

LEISURE MANAGEMENT

VOLUME 37 2018

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For many people, discussing mental health issues is impossible to do, but a trailblazing partnership is offering practical support

We're facing an escalation in the prevalence of mental health challenges right across the population. According to Mind, the mental health charity, twenty five per cent of adults experience some kind of mental health crisis each year, while ten per cent of school-aged children are in need of support for mental-health related issues.

Care is in short supply. Mind says the average wait time of treatment for children is 10 years, meaning 75 per cent of children and their families are living without the professional support they need to either resolve their issues or find more positive ways to manage them.

Given 75 per cent of mental illness starts before the age of 15, the situation is serious and deteriorating.

But knowing we have a problem is only the start and, for many people, being aware of how to get help and then having it available in the form of a useable and accessible service is the biggest challenge.

In a new development – announced this month – sport and fitness operator Sheffield International Venues (SIV), has recognised this need and has struck a new partnership with health and wellbeing provider Westfield Health for the provision of mental health services for members.

Dave Capper, Westfield Health CEO, told *Leisure Management* that getting access to support is a major barrier for many, saying: "Research we conducted found that 30 per cent of people felt unsure about who to talk to or where to go to find help or support regarding mental health issues. In addition, 40 per cent of people find it hard to talk about their mental health to anyone."

SIV and Westfield Health – both non-profit organisations – have created an "access all areas", combined mental health support and gym membership, which is now available at seven of SIV's Fitness venues.

Maintaining mental health is as important as caring for physical health and we must ensure people have the tools to be able to care for both

The service offers 24/7 telephone counselling, as well as access to a GP over the phone and the opportunity to use the 'Big White Wall' – an online mental health and wellbeing service that provides self-help programmes, creative outlets and anonymous online therapy.

Combining mental health support with a gym membership is a great way to break down barriers and make support for those with mental health challenges accessible in a very practical, day-to-day way.

It may not solve the issues surrounding children's mental health, but it will enable people of gym-going age – often 16-years plus – to have access to support and this is clearly a very big step in the right direction.

Mental health has been the missing piece of the wellness jigsaw puzzle and given how powerfully exercise can boost mood, bringing mental health services alongside gym membership makes perfect sense.

We must promote the view that maintaining mental health is as important as caring for physical health and ensure people have the tools to be able to care for both.

Liz Terry, editor @elizterry

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Every tourist is an ambassador for peace, says Louis D'Amore **PAGE 20**



Find out how The Wildlife Trusts is engaging communities near you **PAGE 48**

8 People

20 Louis D'Amore

D'Amore on the work of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism

26 Katy Bowman

In her latest book, the biomechanist and author explains why we need to widen our spectrum of movement and connect with our inner hunter-gatherer

32 Introducing Gen Z

How will this tech-savvy, social media-driven generation affect your business?

42 Aaron Simpson

Quintessentially is an exclusive concierge service for some of the world's richest people. Co-founder Aaron Simpson reveals what wealthy people want

48 Back to nature

British wildlife is being attacked on many fronts. Stephanie Hilborne, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts, wants to involve everyone in preserving nature

56 Right to roam

Sweden is inviting everyone to come and stay – and indulge in a spot of wild camping. Jenny Kaiser from VisitSweden talks about the initiative



Katy Bowman on moving more and moving differently PAGE 26



How Noma and The Fat Duck experimented with new locations PAGE 84

62 Stephen Hulme

We look back on the career of Everyone Active CEO Stephen Hulme

66 Hybrid fitness

ESPA Life at Corinthia's 'revolutionary' new fitness service, BodySpace

76 Sioux-per foods

The Sioux Chef, Sean Sherman, is on a mission to revive indigenous cuisine

80 Ivo Gormley

GoodGym founder Ivo Gormley fights back against loneliness in society

84 Sharing the love

Famous restaurants are popping up in unexpected places. We found out more

88 Spice of life

Oomph! founder Ben Allen is bringing variety to residential homes

92 High flyers

How bmi and Projekt Spielberg are growing British tourism to Graz

94 The show must go on

When austerity hits hard, UK theatres adapt and get creative

98 The benefits of retreats

Research is showing retreats could have a positive health impact



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PEOPLE

Sharapova – who's spent her life training on the pro tennis circuit – is bringing this experience to her fitness facility designs



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

“We want to create partnerships with hotels, resorts and country clubs to design inspirational fitness spaces”

Maria Sharapova, co-founder, sharapova/meis design

Maria Sharapova has joined forces with sports architect Dan Meis to start a new design venture creating inspirational health, fitness, sports and wellness facilities for the hospitality sector.

