

# NORTH AMERICA: UNITED STATES

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## 1. What is currently making news in your country when it comes to wellness or wellbeing?

The news on wellbeing in the U.S. runs through a few streams of intelligence: Medical Studies, Technological Advances, and the rise of Health Issues in the environment and workplace.

This year, while we continue to come up with new studies/theories on weight management and fitness optimization, one of the new stories being told is in technology, first with the Fitbit and now with the Apple iWatch. Such wrist wear is putting fitness practice within our reach at all times, making it possible to get those 10,000 steps in each day, to monitor our heart rates and calories, to not become victims of the computer potato syndrome (even if that Stand! command from the iWatch is mercilessly annoying).

What continues to make news in the U.S. is the fast-rising interest in Wellness as a tourism niche. It is no secret that the industry seems to be exploding in global numbers (SRI International reports that wellness tourism is a \$494 billion international industry and 14 percent of the \$3.42 trillion in total global tourism revenue) but now the once special interest niche seems to be going mainstream. Travel agents are ramping up in this field selling a week at Rancho La Puerta as easily as a cruise or vacation to Disney World. And the customers are buying. According to a recent Virtuoso blog,

*“Wellness means different things to different people and when we work with our clients, Wellness Travel is about finding the right property and experience that will boost and enhance their current state. Wellness Travel is NOT just going to a spa, it’s NOT just drinking green juice, it’s NOT just doing yoga everyday. It’s so much more. We define Wellness Travel on a spectrum: Everything from weight loss and detox programs, to active adventure travel, to wilderness and wildlife immersion, to learning journeys to rest, rejuvenation and spa getaways. These are all resources along the path of personal wellbeing.”*

Similarly, the Business Travel sector is gaining interest in this industry as “bleisure” becomes an increasingly important part of the business travel itinerary. Business

Traveler USA (which goes to 175,000 paid road warrior subscribers in a monthly print glossy) just introduced a standing Lifestyle section that includes health interests and spa escapes in pages formerly reserved for airline news and new aircraft designs.

**2. Please provide one sentence that describes what you think are important developments in your country for each of the following:**

**Spas:** In the U.S., spas are becoming more ubiquitous – targeting as wide a range of customer as possible (including pets and kids) and are now a mainstream service to be found in airports around the world for passengers who want to attend to their wellness needs on the fly.

**Wellness Tourism:** This is becoming a mainstream topic evidenced by the rising numbers from travel agent bookings and the inclusion of Wellness Tourism seminars – including Medical Tourism – at travel industry conferences (Example: The inaugural WTM Wellness Lounge at World Travel Market, the world’s largest travel industry expo with more than 17,000 attendees, held in London each year). Also this January the new York Time Travel Show will include a wellness pavillion.

**Wellness Living Communities/Real Estate:** As America’s baby boomers retire we are seeing this conscientious population choose alternative and breakthrough lifestyles for their golden years (much as we saw them at the frontier of the freedom movements of the ‘60s and ‘70s), and this means a new trend in like-minded souls coming together for planned wellness communities. Places like Alternavida in Puerto Rico and Flora Farm in Los Cabos are new experiments in sustainable, organic living and lifestyle that put wellness at the forefront.

**Beauty:** Most hotel and destination spas are using organic products in their therapies and stressing non-surgical ways of enhancing beauty with a holistic lifestyle approaches. Also you see podiatrist and chiropractors offering botox and crossing over into the beauty areas to create one stop shopping.

**Fitness:** This area has seen the most change over the past two years with emphasis on technologies that can monitor health, sleep and metabolism changes minute to minute through the daily cycle – allowing wellness-minded users to measure and manage fitness to optimal advantage. Also, fitness clubs are offering medical testing to further customize workouts to provide exact plans to target heart rate and weightless.

**National Research:** While more eyes are on health matters and more research comes out on the various common disease elements in our society that can be prevented or

helped with certain mindful actions, true science beyond evidence-based research, is still an area sorely lacking for wellness professionals for therapies that are not pharmaceutical in nature.

### **3. How would you describe the state of workplace wellness in your country?**

In an always on, 24/7 technologically-based work culture, workplace stress, alone, costs U.S. companies an estimated \$300 billion annually and sleep deprivation another \$63 billion or, more specifically, an estimated \$2,280 per employee. Long hours, job insecurity and lack of work-life balance — contributes to at least 120,000 deaths each year and accounts for up to \$190 billion in health care costs, according to new research by two Stanford professors and a former Stanford doctoral student now at Harvard Business School, as reported in Wired Magazine.

Still, little emphasis is placed on the wellness of the worker beyond insurance coverage, if that. Recent reports about working at Amazon, perhaps the new model for the American Corporation, shows that white collar working conditions are only getting worse - overtime, vacation time, sick days, maternity leave: these are no longer rights that get respect. The average American leaves 11 days of their annual two weeks of vacation on the table for fear of losing their job. Much of the American workforce is now a fragmented landscape of contractors with no rights, no job security and no benefits at all.

Wellness in the workplace, if it exists at all, is up to the worker to carve out of the workday for himself or herself through discipline and skilled time management.

### **4. What has been the general attitude about investing in spa/wellness in your country in 2015? Specific examples?**

Spa and wellness investment is best seen through a recent trend in hospitality that has used wellness as a concept to sell room nights. No longer is spa and wellness limited to the territories of upscale resorts in exotic locales. MGM Resort in Las Vegas offers a span of wellness rooms that have such amenities as filtered air, circadian lighting and vitamin-infused showerheads. Even Hotels, a new division of InterContinental Hotels, offers in its tag line: “Where Wellness is Built In,” and targets the burned out business traveler as its ideal guest. Starwood is launching a “Wellbeing Movement” through its Westin brand, which revolutionized the guest experience in sleep during the 1990s with its Heavenly Bed.

### **5. Whose responsibility is it to create a well world?**

This will likely redound to consumers, whatever their nationality, to set a course for a healthy lifestyle - a condition that happens via food choices, mindful actions, fitness discipline, an explorer’s curiosity and an ability to be still. Should these approaches

and values strengthen and become part of a core of what makes up a culture small or larger, the demand for wellness ways in products, services, information, work policies and urban environments will strengthen to eventually become the norm. It happens imperceptibly, person by person, but as with the “100th monkey” adage, the one more person eventually becomes the village, the expectation, the movement. Wellness is a personal choice and for a well world to come about we need rest from war, terrorism, scary politics, unfathomable economics and relentless technology and perhaps a decision to opt out. Through focusing on our inner selves we will eventually find community and a willing well world.

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