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The Management and Upgrading of Wellness Amenities and Facilities

This chapter discusses the management and development of health and wellness destinations, facilities, and amenities in foodservice, hospitality, and tourism businesses. First, it introduces the case study of the Finger Lakes Region of New York State. Next, it defines wellness destinations, facilities, and amenities in foodservice, hospitality, and tourism. Finally, it discusses how those wellness destinations, facilities, and amenities can be developed and managed.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to do the following:

1. Discuss the case study of the Finger Lakes Region of New York State.
 2. Define and discuss wellness destinations, facilities, and amenities.
 3. Categorize the core resources and competencies that a wellness destination should have.
 4. Define and discuss management of wellness destinations.
 5. Define and discuss the development of facilities and amenities in wellness destinations.
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Case study: Finger Lakes Region, New York

Between New York City, the Adirondack Mountains, and the western New York city of Buffalo, a third of New York State is comprised of the Finger Lakes Region. This part of the state has gone through a transformation from an agricultural paradise to an industrial center anchored by Corning Glassworks, a brief stint as a silent film mecca, and it is now known as a wellness haven. Hiking trails, cycling circuits, yoga studios, herbal apothecaries, and other traditional medicine centers, farm-to-table restaurants, farmer's markets, and more abound in this destination (Steuben County CVB, 2020).

One of the primary cities, Ithaca, is home not only to Cornell University and Ithaca College but also to the North American seat of Namgyal Monastery, the personal monastery of the Dalai Lama. Other parts of the rustic region host vineyards and many water activities centered on the 11 Finger Lakes in the region, as well as cow cuddling and horse therapy. Spas and wellness centers thrive, including the Inns of Aurora, located in Aurora, which has an on-site yoga master and Ayurvedic expert in the role of Director of Serenity, whose only job is to help guests decompress. This resort, in particular, offers guests massages and bodywork, Ayurveda consultations, and serenity sessions for those guests who are visiting and focusing on their wellness (Inns of Aurora, 2020).

Multiple New York State parks make it easy for guests to take advantage of the gorges, waterfalls, and pristine forests of the region (Lippe-McGraw, 2019). There are also many history centers and attractions celebrating such people and events as President Millard Fillmore, Harriet Tubman, the underground railroad, women's suffrage in Seneca Falls, the Erie Canal, and more.

There are several destination management organizations (DMOs) (defined below) in the Finger Lakes Region that oversee the management and development of tourism in the area. This network of organizations monitors the current and potential tourism offerings, coordinates with various destination stakeholders like lodging and restaurants, other local businesses, the State Park network, and more, to help ensure a consistent wellness product and marketing message. They work together in areas such as research and marketing, to avoid overlap and duplication of efforts.

Discussion questions

1. What types of wellness facilities and amenities are available in the Finger Lakes region?
2. What natural resources does this region have to offer visitors?
3. What purposes can destination management organizations (DMOs) serve?
4. What other areas of the United States and the world are similar to the Finger Lakes region?

Wellness destinations, facilities and amenities

Chapter 4 of this textbook described some popular wellness destinations around the world, like Sedona, Arizona, Amelia Island, Florida, Bali, Indonesia, and Costa Rica. Although many of those places have been famous for their wellness facilities and amenities for decades and even centuries, to remain competitive in the modern tourism environment, they must continue to innovate by managing and upgrading their offerings. Chapter 7 discussed the development and management of spas and hot springs, but there are many other facilities and amenities a destination can use to compete in the wellness arena. In Chapter 4, a *tourist destination* was defined as a country, state, region, city, or town which is marketed or markets itself as a place for tourists to visit, and a *wellness destination* was defined as a country, state, region, city, town, or event that tourists and residents visit to improve their holistic health.

Coordinating efforts within each destination and between the destination and the rest of the world often are handled by a destination management organization (DMO). While the M in DMO has traditionally stood for *marketing*, in recent years, it has transitioned to *management*, making a DMO the leading organizational entity that may encompass the various authorities, stakeholders, and professionals and facilitates partnerships towards a collective destination vision (WTO 2019a; Destination Think!, 2020). Often, it is recommended that DMOs work alongside their members and stakeholders (hotels, restaurants, activity providers, etc.) to develop an overarching and cohesive strategic plan for marketing and promoting the area (Dvorak et al., 2014). DMOs do not own the destination's tourism product, but are in charge of facilitating its development by encouraging tourism to the region. In addition to the hard skills of designing, planning, and marketing, DMOs perform "soft functions" like instilling trust, calming uncertainties, and creating a sense of community (Sheehan et al., 2016).

DMOs exist in three different capacities and depending on where the wellness destination is located, how large it is, and if it is publically or privately owned. This will affect which type of DMO a destination may reach out to for assistance. First is the national tourism authorities; this type of DMO is responsible for managing and marketing an entire country. If a wellness destination wants to be included in national tourism management and marketing, it will contact this type of DMO. Second are the regional tourism authorities, which are responsible for the management of a specific tourist zone like the French Riviera or French Alps. Lastly, there are local DMOs that are independent regional tourism organizations that are close to all of the local tourism areas. In Central Florida, these would be Experience Kissimmee or Visit Orlando.

The duties of DMOs are as follows (Burnaz et al., 2017):

- **Coordination** – Coordinating many elements (including local, political, civil, business circles, and tourism sector representatives) that constitute the tourism industry to provide a single voice in tourism.
- **Protection** – Leading tourism efforts in local communities and protecting the interests of the tourism industry.