The pair are in talks to create branded experience-led training venues for sports clubs, hotels and resorts that will help budding and professional athletes reach their peak performance.

They'll provide design services, operational consultation and licensing advice for a wide range of facilities – from spas focused on wellbeing and recovery from injury to large-scale tennis resorts and individual hotel fitness rooms.

“The concept all goes back to an idea I had a few years ago,” Meis told Health Club Management.

“While sports architects are really good at thinking about how sports venues affect the fans, we don't always think about the players' perspectives.

“I was following Maria on social media and the idea came back to me, because I saw she had a strong sense of design.

“I reached out to collaborate and from the start, she talked about how she'd grown up playing tennis, but always found the training facilities where young players spend so much of their time aren't particularly inspirational. So that became our starting point.”

Inspiring fitness facilities

Meis said that the duo are considering what inspires athletes to train to become world-class, “and how architecture and design should play a role in that – the same way a uni-

Maria Sharapova and Dan Meis have started work designing fitness facilities for a number of partners



versity inspires a student to excel academically or a studio inspires an artist to create a masterpiece."

"Maria is really excited about curating experiences. This is not just architecture, it's everything you feel and touch," he said.

"At the moment, the fitness centre in the average spa, resort or hotel tends to be a leftover space they just put some equipment in as an afterthought. We want to change that. We'll also use integrated landscapes and natural materials to communicate a healthy lifestyle.

"While it's not rocket science – there are certainly health and wellness clubs that have figured this out – we think we can bring another level of design perspective to it."

Already in talks

Meis revealed the pair are already in talks with a number of potential partners and hope to have "one or two" projects underway by the end of this year.

"We've been proactive in approaching people. Each project will be different depending on the owner, operator and location. We want to create partnerships with hotels, resorts, country clubs – you name it. It's a pretty broad market – both luxury properties and less so – and it also goes way beyond only tennis."

The collaboration is tentatively called Sharapova/MEIS, but could be renamed 'Unstoppable' after Sharapova's recently-published autobiography.



We'll use integrated landscapes and natural materials to communicate a healthy lifestyle

Dan Meis

“Both projects are very exciting but dovetailing the requirements and synergies between them will be a challenge – that and learning a bit of German!”

Sheila McCann,
general manager, Lanserhof UK



McCann is a key figure in the global spa industry and used to run Chiva-Som

An opportunity to delve deeper into the health and wellbeing arena, working alongside medical practitioners,” is what drew Sheila McCann to her new role of general manager for Lanserhof UK – as well as the chance to “apply the learnings from my now global experience to a new business model”.

In a notable move, she left her position as general manager of Thailand’s Chiva-Som early this year to head up two sites which form part of the ever-expanding portfolio of Austria-based health and medical resort specialists the Lanserhof Group.

One location, revealed in February, is a ‘medical gym’ opening this year. Lanserhof has partnered with the Dover Street Arts Club, a private club in Mayfair, London for the new wellness model.

The other is Grayshott Health Spa, an historic destination health spa in south England, which is to undergo a major refurb following Lanserhof’s acquisition last August.

With 59 rooms and 36 treatment rooms, Grayshott is known for its health-based programmes – ranging from those targeting the digestive system to regeneration following injuries or illness. And now Lanserhof plans to focus on its medical wellness offering.

“Both projects are very exciting,” says McCann, who’s most looking forward to being involved in their creative development. Yet, both are also very different. “Dovetailing the requirements and synergies between them will be a challenge – that and learning a bit of German!”

