



# Spa Executive

## 8 WELLNESS TRENDS FOR 2023: A HOSPITALITY HANDBOOK





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It seems cliché to say we can't believe it's almost 2023, but it's true! Where does the time go? It seems like only yesterday we were predicting wellness trends for 2022 (predicting wellness trends is one of our favorite activities around here) and now it's time to look at what will be catching on and capturing interest next year.

It's no secret that consumer interest in wellness continues to grow at a rate that amazes even those of us in the industry. Or that the hospitality industry continues to find new and innovative ways to incorporate wellness into the guest experience.

Last year, we saw an increase of interest in sustainability, adaptogens, and employee wellness. This year we're seeing a range of developments both innovative and back to roots. From ketamine drips and the metaverse to sober curiosity and women's health, we believe 2023 will truly be the year of something for everyone.

Here are eight wellness trends for 2023.



## MENOPAUSE

Half of the global population will go through menopause during their lives. And yet, until recently, nobody talked about it, a mind blowing reality, considering the debilitating and confusing symptoms that can accompany these life changing events. Women have been suffering in virtual silence as the only recognition menopause got, until recently, was either as a source of humor or in whispered tones accompanied by winks or eye rolls (there's a good Los Angeles Times [article about all this here](#)). We were too embarrassed to ask questions and seek relief for a variety of reasons that include shame over getting older and men's discomfort with the topic.

Well, the tides have changed. Empowered and emboldened by numbers, social media, and celebrity voices, women have started to talk and look for answers. Moreover,

people – many of them women – are waking up to the potential revenue in the menopause and perimenopause market.

Stacy London, former host of TLC's *What Not to Wear* and current CEO of State of Menopause, a company to help people “feel their best during menopause,” recently hosted the first Menopause CEO Summit in New York City on World Menopause Day (October 18).

Forbes reported that conference speakers were leaders in “the up-and-coming field of menopause health.” Companies helmed by these execs all offer some kind of menopause wellness solution, like Womaness, which offers solutions for symptoms like dry skin, low libido, and hot flashes. And Evernow, a start-up offering prescriptions and science-backed solutions for menopausal and perimenopausal women. Investors include Drew Barrymore and Cameron Diaz.

Australian actress Naomi Watts has also launched a “menopausal wellness brand” called Stripes, in partnership with Amyris.

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## KETAMINE

We've talked in the past about the mainstreaming of psychedelics, like psilocybin, the compound found in more than 200 species of mushrooms, and DMT (N,N-Dimethyltryptamine) the chemical substance known as the "spirit molecule," used in ayahuasca, as potential treatments and preventatives for depression, anxiety, Alzheimer's, and addiction, among other things. More recently, another player has entered the game: ketamine.

Developed in 1962 and later approved as an anesthetic, ketamine has gained notoriety as a recreational drug. Studies into its potential as a treatment for depression by targeting the neurotransmitter glutamate started in 2000. A more potent version, esketamine, was approved as a treatment for depression in 2019, though clinics began administering intravenous treatments without approval about 10 years ago,

according to the [Los Angeles Times](#). Johns Hopkins University psychiatrist, Paul Nestadt, says that about three-quarters of "very treatment-resistant patients" show significant improvement in depressive symptoms.

Meanwhile, [a new study](#) at the University of Pittsburgh found that ketamine paired with looking at images of smiling faces to build positive associations holds "promise" for helping people with treatment-resistant depression.

In cities including Toronto, New York, Miami, and Seattle you'll find clinics offering ketamine IV drips. Manhattan's Jeff Ditzell Psychiatry clinic, for example, provides a drip accompanied by theta brain waves and psychotherapy for people with debilitating depression who have already tried other treatment options. And the Nushama Psychedelic Wellness Clinic, also in NYC, offers "sub-anesthetic doses of

Ketamine, to occasion an ego-dissolving inner exploration."

On top of treatment-resistant depression, ketamine has been found in studies to be a potentially promising treatment for migraines, generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, anorexia nervosa, and alcohol and cocaine abuse.

Researchers are cautious, as ketamine is an addictive substance and associated with serious health risks. But, as wellness, medicine, and mental health supports continue to overlap, we expect that we might see more normalization of psychedelic treatments, including ketamine, in the coming years. +



## NEXT LEVEL IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES

The Global Wellness Institute tagged the Metaverse as a trend to watch in 2022 and this has been a little slow to roll out, but proponents are still banking on it.

In futurism and science fiction, the Metaverse is “a hypothetical iteration of the Internet as a single, universal and immersive virtual world that is facilitated by the use of virtual reality and augmented reality headsets. In colloquial use, a metaverse is a network of 3D virtual worlds focused on social connection.” Or a 3D version of the internet. This immersive world will presumably expand to encompass wellness and, as we reported earlier in 2022, the spa is coming to the metaverse with technologies that will allow us to travel, interact, smell, and feel touch. Educated guesses suggest

that the Metaverse will include virtual and augmented reality experiences, haptics, smell technology, and more.

