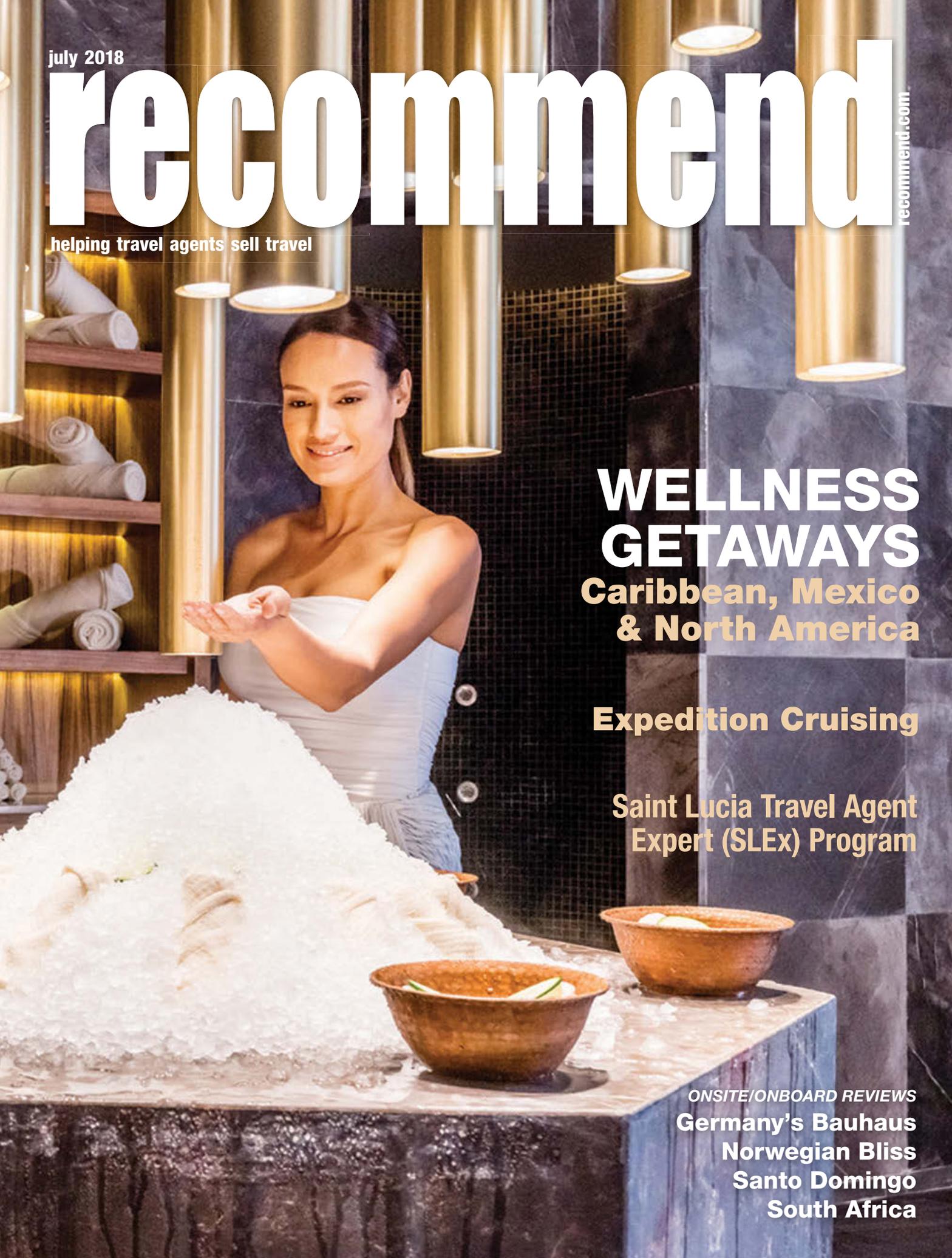


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Selling Wellness Retreats

Michelle Marie Arean

Back in the day if your client came asking for a wellness getaway, more often than not that meant a few treatments at the resort they were visiting. Oh boy, how booking wellness travel has changed in just a few short years.