McCann is a key figure in the global spa industry and was at Chiva-Som for five years. The new appointment sees her career come almost full circle. “It’s an exciting challenge with a cutting-edge, high integrity health and wellbeing brand and a return to Grayshott where I spent seven years of my career in the 1990s.”

McCann started out as a therapist in Canada and over her 35-plus years in spas has worked for leading brands worldwide. Prior to Chiva-Som, she was corporate director of spa brand quality at Asia-based Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, responsible for 35 sites.

In an interview with Spa Business last year, Lanserhof’s CMO Nils Behrens revealed that the UK was next on the group’s expansion “hit list”, adding to its existing portfolio of clinics in Lans, Austria; Tegernsee and Medicum in Germany, and the forthcoming location in Sylt, Germany.



Grayshott Health Spa is one of the UK’s top destination spas



David Attenborough and Jumbo the elephant at the American Museum of Natural History

“Institutions like this are the very foundations of all zoological knowledge”

Sir David Attenborough, broadcaster and naturalist

Sir David Attenborough, the veteran naturalist and broadcaster known for groundbreaking documentaries like *Life*, *Blue Planet*, *Frozen Planet* and *Planet Earth*, has been working with the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) on a new film.

With the working title *Jumbo: The Life Of An Elephant Superstar*, Attenborough and a team of experts at the AMNH in New York, New York, created a 60-minute documentary that explores the story of the elephant who inspired Disney's *Dumbo*.

Jumbo's moving story began when he was brought to London Zoo in 1865. But the superelephant was difficult to control and sold to PT Barnum's circus in the US. More than 20 million Americans came to see Jumbo and the troubled elephant became a star. Attenborough's upcoming programme investigates Jumbo's life and the mysterious circumstances of his death, looking too at elephants in the wild and examining changing attitudes to captivity.

"AMNH provided archive photographs and information, along with direct access to Jumbo's skeleton," Roberto Lebron, senior director of communications at the museum told Attractions Management. "The production was interested in doing a DNA analysis of the skeleton, which we facilitated – the results will be

discussed in the film. The museum's provost of science Michael Novacek was also interviewed."

Lebron says the museum is looking into possible related programming for next year.

Attenborough has collaborated with attractions since the 1950s, when he worked on *Zoo Quest* alongside the BBC and ZSL London Zoo, establishing his talents in front of the camera.

While with the AMNH, Attenborough also filmed a short video about the importance of natural history museums in learning about and protecting the animal kingdom.

He says: "I've been fascinated by animals for as long as I can remember and if you're fascinated by animals, you want to know more about them. The great place to know about them is, of course, museums."

"Institutions like this are the very foundations of all zoological knowledge."

"The natural world is becoming poorer and more damaged. If we want to prevent it being damaged, we have to understand how it works and we have to understand what it is that we're doing that may have an effect. That is perhaps the most important thing that's facing humanity today. If we want to preserve the richness of the animal world, we have to know how it works. And these are the places that tell you."

‘We’re creating new spheres, where people, trees and animals can coexist in an environment of wellness’

Stefano Boeri, founder, **Stefano Boeri Architetti**



Stefano Boeri is working on a number of major green schemes in China



Italian architect and ‘vertical forest’ pioneer Stefano Boeri has unveiled his design for a pair of towers in Nanjing, east China, covered by 1,100 trees and 2,500 cascading plants and shrubs.

The Nanjing Green Towers complex will house a museum, a green architecture school, a private club and offices in one of the buildings, and a Hyatt hotel with rooftop pool in the other. A 20m (65.6ft) high podium will support the towers and host shops, a food market, restaurants, a conference hall and exhibition spaces.

Around 600 tall trees and 500 medium trees of 23 species will line the building façades, with plants and shrubs also covering 6,000sq m (64,500sq ft). The towers will be characterised by the interchange of balconies and green tanks to support the greenery, following the prototype of Boeri’s famous vertical forests in Milan and Lausanne.

Boeri says this urban forestation will regenerate local biodiversity by absorbing carbon dioxide and producing 60 kg of oxygen per day.

The project is being bankrolled by the state-owned Nanjing Yang Zi National Investment Group. It will be located in Nanjing’s Pukou District as a driver for the wider Yangtze River economic zone.