People are expected to be able to visit spa destinations, purchase products, and attend classes in the metaverse. Predictions are that:

- Workouts will be enhanced with AR projections into your environment.
- Technology will transform how consumers find and learn about wellness destinations with virtual 3D tours and digital avatars, allowing for an immersive experience in the space and making guest decisions easy.
- Digital solutions that include AR, VR, scent, and haptics will replace pharmaceuticals as treatments for pain, stress, PTSD, and other mental health conditions.

- Doctors will prescribe VR games to treat conditions like attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The best spa operators have always aimed to engage all five senses with their experiences. The metaverse promises to take this several steps further, into truly immersive territory where scent, sound, touch, taste, and sight interact and intertwine on unprecedented levels. +



## SOBRIETY

According to [Sarasota Magazine](#), the sobriety, or “sober curious,” fad started in 2014 with a challenge called “Dry January,” trademarked by the UK charity Alcohol Concern. You’ve surely heard about this challenge, sometimes stylized as “dryuary,” in which participants take a month-long break from alcohol.

Since then, sobriety has gained further traction, partly in response to the opposite fad of people turning to alcohol as a coping mechanism during the height of the pandemic years. A younger generation is saying no to booze and yes to sobriety. Millennials, now aged around 26 to 41, are sometimes referred to as “generation sober” because of their non-drinking culture. And Gen Z, aged approximately 10-25, reportedly drinks even less. The fact that the youngest of them is 10 years old suggests this research should be taken with a

grain of salt, as this generation has yet to experience the stresses and difficulties of life that often lead to a cocktail. Still, there is ample evidence that something sober is happening.

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Dame Magazine reports that mocktail bars, and nonalcoholic wine and beverage stores are opening in cities around the world. Some have attributed the growing sobriety movement to a greater wellness movement and it’s been noted that young people are choosing cannabis and psychedelics over booze, which is in keeping with the other trends we’ve noted over the years and this year as well.

Celebrities are hopping on the bandwagon. Pop star Katy Perry recently teamed with Morgan McLachlan, master distiller and founder of AMASS Dry Gin (an alcoholic gin) to launch De Soi, a range of non-alcoholic aperitifs made with natural adaptogens, Blake Lively launched a line of non-alcoholic sparkling mixers called Betty Buzz.

The hospitality industry, however, has not been quick to follow suit. And some people are saying they’re tired of seeing a lack of non-alcoholic options on drinks menus. Body + Soul Australia recently asked the question, “Why is the hospitality industry so far behind the sober trend?” musing that maybe, “bars and restaurants largely missed the memo on this movement.”

Though they could just be biding their time to see if the trend continues before investing in change. ✦



## WELLNESS TOURISM

Defined by the Global Wellness Institute as “travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one’s personal wellbeing” wellness tourism continues to gain in popularity. In a [hospitalitynet article](#), consultant Mariana Palmeiro writes that she gets “more calls from hotels looking to reposition into health and wellness tourism than any other trend,” adding, “no wonder – this market is booming.” This has been true for some time – according to a GWI report, the wellness tourism sector accounted for \$436 billion of the \$4.4 trillion in revenue generated by the wellness economy in 2020 – and seems even more so now that people are free to travel the world again.

An [Accenture survey](#) found that 39% of high-income consumers have already booked a luxury trip

or wellness retreat in early 2023, and 21% of millennials have booked a wellness retreat. The survey of more than 11,000 consumers in 16 countries found that health and wellbeing are considered “essential,” and 33% of respondents said they’re more focused on self-care than they were a year ago.

And a recent article in [Hotel Business](#) calls wellness travel “a major trend that hoteliers need to address,” and quotes Kenneth Ryan, VP, global wellness, spa & fitness operations, Marriott International, saying:

“We’ve heard that wellness is now at the forefront of everybody’s mind and self-care rituals are really important to everybody – and they’re taking that with them when they travel. This has had a profound shift in what’s going on and driving powerful growth. We’re seeing high demand in our spas and the best revenues ever – well over 2019 – and really strong rates.”

Forbes also recently reported that wellness tourism is growing at a 50% faster rate than conventional tourism, with no signs of slowing down. Savvy hospitality leaders are making wellness programs a priority, which looks different from destination to destination but includes spa, wellness activities, mental wellness focused design, and sleep wellness, which is growing a reputation all its own – [CNN recently reported](#) that an increasing amount of sleep-focused stays are popping up at hotels and resorts around the world and that “interest has skyrocketed since the pandemic,” with a number of high profile establishments focusing their attention on those suffering from sleep-deprivation, including Park Hyatt and Rosewood.

