



Championing International
Spa Standards for Consumers
and Industry Professionals

Building Bridges to Wellness — *Special Report for the Hungarian Spa Association by Bernard Burt, Senior Editor, Spa Management Journal*

Gathered from all parts of the world, holding hands around the pool at Danubius Margitziget Health Resort, members of the British International Spa Association shared ancient traditions of healing and the latest development of health tourism during a four-day BISA conference last June at the Budapest island retreat.

The keynote address by BISA Chairwoman Marion Schneider highlighted the importance of BISA's role in recent years of bringing together the European and Asian spa industry and related sectors of health care and tourism that drive the economy. BISA sets standards for education, quality, and the sustainability of spas. Attracting 90 leaders of the spa industry to Budapest, Schneider and BISA demonstrated the continuing vitality of health tourism.

Spa Business, Tourism and Education

A full day of the conference was dedicated to the topic of spa business. Mark Moloney (UK) emphasized the importance of professional management for the future of the spa industry. Introducing presentations on the interdependence of tourism, health care, and education, Dr. Franz Linser (Austria) showed how programs for prevention of illness will play a growing role in all businesses. Dr. Terry Stevens (UK), Anna Bjurstam (Raison d'Etre, Sweden) and Roger Allen (Thermarium, Austria) demonstrated that profitable programs for wellness are a result of strategic, long-term planning.

Educating future leaders of the spa industry, universities are teaming with spa operators. Business oriented managers and multilingual therapists are the result of a long-range development at the University of Derby in the UK, said curriculum consultant Jane Crebbin-Bailey. Additional examples came from educators Katinka Will (Adam Ries University, Germany), Prof. Peter Elsner (Germany), and Kate Hardcastle (UK), demonstrating how private business, universities, and local governments are addressing the need for professional education at all levels.

Responsible Spa – Medical Spa

Hungarian health resorts have a long history, shown by Mark Kincses, Marketing Strategic Assistant at the Hungarian National Tourist Office, in a presentation that mixed nostalgic views of bathing beauties with examples of thermal resorts throughout the country. Fittingly, 2011 will be celebrated as the Year of Hungarian Spas.

As more medical institutions team with spas to develop wellness programs, the BISA delegates discussed their evolving roles in the medical, wellness and healing arts. Dr. László Puczkó (Hungary) Kevin Turnbull (SpaFinder, UK), Dr. Sandra Murcia (France), Dr. Iman Hakim (USA, University of Arizona). Mary Elizabeth Bondu (France) reviewed therapies for spas. Jörg Demuth (Germany) discussed standards for skin care products. Bart Zonnenberg explained the beneficial properties of salt caves such as the installation at Danubius Margitziget Health Resort.

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British International Spa Association
Spa House,
Winchet Hill,
Goudhurst,
Kent TN17 1JY
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1580 212954

spahouse@spaassociation.org.uk
www.spaassociation.org.uk

BISA, the British International Spa Association, is a non-profit organisation established to promote educational programmes and standards of quality and service for consumers and spa professionals around the world. As the international spa industry continues to evolve and diversify, the need for resources, education and accreditation will increase.

Positioned to address these needs, BISA works with leading industry professionals and associations dedicated to advancing industry standards in the spa, resort, hospitality and medical arenas.

www.spaassociation.org.uk

www.internationalspa.org

The Danubius W.O.W. Effect

"We have added the W.O.W effect," said Michael Wallace, director of health spa brand for Danubius resorts and hotels. Translation: "Wonders of Wellness" focuses on vibrant health and prevention of illness. More than 100 hotels owned and operated by Danubius in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania now feature Medical Wellness services.

Wallace presented a newly published Danubius Health Spa & Wellness Hotel Guide that includes five hotels with medical centers and thermal pools, others offering special facilities such as salt caves for respiratory ailments. These accounted for 2.5 million guest nights in 2009, according to Wallace, with 42 percent of bookings from foreign visitors, mainly Russian, American, and British.

Each spa has different attractions, Wallace explained, all have Danubius quality service standards. Partners in the newly branded Budapest Margitziget Health Resort include Focus Medical Laser Eye Clinic, Vital Center Dental Clinic, and Aura International cosmetic surgery. Mixing medicinal baths and mud packs with natural beauty, thermal spring-fed hydrotherapy pools, and electrotherapy muscular stimulation, the medical side of Danubius Margitziget resort provides programs for weight loss, detoxification, and stress management. Boosting energy, doctors prescribe hot mud wraps, massage, and aquatic exercise. Required prior to Medical Wellness treatments, a health checkup by staff doctors looks at blood pressure, spine and joint conditions, and lifestyle.

www.danubiushotels.com

Prescription for Wellness

Positioning spas as wellness centers was the top trend at this year's BISA conference. Still not widely known by travelers, the term wellness has been adapted by hotels, resorts, and day spas worldwide.

Among key factors for wellness are architecture and art that create a feeling of well-being. The visual impact of new designs for European spas was shown by photojournalist Linda Troeller (USA) and Micky Remann (Germany). Conference chair Marion Schneider heads Germany's Toskanaworld resorts (www.toskanaworld.com), where Remann orchestrates concerts and meditation in pools themed "Liquid Sound." The dramatic design of Toskanaworld bathhouses helped revive ancient spa towns near Frankfurt (Bad Orb) and Weimar (Bad Sulza). The next step, according to Schneider, will be a comprehensive medical wellness center attached to the Bad Orb thermal hotel.

International trends introduced by Janice Gronvold (USA), included the greening of spas as a result of new standards for sustainable construction and operations. Representatives from Green Globe provided data on the benefits of green certification.

In 2011, the 6th British International Spa Association Annual Conference will take place in Buxton, Derbyshire. One of the oldest spa towns in the UK, Buxton is currently being revived through the spa management course at the University of Darby, and plans for a new Danubius hotel. BISA 2011 will be held 22-24 June – for further information, visit the BISA homepage www.spaassociation.org.uk, and the conference homepage www.internationalspa.org.

Clearly, the opportunity to take European spas into the 21st century was the best news at BISA 2010.

About the Author: Tracking international trends in wellness tourism for twenty years, Bernard Burt is Senior Editor and columnist for *Spa Management Journal* (www.spamanagement.com) and consumer news Web site www.SpaGoer.com. A new edition of his book *100 Best Spas of the World* will be published in 2011. Based in the USA, Burt was founding director of ISPA, and has been honored for contributions to the industry.



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