

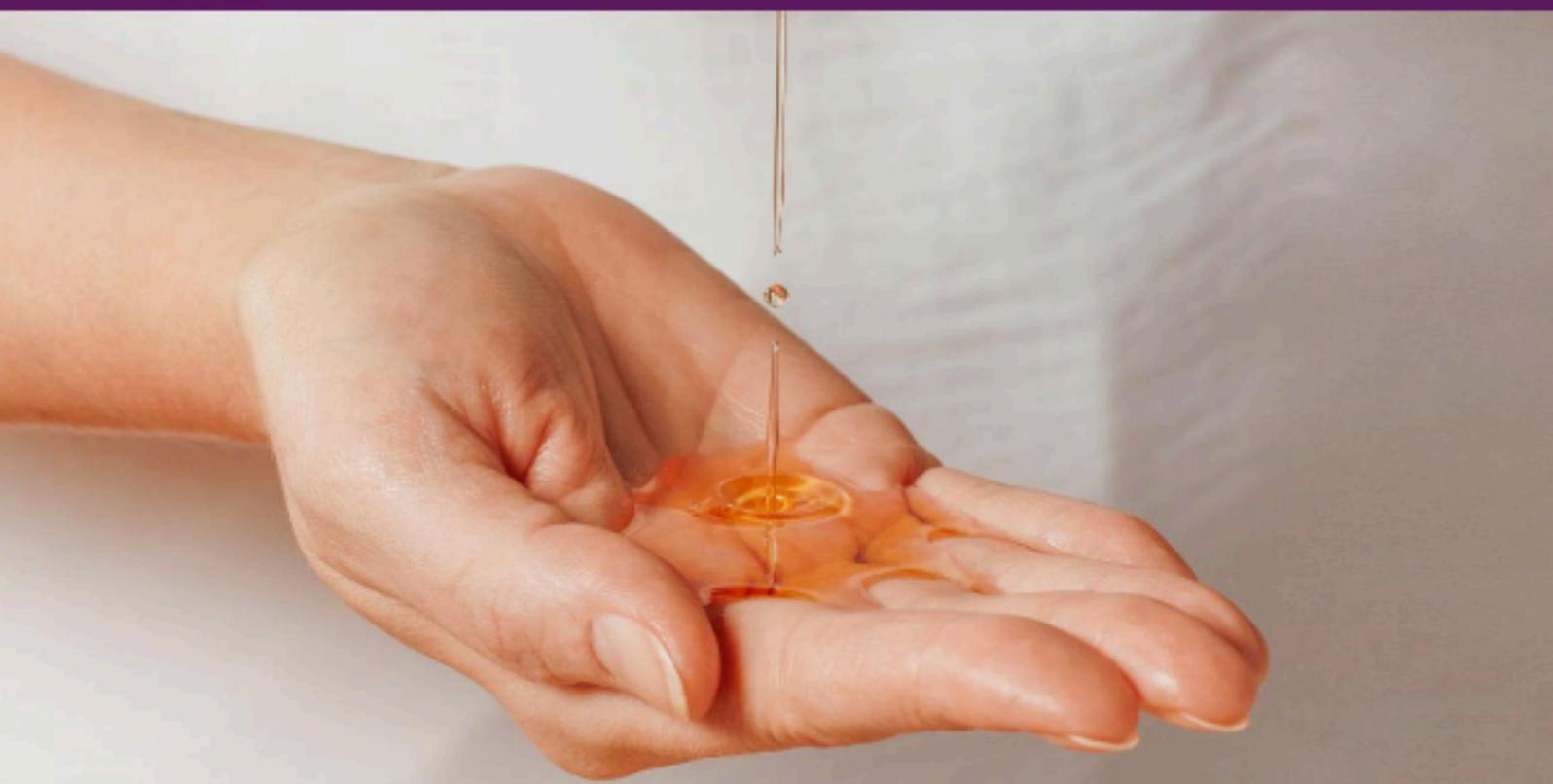
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The essential resource for spa business and wellness hospitality



Helping you get back to business

Spas around the world prepare for reopening...



