



# Hot Springs Initiative Briefing Paper 2017

## **What is the aim of your initiative?**

The Hot Springs Initiative is an international wellness think tank dedicated to exploring and promoting the diverse values of geothermal waters for health, recreation, tourism and community.

## **What or who are the current “news makers” or trends in the initiative’s industry/sector?**

### **Demographics, accessibility and need for improved well-being**

Global attendance increasing due to accessibility, value, swift relief of physical ailments and stress, and increased desire for community in a relaxing, tranquil, quiet and natural environment. Wellness communities are developing around historic hot springs. Visitor age profile is getting younger.

### **Integrative programming**

Hot spring resorts offering unique spa services, mud experiences, spiritual rituals, yoga, evening programming, fitness, workshops, retreats, etc.

### **Sanitation**

Increased use of UV, ozone and ultrasound to sanitize waters. More research is being conducted to encourage decreased use of chlorine.

### **Expansion**

Private investment in hot springs rapidly growing in the United States. Governments and tourism boards in many countries assisting in awareness of health benefits and promoting visitation.

## **Name some (high level) challenges facing your industry/sector?**

We are continually supporting research to improve water sanitation with a focus on encouraging decreased use of chlorine. Firstly, because of the harmful effects of exposure to chlorine including skin, eye and throat irritation. Secondly, strains of new bacteria are resistant to chlorine. More hot springs are employing UV and ozone, and are experimenting with new sanitation methods including microbiomes. Several U.S. hot springs are challenged with overcrowding and ensuing noise that detracts from the soothing and tranquil nature of the soaking experience. Price points are being evaluated to control

demand, create more intimate soaking areas and offer other social events for more interaction.

**Where do you see the opportunities for industry/sector?**

There is a growing understanding amongst health professionals and consumers of the health and wellness benefits of bathing in hot springs/geothermal mineral waters. There is a massive untapped potential to improve people's well-being without recourse to medications.

**Are there any “heroes” (either companies or individuals) who stand out in your industry/sector?**

Dr. Marc Cohen, PhD, professor at RMIT in Australia, is leading a number of research topics to develop and deepen our understanding of the health benefits of hot springs.

**Is there noteworthy investment happening in your industry/sector?**

The international hotel chains are beginning to understand the potential of the industry, and we can expect some significant investments and consolidation of what is currently a fragmented ownership structure in the years ahead.

**Name any key accomplishments (milestones) made by your initiative?**

- Published *Hot Springs and Geothermal Mineral Waters – A User's Guide for the Global Wellness Traveller*.
- Supported the research efforts that has resulted in the following publications:
  - Exploring the characteristics, motivations and experiences of hot springs bathers in Victoria, Australia
  - Conserving Sacred Waters in the High Desert
  - International Wellness, Spa & Travel Monitor
- Regularly moderated conference sessions at the Global Wellness Summits.

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