

# Medical Tourism Worldwide from Past to Present

Before the days of conventional medicine there was a strong relationship between religion and healthcare. Depending on the natural resources available, each region developed unique healing methods. Since medical progress varied depending on the region, when word spread of effective treatments, people travelled to cure their ailments out of necessity.

Today medical knowledge is accepted and shared on a global level. This offers potential patients an opportunity to choose the most suitable treatment, whether the choice is based on finances, preference of natural methods, privacy, expertise, and the list goes on.

This article will take you through medical tourism from the past and present.



## Ancient Greece

The Asclepia Temples were dedicated to the mythological Greek god of medicine. These temples were often located near natural healing sources such as mineral springs. Most of these temples housed snake nurseries where snakes were farmed for mystic healing rituals. People from all over would journey to these temples in order to receive medical treatment.

Today, Greece is still actively participating in the medical tourism industry by meeting western standards while offering low cost cosmetic and dental treatments.

As for the snakes, there is a spa in Northern Israel which offers snake massages using six non-venomous snakes. This treatment is said to alleviate muscle pain and tension. The big snakes provide

a deep tissue massage, while the little ones lightly massage the skin.

### **India - As Early As 3000 B.C.**

With the establishment of the Harappan Civilization, India became a trade center for travelers seeking spices, jewels, cotton, and ivory. The knowledge of Indian religion including the therapeutic mental and physical meditation system of yoga as well as the healing methods of Ayurvedic medicine slowly started to spread throughout the Eastern and Western worlds. Medical travelers and spiritual students traveled to India to seek out such treatments.

Today, in addition to specializing in the traditional methods, India has become a medical tourism hub. Tourists are now flocking to India's high standards, low costs and well known modern medical care facilities.



### **Switzerland & Austria - 2000 B.C.**

The hill tribes in what is presently known as St. Moritz, Switzerland recognized the health benefits of drinking and bathing in iron-rich mineral springs. Archeologists found the same bronze drinking cups used by these tribes in the thermal springs of France and Germany. This indicates that there was some form of health "sharing" between these cultures.

Today spas in Switzerland, Austria and many other countries attract tourists seeking to ease their muscle and joint pains in the mineral rich hot springs.

### **Medieval Japan**

Hot mineral springs called Onsen became popular throughout the nation due to their healing properties. The warrior clans soon took notice of these springs and began using them to alleviate pain, heal wounds, and recuperate from their battles.

Today people still go to Japan's mineral springs to treat muscle pain. Japan has also become known

for their cosmetic surgeries and treatments.



### **Egypt - 1248 A.D.**

In 1248 the Mansuri Hospital in Cairo was erected. This hospital was the most advanced healthcare facility of the time. With the capacity to care for 8,000 in-patients, the Mansuri hospital stood on a creed to serve everyone regardless of their race, religion or status. People came from all over the world to be treated at Cairo's hospital.

Today, Egypt is not one of the major players in the industry, but they are developing their medical tourism services.

### **Turkey - Early 1800s**

In the early 1800s hot springs were found in the Kangal region of Turkey. Thermal pools were built in the 1900s, and they were opened to the public in 1963. The most unique element of these thermal springs are the tiny little fish living in them known as *garra rufa* - more commonly referred to as the "Dr. Fish". Doctor Fish feed on dead, unhealthy and scaly skin cells offering an effective treatment for dermatological conditions such as psoriasis and eczema. The mineral rich springs are known for treating skin diseases but have also been reported to treat rheumatic disease, neurologic disorders, orthopedic problems and several more.

To this day, people travel from around the world to receive treatment in Turkey. These fish have become so wide spread that many spas in Japan and other countries around the world have incorporated them into their services.

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