



INTO



Turn Vacancy into No Vacancy!
Capture Missed Income by Offering What Guests Need
Judith Culp Creative Copy

Experiencing lower occupancy during the week? You're not alone. In 2015, US hotels properties had the highest occupancy ratings in the past 15 years with a rate of 65.6%. Up 11% since 2009.

Peak times were filled, but still there's a 33% average availability during slower days or seasons. (These numbers provided by industry leader Spa Wellness 365.) How much income might you be losing?

More and more properties are tapping into the fastest growing segment of the travel industry. They are providing guests the things that are important to them while filling those empty rooms.

What are guests looking for? 96% of all travelers consider pampering relaxation very important. 84% want health/wellness. 68% want a mind body connection. 67% want a nature adventure. All of these are part of what we now call wellness travel.

The Global Wellness Institute is a research and think tank organization. Its most recent report shows Wellness Travel is now worth 3.4 Trillion dollars. An independent nonprofit firm, SRI International, did the study.



“New York, NY – September 30, 2014 – With consumer demand for wellness services and products higher than ever, a landmark study released today by The Global Wellness Institute reveals that the global wellness market is now worth \$3.4 trillion, making it nearly three times larger than the \$1 trillion worldwide pharmaceutical industry.”*

Highlights of the study showed:

- *The spa industry grew 58 percent from \$60 billion in 2007 to \$94 billion in 2013, with 47 percent increase in spa locations from 71,762 to 105,591*

- *Wellness tourism expanded to \$494 billion in revenues, rising 12.5 percent from 2012, significantly outpacing SRI's original growth forecast of 9 percent*
- *The first-ever assessment of the thermal and mineral springs sector, which accounts for \$50 billion in revenues and spans 26,847 properties worldwide*

Wellness equates to healthy, but the definitions have changed and expanded. Today wellness refers to wellbeing, happiness, and improving health physically, mentally, and/or spiritually. It's a dose of prevention for stress related health disorders. It's about experiences that enhance our lives.

A person feels frazzled. They know they need a break. They may not know the term wellness travel but they plan an escape.



The demand is huge. International chains are creating hotels dedicated to wellness. Airports are adding facilities to help visitors cope with the stress of travel. Stressed-out guests need and seek this in their travel.

Any property can incorporate wellbeing options for guests. You can create packages that offer renewing experiences. Midweek travelers are looking for this plus value. Wellness experiences will have guests staying longer and going home with great memories. Today's wellness travelers want to connect with places they travel. Help them achieve this and it will bring them back repeatedly.

SpaFinder Wellness 365 recent research survey revealed demographics of wellness travelers. The demand for wellness travel is across all age groups.

The top five demands by 49 and younger travelers are:



1. Outdoor adventures
2. Environmentally friendly properties
3. Properties that actively support the local community including volunteering
4. Fitness / yoga classes and facilities
5. Beach access.

The 50 and over group wants:

1. Luxury resorts
2. Spas
3. Destressing
4. Eco-friendly resort experiences
5. Beaches and cruises that offer fitness and spa services.

Who will your guests be? SpaFinder Wellness 365 offers data on the frequency of booking wellness travel by age group with 1 being the most frequent.

1. 46-55 (Gen X and youngest boomers)
2. 36-45 (Gen X)
3. 56-65 (Heart of the boomers)
4. 26-35 (Millennials)
5. Over 65 (Older boomers)

American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) says business travel (40%), is dominated by solo male travelers (63%). Leisure travel (60%), is typically two people (57%).

Of spa goers, SpaFinder found that women traveling together ranked number 1. Next was a woman traveling with a man. Spa for the women, golf for the men has extended the busy season by weeks for many properties.

Nature

Link clients to local ways to enjoy the outdoors. The number one opportunity for wellness is to enjoy nature. Get away from the television or computer screen. Active, passive, adrenalin pumping or quiet, every imaginable way can destress.

- Beaches
- Surfing / wading
- Rivers, lakes, streams
- Walking
- Hiking
- Cycling
- Swimming

- Boating
- Lounging
- Picnicking
- Golfing
- Fishing
- Sailing
- Driving big trucks
- Ballooning
- Bungee jumping
- Horseback riding
- Learn or discover something
- Touring
- Dune buggies
- Photography
- Painting
- Spending a day on a farm
- Attend a festival
- Shop
- Outdoor yoga



It's all about experiencing life. Something different from the daily routine at home. A time to recharge completely. An opportunity to connect in a new or different way. Interacting with locals builds friendships and bonds to draw visitors back again.