Going virtual: Euphoria Spa in Greece; Thailand's Chiva-Som; Seaham Hall in the UK; and Six Senses Duoro Valley, Portugal

Image: Julian Okines

Healing at home: Rise of the virtual spa

The spa and wellness industry responded to the Covid-19 pandemic with positivity and practical solutions. Pivoting business online, many introduced virtual spa retreats designed specifically for people in lockdown. European Spa reports

REPORT BY MARK SMITH

Maintaining a continuous, close connection with guests is an important part of any successful wellness business. As spas around the world closed their doors in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, operators were faced with a challenge – how to maintain this connection in a heart-felt, honest way that was authentic and true to the core values of their business.

Given that spas are so experiential, relying on people, place and purpose to deliver on their wellness objectives, many turned to social media to maintain a connection, refocusing their offering accordingly.

Webinars, Zoom conferences, one-to-one virtual consultations and Facebook and Instagram Live sessions took place, along with serialised You Tube programming. Expert-led classes, group discussions and instructional seminars addressed the mental health and wellness of people working from home, focusing on posture, a positive outlook, and boosting immunity.

Meditation, yoga and fitness classes were core to the offerings with health, nutrition, energy work and Ayurvedic consultations forming part of an inventive response from the industry. Inspirational and engaging, these virtual spa sessions proved very popular.



Leaders in action

From individual consultations to weekly retreats, the pandemic prompted the world's leading spas to find new opportunities to connect with guests at home. Some were offered exclusively to customers while larger international spa groups made their portfolio of programmes available free of charge to all participants.

Ananda-in-the-Himalayas launched complimentary online Ayurvedic consultations to help people focus on health and systemic wellbeing. Meanwhile, Spanish medical wellness and preventative health pioneer SHA Wellness Clinic developed an exclusive guide to

help those self-isolating, including exercise tips and nutritional advice.

Joining the virtual spa revolution, Healing Hotels of the World created its Signature Retreat, promising 'a profound awakening into your whole being' with meditation, movement and self-healing.

In the UK, Bamford's virtual wellness retreat was designed to help target four key aspects of wellbeing – strength, energy, nourishment and peace – with a series of bespoke sessions. *European Spa* looks in detail at how four other leading spa operators translated their offering into the digital space.





UK: Seaham Hall

Creating a virtual community

A combination of shared experiences and innovative programming

▷ **S**eaham Hall is a luxury, 21-suite hotel set in a former Georgian manor house on Durham's Heritage coastline in Yorkshire. During the lockdown, the Serenity Spa team at the award-winning property created a series of free virtual wellbeing sessions designed to help guests recreate the Seaham Hall experience at home.

"Adaptation is key for any brand to succeed and stepping into a digital space – and owning it – is a huge part of keeping the Seaham brand alive," explains Serenity Spa manager Amanda Hardy. "We understand the need to stay connected and we have achieved this by creating an interactive online wellness plan across our social platforms."

In collaboration with its key partners, including Temple Spa, ishga and Technogym, along with a team of local experts, Seaham Hall launched its first virtual

programmes on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube with a selection of live and pre-recorded sessions. These included live sessions with resident hypnotherapist Silvia Mather; front room fitness classes; guided walking routes trackable via Technogym's Mywellness platform; yoga and Pilates; cookery demonstrations with head chef Damian Broom; and 'how to' guides for creating the ultimate at-home spa experiences.



"The virtual steps we have taken will remain a huge part of our brand. We have embraced technology and it is our aim to help improve and grow this as a touch point for the spa in the future."

Amanda Hardy Spa manager, Serenity Spa at Seaham Hall

Seaham Hall, located on Durham's Heritage coastline, has created a sense of community among its guests by providing at-home experiences and uniting people under the #seahamstories thread on social media

"The power of video content, home wellness and mental health was a huge focus for us before the pandemic, and we have simply adapted the way in which we deliver this to our audience in the comfort of their homes," says Hardy.

