

DESTINATIONS

HOTELS, RESORTS & SPAS | WELLNESS

Q&A

CRISTINA GIORGILLI RESERVATIONS MANAGER, SHA WELLNESS CLINIC, ALICANTE

INTERVIEW BY Laura French

Q. How much interest are you seeing in wellness stays in the wake of the pandemic?

A. We've definitely seen increased interest in health and medical wellness, especially around preventive medicine and treatments that boost the immune system. After what has been a stressful year for many, it's clear consumers are looking to disconnect and recharge both physically and mentally, and we're getting enquiries from both new and repeat guests. More specific requests for available dates and programmes have been coming in since February, although we're seeing more last-minute bookings because of travel restrictions.

Q. SHA recently introduced a 'long Covid health programme'. What does this involve and how has it been received?

A. The programme is bespoke and uses rehabilitation therapies and clinical treatments to address persistent symptoms of long Covid, which has been estimated to affect 10%-30% of those infected with the virus. It's tailored to each guest, with an integrative plan drawn up by the medical team based on a personal health assessment. We have only recently launched it, but we've already seen a great deal of interest from both new and repeat guests, with enquiries as well as bookings. This is the first of its kind in the wellness sector, so it's an exciting step.

Q. What other key trends have you noticed?

A. The pandemic has brought some



“ A wellness holiday can help clients achieve an optimal state of health after a year of lockdowns

changes in demographic, with more domestic and European clients than in previous years, when Russia, the Middle East and the US were the biggest markets. The length of stay has also changed. During the first months after lockdown, we welcomed domestic guests staying for shorter periods on weekend getaways. We then saw an increase in longer stays, with guests looking to recover after lockdown, and some combining a 'workation' with the chance to look after their health and wellbeing.

Q. What Covid protocols can guests expect at SHA and how might these affect the experience?

A. All of our facilities are open but with caps on numbers. Guests are

advised to take a PCR test before arriving, and are then given a medical check-up on arrival, including an antibody test. Staff are also tested, and we have heat-sensitive cameras to measure temperatures at arrival points. For dining, guests are assigned the same table throughout their stay, and we have an app where they can view food menus as well as book medical treatments. We're also soon going to be introducing virtual check-in and contactless suite-opening, and we've enhanced our cleaning protocols, with new technology including UV-C light wave towers and ozone generators, for example.



PICTURE: Antonio Terron

CRISTINA'S TOP TIP

Highlight flexible policies for those concerned about booking. We offer a free cancellation policy valid for up to seven days before arrival, and guests can alter their booking to another date up to 48 hours before.

Q. What tips do you have for agents selling a wellness holiday at this time?

A. As a result of the pandemic, consumers are likely to expect more from their trips; if they choose to leave the security of their home, they will want a good reason for it. They'll be seeking a transformational journey to mark a turning point in some aspect of their life. A wellness holiday is a great way to do that, so highlight the benefits when selling to clients who want to achieve an optimal state of health after a year of lockdowns – whether that means returning to their normal weight, getting back into exercise, reducing stress and anxiety or rebalancing emotional health. **TW**