"The world of luxury hotels is evolving rapidly, and sophisticated travellers are looking well beyond the resort spa, seeking to return from holiday feeling leaner, fitter and more mentally acute," says Samantha Gee, Executive Director of Zen Savannah, a luxury travel-planning company. "This is where a good quality health retreat can play a key role, providing a kick-start to a healthier lifestyle with sound advice, a motivating environment and, above all, the time to focus on yourself. Because of that, this trend isn't going anywhere any time soon." ■



PHOTOGRAPHY: RITZ CARLTON SPA, LOS ANGELES