

Demand For 'Wellness' Activities In Hotels On The Rise



Top hoteliers, restaurateurs and senior hospitality figures have gathered at a 'Wellness in Hotels' forum in London, hosted by EP Business in Hospitality, in partnership with guest experience management firm, HGEM, to debate how food and beverage (F&B) is evolving in hotels today.

The forum, which highlighted how F&B is changing at speed and putting increasing pressure on hotels and dining operations to meet consumer demand, merged quickly into a thought provoking debate on how hotels will need to adapt to meet the focus around wellness and a desire for greater indulgence.

HGEM also revealed some interesting new research insights into what hotel guests are looking for when booking a hotel stay. The emphasis on wellness and healthier lifestyles is becoming more prominent for guests with 25% saying they choose hotels based on being able to 'switch off' and get away from it all. One third of guests (33%) said a hotel with a health spa and gym does influence their decision to book. While a further 66% of hotel guests said they would welcome a wellness offering and would be more inclined to book a hotel that offered wellness activities in addition to a gym and a spa, such as yoga and meditation therapies or specialist exercise classes.

Chris Sheppardson, CEO at EP Business in Hospitality commented: "The speed of change for hotels is quite astonishing and operators are starting to realise they cannot simply ignore this. Change is daunting of course and hotels are feeling the pressure and the immediacy to cater for all while improving the overall guest experience on a more indulgent level. But the debate really highlighted that there is a need for balance in terms of embracing change and expanding offerings."

Another strand to the debate questioned the meaning of wellness as this too has changed in recent years. Hoteliers agreed that wellness is no longer simply about exercising and eating more healthily but it expands to include everything from therapies and treatments to dietary offerings and mental wellbeing.

Sheppardson added: "The question we are now asking is, how can hotels adjust their dialogue to offer and embrace demands around the wellness offering? Food has itself, taken on a new role and meaning today and is no longer just a means to 'fuel' the body, it is now key to wellness and also reflective of our society and values."

With HGEM's research also revealing that 75% of guests still view a hotel stay as an occasional treat, the indulgence offering is also becoming more important. In the case of leisure guests, 68% will indulge themselves during a hotel stay and 87% said they enjoy a drink in the hotel bar.

"Our belief is that there is a genuine opportunity for hotels to engage on wellness to a higher level and that they are in a good place to embrace the changes ahead, while still retaining indulgence and the essence of good hospitality it their core", concluded Sheppardson