



Azerbaijan is an emerging destination within the global wellness tourism market, uniquely positioned at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Valued at US\$2.92 billion and ranked 86th globally in 2024, Azerbaijan's wellness economy reflects continued growth and considerable potential for further development within the global wellness landscape.

With tourism contributing 2.88% of GDP, wellness presents an opportunity to support Azerbaijan's broader tourism development agenda and expand the country's range of premium experiences.

Johnston, K. (2026). The Global Wellness Economy: Country Rankings (2019-2024). Miami, FL: Global Wellness Institute.

AZERBAIJAN CASE STUDY 2026

WELLNESS SNAPSHOT

Global Wellness Institute -
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AZERBAIJAN: A TRUE HEALING HUB OF THE CAUCASUS

Home to centuries-old healing traditions and rare natural therapies, Azerbaijan is increasingly positioning wellness as a key focus of its future tourism vision.

Azerbaijan offers a unique approach to wellness that is rooted in nature, tradition, and a long history of therapeutic practices.

For centuries, travelers journeying along the ancient Silk Road came to Azerbaijan in search of its renowned natural remedies. Azerbaijan's healing traditions date back to the 12th century, documented in the village of Safikurd. This longstanding history of health and restoration offers a foundation for the continued development of the country's wellness tourism sector.

Azerbaijan is home to a remarkable concentration of healing assets, all contributing to a holistic ecosystem of wellbeing. From the Caspian Sea to the Caucasus and Talysh mountains, Azerbaijan creates a distinctive setting for nature-based, preventive, and recovery-focused wellness experiences.

As part of the country's strategy, Azerbaijan's destination branding is anchored in four pillars—culture, health & wellness, business events, and nature & active tourism—with wellness having a growing role as an economic and experiential driver.

Today, visitors encounter a dynamic blend of old and new. Historic hammams and traditional sanatoria coexist with modern wellness resorts, offering treatments that range from balneotherapy and oil baths to contemporary spa and longevity-focused programs.

This integration of heritage and innovation allows Azerbaijan to deliver experiences that feel both authentic and forward-looking. With its rich traditions, natural abundance, and emerging infrastructure, it stands as a rising destination in the evolution of wellness tourism.

“The strategic vision is to make Azerbaijan an accessible, sustainable and ‘quality tourism’ destination that offers unique experiences both to domestic and international tourists with an enchanting blend of Caucasian atmosphere, alluring nature and delightful gastronomy to delight all the senses.”

“Azerbaijan is a country of revelations. Discovering the land and its people is a new and unique experience. It takes you to a different place every time. And it opens the mind to see something new. Azerbaijan will unleash your inner explorer.”

Azerbaijan Tourism Board



KEY SUCCESSES

NATURAL THERAPEUTIC RESOURCES

Azerbaijan is distinguished by its remarkable concentration of therapeutic resources, most notably Naftalan oil, found almost exclusively within the region. Since the 12th century, Naftalan oil has been used to support the treatment of more than 70 conditions, including disorders of the nervous, circulatory, musculoskeletal, dermatological, urological, and ear, nose, and throat systems, while also helping to reduce stress and fatigue. Today, visitors travel to the city of Naftalan to experience its renowned therapeutic oil baths. Here, this centuries-old healing practice is evolving into a signature wellness tourism experience centered on health, restoration, and wellbeing.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIVERSITY

Azerbaijan features 9 of the world's 11 climate zones, creating a concentration of diverse ecosystems that support nature-based wellness experiences throughout all four seasons. Visitors can hike through the Greater Caucasus Mountains, explore forested walking trails in Gabala and the Talysh Mountains, bathe in mineral springs, experience therapeutic mud volcanoes, or enjoy restorative retreats along the Caspian coast. The country's environmental diversity allows wellness experiences to evolve throughout the year, from alpine escapes in summer to thermal therapies and spa retreats during the colder months.

SANATORIUM LEGACY

Azerbaijan's wellness sector is rooted in a long-standing sanatorium tradition that integrates medical care with hospitality. Originating during the Soviet era, this system was built around structured, physician-led treatment programs focused on prevention, rehabilitation, and long-term health outcomes. Today, this legacy continues to evolve, with many sanatoria undergoing revitalization to incorporate modern medical technologies, upgraded facilities, and higher standards of service. New models are introducing personalized diagnostics, tailored treatment plans, and holistic approaches that integrate nutrition, lifestyle, and longevity-focused care.

