

# A breath of fresh air

Head to Scandinavia for a much-needed wellness break, says **Natalie Marsh**



**f**ew places take wellbeing more seriously than Scandinavia. With vast open spaces and strong spa traditions, it has a lot to offer when it comes to self-care – and while your clients might just be waking up to the benefits of a wellness holiday, this is not a new concept in the Nordic countries.

Locals embrace the outdoors as part of a holistic approach to wellbeing, so much so it's rooted in the language, from the Danish word *hygge* (feeling 'cosy' and acknowledging the good in life) to the Swedish *lagom* (a balance of not too much and not too little).

With short-haul travel expected to bounce back before the rest of the world, a wellness escape to Scandinavia might be just what your customers need. Whether it's indulging in a massage, relaxing in a pool or simply being outdoors among nature, we've rounded up some of the best experiences for a long-awaited wellness fix.

#### BEST FOR...A SPA RETREAT

What could be more soothing than revelling in spa treatments in the serenity of the Swedish wilderness? "We feel that people will be travelling differently after

the pandemic and that it has given them time to re-evaluate their lives and what is important," says Sue McAlinden, general manager of Best Served Scandinavia. "A good work-life balance is part of that as well as looking after yourself and reconnecting with nature."

Wellness is taken to the next level with a stay at the renowned Orbaden Spa & Resort, set on a clifftop overlooking the lake. The hotel's extensive spa menu ranges from a magnesium wellness treatment to a bamboo massage and more.

**Book it:** Best Served Scandinavia's six-day Gavleborg holiday starts from £1,350 per person this summer, staying at three properties including the Orbaden Spa & Resort, with flights and car hire. [best-served.co.uk](https://best-served.co.uk)

#### BEST FOR...BEING OUTDOORS

It's hard to think of a better place to clear your mind than in the Norwegian fjords, breathing in fresh mountain air while taking in views of dazzling blue waters. It's the perfect place to find *friluftsliv*, a Norwegian term that translates as 'open-air living' and a mantra adopted across Scandinavia, where spending time ➤



# DESTINATIONS

## SCANDINAVIA | WELLNESS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Blue Lagoon, Iceland; Arctic Sauna World, Finland; Geirangerfjord, Norway PICTURES: Per Eide; Camilla Gewing-Stalhane; Shutterstock



### ASK THE expert



**GABRIEL DORCH**  
head of travel trade,  
Visit Sweden

"Exploring wellness in Sweden is simply part of our lifestyle. Taking time for oneself, enjoying favourite pastimes, sharing moments with friends and family, eating tasty local food or simply being in nature are all things we Swedes hold dear. This sustainable way of life flows into our tourism product. Nature and wellness are also ever-present in our places to stay. From the architecture and interior design to locally sourced construction materials, you can see the influences."

outside is part of everyday life. The Norwegian fjords are "an excellent choice to promote good health and wellbeing", according to Julie Franklin, head of agency sales at Inghams. "The glorious and diverse scenery offers mountains, glaciers and lakes galore – stunning, natural settings to explore and unwind in."

**Book it:** Inghams offers an 11-night Highlights of the Fjords tour, from £1,999 per person, based on two adults sharing, including Gatwick flights on August 2. [ingham.co.uk](https://www.ingham.co.uk)

### BEST FOR...SAUNAS

Finland is the birthplace of saunas – said to flush out toxins, improve circulation and decrease stress – so you'd be hard-pressed to find anywhere better to try them out. But why try one when you can try four?

Arctic Sauna World in Finnish Lapland has a sauna themed around each of the elements – fire, water, air and earth – as well as a 15-metre-wide ice hole for those brave enough to cool off quickly. You could also upgrade to the northern lights sauna, where you might be lucky enough to see the aurora borealis dance across the night sky.

**Book it:** The Aurora Zone offers a seven-night stay at Hotel Jeris on a full-board basis from £1,895 per person. The price includes access to Sauna World, flights from London, transfers and other activities. [theaurorazone.com](https://theaurorazone.com)

### BEST FOR...YOGA

Hold your warrior pose in the serenity of Swedish Lapland, where the snow-covered ice is the setting for a yoga class. The cold temperatures will leave your body feeling

relaxed and revitalised, while the beautiful surroundings will ensure this isn't an experience you'll forget in a hurry.

"A socially distanced yoga session on ice in Arctic Sweden is a unique way to experience Arctic nature and silence in the open air," says Laura Greenman, managing director of Magnetic North Travel. She recommends following it up with a Swedish sauna, meditation session and the local ritual of *fika* – having a coffee break and a chance to mentally recharge.

**Book it:** Magnetic North Travel's four-night Arctic Bath and Treehotel Break includes a 'yoga on ice' session and starts from £2,765, based on two sharing half-board, with transfers and some activities, excluding flights. [magneticnorthtravel.com](https://magneticnorthtravel.com)

### BEST FOR...HOT SPRINGS

Bathing in geothermal pools and lagoons is a rite of passage for any visitor wanting to tap into what makes Iceland so great for a wellness break. From the touristy Blue Lagoon to the less-visited Mývatn Nature Baths in the north, mineral-filled hot springs are scattered all across the country and provide a great way to feel rejuvenated.

Torfhús Retreat, a new property that opened last year, boasts its own geothermally heated basalt stone pools, so guests can sit against its warm stones year-round, making it the perfect way to relax in the open air.

**Book it:** Three nights at Torfhús Retreat costs from £1,140, based on two people sharing a Torfbaer Suite with an outdoor basalt stone hot pool. The price includes breakfast and soup of the day at lunch, but not flights. [torfhus.is](https://torfhus.is) **TW**