Seaham stories

Seaham Hall embraced a sense of community with the #seahamstories campaign on social media, whereby guests shared their at-home experiences using the hashtag. Hardy says this was a particularly effective engagement, saying: "Our #seahamstories campaign has been a huge success, allowing guests to feel a sense of inclusion in this new landscape we are all living in."

Learning to master the digital realm has been a long-term goal for the spa team and Hardy says the lessons learned from recent experiences will continue post-lockdown. "I can absolutely say that the virtual steps we have taken will remain a huge part of our brand," she emphasises. "We have embraced technology and it is our aim to help improve and grow this as a touch point for the spa in the future."

www.seaham-hall.co.uk





Greece: Euphoria Retreat

An online transformation

A refocused offer to provide holistic healing in a virtual world

▷ **E**uphoria Retreat, a holistic wellbeing destination spa near the ancient town of Sparta in the Peloponnese, offers transformational wellness journeys that combine elements of traditional Greek and Chinese medicine. Shifting its business to a digital model during lockdown, the team adapted its signature retreat 'Emotional and Physical Transformation' to offer an online healing experience over five consecutive weeks.

"We chose to offer something that was not a random choice, but came from a well-defined structure, based on our Euphoria Methodos and our signature retreat," says the property's founder, Marina Efraimoglou.

The immersive retreat, co-hosted by Euphoria's spiritual mentor, Mary Vandorou along with Efraimoglou, was designed to explore the five elements of water, wood, fire, earth and metal. Two weekly webinars have been combined with daily yoga sessions,

meditation classes, discussions, energy work, Qigong, theta healing and healthy eating advice.

The programme aimed to detox the organs, balance energy and increase vitality and the immune system through understanding of the body and the emotions. "We wanted to deepen their understanding of the five elements and start transforming the lower frequencies into middle ones, opening people up to receive the spiritual power of each element," says Efraimoglou.



"We have witnessed how a well-structured virtual retreat can have a transformative effect on people. We are seriously thinking of offering it as a separate product on an ongoing basis."

Marina Efraimoglou Founder, Euphoria Retreat



Image: Julian Okines



Image: Julian Okines

Euphoria Retreat has translated its ethos into an at-home experience that is said to have had a transformative effect on those taking part



A new element

The two weekly webinars were supplemented by practical and instructional sessions on Instagram and Facebook, which helped to provide support and inspiration. The main sections of the retreat, including webinars, were open to all, however, only previous guests of Euphoria were able to directly connect with Efraimoglou and Vandorou during the intimate question-and-answer sessions.

Distinct and authentic, the retreat was designed to bring the concept of Euphoria Retreat into people's homes. "We infused our unique take on the five elements, which combines Taoist inspired practices with the language of archetypes derived from Ancient Greek philosophy and mythology, which makes the journey more tangible and fun," says Efraimoglou.

So effective was the online approach that it may well become a permanent part of Euphoria's offering. "We not only believe, but we have witnessed how a well-structured virtual retreat can have a transformative effect on people," says Efraimoglou. "We are seriously thinking of offering it as a separate product on an ongoing basis. Potentially also combining physical and virtual aspects."

www.euphoriaretreat.com



Thailand: Chiva-Som

Pioneering a new method

Providing personalised, evidence-based wellness in a digital setting

▷ **A** forerunner in transformative evidenced-based wellness for over 25 years, Chiva-Som in Hua Hin, Thailand, recently launched Chiva-Som Online Wellness Services to provide support and encourage people in maintaining their wellness goals during the Covid-19 crisis.

“As travel restrictions and other measures became the new normal, we launched a number of online services, including wellness cuisine delivery, to help clients maintain their wellness lifestyle at home,” explains the brand’s chairman and CEO, Krip Rojanastien.