STRATEGIC TOURISM GOVERNANCE

Azerbaijan's tourism sector is driven by a highly coordinated, government-led strategy that aligns national vision, policy, and execution. Through the Azerbaijan Tourism Board, the country is taking a holistic approach to strengthen its position as a global destination while supporting sustainable, high-quality tourism growth beyond Baku and across emerging regions through its 'Take Another Look' campaign. *The Azerbaijan Tourism Strategy 2023–2026* provides a comprehensive development framework, with future strategic priorities (2027–2030) expected to further integrate wellness as a core pillar.

WHERE *EAST MEETS WEST*: AZERBAIJAN BLENDS ANCIENT HISTORY, FUTURISTIC ARCHITECTURE, & STUNNING NATURAL LANDSCAPES

KEY LEARNINGS

Azerbaijan's growing wellness tourism sector is supported by a distinctive concentration of natural assets, many of which are geographically unique and difficult to replicate. Signature experiences such as Naftalan oil, salt caves, and mineral springs provide a compelling foundation for the continued development and diversification of the country's wellness tourism offering.

Another important aspect of Azerbaijan's approach is its growing integration of wellness within the broader, government-led tourism strategy. By placing increasing emphasis on wellness alongside its three other brand pillars, the country is strengthening alignment across policy, investment, destination development, and national branding under a unified vision. The Azerbaijan Tourism Board's 2026 Marketing Action Plan reinforces this strategy through coordinated global brand awareness campaigns, targeted digital marketing, international exhibitions, media partnerships, familiarization (FAM) trips, and destination seminars.

Complementing these efforts, their newly approved National Program (2026–2029) aims to expand international awareness of Naftalan oil's therapeutic applications while promoting its medical use, supported by ongoing clinical research and coordinated implementation by the Ministry of Health.

Azerbaijan demonstrates the potential of strategic branding through storytelling. According to legend, the healing power of Naftalan oil was first discovered along the Silk Road, when a merchant abandoned a sick camel near a pool of oil, only to later return and find it fully restored. This story, passed down through generations, reflects Azerbaijan's longstanding connection to health and healing. Compelling storytelling, reinforced by consistent messaging, is essential for shifting perception and unlocking demand in emerging wellness markets.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Azerbaijan remains relatively under-recognized in the global wellness tourism market, with a clear gap between its natural and economic potential and current performance. Wellness spending stands at just US\$286 per capita (ranked 105th globally) despite a GDP per capita of US\$7,251, indicating that the sector is still in an early stage of development and requires further scaling.

While Azerbaijan has made progress in developing a cohesive national tourism brand, its wellness narrative remains nascent and has yet to gain traction beyond domestic and regional markets. In February 2026, Azerbaijan's top source markets remained predominantly regional, with Russia (23.0%), Turkey (22.4%), Iran (9.7%), and Georgia (5.3%) leading among its top 15 countries, reinforcing a continued reliance on neighboring countries and a tourism base largely concentrated in Baku. Monthly arrivals in February 2026 were approximately 6% lower than in February 2025, likely reflecting the impact of regional geopolitical tensions.

Transitioning into a global, luxury, and wellness-oriented destination will require sustained investment in branding, service excellence, and international positioning. Azerbaijan's challenge is not a lack of assets, but the ability to fully unlock and translate them into global appeal.

OPERATOR EXCELLENCE



Lankaran Springs Wellness Resort: A tranquil retreat set amidst lush forests, mineral springs, and the Talysh Mountains, where nature is seamlessly integrated into the healing experience.

Sea Breeze Resort: A large-scale, mixed-use wellness destination along the Caspian coast, combining hospitality, residential living, and preventive health.

Duzdag Physiotherapy Centre: Located within ancient salt caves in Nakhchivan, Duzdag transforms a natural resource into a clinically oriented treatment environment—with a particular focus on respiratory wellness.

Chenot Palace Gabala: Chenot brings an internationally recognized wellness brand to Azerbaijan, offering medically supervised, longevity-focused programs within a dramatic natural setting of mountains, rivers, and thermal landscapes.



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