

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Social media is leading inspiration source for wellness travelers

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*Four Seasons awakens a mind-body spirit connection for Global Wellness Day. Image credit: Four Seasons*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

More than half of affluent travelers plan to incorporate wellness aspects into their future travels, as more people look to balance self-care with unique experiences.

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According to a new survey from MVI Marketing, more than 60 percent of travelers expect hospitality brands to offer wellness options at their properties. More than 50 percent also named social media platforms as their inspiration for wellness and luxury travel.

"In today's world we do not take the time to be disconnected from the stress around us," said Theresa Jones, marketing coordinator at **MVI Marketing**, Austin, TX. "Wellness travel makes you take the time for self-care."

MVI surveyed 1,200 U.S. consumers between the ages of 25 and 50 with household incomes of at least \$75,000.

### Wellness exploration

Fifty percent of affluent travelers have or will go on trips that involve wellness activities.

The wellness travel segment has seen rapid growth of late. According to the Global Wellness Institute, wellness tourism is valued at \$639 billion and has a projected 6.5 percent annual growth rate, more than double the overall tourism industry's rate of 3.2 percent.



*Mandarin Oriental helps guests disconnect with a Silent Night event. Image courtesy of Mandarin Oriental*

About three-quarters, 74 percent, of travelers prefer self-guided wellness trips, rather than overly scheduled stays. However, 79 percent were still at least somewhat interested in working with a personal fitness coach during an active vacation.

The ideal wellness vacation lasts five to six days, according to 37 percent of travelers. Seventy percent are likely to travel with a significant other, while less than 10 percent are solo wellness travelers.

Relaxation and stress reduction were named as the primary reasons travelers chose to take a wellness vacation. Spa services were ranked as the top amenity for a wellness trip, followed by adventure options and accessibility to nature.

"People want to get outside and take advantage of the benefits and beauty of nature," Ms. Jones said. "Going on an adventure and being with nature is just as relaxing and can have the same benefits as receiving a spa treatment."



*Meditation is becoming an important part of wellness. Image credit: The Mandrake*

While meditation was named as the wellness trend that 56 percent were interested in trying, CBD products were a surprising second on the list at 38 percent. The younger the traveler, the more interested they were in trying CBD products.

Four Seasons and the Ritz-Carlton were among the five hospitality groups affluents preferred when booking wellness travel. The Caribbean, Bali, Italy and Costa Rica are among the most desirable wellness destinations.

#### Social influence

When looking for travel inspiration, 54 percent listed social media, including platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest, as a resource. Forty-six percent also rely on referrals from family and friends.

Online media was doubly popular than more traditional media, including television, print and travel agents.

Social media has become a key source of inspiration for most consumers as they make travel plans, but friends' posts are more influential than what a brand or publication shares.

According to a survey from Allianz Global Assistance, about half of U.S. millennials say social media influences their travel decisions. Peer-to-peer word of mouth holds the most sway, as 86 percent of consumers trust their own social networks to post accurate content about travel experiences, while 55 percent deem brands to be truthful on social media ([see story](#)).

Sharing moments on social media also contributes to the travel experience, according to research from YouGov and Priority Pass.

More than a third, 37 percent, of travelers from Asia-Pacific said they would post about a leisure trip on social media, compared to just 11 percent who would post about making a luxury purchase ([see story](#)).

With exclusive, personalized experiences are also in high demand, luxury hospitality groups need to rethink how they approach wealthy travelers.

"Several big hotel chains are recognizing the growth in the wellness sector," MVI Marketing's Ms. Jones said. "The challenge will be to come up with programs and initiatives that are authentic to their brand, without being cookie cutter."

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