“Wellness travel is booming and has definitely moved to mainstream,” says Jesse Tyler, spa director at **Omni Mount Washington Resort**. “At our spa in particular, we are seeing an up-tick in first-time wellness travelers, including many male guests.”

Danielle Gabarino, spa director at the **The Boulders Resort & Spa, A Curio Collection by Hilton** property, echoes that saying. “Wellness programming is on the rise. Retreat-style options are becoming extremely popular and changing the spa markets’ overall culture.”

“People want to take their healthy lifestyle with them,” notes Helen McCabe-Young, executive v.p. of sales & marketing for **Carmel Valley Ranch** and **Ventana Big Sur**, “or even ignite a healthier lifestyle

while they are on vacation and have the time. Activities that get guests outdoors are in high demand—our hiking, sunrise and sunset yoga, farmstead activities with organic garden tours and chicken chats, and new *Sustainable Wildcrafting* and *The Amazing World of Bees* programs are very popular. It’s all about moving people outside of the gym and into nature.”

Carillon Miami Wellness Resort’s director of communications Roxana Medina says, “Wellness is an ever-growing lifestyle that more people want to pursue. We’ve noticed that travelers don’t always want to ‘retreat’ but rather vacation where they have better options and can also learn new workouts, healthy habits or spend time with experts who will also provide insight on healthier living. The *Wellness Your Way* program has really proven true for us this year as we offer both relaxed healthy options, while also providing significant cleanse/detox programs as well—wellness the way you prefer it or in doses of as much as you need.”

What Do Guests Want?

Guests are looking for variety, says Gabarino, adding that, “I find that more and more people are becoming aware of their health, not weight and diet fads, but overall wellness health. Everyday stress triggers are affecting their ability to have a normal work/life balance. People are turning to a series of intricate services and fitness classes over a length of a few days with the purpose of healing their minds and then bodies vs. a typical Swedish massage of the past.”

“They are looking for experiences that are authentic to the location,” says Tyler.

“Travelers are looking to experience what they want, when they want it and exactly how they want it,” points out McCabe-Young. “One example is healthy options that honor dietary preferences and needs on all menus all the time. Guests want these clearly visible and they don’t want to have to ask for gluten-free, dairy-free, vegan or vegetarian. This is now the standard.”

“Often, people start with a focus on food as they start on their quest for wellness, before taking on a more of a holistic approach.

For this reason, culinary is a large part of what we offer.”

-- Jesse Tyler, Spa Director, Omni Mount Washington Resort

Who and Where to Book?

How do you know where to book your wellness-focused clients? Gabarino says, “Find a place that speaks to a person. Don’t focus on what is in close proximity to do for fun, focus on a place that allows the guest to retreat on their own. Each individual is different in their journey to healthier mind and being. For some its open waters with the wind in their hair, others it’s the solitude of nature and their surroundings. Listen to the guest’s needs and guide them appropriately.”

Tyler says they see a lot of “groups of friends and grown families, but also couples looking for bonding experiences, and solo travelers wanting time for introspection.”

McCabe-Young adds, “As always, make sure the setting and the entire experience is a perfect fit for what they want to get out of the vacation. Are they looking for an all-encompassing vacation where holistic wellness takes center stage or a low-key, relaxing escape with optional wellness activities that align with their interests? Feeling comfortable and their best to focus on well-being, the way they want it, is the most important thing.”

Bookable Holistic Journeys

Located on Miami Beach, Carillon Miami Wellness Resort offers guests workshops, spa treatments, and wellness classes. While at the spa, guests can take part in a *Thermal Experience* that includes a Finnish sauna, *Crystal Steam*, and an *Igloo Experience*, plus sign up for *Deep-tissue Therapy* or a *Seatonix Firming Wrap*. Guests can also take part in classes ranging from Pilates and Barre, to QI-Gong, salsa dancing, yoga, singing bowl meditation, Tabata, and Latin cardio dance.

