



GALLEN'S SPA NOTES



Keeping it in the Family

AOIBHEANN GALLEN

reports from the recent European Spa Summit and discusses why targeting families is a good option for Irish spas.

Spa industry leaders from around the world attended the recent European Spa Summit held in Paris.

The seminars were very informative and the statistics that surfaced were quite significant and important benchmarks for Ireland's spa industry.

Within the US and Canadian spa industry there are approximately 25,000 spa locations of which 11,000 are day spas, 11,000 hotel and resort spas, 1,800 fitness spas, 1,200 medical spas, 320 mineral spring spas and four thalassotherapy spas.

US and Canadian spas grossed close to US\$19bn in 2007 and there are 350,000 full-time and part-time employees. The total spa visits were 175m and 46% of these were day spa visits.

Without a doubt, the rise of the day spa is back and they will prove to be competitors to hotel spas. Statistics prove that 50-60% of second home owners use a spa facility. The second biggest leisure choice is golf, with 30% of second home owners proving to be golfers.

Family spa-goers are a growing trend, not just for mother and daughter but for the male family members also. In the US and Canada, more and more men are spa-going. Hotel spa resorts and destination spas are at a 50/50 gender breakdown.

This is an important trend to watch. Irish spas must attract more 'spa-shy males' into their facilities. From my experience of having worked as a therapist in a spa, once men have their first treatment they are sold. Offer 'hot-towel shaves' and devise treatments around this. Men will then realise the benefits of stopping and having a treatment and will feel relaxed and de-stressed, therefore feeling well and preventing illness.

I believe that more Irish families will opt for Irish hotel spas, instead of travelling abroad in 2009. There is a great opportunity for hotel spas to entice family spa-goers by encouraging healthier lifestyle programmes for the whole family. Obesity is on the increase among the Irish, one in five Irish children are obese.

Irish spas need to keep a focus on wellness, as this is the basis of our spa industry. Spas are a new phenomenon to Ireland, compared with our European counterparts, as they have a longer spa history and are therefore longer established. Hotel spas must initiate change and take advice on how their spa facilities can compete on an international level. There are 38m active spa-goers between Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Austria alone. These key spa-goers will only gravitate towards spas which offer a unique spa experience and highly trained spa staff. ♦

AOIBHEANN GALLEN, founder of Irelands spas, is Ireland's leading independent spa consultant. To find out more about Aoibheann and the services she offers to the industry log on to www.irelandspas.com or email her at agallen@irelandspas.com.