

HEALTH TOURISM - CANADA, UK, AND ISRAEL ON THE TOP



Health tourism has established itself as a vital part of the industry. It is no surprise that the number of people travelling for treatment is constantly on the rise, as well as the revenues of the segment.

The market of wellness and health tourism is experiencing constant growth. Both Western and Eastern Europe have registered market increases. **In 2017, the Western European health and wellness market is expected to reach a figure of €146,407.5 million.** The Eastern European market is expected to reach numbers of about €27,698.4 million.

These numbers only stress the significance and size of the segment. Since 2012, the Western European health and wellness market has grown by about €16 million from €130,746.6 million to the number mentioned above. Meanwhile the Eastern European market has risen by approximately €7 million from €20,948.8 million in 2012. These numbers are based on the elaboration from the Euromonitor.

Globally speaking, according to an index developed by Fetscherin & Stephano in 2016, Canada (76.9) leads the world in health tourism. It is followed by the UK (74.8) and Israel (74.8). The top 15 also consists of some surprising countries such as Jordan or the Philippines. But there are many established countries such as Germany, Japan, France or South Korea.

According to another index made by the International Healthcare Research Centre, the top European health tourism destinations are the United Kingdom (74.87), Germany (71.9) and France (71.22), with Italy and Spain just behind.

The size of the global wellness market is also expanding. For 2017, it is expected that this market will reach about \$678.5 billion, according to elaborations based on the Global Spa Summit. This is a significant increase from the \$438.6 billion in 2012.

Many countries have also experienced high growth rates in terms of wellness tourism. According to estimates made at the ITB fair in Berlin, Russia (13.1) has shown the biggest growth since 2013 to this year. It is followed by Turkey (12.6) and Poland (12.4), while more established names such as Germany, France and Spain stayed somewhat behind in the index. Perhaps due to the fact that there is less room for improvement.

In terms of wellness tourism arrivals from 2013 to 2017, Germany is the leader with 12.7 million tourists. The Western European country is followed by Russia (8.5 million) and France (8.3 million)

How do medical tourists choose their destination? They are influenced by many variables. The main factors are: professionalism, quality of facilities and services, the cultural context, and costs.

Meanwhile, wellness tourists take in to account the offer of entertainment associated with the destination, along with costs and the overall image of the destination.

The consolidation and emergence of specialized destinations in health tourism is an upward trend. This trend results mainly from the differences between health services of countries, reduction of distances and the search for competitive advantages through specialization of tourism, along with changes in consumption patterns.

What is also interesting is that the **older generation opts for therapies and treatments to relax and stay in shape**, while at the same time they want access to experiences with a high component of physical activity and adventure.

On the other hand, the millennial generation prefers alternative therapies, cosmetic treatments and physical and mental wellbeing. Along with that, younger people prefer offers including immersion in the community, culture, language and local traditions.

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