



AUSTRALIA: AUSTRALIA



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

- Traditional residential wellness retreat centres are continually reviewing the service mix they are providing. One of the longest running facilities, Golden Door, recently re-opened under a co-branding arrangement with the Biggest Loser Retreat, with a clear focus on weight loss. In its first month of operation under this banner (August 2013), the property doubled occupancy from the same month in 2012. Obesity is one of the major health issues in Australia and hence one of the largest growth potentials for the spa industry.
- Chinese customers are coming in rapidly increasing numbers and are willing to spend on spa and lifestyle activities.
- Medi-spas are finally coming into their own, with franchises growing. Non-surgical aesthetic equipment is now more affordable with the high Australian dollar.
- Management education is a growing industry stream. Recent developments include the William Angliss Institute Diploma of Holiday Parks and Resorts, specialising in spa and wellness (angliss.edu.au/Resorts), and the Australasian Academy of Cosmetic Dermal Science nationally accredited Diploma of Management (Medispa Practice), starting in 2014 (aacds.com.au).

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

This is unlikely to become a viable market in Australia while the dollar remains high.

Chronic lifestyle diseases like diabetes, obesity and stress are driving domestic wellness tourism trends for both weekend and month-long destination spa stays.

Wellness education is a strong aspect of the Australasian industries. Super-clinics that combine general medical practitioner health with complementary therapies and aesthetic treatments in long-term relationships with clients are transforming healthcare. One example: Exqisit You Medispa in 'outback' Australian town of Mackay (<https://www.facebook.com/FaceOfExqisitYou>).

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?

While the penetration of spas into all major hotels is complete, a number are becoming more stylised and thematic, refining a unique 'story' into the spa offering. As per international trends, healthier offerings are being added to hotel menus across the board to reinforce wellness services in the spa.

What is happening with destination spas?

Weight loss is again becoming an area of focus and concern. Affordable options and boutique luxury with wellness offerings complement the main players in destination/retreat spas.

What is happening with hot springs spas?

Global best practice research into the hot springs industry is being funded by two existing and two start-up hot springs developments in the state of Victoria, spurring the dawn of a new and significant industry segment in Australia.

At this time, while there are over 40 hot springs to be found throughout Australia, only Victorian hot springs have incorporated spa services into their offering.

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

Historically low interest rates and a relatively robust demand has encouraged continual investment and re-development in the spa and wellness arena. However, the high Australian dollar has seen discretionary tourist spend mainly used offshore in nearby spa destinations of Indonesia and Thailand, so local spas generally focus on a functional maintenance approach and regular delivery of services rather than investment into elaborate facilities.

Product brands have taken a conservative view in 2013 but confidence seems to be rising for 2014 in terms of marketing and education spend.

Employee wages remain a high cost centre in all Australian businesses, so staff education— to encourage retention— is considered an important investment program by most spa operators. **Looking back at the past four decades of spa and wellness, what would you consider “a defining moment?”**

In the late 1970s the Australian Federal Parliament passed legislation that legalised prostitution. In the lead up to the introduction of the new legislation the parliament was appealed to outlaw the use of the words ‘massage parlour’ in relation to prostitution effectively emancipating the word ‘massage’ from the red light prostitution business. With a new-found freedom, massage has been able to evolve as a legitimate element of a healthy wellbeing lifestyle and the day spa industry was enabled to commence. In the early 1990’s massage was introduced into the health training packages in the education system further legitimising the industry.

Also from the 1970s, changes to Australian government immigration policies brought Asian immigration in waves— along with a wealth of wellness-related knowledge such as TCM and massage techniques, which means affordable alternative wellness and beauty services have proliferated in cities and towns.

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