Other onsite activities include *Tea Time with Dr. Ahuva*, which is an acupuncture facial rejuvenation Q&A session that teaches guests about needle alternatives in Oriental medicine; and *Understanding Your Body*, a class with the in-house exercise physiologist

who will teach guests about the body’s essential functions and how to optimize quality of life through mindfulness and healthy habits.

You can also book your clients on health-focused packages such as the *Carillon Cleanse*, in which they will meet with the in-house nutritionist who would create custom menus based on the guest’s diet goals. “Culinary plays a large role here because while there are journaling and meditation, therapeutic and exercise portions, a chef-prepared daily meal plan is a very significant part of this cleanse,” points out Medina. Rates start at \$495 in the summer, \$695 in season.

Going from beachside to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona, The Boulders Resort & Spa provides a true “Desert Zen Spa” that’s rooted in timeless traditions of healing and the connection to earth. This property offers more than a typical resort spa, as it features self-guided experiences, and encourages guests to spend time outside to connect with the earth while on labyrinth walks, during private meditations in a Native American tipi, or while on strolls in the Organic Garden. In the tipi, guests can take part in private meditations, soul readings or shamanic ceremonies.

Guests can also take part in wellness coaching programs including holistic nutrition programs and holistic stress management, as well as reiki, emotional balancing, watsu, and memory enhancement sessions. There are also body treatments such as an *Organic Blueberry Detox Wrap* and a *Yuzu Sage Splash*; hydrotherapy tubs that provide lymphatic drainage, and a *Wellness Classroom* where guests can take part in a full chef demonstration. In addition, guests can enjoy rock climbing, horseback rides, desert hiking, moonlight bicycling, mountain biking, stargazing, a desert photography tour, and more. Rates start at \$459 Jan.-March, \$139 June-Aug., and \$299 Sept.-Dec.

For those guests who are looking for a weekend of rejuvenation, consider the

Omni Mount Washington Resort’s *Thrive: A Wellness Immersion Weekend* taking place Nov. 16-18, 2018. During this weekend escape, Barbara Close, founder of Naturopathica, will show guests how to diet, practice restorative yoga, use herbal remedies, and demonstrate how mind-body practices can improve health. The weekend includes daily yoga, healthy meals, informative lectures, and spa treatments. Also included are a smoothie and juicing clinic, forest bathing, mini facial treatments, and a dry brushing clinic. Rates start at \$548 for two nights sgl, and \$698 for two nights dbl.

And for those looking for something a little more laid back, Carmel Valley Ranch, a playful summer camp-inspired resort located on California’s Central Coast, offers a plethora of wellness activities, including daily guided hikes, sunset hikes, and sunset yoga on a serene hilltop platform. In addition, guests can take part in a *Hypno-Health & Wellness* experience that dives into sleep health, and a new “sustainable wildcrafting” class that allows guests to explore the resort’s secret gardens and hillsides for natural plants and ingredients to create nourishing food, teas, and tinctures.

“Guests can also get in on the farmstead fun and learn more about where their food comes from with our *Learning Adventures* that include chicken chats at the hen house, weekly drop-in hours in the organic garden with farmer Mark Marino who came from the celebrated Earthbound Farms, and our new *The Amazing World of Bees* program that includes hive science demonstrations, honey extractions and tastings,” says McCabe-Young. Rates start at \$325 per night. ■

Contact Information

Carillon Miami Wellness Resort: carillonhotel.com

Carmel Valley Ranch: carmelvalleyranch.com

Omni Mount Washington Resort: omnihotels.com/hotels/bretton-woods-mount-washington

The Boulders Resort & Spa: theboulders.com