



# EUROPE: TURKEY

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## **What is making news in your country when it comes to spa and wellness?**

Turkey is one of leading tourism destinations in the world. With its enormous tourism potential and a great variety of natural resources, historical treasures, cultural richness, and popular attractions, the Turkish tourist industry offers a wide selection of products that can satisfy the demand of different market segments including the most sophisticated and demanding travelers.

Turkey is the sixth most popular tourist destination in the world, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Tourism Highlights 2012 Edition. The country attracted a total of 31.8 million foreign visitors in 2012, achieving a total revenue of \$23.4 billion.

Turkey's fast developing economy has attracted international hotel groups looking to expand their portfolios. All the major hotel groups want a slice of Turkey, with the big brands searching for local partners to target the country's increasingly affluent major cities.

Turkey is an important growth market for international hotel brands with its strong economy and ambitious development plans. With its rapidly growing tourism industry, Turkey is full of opportunity for hotel development.

Istanbul is the fastest growing tourism destination in the world and has been named the No. 1 city in Europe and No. 2 in the World at Travel + Leisure's "World's Best Awards 2013". Voters placed Istanbul ahead of Paris, Venice and London in the European category, while the city finished second in the worldwide category. Turkey welcomed 31.7 million international visitors in 2012, and that number has continued to rise in 2013. The latest update to Turkey's 2023 Master Plan anticipates that by 2020 nearly 50 million tourists will be visiting the country annually. With Istanbul's enduring appeal as a meeting point of European and Asian cultures, Istanbul alone will be home to 100 new hotels over the next two years.

All the leading international hotel companies, such as InterContinental, Hilton Hotels, Ramada, Marriott International and Accor, have a presence in the Turkish hospitality market.

Luxury hotel brands prefer Istanbul for their city hotel projects and Bodrum for resort projects. Marriott chose Istanbul as the first European destination for its Edition boutique brand. Le Meridien, Shangri La has opened already and Raffles is also present. The Mediterranean resort of Antalya is listed with Paris, London, New York, and Singapore as one of the top five tourist destinations in the world.

Other luxury brands in Bodrum are Aman Resorts, Mandarin, Four Seasons, Swissotel, Nikki Beach.

## **What is happening in your country when it comes to wellness tourism and/or medical tourism?**

Turkey provides excellent treatment opportunities by offering services in the medical and healthcare sector with high quality, success and efficiency. In addition, Turkey has an abundance of private health institutions with state-of-the-art technology and qualified medical service personnel. Today, Turkey is the country with largest number of JCI accredited institutions.

Turkey has great potential for health and wellness tourism, Anatolia is located on a major geothermal belt and offers a considerable number of thermal baths and spas. These thermal spas are promoted as cures for various illnesses due to the high density of minerals in their waters. Approximately 1300 geothermal resources with temperatures varying between 20-110 C., are suitable for many different cures and the treatment of numerous health problems. For health tourists the

thermal spas of Turkey are marketed as a choice destination with various treatment options such as balneotherapy and thalassotherapy. The thermal springs in Turkey have always been famous, but more and more they are being marketed as health and wellness and spa destinations, and companies have developed high quality health treatments and relaxation packages.

On the other hand, health and wellness tourism which also covers medical treatment at hospitals (such as packages that offer dental treatment and a vacation) started to be more important when combined with spa and wellness packages.

Turkey has a reputation as a leading medical tourism destination in Europe, and offers top quality medical professionals, many of whom are US board certified.

Besides thermal spas, medical procedures and cosmetic surgeries are also gaining popularity among the patient community. Rising healthcare costs in industrialized countries and the increased availability of high quality healthcare at lower prices in developing nations at the same time have contributed to the expansion of the medical tourism industry.

The Turkish government has been actively involved in promoting the country as a medical tourism destination. Some of the principal characteristics aiding the growth of the medical tourism sector are state-of-the-art healthcare quality delivered at low cost, health insurance, and accreditation.

**Please give us one sentence to describe the latest in your country for each of these spa categories:**

**What's happening with hotel spas?**

International hotel chains like Hilton, Starwood, Marriott, Wyndham, Shangri-La , Fairmont, Raffles, Mandarin, Rezidor, Nikki Beach have been investing both in Istanbul and other big cities in Anatolia, including MGM, Emaar, Bulgari, Armani, Jumeriah, and Soho House. Spas at these hotels are driving up quality and boosting consumer interest.

**What's happening with destination spas?**

Destination spas in Turkey are mainly in thermal regions and on the Mediterranean and Aegean coastlines, and their rankings are rapidly increasing.

**What's happening with hot springs spas?**

Thermal springs in Turkey put us among the top seven countries in the world in spring richness, volume of flow, hotness, and physical and chemical ingredients. Recently, thermal springs have taken their rightful place among the other tourism destinations.

**What has been the general attitude about investing in the spa industry in your country in 2013?**

The rapid growth of tourism and an increasing demand for spa-wellness are affecting investments and almost all new tourism investments include a spa-wellness unit. Spa centers in Turkey are increasing day by day. In Turkey, the spa market is running to \$500 million annual turnover with about 10,000 employees. The general attitude for new hotels is to have luxury, high-end, spacious spas with modern, well designed interiors. Turkish Hamam is the dominant facility in the entire spa industry and the most demanding treatment. With respect to the fast growing tourism industry, International spa operators like Espa are expanding their investments in Turkey. Outside Istanbul they have a presence in resort spas in luxury hotels on the Aegean and Mediterranean coastlines.

**Looking back at the past four decades of spa and wellness, what would you consider “a defining moment?”**

There have been tremendous advances in just the last decade in the spa and wellness sector in Turkey, with the rapid growth of the tourism industry and the growing awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle.

The hospitality industry in Turkey is undergoing a rapid expansion due to increased foreign investment, the privatization of tourist facilities and government initiatives to promote the industry. The remarkable achievements of the past two decades have made tourism the engine of the Turkish economy.

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