The project, scheduled for completion in 2018, is billed by the developers as “the first vertical forest built in Asia,” although Boeri is also overseeing green schemes in the Chinese cities Shijiazhuang, Liuzhou, Guizhou, Shanghai and Chongqing.

Boeri told *Leisure Management* how the vertical forest model promotes wellness and sustainable urbanisation.

“Research has enabled us to develop building technologies to bring trees high up in the sky, in and around our structures, and irrigate them with recycled water,” he said. “This advancement, alongside ongoing analysis of the vegetation that can thrive in these environments, allows us to conceive unique buildings specific to their locations.

“The result is new spheres, where people, trees and animals can coexist in an environment of wellness.”

Boeri said truly environmental architecture is necessary “to induce sustainability and a relationship of symbiosis between man, architecture and nature.”

He said: “One important method is the ‘de-mineralisation’ of cities. That is, the multiplication of green surfaces to find a balance between urban construction and the natural environment. A green surface can reduce the air temperature, sink CO₂ levels and reduce noise.”



Some 1,100 trees of 23 different species will line the building façades. Boeri's first vertical forests are neighbouring residential towers in central Milan (right), each with 900 trees and 20,000 shrubs



“All Stars Cricket is going to be around for a long period to come and it’s only going to get better as we continue to learn from it”

Matt Dwyer, director of participation and growth, England and Wales cricket board

Matt Dwyer, the Aussie in charge of the England and Wales Cricket Board’s (ECB) grassroots cricket operations, marked his two-year anniversary with the national governing body by celebrating the successful rollout of the ECB’s children’s cricket initiative, All Stars Cricket, which aims to provide children aged five to eight years old with a fun but comprehensive introduction to the sport.

Big impact

Dwyer says “growth mentality” was behind the scheme’s stellar first year. The ECB managed to connect with 2,000 clubs – plus all 39 first-class counties – bringing coaching and equipment to around 40,000 children.

Dwyer doesn’t want to stop there. He says: “The fact that all 39 counties rolled out All Stars Cricket meant we had an amazing impact. They all bought into the philosophy of going big and investing in the right resources to support it.



Matt Dwyer is driving change behind the scenes at the ECB with his ‘growth mentality’

“It’s going to be around for a long period to come and it’s only going to get better as we continue to learn from it.”

With so many distractions – technology, school and competition from other sports and pastimes – it has never been so important to get the grassroots off right.

Customer service

To encourage people to join or stay within cricket, Dwyer says that skills garnered from his 15-year marketing career with companies such as Mars and Nestle helped bring a “sales culture” to cricket, placing the player – or customer – at the heart of decisions.

After conducting insight work, the ECB marketed All Stars Cricket to parents as a place they could “get an hour with their kids”.

“We said, we think this will be the best hour of your week. You can get involved, rather than just dropping the kids off and leaving,” says Dwyer. “That message has driven a great family community environment.”

ECB buy-in

Dwyer says the clubs were “doing cartwheels” in response to this engagement, and it seems that the ECB’s backing has paid off. Since joining the organisation, Dwyer’s team has grown from “about 60 heads to 90” to support grassroots cricket. The curriculum for All Stars Cricket was even developed by Andrew Strauss, the ECB director of cricket and former England Test captain. There seems to be a concerted push to get kids interested.

The ECB partnered with Kids Industries – an agency specialising in marketing to children and families – to deliver the project, but the cricket programme came straight from Strauss and his team.

Dwyer says the programme will lead to another body of work focusing on improving the participation pathway for children, and ensuring kids from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have access to 200 centres to play cricket. ●



