



INTRODUCTION

A *Wellness Immersion* is an experience designed to create space to reconnect to one's sense of mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wholeness. The experience involves a separation from routine life with the intention to invite a positive transformation. It inspires a commitment to conscious growth and provides us with the tools and motivation needed to fully integrate this transformational experience into our lives and sustain its benefits into our everyday being.

OBJECTIVES

- Propose an industry-standard definition for a wellness Immersion and bring it mainstream
- Clarify the best-practices and program elements that yield positive outcomes and lasting benefits
- Highlight three categories of wellness immersions
- Share stories to motivate and inspire positive transformation
- Collect evidence to support funding by health insurers, policy makers, and employers

THREE TYPES OF WELLNESS IMMERSIONS

Medically Supervised Therapeutic Immersion

- **Purpose:** To treat targeted health issues under the guidance of medical staff, become more resilient, give up unhealthy habits, implement healthy habits, focus on specific results.
- **Defining features:**
 - Medical staff within in-house team
 - Pre-visit evaluation and / or thorough evaluation at the beginning and end of stay
 - Physical / medical exams and medical supervision (such as monitoring blood pressure and blood sugar) are provided on site by in-house medical team
 - Based on results of initial exam / evaluation, personal recommendations are provided for treatments, services, nutrition, etc.
 - High level of individualized treatments, programs and services
 - Wide range of complementing programs and services are provided, including outdoor activities, yoga, meditation, educational lectures
 - Nutrition plans and / or a specific, healthy diet are an important part of the program
 - Typical length of stay: seven to 10 days plus
 - Individual arrival and departure dates

Integrated Health and Wellness Immersion

- **Purpose:** To improve wellbeing on all levels (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual), de-stress, reconnect with life purpose, become whole again.
- **Defining features:**
 - Medically trained staff, such as nurses, physical therapists, or wellness counselors on team
 - Thorough wellness / integrative health evaluation is usually provided at the beginning of a stay
 - Based on results of evaluation, recommendation for programs and services are provided
 - Wide range of programs and services address a variety of conditions and wellness dimensions, such as stress relief, sleep, rejuvenation, detox, fitness, deep relaxation, mindfulness, mental and emotional wellness, spiritual wellness and personal growth
 - Healthy meals are standard and comprehensive and individualized nutritional plans are very often part of the program
 - Sometimes additional experts are available during certain times of the year (visiting practitioner program)
 - Typical length of stay: five to 10 days plus

Dedicated Retreat Immersion

- **Purpose:** To restore, relax, revitalize, engage in a specific wellness practice, and / or learn something new
- **Defining features:**
 - Program focuses on a specific health or wellness topic



- Retreats can be offered by health and wellness resorts / destination spas, holistic learning centers or by individual health and wellness professionals who take their group to a venue of their choice (venues range from simple cabin-style accommodations to upscale resorts)
- When hosted by health and wellness resorts or destination spas, retreats are either facilitated by guest teachers or by in-house experts
- Holistic learning centers usually bring in guest teachers for facilitation of these retreats but sometimes members of their permanent staff lead retreats
- Medically trained or special wellness teams are not always on site (depends on property)
- Evaluations at beginning and end of stay are not always part of the retreat (sometimes available as an optional add-on)
- Retreat cuisine is healthy but does not necessarily provide individualized nutrition plans or special diets (such as detox, heart healthy, and meat free)

KEY ELEMENTS OF A WELLNESS IMMERSION

1) *Intention:*

Where does the property and the guest find alignment in shared goals?

- Space and time to reconnect
- An active and intentional exploration of the multi-dimensional aspects of wellness
- Participant's desired outcomes

2) *Setting:*

How does the setting create a safe space that enables the change process?

- Nurture the space and it nurtures the spirit within
- Access to nature
- Bringing the outdoors, indoors
- Supportive and visually pleasing architectural design and surrounding
- Energetic, esoteric, historical, and culturally-informed purposeful design
- Sustainable design and management practices

3) *Program:*

What does a wellness immersion look like, from intake to departure?

- Wellness immersion as a continuum
- Evidence- based research
- Personal guidance
- Brand and audience alignment
- Venue guidelines and policies
- Post immersion follow up

4) *Community:*

How does community support the wellness immersion?

- Participants (or groups of participants) engage with staff members
- Participants build community among each other
- Participants engage with the local community
- Interpersonal connection
- Sustainable practices that support the environment, and local community
- Environmental stewardship

5) *Outcomes:*

What are the benefits of a wellness immersion?

- Cultivating presence and awareness
- Improvement in knowledge of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health practices
- Expansion of one's sense of self
- Improvement in health, objectively measured through biomarkers
- Sustainable behavior change

AN INVITATION

We invite the Global Wellness Institute members, delegates of the Global Wellness Summit, wellness immersion designers, and industry specialists to join us in conversation as we work to adopt a consistent standard for the Wellness Immersion experience. We hope you will share your thoughts. We will compile our responses, add them to a [working document](#), and use them to further refine our definition of this term, with the shared goal of offering a reliable and consistent experience to our service providers, participants, marketers, and the media. The aim is that we may foster a shared and accurate understanding of this valuable service and the experience it describes.