



ASIA: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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

The UAE is currently growing in terms of suppliers and we have so many more products to choose from that suppliers are realizing we are a healthy market to invest in. We are still growing; in terms of hotels there over 200 currently with a dedicated spa. The Palm Island has eight Hotels operational now, each with a spa. Four years ago there was only one on The Palm - us!

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

Wellness and Medical tourism are on the increase and appear not yet to have reached their full potential, even growing at a 15% increase each year, with more hospitals opening around the UAE and specific care centers in particular in Dubai Healthcare City and Abu Dhabi. Medical and Wellness centers are starting to consider treatment for chronic disease alongside lifestyle and healthy aging therapies. The UAE is among the top 20 worldwide destinations for medical tourism, according to a recent health tourism survey.

Please give us one sentence to describe the latest developments in your country for each of these spa categories: Hotel spas? Destination spas? Hot springs spas?

We are still growing our medical services; our non-invasive treatments are very popular and we have expanded into teeth whitening. The wellness part of spa and wellness is being focused on and we are looking at various age management and alternative therapies to combat and prevent disease, we hope that this will expand into specific wellness tourism. Education is also still key: in 2014 we intend to encourage all of our therapists to acquire more internationally recognized qualifications.

What has been the general attitude about investing in the spa/wellness arena in 2013?

The spa and wellness arena is still a healthy option in terms of investment in the UAE and is very much a part of the new UAE culture. Healthy living is a big focus right now, and people are looking to manage their lifestyles. The average age in the UAE currently stands at 32, so we have a vast representation from what would be classed as a middle age bracket. This bracket tends to have more disposable income and an increased desire to take better care of themselves, mentally and physically.

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

The synergy of spa with wellness, has taken some time to evolve, mainly due to diverse interpretations of both spa and wellness.

SUBMITTED BY:

Neil Hewerdine
Kerzner International Resorts
Atlantis, The Palm, Dubai