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THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY'S TRUSTED VOICE

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wellness

With everyone from aging boomers to millennials focusing on healthier lifestyles, health-centric tourism, from spas and fitness centers to organic eateries, is growing twice as fast as any other travel sector.

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Viking to enter U.S. market, adding Mississippi cruises to product mix

By Michelle Baran

The European river boom has officially landed stateside. Viking River Cruises made a bona fide entry into the U.S. river cruising market last week with plans to launch six modern river cruise vessels on the Mississippi River starting in 2017.

Viking first teased the idea of launching Mississippi cruises in 2013, when the company proposed bringing a version of its latest European river vessels, the 190-passenger Viking Longships, to the U.S.

Though the company did not provide any concrete design details for its forthcoming U.S. vessels, Viking Cruises Chairman Torstein Hagen did suggest that the Mississippi

vessels would be a more modern concept than the traditional Mississippi paddle-wheeler.

In order to enter the U.S. river cruise market, Viking needed to find a way to build and operate ships in this country in compliance with the Passenger Vessel Services Act of 1886, a cabotage law that was updated with the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (the "Jones Act"). The law states that no foreign vessel may transport passengers directly between ports or places in the U.S. unless the vessel was built in the U.S. and is wholly owned and crewed by U.S. citizens.

Last week, the company announced that it has done just that. The vessels will be owned
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[THEY USE THE WEB FOR RESEARCH, THEN SEEK AN EXPERT TRAVEL ADVISER]

Millennials: The generation most likely to hire an agent

By Kate Rice

It might seem counterintuitive, but millennials, the most online generation, is also the age group most likely to use travel agents.

What's more, agents who see their sales to millennials increasing say it is the generation that comprises by far the most knowledgeable consumers and that they turn to agents for curatorial assistance and to ensure they get the most bang for their buck.

According to MMGY Global's 2014 Portrait of the American Traveler, 28% of millennials surveyed in February 2014 had used a travel agent in the previous 12 months, compared with 15% of Gen X consumers, 13% of baby boomers and 21% of matures.

Looking forward, the MMGY study predicted that millennials would be even more likely to use a travel agent. Thirty percent said they would use an agent in the next two years, compared with 19% of Xers, 16% of boomers and 27% of matures.

On top of using agents more, millennials
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A Four Seasons Seychelles mountain yoga class above Petite Anse Bay.



With consumer demand for wellness services and products higher than ever, a study from the Global Wellness Institute estimates the global wellness market is worth **\$3.4 trillion**, vs. the **\$1 trillion** worldwide pharmaceutical industry.

Source: Global Wellness Institute

WELLNESS

Continued from Page 27 of phase one.”

Phase two, she said, was fueled by the global economic downturn that took hold in 2008.

“People were dealing with the highest levels of stress and anxiety,” Kyricos said. “They needed a timeout. ... They started hearing about the benefits of massage, the benefits of sleep. ... There is so much more evidence out there, and people started to connect the dots in ways that had not happened before.”

People now realize, she said, that they need to deal with their stress and anxiety more regularly, “not just on a week’s vacation with the family.”

Because of that, wellness has now invaded all areas of travel, even airports.



A massage at the Cheval Blanc Randheli resort on the Noonu Atoll, in the Maldives.

“It’s kind of exciting, because it’s everywhere you go,” said Kurtz-Ahlers. “My vision is that airports will be a place of health and wellness. And it’s starting. Every time there is a renovation of an airport, there is a spa component, a place where you can get a 15-minute shoulder massage. When you think about it, if you can get a 15-minute neck massage before you get on the plane, it can make such a difference when you land.”

Travelers are also starting to see healthier food options at airport restaurants and shops.

In fact, the wellness movement is becoming so widespread and mainstream that some countries are talking about creating wellness ministers, according to Susie Ellis, president of Spafinder Wellness.

“In Canada, provinces have wellness ministers,” she said. “India has a minister of yoga. Governments recognize that it’s a category that they want to attract people to come visit and promote their indigenous practices. ... So you see the momentum is just going to accelerate.”

Luxury leads

The biggest growth in wellness tourism, of course, has come at the luxury level — so much so that the International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) has eliminated its special spa events and integrated spa into its all of its shows.

“Spa is a now a definitive element of luxury travel, and we see no end to this trend,” said Alison Gilmore, senior exhibition director for ILTM. “The global spa industry has grown by 58% since 2007 and is now valued at \$94 billion.”

In luxury, Kurtz-Ahlers said, spas and wellness have become a point of entry.

“If you have a luxury resort, the stakes are really high in terms of the offerings and people. ... It gets down to not just having a massage therapist, but how good is the massage therapist? What is their background? ... There has to be quality to everything.”

From the Middle East to Fiji to Nicaragua, new luxury resorts in emerging markets are heavy on the wellness, with much of their focus tied to indigenous techniques.

“It used to be you had to go to Bali or Thailand to get a real wellness experience,” said Trevor Barran, CEO of Aqua Nicaragua Wellness Resort. “Nicaragua is emerging as a kind of Bali-like product.”

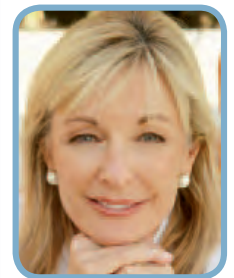
Barran said that except for a Barcelo resort near Managua, Aqua Nicaragua is the country’s largest resort, with

48 rooms. The resort hosts yoga retreats and offers a variety of activities, from hiking, spinning, surfing and rappelling to chocolate-making classes. Its health-focused menus also include raw foods.

Another wellness resort in Nicaragua, Mukul, has six spa buildings where guests can get crystal, energy and hammam treatments.

And the Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort in Fiji offers a medicine walk, during which guests can learn about 24 plants that offer a natural cure for a multitude of ailments.

Ellis said much of the popularity of such retreats is being driven by research that documents the health benefits of spa treatments and the wellness-related activities now



Chief Brand Officer Mia Kyricos, left, and President Susie Ellis of Spafinder Wellness.

offered at resorts.

As an example, she points to forest bathing, a treatment that originated in Japan and is essentially a leisurely walk in the woods. Her group recently listed it as the top wellness trend for 2015.

Ellis said that in preparing the report, she found more than 100 clinical studies touting the benefits of forest bathing, mostly from Japan, which offer evidence that it helps lower blood pressure, heart rate and cortisol levels and helps with stress and depression.

Blackberry Farm, a 30-year-old resort, just opened Wellhouse, a comprehensive spa and wellness center with a focus on Japanese forest bathing.

In addition, luxury hotels around the world are transforming their spas into state-of-the-art fitness and wellness centers.

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