All Stars Cricket is about creating a family community based around cricket

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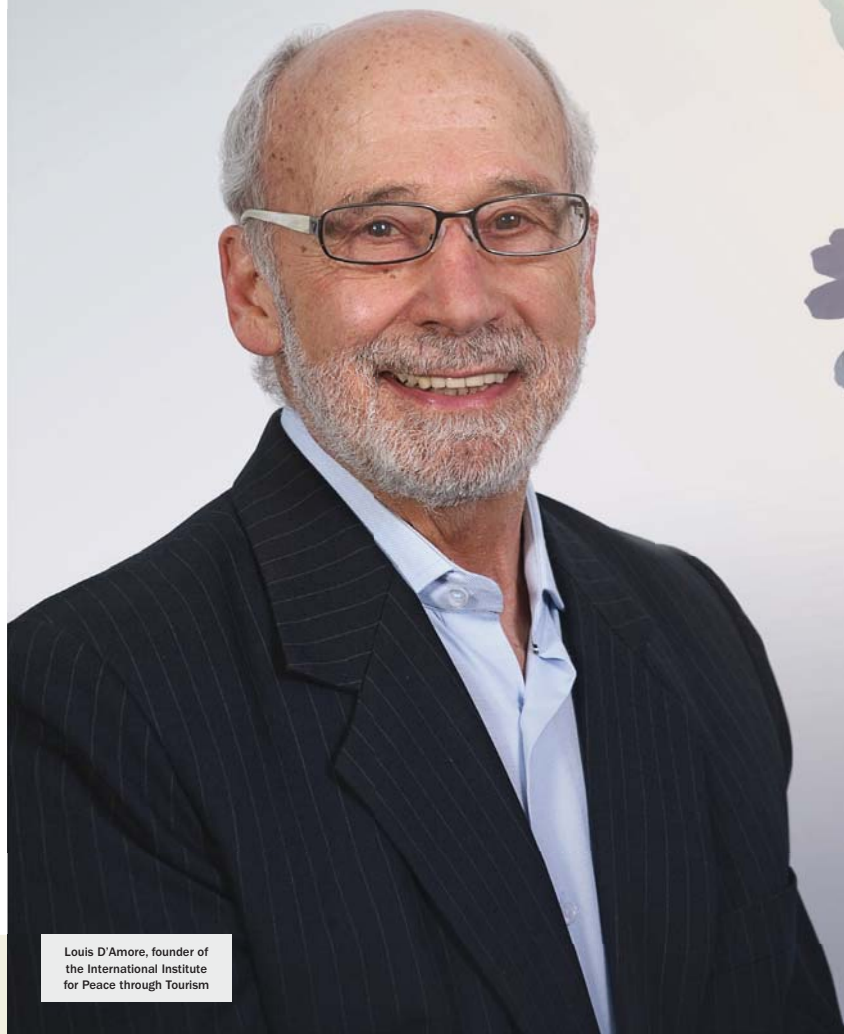
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Louis D'Amore, founder of
the International Institute
for Peace through Tourism



LOUIS D'AMORE

Without peace there can be no tourism, says Louis D'Amore, founder and president of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism, which is why he believes every traveller should be an ambassador for peace.

Kath Hudson reports

An hour after the terrorism attack in London, which struck at the heart of its tourist centre, I first spoke to Louis D'Amore about the link between tourism and peace. As the drama unfolded in the shadow of Big Ben and on Westminster Bridge – two of London's main tourist landmarks – his views on the interconnectedness of peace and tourism sounded especially pertinent.

"When I first proposed the idea for a tourism and peace conference, in the early 1980s, industry leaders in Canada asked what tourism has got to do with peace," says D'Amore. "Their view was that peace is the government's job and the industry should focus on things it can control.

"Then, in 1985, terrorism around the world peaked, with attacks mainly aimed on the tourism industry, including the TWA aeroplane hijacking and massacres at airports in Rome and Vienna. My consultancy company was monitoring terrorism as part of

our futures research on the tourism industry and we saw that tourism, around the world, declined a one-third. Industry leaders then saw the connection: without peace, there can be no tourism," he says.

As a result, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC), unanimously endorsed the idea for an International Conference on Tourism and Peace, so the creation of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism began to gain momentum. The first Global Tourism Conference took place in 1988, and featured video messages from then-US president Ronald Reagan and the Pope.

