

# WELLNESS TOURISM SECTOR HAS A POSITIVE OUTLOOK



The tourism sector worldwide is going through a very tough period during the Covid-19 pandemic. Travel and social restrictions have complicated things greatly and no country or sector is an exception. Not even wellness tourism managed to escape the effects of this unprecedented crisis.

Health tourism around the world has been severely affected by the pandemic. But it is interesting to observe how various countries or regions are reacting to the situation, especially with regard to wellness trips and services.

## New Trends in the Industry

Sustainability has been a trend for a long time in wellness tourism and it has been further emphasized in the past couple of months. **The pandemic has made awareness of physical and mental wellbeing even more important.** According to Technavio, the wellness tourism market is actually expected to grow by USD 315.47 billion during 2020-2024. Sustainability is one of the strong trends embraced by the sector.

The idea of sustainability is that the materials used in wellness facilities and buildings should feel good and come from local resources if possible. They should also be produced in an environmentally friendly manner and be beneficial to health.

Aspects such as energy efficiency and the quality of air and water have also come into focus. Together with the general longing for a healthy life, wellness communities are moving away from absolute luxury projects towards more accessible and environmentally friendly offers.

## Mental Wellness in Africa

Until recently, Africa was able to record rapid growth in wellness tourism. But the situation has now changed rapidly. Due to the crisis, around 8 million people lost their jobs and many wellness hotels had to close.

Nevertheless, there are some interesting developments. According to experts, coaching offers to reduce stress are in demand. There has also been a rapid rise in interest in mental wellness offers as a result of massive restrictions and limited social contact.

Experts also predict that wellness offers will be even more in demand after the pandemic. This is mainly due to the fact that people are eager for freedom like in the times before Covid-19 and are eager to lead their “normal” life again.

## Optimism in Asia

Overall, people in Asia are generally optimistic, as wellness continues to be very important as a holiday offer there. In China things have almost returned to normal, with exercise and fitness offers particularly popular in the country.

Sri Lanka, for example, has been trying to strengthen the wellness industry for a long time - with authentic positioning of the corresponding hotels. In the past five years, the offer on the entire island has been continuously expanded, with the aim of positioning Sri Lanka in the sector in the long term.

But there is also bad news. Due to the pandemic, 30 to 50 % fewer tourists than usual travel to Asia. In Thailand, for example, many wellness facilities have had to close. 35 % of these will not reopen. The consequences of the lockdown and international travel bans are also having a drastic impact in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, there is a lack of government financial support and clearly formulated perspectives for future planning.

### **Wellness No Longer a Luxury in Europe**

As it could be seen, last year the European markets had to live mainly from domestic tourism.

**Domestic travel has increased particularly in Northern Europe and will most likely remain popular even after the pandemic ends.**

The overall interest in wellness tourism continues to grow and it must be noted that Europe is taking a leading position in this regard. However, it will be necessary to wait for the crisis to end to see the full potential of this “new” sector.

It remains to be seen what new opportunities will open up for wellbeing tourism in Europe, but what is certain is that wellness is no longer considered a luxury good, but rather a lifestyle. People consciously want to take advantage of health-oriented wellness offers and are happy to be able to benefit from them.

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