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THE LISTS

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the important new trends in luxury wellness travel

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As distinct from fitness, wellness encompasses the quest for spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being, with the emphasis on the first two, rather than the last. Destination spas can focus on boot-camp-style weight loss, luxurious pampering or sports-oriented outdoor activities. Increasingly, though, all kinds of luxury spas are adding **innovative programs focused on wellness**. We checked in with our ace travel agent, Judi from Virtuoso, and here are some of the **new trends to be aware of as you plan your next spa vacation**.

1. The quest for knowledge. The educational side of wellness is becoming more important as science advances and we become smarter and savvier consumers. Increasingly, guests at luxury spas are looking to learn from experts at the top of their fields, in addition to the on-site resort staff. As a result, chefs, athletes, healers, teachers, doctors, and even Buddhist monks are regularly serving as guest experts, sharing guidance about spiritual healing, healthier life habits, and skill-building. Sessions run the gamut from sleep training with world-famous CEOs to food prep with Michelin-star chefs.

2. Exercise as an opportunity to connect with others and with nature. As we shared in a previous post, hiking is the new yoga. Boot camps have long centered their programs around group hikes. Expect to see that spread to other types of destination spas.



3. DNA tests for bespoke diet and fitness plans. A new nutrition program offered by the Canyon Ranch wellness resort gives you insight into what diet is best for your body. With locations in Tucson, Arizona, and Lenox, Massachusetts, Canyon Ranch is offering what they call “*Nutrigenetics for Personalized Weight Loss*,” a program that looks at an individual’s DNA to determine their ideal nutrition and fitness plan.

4. Sugar-free detox. The idea is a purge that delivers the potential for clearer skin, a more efficient digestive system, and increased energy. (of course, it could result in weight loss, too.) Sugar-free diets are high in fat and protein, so satiation is less of an issue. To complement the nutrition component, some programs also include yoga, meditation, acupuncture and massage.



5. Good relationships are a key to health. Social isolation, loneliness, dysfunctional relationships — they're all a fact of modern life for many, and they're all detrimental to good health. Programs are increasingly available to address the underlying causes of poor relationships, and to help identify practical steps to address them with the goal of improving both health and wellness. Animal therapy, especially equine therapy, can be highly effective for some of these issues.

6. Gut health and functional foods. More and more is known about how microbiome bacteria affect our health and our weight. "Gut health" is a growing area of focus in health and wellness: cutting-edge weight management now involves optimizing the levels of "good" bacteria found in the digestive tract. Inflammation is a cause of disease, and eating poorly can raise inflammation levels. Functional foods can help reduce inflammation, so expect to learn more about them when you next visit a spa or retreat.





7. The grief getaway. Whether its the loss of a family member or a tragic life event, more and more people are turning to destination spas as part of their journey to find solace and healing. A week away to regenerate can reduce the stress of grieving while trying to carry on with day-to-day life. Not everyone is mourning a literal loss: it could be a life change, such as a divorce or a change in employment. Whether its walking a labyrinth, or mediating, or creating a reflection journal, spas are equipped to help create a private space to grieve and remember.

8. Sleep. It's well-settled that bettering the quality and duration of your sleep will improve your entire life. But how to achieve it? Sleep-specific programs assess the underlying causes of sleep difficulties, and then develop specific programs focusing on stress management, yoga, massage and meditation — as well as practical tips on bed linens, sleepwear and room ambiance.



9. Medical interventions. Fully-staffed medical facilities that can provide genetics testing and biometrics are more and more the norm. Highly-trained specialists can do diagnostic testing and then develop a personalized program, including customized diets and weight-loss plans based on individual DNA and blood type.

10. Silence. Social media and mobile devices can be a major source of stress, anxiety and even depression. As a result, more people are seeking a serious digital detox when they take a wellness vacation. The most extreme examples are visits to a monastery or a cloister. But short of that, destination spas are providing guestrooms with wi-fi blockers, blindfolded floating massages, quiet mindfulness sessions and meditative forest walks (also known as forest bathing).



There you have it: ten new ways to think about your next wellness trip. We hope they inspire you to take good care of yourself, whether at home or away.

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