The complimentary, highly personalised services included a video health and wellness consultation as well as a separate, one-to-one consultation with a naturopath, or a physiotherapy or exercise session with a practitioner, depending on the guest’s individual needs.

Chiva-Som has also shared a collection of on-demand,

inspirational wellness content and hands-on tools across the resort’s digital channels – Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and its blog – to help everyone adapt to living a full life from home. These include healthy recipes and holistic wellbeing advice as well as virtual exercise programmes and self-training tutorials.

Rojanastien explains that while the virtual consultations gained most traction, they presented



“Wellness tourism will grow even faster than before, especially with the realisation that well-being and a robust immune system are key to combatting any future viral infection or pandemic.”

Krip Rojanastien Chairman and CEO, Chiva-Som





The pandemic has placed a focus on new opportunities for spas and Chiva-Som founder Krip Rojanastien believes wellness tourism will be the most sustainable option for the future

some challenges. “Switching from direct to electronic communication, and yet retaining warmth and intimacy, poses an obstacle,” he admits. “But we are committed to delivering personalised solutions on the platform of cutting-edge technologies. We will retain the brand’s uniqueness way beyond the ‘new normal’.”

Tech and touch

The pandemic presented new opportunities for spas and has fast-tracked many projects that were already in development, and Rojanastien believes a highly

personalised online presence will be in greater demand in future.

“The digital platform of services will be an inevitable option going forward, although direct human interaction will always be sought after,” he says. “Hence, those in the wellness industry that can achieve excellence on both fronts will be the most successful.”

During lockdown, health has been at the forefront of people’s minds and this may yet prove to be a boost for the industry. “Wellness tourism will grow even faster than before,” Rojanastien believes. “Especially with the realisation that wellbeing and a robust immune system are key to combatting any future viral infection or pandemic. In other words, wellness will be the most sustainable form of tourism going forward.”

www.chivasom.com



Global: Six Senses

In-house expertise at home

Cultivating resilience through a toolbox of wellness excellence

▷ **S**ix Senses is a global wellness brand that manages 19 hotels and resorts, and 14 spas in 21 countries. In response to the Covid-19 crisis, Six Senses swiftly translated its unique in-resort wellness experiences into the digital space with the launch of Six Senses at Home. The concept connects in-house wellness experts with guests – and anyone interested in health and wellbeing – to support resilience, physical fitness and mental wellbeing.

“We created a toolbox of free content that guests would usually experience at our resorts and spas,” says vice-president of wellness Mark Sands. “Because people can’t come and see us, our in-house experts and our wellness board are reaching out to them with messaging organised around six pillars: mindfulness, eat, sleep, move, live naturally and connect.”

Videos, tutorials and articles were shared via the Six Senses corporate and resort social media channels,





“At Home with Six Senses has enabled us to reach our past, present and future guests in a different way.”

Mark Sands
Vice-president of wellness, Six Senses



Six Senses has tapped into its global wealth of in-house wellness expertise to provide support based around the six pillars of mindfulness, nutrition, sleep, movement, natural living and human connection

newsletters and website. Wellness content is also broadcast every day on Facebook and Instagram by experts from around the world.

High-tech lessons

Between its launch on March 18 and the end of April, the digital reach of Six Senses at Home was over three million people with over half a million engagements reported.

The technological evolution has proved to be a steep learning curve for the Six Senses team and Sands says many valuable lessons have been learned along the way. “We have learnt to always have a backup like Zoom, ReStream or Be Live,” he explains. “There are so many tools available, we have tested many and always have two to hand.”

Pivoting its businesses online during the crisis has been a valuable tool for connecting with Six Senses’ guests in a new and authentic way, and is set to form a part of the brand’s future strategy. “At Home with Six Senses will live on past lockdown when the world can travel again,” states Sands. “This campaign has enabled us, as a global workforce, to reach our past, present and future guests in a different way. We will be able to continue the guest journey beyond the resort walls and reach people directly, in a way we haven’t before.” ●●●●●

www.sixsenses.com