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## PERSONALIZED NUTRITION

According to [Harvard School of Public Health](#), personalized nutrition, also referred to as precision nutrition, focuses on the individual rather than groups of people. This means customizing diets based on individual factors like microbiome, metabolism, genetics, physical activity, and more.

Harvard explains that studies focusing on individual responses to food have found “substantial variations in blood responses of glucose and triglycerides even if individuals are eating identical meals. The person’s microbiome was found to cause variations in blood triglycerides after a meal. Non-food factors like sleep, physical activity, and time of meals also played a role in causing variations in blood levels of glucose and triglycerides after meals.” This suggests that individuals may see benefits from following personalized

nutrition guidance beyond general health recommendations. “Precision nutrition evaluates one’s DNA, microbiome, and metabolic response to specific foods or dietary patterns to determine the most effective eating plan to prevent or treat disease.”

Consumers are [reportedly](#) seeking out personalized eating approaches tailored to their unique needs driven in part by awareness of the microbiome’s connection to mental wellbeing and immune function.

An obvious and common example is the allergen-free diet or one designed to remove triggers like gluten free or low FODMAP, while people have more recently become interested in expanding applications of these personalized designs. Challenges [reportedly](#) include data and methodological issues. Collecting and analyzing data, for example, is a complex task, though one that people are working on every day in

pretty much every industry; while [growth areas](#) include tech-enabled, hyper-specific recommendations and solutions for a range of specific needs and consumer segments and personalized diagnostic services.

Hospitality companies may one day find themselves offering highly personalized food and beverage to every guest.

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## THE COLD PLUNGE

Cold water has actually been used to promote health for hundreds of years but Dutch fitness influencer, Wim “The Iceman” Hof, can largely be credited with popularizing cold water bathing since he came to public attention more than a decade ago. Thanks to Hof, who invented his own method using breathwork, meditation, and cold exposure, which he says are the secret to physical and mental health, the cold plunge has been on the wellness trend radar for a few years now, but in the last year or so it appears to have tipped into mainstream popularity.

It feels like every day, people are sharing social media posts about jumping (or stepping gingerly) into cold water, and Google Trends shows that the term “cold plunge” has surged in popularity since 2020.

The Wim Hof method typically involves soaking in an ice bath or a

cold shower, but some people have adopted a more active version. [The New York Times](#) reported in February 2022 that Mental Health Swims, a nonprofit that organizes cold-water swimming throughout the UK, had grown from one meet-up group to more than 80 over three years.

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Cryotherapy is another well-known way of immersing oneself in the cold, also popularized by athletes and influencers. And another option is contrast bath therapy, which involves alternating hot and cold water treatments. [Switching between cold and hot water](#) is said to cause alternating vasoconstriction and vasodilation and changes in heart rate, which may aid healing from injury, reduce inflammation, and decrease fatigue.

Some examples of wellness experiences that involved cold therapy, cold plunges, or contrast therapy include the Lakeside Immersion experience at Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York. This promises “the benefits of cold therapy, providing endorphin release, blood flow stimulation, joint and muscle pain relief, and an immediate energy boost.” And the menu at Remedy Place, a social wellness center with clubs in Los Angeles and New York City, features Ice Bath Classes, cryotherapy, and a private contrast suite with infrared sauna and double Ice Baths. [+](#)



## HYPER PERSONALIZATION

Back to personalization, it's getting serious. Basic personalization has become a standard customer expectation. People expect a certain level of recognition and don't want to see irrelevant product and service offerings marketed or communicated to them throughout their hospitality journey. They want to see items specific to them and not the same things you're showing everyone else.

Now, in the past few years, brands have moved towards "hyper personalization," which is the customization of offerings, content, and the customer experience at the individual level and in real time. The process requires a combination of historical and real-time data covering purchase history, behavior, and preferences across the entire customer journey. A company can then create the most personalized experience

and provide the best possible service offerings moment by moment.

A spa is now expected to know a customer's name, contact information, and relevant health information before that person arrives for a treatment or service. They are also expected to collect purchase history and preference information about each person – like slipper and robe size, and preferred products, snacks and beverages – and to log this into a system that makes the data shareable across multiple properties.

It's standard for service providers to note special and relevant information, like important dates and conversation topics, for service enhancements, like giving the guest a birthday gift. Or, taking things a step further, if a guest shares with a massage therapist that it's their anniversary or that they just got engaged, for example, the information can be shared with the front desk through a mobile device, and

a special package prepared to surprise the guest at checkout. These tidbits can also keep the conversation flowing when the guest returns to the spa.

Features like Book4Time's Shopping Cart allow your service providers to communicate treatment notes and suggested retail items directly with the front desk through a mobile device, placing the items in a virtual cart, so desk staff can continue with the recommendation for suggested retail purchases at checkout. This streamlines the experience and keeps communication flow between team members open to create that hyper personalized experience.

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