



EUROPE: FRANCE & BELGIUM

What is making news in your country with regards to spa and wellness?

2013 has seen a lot of French days spas and hotel spas asking Spa-Management companies to run their operations in order to improve efficiency, profitability and guest experience. Spa Menu re-engineering is also a big trend, with simpler offers, shorter menus, and more efficient treatments and massages. In 2014, we should see some strong Spa, Wellness & Leisure Management companies emerge in France and Belgium.

What is happening with wellness tourism in your country?

In 2012, 83 million tourists came to France (including an increasing number of Chinese travelers), but they are usually in transit to other European countries, like Italy or Spain, where they stay longer and spend more money.

With a strong tradition of healing waters, French Spa professionals have worked hard these past few years to renew some of their Thalassotherapies & Thermal centers. Out of the 150 centers that TIP TOUCH International has studied in 2011 and 2012 for an exclusive research project, we found the following break-down:

- 11% are traditional thermal centers (mainly for para-medical purposes, with no wellness or spa component)
- 33% are thermal centers with a wellness offer
- 17% are “Thermal Spas” (with a higher focus on design and service than thermal centers)
- 6% are “Thermoludic” centers encouraging families and couples to spend 2 hours or more in themed water and heat experiences
- 9% are traditional Thalassotherapy centers
- 4% are “Marine Spas” (with a higher focus on design and service than Thalassotherapy centers.)

French thermal and Thalassotherapy centers are extremely eager to renew their appeal, using evidence-based research (aka SMR, “Service Medical Rendu”) on the multiple benefits of water treatments against rheumatisms, pulmonary diseases, skin problems, even against depression. They are also very involved in raising their quality of service, and enhancing the clients’ experience level.

Please give us one sentence to describe what is happening in your country for each of these categories:

Hotel Spas?

Moving from luxury segment (5-star) to a broader popular clientele with a lot of 4-star hotels (even 3-star and trailer parks) offering a spa/wellness component; with an increasing number managed by a local esthetician, or by a Spa Management company.

Destination Spas?

A lot of hotels with a Spa in beautiful locations, or Marine/Thermal Spas, are trying to position themselves as Destination Spas, but none can yet compete with the impressive offer of wellness activities offered by Miraval, Canyon Ranch, Rancho La Puerta...

Hot Springs Spas?

A booming number of Thermal and Marine Spas are raising the bar in design and services to improve guests' experience (see above).

What is your country's position on investing in the spa industry in 2013?

After three years of feverish debates about a French norm for Spas, the current disappointing document is leaving the spa industry very perplexed: its working title could be "Much ado about nothing..." Sad but true.

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

The 60 to 80% discounts on Groupon deals have been a game changer, shattering the perception of value by new clients who hope to get a "spa experience" for a handful of dollars or euros. Unfortunately, most small Spa owners did not take this opportunity to train their teams in rebooking, cross-selling and up-selling. The new defining moment is for Spas to stand out on the internet (PC, smart phones, tablets) and attract online to on-site clients with Search Engine Optimization, online bookings and Customer Relationship Apps.

SUBMITTED BY:

Jean-Guy de Gabriac

CEO

TIP TOUCH International

France & Belgium