



ASIA: QATAR

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

In recent years, the demand for beauty and personal care products has increased significantly in Qatar. Between 2008 and 2011 there was a 40% growth in value sales for these products. Qatari women and men place a strong emphasis on personal hygiene and good grooming. Internationally recognized brands are important in this market and highly in demand. The average treatment revenue increased by 19% from 2010 to 2012 to \$143. RevPATH Doha experienced a 50% growth from 2010 to 2012 to \$33.

The government is working to raise awareness of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Obesity and type-2 diabetes are big problems in Qatar. According to statistics 71% of the population is overweight and 32% are obese or morbidly obese. In 2013 the first National Sports Day took place and there are many governmental efforts to promote Sports and healthy living. Gym memberships and exercise classes such as Yoga, Pilates and Zumba are on the rise. There is a great demand for women-only facilities.

Going back to basics using organic ingredients, simpler menus and increased personal service is a trend in the spa market. Consumers are realizing that wellbeing is more than a single treatment and are seeking opportunities to address their health, nutrition and fitness, all at the same time. People want to see instant results from Spa treatments. There is an increased demand for water inspired treatments: Hammam rituals, saltwater bathing, Vichy showers and cold or ice therapies. Retail spa products are more and more in demand, as consumers want to take the spa experience home to prolong the results.

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

Despite the fact that plastic surgery used to be considered taboo in Qatari society, an increased demand can be observed. The main drivers are high disposable incomes combined with increasing pressure to look good. Only few cosmetic surgery clinics can be found in Qatar. Most consumers travel abroad to Europe, the US and Lebanon for their surgery.

The most popular cosmetic treatments for females are liposuction, nose corrections and breast enlargements. Women in their thirties and forties often opt for eyebrow and face lifts, while younger women tend to go for less invasive procedures, such as chemical peels, laser resurfacing and laser hair removal. Some Qatari men undergo cosmetic surgery such as liposuction and weight-loss surgery.

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?

Four-star and 5-star hotels featuring luxurious, high quality Spas dominate the hotel supply in Qatar; the trend is to offer more holistic experiences to increase physical and mental wellbeing.

What is happening with destination spas?

Due to the fact that Qatar does not have a lot of international tourism, 65% of the tourism inbound is from Saudi Arabia, there are not really any destination spas; the ones you could consider as such are located in 5-star hotels like the Four Seasons and the Ritz-Carlton.

What is happening with hot springs spas?

There are no hot spring spas in Doha yet; Angsana Spa is the only place in Doha that offers Hydrotherapy; however popular water-related treatments are Hammam journeys.

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

The general attitude about investing in Qatar is very positive. Doha is getting ready for the FIFA World Cup in 2022 and the hotel market, including spa and fitness facilities, is booming. Between 40-60 new hotels are expected to enter the market within the next few years, representing about 35,000 rooms by 2022. Qatar is spending up to \$100 billion on infrastructure developments in the tourism, real estate and transportation sectors.

Shrangri-La Hotel is opening at the end of 2013 featuring Chi Spa. The luxury hotel brand Waldorf Astoria is expected to open its property in Doha in 2017 including a huge and luxurious spa. Pullman, Mandarin Oriental and another Four Seasons are projected to open in the next few years all including spa and wellness facilities.

Linked to the governmental efforts to promote a healthy lifestyle, sports and recreational clubs are increasing in demand and continuous growth can be expected in future years. Competition is fierce with most spas offering memberships.

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

The holistic approach to physical and mental wellbeing and numerous research proving the effectiveness of alternative methods and treatments, are in my opinion “a defining moment” for the spa and wellness industry. Further, clinical proof and increased demand of natural and organic cosmetics are, to my mind, groundbreaking for the industry.

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