



ASIA: UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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

People are becoming more conscious about their bodies, health and wellbeing, and more focused on preventive programs than on healing. Therefore spas are offering hydro baths that are detoxifying, stimulate the blood circulation and are good for the flow of lymphatic systems. There are many luxurious and unique facilities and treatments offered, as well as new trends in cosmetics and machinery.

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

Health retreats and medical tourism have become big business around the world. With state of the art infrastructure and unbelievable luxury offerings, Dubai ranks among the top tourism destinations around the world. Over time it has evolved into a major player in world health tourism by offering a variety of medical procedures to visitors in search of quality health care at affordable prices.

Medical facilities in Dubai are available at a low cost and can be compared to the standards of the USA and UK. Dubai has been promoting medical tourism and its cosmetic surgeries are known to attract tourists from all across the world who can also indulge the luxuries on display in the shopping malls and enjoy duty free shopping.

There are many qualified doctors in Dubai, including American Board Certified, offering cosmetic surgery through hospitals and boutique clinics, including American Hospital, Belhoul European Hospital, Cosmesurge, Welcare Hospital. Major procedures such as hip and knee replacement are being carried out at Dubai Bone and Joint Center.

Dubai Health Care City (DHCC), which was formed with the objective of providing quality healthcare to patients and an integrated centre for clinical and wellness, medical education and research within an informed regulatory network, will be the largest international medical centre between Europe and Southeast Asia. It, will offer a wide range of medical services for visitors as well as world-class medical education and research.

The latest news is that Abu Dhabi Wellness Tourism in Saadyat Island Resort is opening its new DNA Center, which will contribute to attracting visitors in the medical tourism sector to UAE. This is despite travel agencies in the UAE being mandated since 2011 not to promote such tourism without authorization from destination countries.

Last year, 100 Emiratis and expats went abroad through the travel management company Anta GlobalStar. “That number has been rising between 8 and 12% every year over the last three years across all destinations,” said Ajay Nair, the head of corporate travel and sales for Anta GlobalStar. The Anta group partners with the London-based travel company GlobalStar in the UAE.

“With the national and budget carriers expanding their routes and this segment being seen as a lucrative opportunity for various countries within the Gulf and abroad, I do see considerable traction in outbound medical tourism rising over the next coming years,” he said.

At the same time, the UAE is positioning itself as an upcoming destination for medical tourists from Middle Eastern countries as well as those from the Commonwealth of Independent States.

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

What is happening with hotel spas?

Dubai's 5-star hotel guests' willingness to spend on spa services appears to be strengthening. The latest report by Ernst & Young reveals that hotel revenue has increased on spa services compared to last year. Sixteen hotels in Dubai opened their doors this year, all with spa treatment rooms and fitness facilities included.

What is happening with destination spas?

More residents and locals, and more tourists are now attracted to destination spas.

What is happening with hot springs spas?

Al Ain Hot Spring in the foothills of the country's highest mountain, Jebel Hafit, is part of a master plan designed to make Al Ain, which is still under construction, an international tourist center.

Golden Tulip Khatt Springs Resort and Spa, located in RAK, offers many services, but according to reviews it is not yet of a sufficient standard to attract many visitors.

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

Within hospitals, we have seen the opening of beauty clinics and yoga centers, while in fitness centers there now are nutrition and diet programs available for customers.

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

In the past people believed that the average life expectancy was 65-75 years, but now everything is changing. Many people wish to be more healthy so they can live longer.

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