

EUROPE: RUSSIA

1. What is the latest spa and wellness news in your country?

Establishment of the first- time- in-history Federal Standards on spa services marked a new era in the development of the Russian spa and wellness market. Besides clearly defining all the key terms and definitions used by professionals, the Standards relieved the pressure on day spas and hotel spas that had been obliged until now to work under medical license. This regulation did not only mean hiring the staff with a serious medical background but made spas subject to constant supervision by the healthcare authorities. The Standards will help the new spas to operate in accordance with international rules and practices and guarantee the best quality of service to their clients.

In 2014 one of the best Russian hotel spas, Mandara Spa, Moscow, won the World Spa and Wellness Awards as the Hotel Spa of the year in Eastern Europe. Although the winner is operated by an international company, the victory has been considered as a serious breakthrough for the Russian market.

Another important event for the Russian professional community will be the Spa and Wellness International Congress, due in October 2014 that will address the national audience of spa owners and directors with a series of conferences, panel discussions and competitions.

2. The industry is buzzing about wellness technologies. How do you see spa and wellness establishments in your country using wellness technologies now and in the future?

The process of adapting modern wellness technologies in spa and wellness facilities in Russia is gaining speed, with more and more clients becoming wellness-aware and practically all key equipment brands represented in the Russian market. Some wellness clubs and clubs spas integrate wellness software in their programs, and the majority of resort spas would boast of sophisticated alfa-capsules, floatation tanks or Hypoxi chambers.

Besides these internationally popular technologies, Russian scientists offer a wide range

of innovations to be implemented in spa and wellness establishments, such as ultra-short frequency equipment, crio-saunas, aura diagnostics etc. The lower cost of domestically-produced equipment and gadgets might be a solution for the segment of day spas and local wellness clubs with lower budgets.

3. What is happening in your country in terms of wellness tourism?

Despite the fact that the percentage of Russian tourists travelling for wellness inside the country is still smaller compared to those choosing foreign wellness destinations, the segment of health resorts is developing rapidly, especially with the boost given by the state during the preparation for the Sochi Olympic Games of 2014.

Russia has a vast potential for all types of wellness tourism, with its hot springs areas in the South, Altai mountains sanctuary destinations, Black Sea climatic and thalassotherapy resorts and over 2000 rehabilitation institutions expecting modernization. Depending on the infrastructure development and social and economic situation, a serious shift to domestic health and wellness tourism can be forecasted.

4. Please provide one sentence that best describes the latest developments in your country for each of these categories: hotel spas, destination spas, hot springs spas, medical spas, wellness living communities, and corporate or employee wellness programs.

Hotel Spas is the fastest developing segment of the market, due to a large number of international hotels already operating or to be opened soon, including The Four Seasons in Moscow and St.Petersburg.

Destination Spas: Many former health resorts becoming properties of private investors are transformed into destination spas to satisfy the growing demand.

Hot Springs Spas have been a tradition in Russia since the Peter the Great Empire, and although some of the existing spas require serious modernization, the tradition is still alive, with many Russians choosing this kind of rehabilitation.

Medical Spas: This category is often misunderstood in Russia, and in a large number of spas that position themselves as “medical” the main focus is on aesthetic medicine treatments, such as Botox and hyaluronic acid injections, as well as anti-ageing cosmetology programs.

Corporate Wellness Programs used to be a normal practice within state enterprises but today it is a priority only in large private corporations that own about 5% of national health resorts, which are the majority of Russian companies and enterprises providing basic healthcare programs for their employees.

5. Fast forward 5 years and tell us what you think the spa and wellness industry in your country will be like.

Independent of the political and economic developments in Eastern Europe, the health and wellness awareness of the Russian population is growing, together with the demand for the high standard of spa services. Several dozens of spa and wellness projects are being either developed or are in the construction stage, and the hospitality segment provides more opportunities for hotel spas.

As an optimist, I believe that the spa and wellness industry in Russia will experience a boom in the coming five years, with more and more private investors considering the new market as a prospective one. With more and more western-model companies operating in Russia, spas will become part of corporate culture.

I hope that there will be wellness educational programs introduced in secondary schools. The “spa therapist” qualification would be subject to formal standardization, with a system of professional education finally established in Russia.

New spa and wellness destinations in natural resorts will attract international tourists who would appreciate the Russian balneology and holistic curative traditions.

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