



The Role of Wellness Tourism in Economic Development

Wellness Tourism Roundtable

Facilitator

Anni Hood, Founder & Director, Wellness Business Consultancy, UK

Participants

Jean-Claude Baumgarten, Chairman & CEO, CREWE Associates; Former President, World Travel and Tourism Council, France

John Bevan, COO, Spafinder Wellness Inc., U.S.

Kathrin Boerger-Bechtold, Director of Business Development, Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, Switzerland

Dr. Jenry Carreño Cuador, Director of the International Center for health “La Pradera”, Ministry of Public Health, Cuba

Simon Casson, Regional Vice President and GM, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, United Arab Emirates

Anne Dimon, Editor, Travel To Wellness, Canada

Jean Lucien Ligonde, President & CEO, CHARD (Centre Haïtien de Recherche en Aménagement et en Développement), Haiti

Raymundo Flores, Sales Manager, Universe Travel, Mexico

Vickum Nawagamuwage, Founder & CEO, Santani, Sri Lanka

Robert Ranzi, CEO & Founder, Cluster Wellness Tirol, Austria

Cheryl Smith, Specialty Markets Manager, Medical and Wellness Tourism, Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

Malcolm Short, Chairperson Director, Pukeroa Lakefront Holding Ltd, New Zealand

Karina Stewart, Founder, Brand & Concept Director, Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary & Holistic Spa, Thailand

Jorge Vazquez, Directory of Marketing, Secretary of Tourism, Mexico City, Mexico

Country and destination dimensions of wellness tourism impact

- Sri Lanka shortly to open a new wellness resort - largest on the island with expectations of creating a new tourism revenue stream.
- Imperial Beach San Diego County - a residential community that also serves as a magnet for wellness lifestyle for those living there as well as attracting the domestic traveler market - vibrancy and motivation in daily living.
- Cuba demonstrates specific and measured tourism clusters that present medical and wellness tourism as clearly differentiated markets.
- The Tyrol wellness cluster in Austria is an established market demonstrating 43 million stays per year, 720,000 inhabitants (53k work in tourism)
- Haiti's intention is to make the island a 'Number One' spot - the strategy to deliver is still to be refined.

Biggest Discussion Points

- The ability to define wellness tourism. Significantly easier to say what wellness tourism is 'not' rather than what it is. Still perceived as somewhat overwhelming for public and private sector alike and there is a call to more actively encourage wellness tourism definition as a destination or country 'fit' rather than a blanket cover. 'Keeping It Simple' viewed as mission critical for continual and foundational growth and seeing wellness being matched or 'paired with all manner of tourism pursuits.
- Compilation of data - gaining a continuous, quantified reservoir of relevant wellness tourism data that can be shared and utilized in and for relevant and applicable markets. Las Vegas and Austria were two most evidenced examples of how valuable their data is and will remain.
- Case Studies - encouraging both public and private sector organisations and businesses to map, monitor and track their evolution and creation of wellness tourism markets. Utilisation of academic establishments to achieve this as an industry deliverable to support and credibly record and validate models.
- Trends discussion - a move from destination and venue to experiences and the people delivering the experiences. Emerging market and frontier market trail blazers - Cuba and Haiti good examples. Although Slovenia not represented at the table, their decision to appoint the Minister for the Economy, Technology and Tourism, from the private sector (with a background in managing wellness resorts and hot springs) and a rapidly increasing tourism budget (from Euros 6m - 20m over two years)
- Emphasis on a private sector drive rather than waiting for governments to take the initiative (Serge Dedina)

Conclusions

1. Clearer definition around wellness tourism (relevant to country, destination or venue) is needed to avoid ambiguity and confusion for both public and private sectors.
2. The mining and compilation of data and case study examples (for all dimensions of wellness tourism) a vital and necessary initiative across the industry.
3. That 'wellness' within tourism, as well as having a niche evidenced in destination health and wellness venues, will also be matched with all manner of tourism pursuits that will appeal to a wider traveler audience.

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