

# Wellness travel boom

It's a trillion-dollar industry, but what is wellness tourism and how can it help you stay healthier and happier?

Words **UTE JUNKER**

**S**TEAM BATHS IN TURKEY. Detox retreats in California. Foot massages in Singapore and walking tours in New Zealand. They are all part of a sweeping global trend that is changing how we holiday.

Wellness tourism is predicted to hit the US\$1 trillion mark this year, according to the Global Wellness Institute. Defined as any tourism associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal wellbeing, it includes anything from enjoying a massage after a long-haul flight to signing up for a health overhaul at a top retreat.

"More people are wanting a holiday with an outcome, particularly the over 50s," says Sharyn Lenon, strategic partnerships manager at Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat in the Gold Coast Hinterland. Gwinganna's programs range from two to seven nights and cover everything from better mobility to nutrition, menopause or even improved decision-making under pressure.

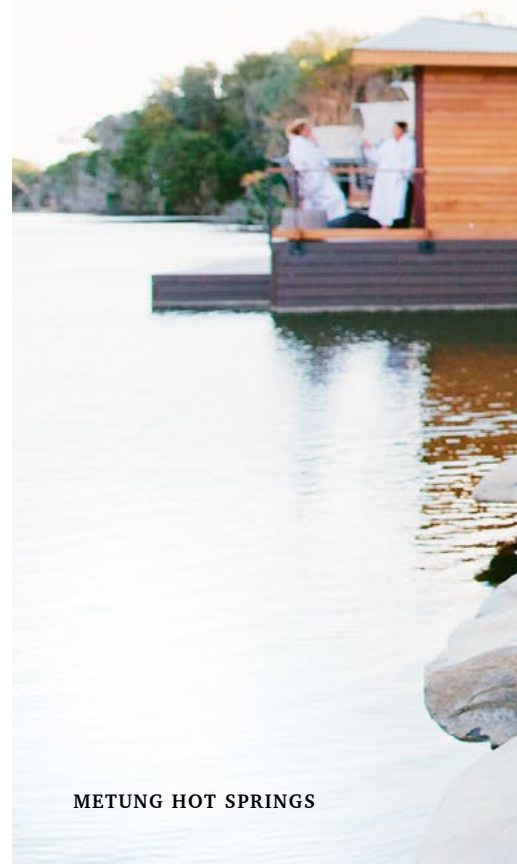
"Some guests have hit health issues or are dealing with grief or a crisis. Others

just want to get back on track, to ensure they live a healthy life as long as they can," Sharyn says.

At the top end of the market, world-leading retreats like Thailand's RAKxa create personalised programs that combine high-tech diagnostics and holistic healing.

"Every piece of individual health information is like part of a jigsaw puzzle," says Wsinee Sukjaroenkraisri, RAKxa's executive vice president business strategy. RAKxa professionals assess everything from hormonal imbalances and inflammatory levels to gut microbiome. Their programs help tackle any existing or incipient conditions and set you on the pathway to a healthier future.

Incorporating wellness into your next holiday doesn't have to be that in-depth, however. It can be as simple as booking a spa appointment or a meditation session or immersing yourself in nature, all of which have scientifically-proven health benefits. To help inspire you, we have put together some outstanding options in Australia, as well as the industry leaders overseas.



METUNG HOT SPRINGS

## SOAK IT UP / Victoria

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**T**he ancient Romans did it; the Japanese have turned it into an art form. Soaking in mineral springs is linked to a host of health benefits, from improved vascular health to soothing skin conditions – and of course it is a wonderful way to relax. Victoria is home to some fabulous hot springs, including the inviting Metung Hot Springs. Set on 10 hectares

overlooking Lake King, four hours from Melbourne, guests can soak in a number of outdoor geothermal pools or sign up for sound healing or hot springs yoga. The safari-style glamping tents overlooking the freshwater lagoon come equipped with four-poster beds and private bathing barrels on the balcony. [metunghotsprings.com](http://metunghotsprings.com)







**BACK TO NATURE** / *South Australia*

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**W**ith glorious bushscapes to hike through and countless restaurants serving up farm-fresh produce, a trip to the Adelaide Hills helps you reconnect with the natural world. At the adults-only sanctuary of Sequoia Lodge, you'll find plenty of other ways to make the most of the reviving surrounds, from morning yoga classes to evening stargazing sessions through the lodge's telescope.

Enjoy a local cheese and wine tasting, take a guided nature walk or go koala spotting – but don't forget to leave time for a spa treatment or two. And if that all sounds a little too energetic, you can simply stay in your suite, soaking in the valley views from your balcony in warm weather or beside the gas fireplace on chillier days.

