



EUROPE: FRANCE

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

Most recent Wellness Spas now offer treatments such as Collagen Mask, glycolic acid peeling, AHA, and Botox. Spas are no longer associated just with wellness and Medi Spas are opening in big cities. Wellness without visible results is becoming a harder sell, except in Spa retreats.

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

France remains a strong magnet for tourists and hotels are packed. Designers have pushed their art to new territories and the gap is getting wider between hotel Spas and day Spas. We have seen in 2013 some lavish Spa openings in 5-star, 4-star and even 3-star hotels while day spas have not changed much over the last ten years. More importantly, the price difference between hotel Spas and day Spas is minimal (about 25 percent), so tourists are not tempted to go to day Spas during their stay (especially when they have such beautiful ones in their hotel). In both types of Spas “trendy” treatments no longer make headlines: emphasis is on treatments with results.

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? Management is improving in hotel spas; many have learned that design alone is not enough. Also, you see more and more 3-star hotels getting into the business, not just 5-star and 4-star hotels.

What is happening with destination spas? They are still a very small part of the French Spas. Nevertheless, their growth is steady.

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

Some independent Medi Spas have successfully lured investors, but overall it has been very difficult to convince investors and bankers and few large projects have started outside of a hotel. New day Spas are a bit smaller than in the past because of the difficult access to cash. To gain back the confidence of bankers, day Spas must put a strong focus on improving their margins.

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

During the last two decades, we have seen hotel websites evolve to the point that if they do not have a Spa section, they might lose some guests. More importantly, many people make their decision to book a hotel based on the hotel’s Spa. However, the Spa business is not as mature as the restaurant business and we must continue to push hard to narrow that gap, especially by using new technology to develop Spa awareness among the general public. If you type www.hotels.com or www.restaurants.com, you clearly do not have the same experience as if you type www.spas.com. A defining moment will be when this will change...

SUBMITTED BY:

Bertrand Thiery
CEO, Co-Founder
THEMAE