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Travel as Healing

Wellness vacations now go far beyond massages and diet advice, instead offering a respite from physical and mental stress. Here's what to expect.

Spas took a hit

Spas, with their focus on high-touch, one-on-one services like massages and facials, were hit hard last year. Hotel and resort spas experienced a 42 percent dip in revenues, while destination spas, which offer an immersive experience, were down 37 percent, according to [a report by the Global Wellness Institute](#) published in December. But the wellness industry has since begun a rapid recovery, the report said, projecting that the spa sector will grow 17 percent annually through 2025.

Still, the downturn forced hotels and resorts — and their guests — to expand their notions of wellness and what activities fall under that umbrella. Before the pandemic, a wellness trip was probably centered on a spa's traditional services, said Caroline Klein, the chief communications officer of Preferred Hotels & Resorts, a luxury hotel group. Now, hotels may offer nature walks, meditation, yoga or any number of creative offerings.

In some ways, hotels are responding to the lifestyles that many people adopted at the height of lockdowns, including making home-cooked meals and taking virtual fitness classes.

“Hotels are really seeing people bring those new mind-sets, routines and preferences with them as they start to travel again,” Ms. Klein said. “What that creates is a definite shift in expectations and experiences that hotels need to cater to, because they're not catering to the traveler from 2019.”