Higher purpose for tourism

At a time when the industry was focused on mass tourism, the Vancouver conference introduced the concept of sustainable tourism, as well as a new paradigm for a higher purpose of tourism: that it could be used to promote international understanding; collaboration among ►



Helping to promote peace

● IIPT launched two flagship projects for its 30th anniversary. With the Global Peace Parks Project - originally an initiative to celebrate Canada's 125th birthday, in 1992 - the organisation has a goal of 2,000 peace parks being dedicated or re-dedicated by late 2018. IIPT has a Peace Parks Tool Kit, which it will share with any organisation willing to create a peace park.

● IIPT is also keen to engage with airlines, travel agents, tour operators and other organisations around the world in its Travel for Peace Campaign, promoting the belief that every traveller is potentially an ambassador for peace and that we are all part of the same global family.

● A third initiative was the IIPT Peace Tour to Jordan, which happened in November 2017. It included an opportunity to interact with Syrian refugee children while providing games, handicrafts and other gifts at the school. HRH Princess Dana Firas was patron of the IIPT Travel for Peace Tour and President of the Board of the Petra National Trust.

Portugal is a country that experienced a spike in tourism last year, up 15 per cent



► nations; protect the environment and preserve biodiversity; enhance cultures and value heritage; sustainable development; poverty reduction and healing wounds of conflict.

Since the inaugural conference, the IIPT has organised 18 conferences and summits, as well as many seminars and workshops, and developed the first code of ethics and guidelines for sustainable tourism. This year is the 30th anniversary and the global summit will be held in Montreal, with sustainable tourism for development and peace at the top of the agenda.

"IIPT was formed firstly with a vision to make travel and tourism the world's first formal peace industry," says D'Amore. "Every traveller is potentially an ambassador for peace. When you travel, you realise we have more in common than we have differences."

Indeed, at the end of the Cold War Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev encouraged travel between the two countries to encourage Americans and Russians to better understand each other.

Broadening segments

The tourism industry is expanding all the time. When D'Amore first started assessing the industry in the 1970s, there was simply mass tourism. Now there are many different segments.

Ecotourism became popular in the late 1980s, followed by adventure tourism, cultural tourism and volunteer tourism. Then came agrotourism, wine tourism, culinary tourism, medical tourism and, recently, wellness tourism. D'Amore predicts that the moon will soon be the ultimate destination - and SpaceX plans the first tourist journey around the moon for 2018/9.

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries and accounts, directly and indirectly, for one

How peace boosts tourism

● According to the WTO, Spain, Portugal and Croatia (itself once a victim of war) all experienced large spikes in interest last year, up 13.9 per cent, 15 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively. Germany, the Netherlands and Malta also saw tourism increase. ● Iran, which boasts beautiful beaches, skiing, impressive Islamic architecture and 19 UNESCO sites, saw incoming tourism wither away during

the war with Iraq in the 1980s, followed by political isolation over its nuclear programme.

However, following a deal over its nuclear programme in 2015 and efforts by the current government to boost tourism, the country is now considered safe, cheap and edgy, so visitors are returning. It welcomed more than 5 million tourists in 2014, and the upward trend is projected to continue, with Tehran now being seen as a must-do destination.



in every 10 jobs, according to D'Amore. This is expected to continue, because when people become more prosperous, one of the first priorities they have is to travel. D'Amore predicts the tourism industry will continue to grow in most areas of the world, particularly in Asia.

However, while destinations, such as Rwanda, Colombia, Vietnam, Iran and Sri Lanka, are making the most of peace time by promoting their tourism offerings, other popular destinations have become victims of their own success, such as Barcelona and Venice, each of which has exceeded their carrying capacity for tourism.

"Tourism has so overrun Venice that the people who historically lived there can't afford to live there anymore. In time, this changes the nature of the city and the experience visitors have. Large cruise ships are not helping the situation," says D'Amore. "Tourism needs to be directed to those areas which have an excess of ecological capacity, such as Africa, which offers excellent tourism opportunities, with many national parks and protected areas and cultural tourism. At the same time, the growth of tourism in these areas creates employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for groups such as women and the young." ●

