

# WELLNESS TOURISM IN AUSTRIA: THE BOOM IS OVER



The days of new wellness tourism records in Austria are over. According to the publisher of independent wellness hotel guide „Relax Guide“, the struggling economy combined with an increased competition led to a stagnation in room prices. This does not come as an encouragement to guests, because such a stagnation can lead to sharp declines in quality and thus local wellness tourism suffers.

The average price increase compared to previous year was at 1.04 %, which was even below the inflation rate. “This is the lowest increase we have seen so far,” said Christian Werner at the presentation of the 17th “Relax Guides”. In the 20 previous years, the average price increase was at 4.3%, last year it amounted to 6.6%.

**Guests are not going to reap any benefits, as such a stagnation will probably lead to a decline in housing quality.** “It is not hard to imagine how service and food quality will suffer as a result,” said Werner. Consequently, most wellness hotels were not able to improve their performance in 2015. 49 hotels, which were examined by “Relax Guide” for the most recent edition, received comparably worse scores than last year. Only 29 hotels were able to improve their services.

However according to Werner, especially quality can save a wellness tourism establishment from losses. Hotels, which at least received the Lily Award from the testers (the Guide’s quality seal), were able to succeed in spite of higher room prices. “Guests are aware that wellness does not come cheap. This is why they are willing to pay more for consistently high quality,” remarked Werner.

**The main point of criticism for Austrian wellness tourism remains the large discrepancy between promised quality and reality.** “We had to deal with processed food, unacceptably small sauna zones, and primary roads in front of hotel entrances. Or pools which could hardly fit ornamental fishes,” said Werner.

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