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# Health and Wellness Tourism

## Introduction

Tourism is an important form of leisure activity and provides a path which can lead to the wellbeing of people (Gurunathan & Lakshmi, 2023; World Tourism Organisation, 2021). Wellness tourism was considered one of the fastest growing wellness economy sectors prior to 2020 and despite being negatively impacted by the global pandemic, it is predicted to grow by 16.6% annually over the next three years (Global Wellness Institute, 2023). The reason for this exponential growth is attributed to wellbeing being an essential factor which helps shape people's lives, as well as being increasingly influential in patterns of consumption and production. Health research over the past two centuries has primarily taken the pathogenic approach, focusing on the cause of the disease (Obradovic, 2007), with a transition at the end of the 20th century to viewing wellness more as a mega trend, involving the preservation of health in a world of increased work, stress, hunger and disease (Heung & Kucukusta, 2013). For many people, the COVID-19 pandemic functioned as a 'wake-up' call to better understand and improve their own health and wellbeing (Gurunathan & Lakshmi, 2023). The pandemic has contributed to travellers becoming more intentional in their trip choices with many considering travel as a key component of their mental wellness (Global Wellness Institute, 2023). Consequently, wellness tourism has the power to function as a recovery vehicle for the whole tourism industry post-pandemic, with tourism stakeholders in the future needing to improve infrastructure and expand tourism package experiences to best capitalise on this growth prospect (Gurunathan & Lakshmi, 2023).

This chapter defines the relative terms of health, medical, wellness and spa tourism, identifies the current trends in the wellness sector, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, and details the various wellness providers and considers the future direction of health and wellness in connection with tourism and