

Your next trip might change your life

TRAVEL By Elaine Glusac - The New York Times



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The spa has left the building. Industry growth indicates those places that once dispensed pampering are expanding into adventure trips, hotel design and cultural programming under the banner of wellness.

"Wellness travel has traditionally been associated with the spa experience," said Anne Dimon, president of the Wellness Tourism Association. "Today it's more about food and opportunities for fitness and to be out in nature."

Once confined to the spa silo, wellness has seeped into other areas. The Peninsula Hot Springs near Melbourne, Australia, is adding seven new mineral pools that face an amphitheater, allowing patrons to soak while taking in a concert. Spa directors work with the room divisions of Mandarin Oriental hotels on ways to encourage sleep. It's even behind the scenes: The spa staff at the Barceló Gran Faro Los Cabos must attend morning yoga.

Creative and cultural programming are joining the wellness fold, too. At the new Amanyangyun near Shanghai, guests can learn the meditative crafts of calligraphy and painting. In fall, the spa brand Six Senses will open five small lodges in Bhutan that guests can hike between, exposing them to different



aspects of the culture.

"Before it was experiential travel and now everyone's talking about transformative travel," said Beth McGroarty, research director of the Global Wellness Institute, a nonprofit devoted to health and wellness education. "Transformative travel is typically defined as something that wraps you up in story, is extremely emotional, challenges you and shakes up your life."

The new developments may make you buffer, smarter, healthier and better fed.

— Stay at the Gym

The fitness chain Equinox is building its first hotel in New York, but already other hotels have made expansive gyms their key amenity.

In Chicago, the new Hotel at Midtown offers guests entry to the Midtown Athletic Club, with access to indoor and outdoor lap pools, 16 tennis courts, a cycling studio, boxing gym and hundreds of weekly group classes. The restaurant offers healthy grain bowls as well as more indulgent duck-fat tater tots (rooms from \$189).

Also a membership club, the 150-room Carillon Miami Wellness Resort features a two-story fitness center with a rooftop pool, rock-climbing wall and more than 300 fitness classes weekly, including beach boot camp. The 70,000-square-foot spa has a hydrotherapy circuit, and wellness experts include a "grocery guru" to teach healthy shopping practices (rooms from \$495).

— New Wellness Destinations

Women-only tour operators have long worked wellness into their itineraries, combining hiking or safari trips with yoga and meditation. The 8-acre SuperShe Island in Finland, opening this month with cabins, saunas and wellness activities, will welcome 10 women at a time (weeklong stays are 4,000 euros, or about \$4,700).

The Catskills property that once hosted the classic borscht-belt Kutsher's resort will soon reopen with the YO 1 Wellness Center. Fronting Bailey Lake, the 131-room resort will offer ayurvedic therapy, eight yoga rooms, 36 therapy rooms and a 213-seat theater (rooms from \$900, all-inclusive).

The 160-room, wellness-focused Waldhotel, among four hotels at the new Bürgenstock Resort Lake Lucerne in Switzerland, is home to Health & Medical Excellence, a 37,000-square-foot medical center staffed by doctors with specialties like dermatology and orthopedics, offering checkups, weight loss plans and other services (three-day programs from 4,040 Swiss francs, or about \$4,045).

Among more affordable newcomers, the 189-room Civana resort in Carefree, Arizona, has five to seven complimentary fitness and enrichment classes daily, such as spinning, juicing and art and meditation (rooms from \$169, plus a \$25 activity fee).

Next fall, Miraval Austin will open in Texas with its own farm and chicken coop, and a kitchen featuring classes in conscious cooking that consider environmental effects as well as nutrition.

— Shipshape Cruises

Most cruise ships offer fitness areas and spa services. Seabourn cruises has teamed with the integrative medicine guru Dr. Andrew Weil to offer itineraries in Alaska and the Mediterranean.

But in May 2019, the industry will get its first wellness cruise line in Blue World Voyages. According to Gene Meehan, its founder and chairman, the plan is to turn an existing 900-passenger ship into a 350-passenger one, making the top level a spa and relaxation deck. Fitness facilities, including yoga and spinning studios, golf and soccer simulators, and batting cages will fill another level; a bike shop will outfit passengers for rides during port calls. Seven-night itineraries in the Mediterranean will start around \$3,400 per person.

— Stillness Sessions

To escape the 24/7 demands of technology, many are seeking solace in nature or silence. “The values of the monastery — meditation, mindfulness, silence, contemplation and community — are being secularized and redone as resorts,” McGroarty said.

When it's not holding retreats, Eremito in Umbria, Italy, modeled on a historic monastery, offers workshops in Gregorian chant. Mandarin Oriental holds Silent Nights, where conversation is discouraged. In Quebec City, the 17th-century Le Monastère des Augustines has rooms in the original cloister, breakfast in silence, workshops in painting and chances to hear the nuns at vespers.

— Tech-Diagnostic Trips

Medical wellness vacations have taken a tech turn with programs to analyze DNA, and prescribing fitness and nutrition routines based on the results at destination spas like Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Arizona, and Lenox, Massachusetts.

Near San Diego, Cal-a-Vie Health Spa's WellnessFX program uses blood tests to measure cardiovascular, metabolic, hormonal and nutritional health. Guests meet with the staff dietitian to discuss eating and lifestyle recommendations. The spa also offers body scanning to monitor body shape, and headbands that monitor brain activity during meditation.

— Extreme Fitness

For athletic travelers, a new category of extreme fitness trips introduces new challenges. Wim Hof, nicknamed the Iceman, has set records for withstanding extremes, including swimming below ice. Fans can learn his method, which is grounded in breathing exercises, mental focus and exposure to cold on seven-day trips to the Spanish Pyrenees in June and July (1,799 euros).

In June, Le Grand Bellevue in Gstaad, Switzerland, will introduce a four-night retreat with "wild swimming" in Alpine lakes, mountain biking, trail running, mountaintop heli-yoga and food foraging.

At the BodyHoliday resort on St. Lucia, guests can sign up for the island quadrathlon, a four-sport tour of the Caribbean island that includes a 6-mile mountain bike ride, a 2 1/2-mile run and hill climb, rappelling and kayaking 1 mile, and a half-mile back to the resort.