

Worth[®]

Maximize Your Personal Return On Investment At Wellness Spas And Resorts

An in-depth review of the complex world of wellness from the perspective of a medical expert can help you choose wisely and optimize your personal health investment.



Photo courtesy of Roberto Nickson via Unsplash

Not all spas, resorts and retreats are created equal; each has unique strengths and weaknesses. As physicians with decades of experience in clinical practice and research, we have frequently been invited as presenters at health and wellness resorts around the globe. An in-depth review of the complex world of wellness from the perspective of a medical expert can help you choose wisely and optimize your personal health investment.

From an hour at a neighborhood day spa to an extended stay at a luxurious destination resort, the variation in experience and expense can be

significant. Accommodation, cuisine and ambience are common experiences that guests can appreciate and reliably evaluate on their own; but even sophisticated consumers can be overwhelmed by the variety of options in the **trillion-dollar health and wellness industry**. There are many aspects to wellness, and individuals need to prioritize their personal desires and expectations.

A retreat with a focus on yoga and meditation will not be a good match for an individual who needs to improve their cardiovascular stamina. Similarly, an individual seeking an emotional and spiritual reset may not find that a program of rock climbing achieves their goal. The options are as diverse as the quality and expense are varied. The wellness industry has **a wide spectrum of services** with different areas of focus and expertise. Many remain within the bounds of standard approaches, while others embrace trends and alternatives that have yet to be validated.

Some spas and resorts focus on stress reduction and relaxation with services incorporating traditional massage, meditation and yoga. Others may offer less well-known options, such as sound healing, aromatherapy and labyrinths. Alternatively, the focus may be on physical fitness and athletic performance. They may offer individual sports, such as tennis or golf, or group activities such as hiking and biking. Medically supervised programs may offer a focus on specific illnesses. Aesthetic spa services range from pedicures and facials to advanced cosmetic and dermatology treatments. More advanced services may enter the realm of medical tourism in search of economic savings, privacy or services not available locally.

Spas, resorts and retreats may offer a schedule with group participation, while others are individualized and à la carte. They range from a limited number of

guests for a specific time frame, to a larger number with variable lengths of stays. Objective evaluations of the quality of features and specialty services may help guide the selection.

The **COVID pandemic** has brought disruptions of health and well-being to crisis dimensions. Stress, burnout and health issues affect virtually everyone. The economic impact has been staggering, and efforts to mitigate the loss present challenges as well as opportunities. Whether overcoming physical or psychological manifestations of stress and burnout, this may be the ideal time to experience the reset and rejuvenation often discovered at a wellness resort. Many guests comment on the fact that they wished they had made the introduction years earlier. Frequent return visits are the strongest confirmation that they were more than satisfied with their return on investment.

Identifying the best wellness retreat for personal needs requires a thoughtful approach. It helps to understand your ultimate goals. Is the priority gaining skills for enhancing your sleep, nutrition or stress reduction? Many retreats will offer guidance with introductory orientations to the services provided and ‘concierge’ services to personalize your experience. Incorporating these changes into your lifestyle is the best validation of having made the right choice. Follow-up assessments with objective monitoring of physiological, psychological and/or cognitive parameters can measure the personal return on investment.

Proactively enhancing your health and well-being improves vitality and personal satisfaction. Prevention and reversal of lifestyle-related disease is priceless. Rather than investing in a life insurance policy where the benefits

accrue for others, engaging in proactive wellness is a life assurance policy where the rewards are returned to the investor.

Rancho La Puerta

The pioneer wellness resort, **Rancho La Puerta**, is an ideal starting point to explore the opportunities. *Siempre Mejor* (“always better”) has long been the motto for Rancho La Puerta, one of the original health and fitness resorts. It has consistently been rated the premier destination spa in the world by readers of magazines such as *Condé Nast Traveler*. Founded in 1940 by Edmond Szekely, a Hungarian philosopher and proponent of the vegetarian lifestyle, and his young bride Deborah, the Ranch started out as a rustic retreat with a ‘bring your own tent’ option. Guests paid \$17 a day and would learn from the ‘Professor’ about the benefits of vegetarianism and natural living. Many guests would barter services for room and board, and ‘the Ranch’ developed a loyal, nearly cult-like, following.

Rancho La Puerta grew in popularity and notoriety when it was discovered by the Hollywood crowd, and the rest is history. Deborah, who is just shy of her 100th birthday is still active and considered the grand doyenne of the spa industry. Guests who discover the magic of the Ranch on their first visit understand the reasons for the extremely high rate of return, including many who have been frequenting the resort for decades. A common refrain is gratitude for the discovery—but regret that they did not know of this renewal and fountain of youth paradise years earlier.

It was our good fortune to discover this health resort decades ago. As we often counseled our patients, taking care of oneself was not self-indulgence but a vital form of healing and self-renewal. The cuisine has evolved over the years from vegetarian to pesco-vegetarian, taking full advantage of the bounty of

produce from the lush organic gardens. Guests can dine at community tables where meaningful conversations lead to social bonding throughout the week. Excellent professional chefs on staff, supplemented by visiting celebrity chefs and a well-respected culinary school, cater to virtually all dietary requirements.

Daily hikes, lectures and classes with top fitness instructors are combined with a variety of other offerings. Each visit becomes a 'booster' to one's health and resilience. The combination of the exceptional staff and diversity of guests makes this beautiful 4,000-acre resort at the base of magical Mount Kuchuuma resonate with vibrant energy. The Ranch offers a practical program at the end of the week-long stay called, "Take the Ranch Home." This reinforces the philosophy that the benefits should be incorporated into one's daily life.

Rancho La Puerta is not the only health and wellness resort, but it is one that has delivered long lasting and life changing benefits for us and thousands of others. Over the years, we have expanded our experiences at a variety of spa/health resorts and have been rewarded with continued zest, productivity and joie de vivre. Our goal is to provide valuable insights on how wellness resorts can optimize your well-being and maximize your personal return on investment.