

Dubai to become global spa capital

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Dubai: Dubai is set to become the number one spa destination in the world by 2010 as global trends reflect more visitors seeking healthy holidays for rest and relaxation.

The emirate is leading international growth in spas, with the industry as a whole experiencing 17 per cent year-on-year growth. And with several exciting new luxury properties coming online over the next few years, Dubai's spa offering is expected to soar even further.

According to Gassan Aridi, President and CEO of Alpha Tours, the tourism industry has experienced changes in the custom of tourism from cultural tourism, historical tourism, educational tourism, but now it is time for healthy tourism in which spas have become the fashion of tourism, and Dubai is heavily invested in this trend.

The emirate is at the forefront of international spa growth with UAE investment in the spa and wellness industry now exceeding \$38 billion (according the Wellness and Spas Middle East International Trade Fair). The huge surge in hotels being developed in Dubai is up 6 per cent on last year, fuelling a growing demand and leading to an extraordinary growth in the number of spas - it is estimated that by 2015 there will be over 200 hotels offering world-class spa facilities in the emirate.

"All around Dubai you will see big, and sometimes not so big hotels allocating large areas of their facilities to spas, not only to attract visitors, but spas also increase the value of the facilities," said Aridi.

Visitors are spoilt for choice with the variety of spas in the emirate and their unique themes, style and concept treatments. Influences are drawn from the East and West and an international feel is evident, with spa themes ranging from Egyptian and Thai to contemporary. One of the most recent additions to Dubai's impressive spa portfolio is The Lime Spa at the newly opened boutique Desert Palm hotel. This sumptuous spa from Per Aquum allows guests to indulge in exquisite treatments and relax in the sanctuary of a lush polo estate. The 24 guest suites and villas embody the simplicity and elegance of this resort.

Holistic healing

Dubai also boasts a range of city and beach spas including the Givenchy Spa at the One&Only Royal Mirage which includes 12 treatment rooms, one of which is a Givenchy boutique. There is also The Ritz-Carlton Dubai's Balinese themed spa, Shangri-La's Chinese themed Chi Spa, the Taj Ayurvedic Spa at the Taj Palace, the only five-star hotel in Dubai to offer the 6,000 year-old holistic healing Ayur-vedic process And in 2009 the first Armani Spa will open in the world's tallest building, Burj Dubai, designed by Giorgio Armani.

The emirate is also home to a number of desert retreat spas at exclusive boutique resorts. In addition to the Lime Spa at The Desert Palm, there is also the Arabian style Timeless Spa at the magnificent Al Maha resort, using mainly local produce such as frankincense, apricots and dates. Recently trends also indicate an upsurge in male spa users, in 2007 31 per cent of spa clientele were men. This has set a trend for male only spas such as 1847 at Le Meridien resort including hydrotherapy rooms, ice fountain and 'Rasul room', and the H2O spa located at Jumeirah Emirates Towers, where men can de-stress in cool and contemporary surroundings.

"The emirate has one of the highest concentrations of spas per capita in the world, and the growth in the spa industry reflects the trend of today's hectic society where people are now seeking a high-quality spa and

wellness experience. Dubai provides a diverse and world-class spa offering where visitors can expect the best spa facilities in a variety of settings whether it's the beach, the city or the desert," said Ian Scott, director of the UK and Ireland representative office of Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing

In line with these trends, Dubai is creating a range of large-scale wellbeing developments including Dubai Lifestyle City and Dubai Healthcare City. Set to open by the end of 2009, Dubai Lifestyle City will offer residents and visitors a calm and relaxed lifestyle with access to luxurious spas. Dubai Healthcare City, which is planned to open in 2010, will be offering more than just traditional medicine, it will include a "wellness cluster" which aims to enhance quality of life, comprising cutting edge facilities, resorts and spas.

The global spa market is rapidly escalating, and Dubai is setting itself apart from the competition, leading the way with innovative and exciting new spas, and with high consumer demand that is set to continue visitors are on target to reach 15 million by 2010.