

EUROPE: FINLAND

1. What is the latest spa and wellness news in your country?

The Finnish Tourism Board (Visit Finland, see <http://www.visitfinland.com/about-us/>) is developing the “Wellbeing Strategy for Finland” for international markets. Mindfulness is fashionable, not so much in traditional spas as in other types of wellbeing establishments.

The Finrelax brand has been registered. It includes services that are based on Finnish nature, sauna and silence. Visit Finland would also like to see companies utilizing this brand in their international marketing.

Visit Finland has also defined two other important business areas: sports/fitness and pampering services.

Spas in Finland have increased their wellbeing service offerings but this also requires investments in facilities. Because of the recent economic downturn, this has been harder to achieve.

Forests (and other green areas like big parks) as a source of well-being have been a field of study in Finland lately, and there seems to be some recent service development in this area.

2. The industry is buzzing about wellness technologies. How do you see spa and wellness establishments in your country using wellness technologies now and in the future?

New technology is all the rage in Finland. Sports institutes in particular are using technology as part of their fitness and wellbeing programs. Spas are investing in certain new technological solutions but not so much, as yet, into activity bracelets or other vitality testing devices. Finland is also the home of two big players in sports and fitness technology, namely Suunto (<http://www.suunto.com/>) and Polar (<http://www.polar.com/en?nogeoo>).

3. What is happening in your country in terms of wellness tourism?

The Finnish wellbeing strategy for international markets will be updated this fall. The number of visitors from Finland's main target market, Russia, is declining due to developments in and around Ukraine. Service product development is still very much needed in order to attract new target groups to Finland. The word "wellness" is a delicate one in Finland, as neither facilities nor services are at the necessary level of quality compared to international standards. (Finland is the only EU country which does not have a star rating for hotels). On the other hand, service providers are slowly understanding that wellness has many other aspects beyond simple luxury, like peace of mind and slowing down. Finland is very well set up for that, with its green, clean nature, noiseless areas and clean water. The challenge is the marketing of these services to international clients. We still have to face challenges in the proper segmenting of services offered. Only Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences offers a degree in this field of study.

4. Please provide one sentence that best describes the latest developments in your country for each of these categories:

Hotel spas: There has not been much development in this area lately. We have some slowly developing spas like Haikko Manor and Naantali Spa. And Holiday Club Saimaa has invested in the hotel spa concept, although it is still more like a resort.

Destination spas: We do not really have destination spas as such. The closest equivalent to the concept would perhaps be Ikaalinen Spa and Holiday Club resorts. Facilities are old (from the 1960s and '70s) and are slowly being renovated. They offer a wide variety of activities but do not usually have a specific spa philosophy. Most spas offer very basic beauty treatments, massages and body treatments.

Hot springs spas: Do not exist in Finland

Medical spas: Finland Care acts as the coordinator but the main target group (Russians) is currently in decline. We should find new target groups. Traditionally, the medical (occupational health) side has been paid for by the state using tax revenue but the economic downturn has also affected this, and many service providers are trying to renew their offerings to attract new private markets. Some private medical centers have also shown interest in this field.

Wellness living communities: Do not exist yet, but the concept is being slowly embraced.

Corporate wellness: Finnish Sauna is traditionally always included in incentive tourism but otherwise we do not really have wellbeing elements in the corporate service offer. Some spas are now slowly adapting their concepts for the occupational health sector, meaning that they offer services to companies in their location. A great deal of further investment is required.

5. Fast-forward five years and tell us what you think the spa and wellness industry in your country will look like.

Visit Finland hopes to have an established supply of wellbeing programs for international tourists which will include the most important Finnish wellbeing elements: sauna, traditional wellness treatments, good quality, healthy Finnish food, and wellbeing deriving from forests, nature and silence. There will be further studies of all customer segments. This data is also actively used in service product development, the targeting of wellbeing services, and in marketing.

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