

Experts see health-related travel as a growth sector

Health megatrend a boon for Destination Germany

Frankfurt am Main / Berlin, 12 January 2012 – The health megatrend – a product of demographic change, changing lifestyles and a new focus on health – looks set to generate unprecedented demand for travel to Germany in the coming decades. This is confirmed by an online survey carried out by the German National Tourist Board (GNTB), in which 300 or so travel experts from twelve different countries were asked to give their views. Nearly 40 per cent of them predicted that the volume of health-oriented travel will rise over the next 20 years. According to Euromonitor, nature and medical tourism will be the major growth areas for the travel industry up to 2015, with annual increases of 6.8 and 5.5 per cent respectively. In Germany, the number of purely health-motivated trips more than doubled between 2009 and 2010. The World Travel Monitor indicates that 341,000 Europeans visited Germany exclusively for health reasons in 2010 – less than half the figure for the previous year (2009: 157,000).

Much credit for this growth must go to Germany's image as a leading nation for healthcare standards. In a comparison of 139 countries, Germany achieved one of the best scores for health and hygiene and is ranked in seventh place worldwide (World Economic Forum). In the GNTB online survey, Germany emerged as the top destination market for health-oriented travel.

GNTB online survey confirms growing importance of health megatrend

Health market gaining in importance

Germany's image as a leading nation for healthcare standards

Going by the Euro Canada Consumer Index, the German healthcare system is second overall by European comparison and ranks among the most progressive and innovative healthcare systems in Europe and around the world.

Last year, the GNTB introduced its 'health and wellness travel' theme, which it put at the heart of its international marketing. 'Spas and health resorts', 'wellness and beauty hotels' and 'medical tourism' were the three main focal points for the year. Particularly strong interest in medical tourism was registered in the European markets, including the Netherlands as the no. 1 source market, but also France and Austria. From the perspective of the clinics, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and, in first place, Russia, were the most attractive source markets in the medical tourism sector.

GNTB continues to target health tourism market

"Growth of over 20 per cent in inbound overnight stays in the first ten months of 2011 means we will be concentrating more heavily on the Russian market", explains Petra Hedorfer, Chief Executive Officer of the GNTB. To do this, the GNTB has launched a Russia pool. 'Health and medical tourism' will provide the main focus and marketing activities are envisaged mainly for the regions beyond Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Russia pool set up for intensive, long-term marketing campaigns

In 2011, the GNTB held its first health tourism workshop in the Arab Gulf States together with 19 partner organisations from the German travel industry as well as medical service providers. The campaign is being continued in 2012, and more content will be added to the extensive health tourism section of the www.germany.travel website. The GNTB established a nationwide network in the international health travel market in 2011 and it will continue to build on its activities in this area.

Arab Gulf States also a target for intensive marketing