Adventure

Enthusiastic adventurers will be big into tackling outdoor or adrenaline-pumping challenges. While the Millennials may choose the most challenging offering, everyone is looking for more activity. Find local businesses that offer adventure activities. Partner with them to expand your offerings without any overhead.



Create a wet weather tour guide. A local driving tour where they can visit indoor landmarks, wine tasting or shopping. Share colorful local history and stories. This helps guests connect with your area and your property. You could offer your own van tours. Or you may choose to recommend a local tour provider. Guests wanting to go wine tasting or attend a festival appreciate the ride.

People enjoy learning and experiencing new things. Traveling to a new place where the culture is different. Local touring, shopping and visiting landmarks are high on their lists. Glass blowing, pottery making, watching artists work.



History and genealogy keep growing in popularity. People may be tracing their ancestry and visit places they came from. History buffs want learn about the local history and development.

Small vineyards have gotten quite clever at connecting with visitors. They invite them in for a wine stomp, an afternoon in the fields or live music gatherings.

Agro-tourism is also trying to connect with your guests.

Develop partnerships with local vineyards and agro-tourism to share guests and strengthen community feel. Your property could be their stay destination.

Cooking classes have grown steadily in popularity over the years. Most commonly, they are lecture and demo where guests watch the chef at work. Hands on with a chef is an alternative. It's a guest friendly two-hour chef school experience. The 700 Cooking School in Savannah is an excellent example. (Note: this is not a stand-alone cooking school. It is part of a hotel, spa, and restaurant property.) It consistently rates as the top experience in Savannah.

The chef gives tips on knife skills to keep everyone safe. He guides guests through their experience. Attendees pay to learn and they prepare their own meal. Be sure to offer copies of the recipes with your property logo, website and phone number.

Relax and Restore

Spas may have been the place of the elite in the past. Today they are essential for stress management and sharing time with friends. Best Friend Get-aways understand this need to escape, talk and relax.

Spa services are in high demand. Massages, soaks, thermal waters, baths, pools are valued for their restorative benefits. They also make great indoor alternatives when it's raining outside.

July 2016 reports show just how much spa services help the super-stressed. Since Brexit, the demand for spa services in the area between Westminster and London (highly financial based area) has jumped by 30%.

You can meet the need for relaxed social sharing with spa goers via a membership program. Locals visit on a regular basis to use the spa facilities, relax, visit quietly and unwind. If you don't have a spa associated with your property, partner with one nearby.

For little to no investment you can offer Yoga classes indoors or out. A quiet spot with a view or in a garden offers guests a place for private yoga or meditation. A well kept fitness center offers indoor workout choices.

Both Marriott and Hilton now offer in-room fitness options for business travelers.



If there is a time when bookings are slow, offer a "ladies retreat." For 3-4 days, they can take part in a combination of wellness oriented activities. Spa, yoga, fitness tips, cooking tips and time to relax. Make it easy by networking with local specialty providers you may not have on staff.

One of the biggest challenges for travelers is finding food choices that are in line with a healthy lifestyle diet.

To keep your guests dining on site, a diversity of food choices is key. Flexibility to serve smaller portions, low carb, vegetarian and paleo foods could set you apart.

With more people wanting/needing to avoid high calorie, starchy carbs, or gluten, creative alternatives could score big.

Specialty Services

Are medi-spa services readily available in your area? A midweek get away for a medi-spa treatment might be just what guests are looking for. If you don't offer them, is there someone locally where you can network? Typically, medical professionals don't work weekends.



Adding medi-spa packages may just boost your weekday traffic. Locals, your guests and other visitors want a reliable place for these services. Add on a massage or other spa service to promote the de-stress factor.

Employers are looking for ways to improve workplace wellness and team building. Getting staff out of the office into a neutral environment can boost success. If you can accommodate this type of group, it could be a great early week market.

Find someone local who is a wellness coach/facilitator. This would be a bonus for businesses looking to create an event like this and make their job easier.

Reward previous guests. Tempt them back with your new wellness packages. Consider offering a room upgrade from their previous booking level. This might fill a more expensive room that otherwise would remain vacant. It may also send guests home telling their friends about how great their experience was.



Consider a bonus for staying two or three nights. It might be the third night free or cross-market. Drive traffic to your spa or restaurant with food and spa vouchers.

Wellness experiences, adventure experiences, cultural experiences. They all contribute to happier, healthier people. Moreover, they can fill those empty rooms and improve your bottom line.