[sequoialodge.com.au](http://sequoialodge.com.au)





GWINGANNA  
LIFESTYLE  
RETREAT

## BALANCE BODY AND SOUL / Queensland

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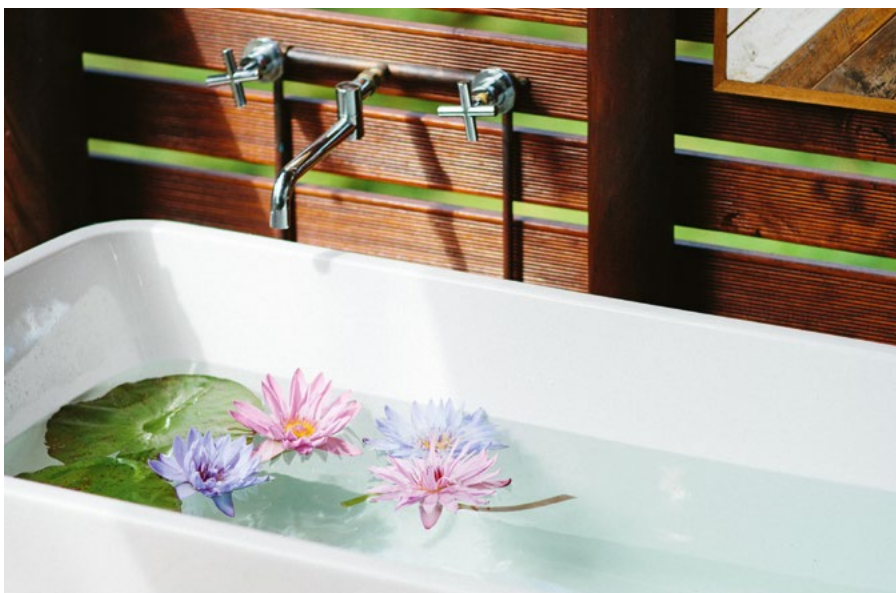
**B**e warned: your first stay at Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat may not be your last; this Gold Coast wellness destination has a famously high repeat visitation rate. Most first-timers ease their way into it with the two-night Wellness Weekend, which combines movement sessions, relaxation activities and wellness seminars. And if you are in the mood for some serious pampering, Gwinganna is billed as the largest spa in the Southern Hemisphere. It offers a huge range of treatments from acupuncture to Ayurvedic treatments, reiki to psychology, astrology to equine therapy.

[gwinganna.com](http://gwinganna.com)

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## STRIKE A POSE / *New South Wales*

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**L**ove standing tall in warrior pose, or stretching out your hips in pigeon pose? Then a stay at Billabong Retreat, an hour out of Sydney, may be just what you are looking for. Surrounded by verdant bush, it offers a varied schedule of yoga, meditation and mindfulness classes. Nothing here is compulsory: you get to choose how many sessions you attend. The immersion in nature helps boost your spirits – kookaburras and galahs are both frequent visitors – as does the fabulous food, which is vegetarian and free from refined sugar. Try out a weekend escape and you are likely to find yourself signing up for a longer stay straight away.

[billabongretreat.com.au](http://billabongretreat.com.au)

## BILLABONG RETREAT



For helpful information about how to find the right travel insurance as a senior, go to [seniors.com.au](http://seniors.com.au) and search 'getting travel insurance'.



## "It can be hard to find the off button"

SUSI WOOLF, 72

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**F**or university lecturer Susi, wellness is about getting away from it all. "I'm in my head a lot and it can be hard to find the off button, so I like to get away from the big city and simply sit by a billabong," she says.

Her favourite holiday activities include yoga and massage. "A good massage helps the relaxation come a bit faster," she says, which is why she will sometimes book a massage even before she reaches her destination.

Susi's go-to wellness escape is the yoga-focused Billabong Retreat outside Sydney (left), which she has visited more than 20 times over the past decade. "I really like that nothing is pushed at you. You can join in any activities you want to but if you just want to read or sleep, you can. And the food is exceptional. It's beautifully presented and you know it's good for you."

Scheduling regular wellness breaks helps Susi manage a heavy workload, and she says that the anticipation is part of the experience. "As soon as I start driving there, I start to feel better. I'm already in the zone from when I leave the house."







### TAKE IT SLOW / Western Australia

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**I**t's one of the big trends sweeping the wellness world: breathwork classes that teach you how to slow your breathing to relax your body and mind. Check in at the Empire Retreat, however, an adults-only hideaway in the Margaret River region, and you'll find breathing deep comes naturally. Everything about the tree-fringed resort dials up the relaxation, from the chic suites styled in soothing tones to the inviting common areas strewn with cushion-laden couches. The Asian-inspired spa offers an array of facials and massages and the many delights of Margaret River – with spectacular coastal walks, long lunches at world-class wineries or relaxing strolls along the beach – help you shed your stress. [empireretreat.com](http://empireretreat.com)

### EMPIRE RETREAT



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## NEXT-LEVEL WELLNESS

*These international destinations are finding new ways to help boost your health.*

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### RAKxa / Thailand

Traditional remedies meet high-tech analysis at this extraordinary retreat set in the serene green belt surrounding Bangkok, where blood analysis, traditional Chinese medicine, cupping (below) and sessions in a hyperbaric chamber are all on the menu.



### JOALI Being / Maldives

The island nation's first destination wellness resort offers a dozen different ways to boost your body and ease your mind, from sound healing to aerial yoga. The food from the pastel-coloured open kitchens is sensational, and the herbology centre is fascinating.

### SIX SENSES / Ibiza

Sitting on the party island's quiet northern coast, this property from the famed Six Senses wellness brand focuses on longevity with all the latest technology, including cryotherapy and infrared beds.

### SENSEI LANAI / Hawaii

It's a long way from the beach but don't worry, there are plenty of other ways to unwind at Hawaii's Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort. Highlights include treatment pavilions shaped like Japanese mountain temples and a one-on-one guide who shapes your bespoke program.