SpaceX aims to take tourists to the moon



How conflict impacts tourism

- According to figures compiled by Euromonitor for the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), civil instability and terror attacks were blamed for a 9.9 per cent fall in tourism arrivals in Turkey in 2016.
- The November 2015 terror attacks in Paris are suspected to be the cause of an 8 per cent fall in visitors to France.
- Perhaps the tourist destination which is suffering the most as a result of its political fortunes and a number of attacks in tourist locations is Egypt. Following terrorist attacks and unrest, figures from Egypt's statistics agency, CAPMAS, showed tourism numbers in July 2016 were down by 41 per cent compared with the previous year, which had already seen massive decreases.
- After a terror attack at the beach resort of Sousse, Tunisia, the country saw a drop of 18.7 per cent in its tourism industry the following year, prompting the Tunisian ambassador to the UK to issue a plea to the Foreign Office to relax travel restrictions, claiming the loss of tourism was crippling the economy.

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GOCARDLESS

KATY BOWMAN



In her latest book, *Movement Matters*, biomechanist and author Katy Bowman argues we are continually evolving to move less, as well as further from nature. Kath Hudson finds out more

I've had a few startling revelations since speaking to Katy Bowman about how the innocuous choices we make on a daily basis are leading to the human race becoming increasingly sedentary and further divorced from nature.

Indeed, the more affluent we become, the worse it seems to get. We spend most of our lives in insulated boxes or heated moving boxes. The super-wealthy are even asking for beaches to be carpeted so as not to get sand on their feet (see interview with Aaron Simpson from

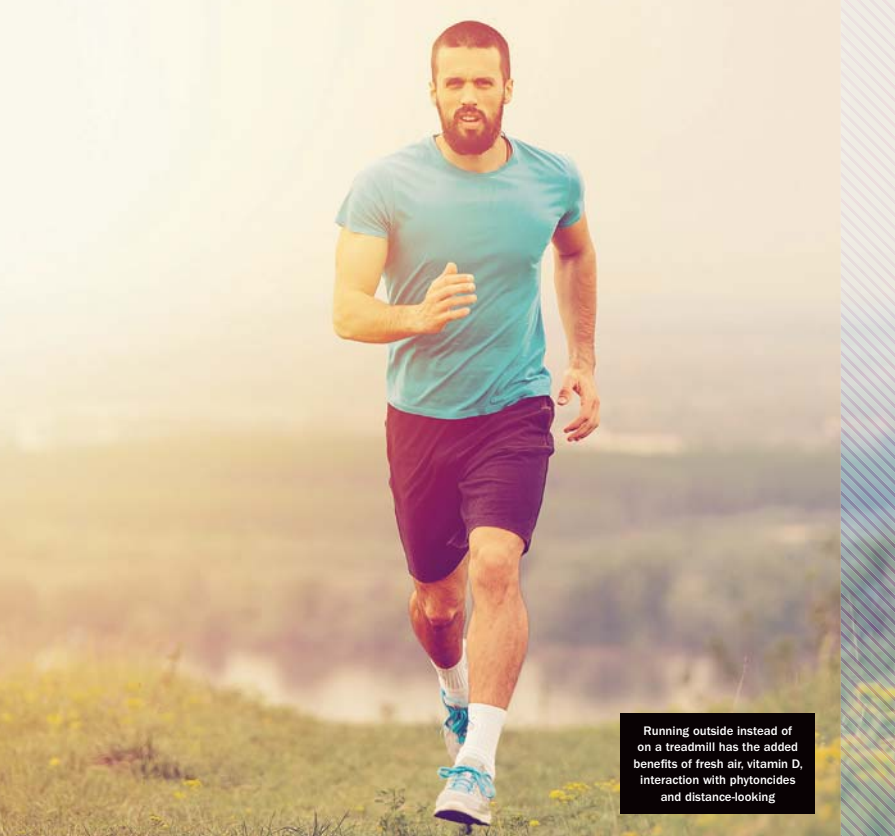
Quintessentially on page 32).

Despite being an amateur triathlete, I was shocked to realise I fall into the active but sedentary category. I train four times a week, but spend about eight hours a day sitting down at a computer, and on an average day I only walk about 5,000 steps.

"Maybe you walk a lot or ride your bike every day, but the latest research shows you can be actively sedentary," says Bowman. "If you exercise an hour a day, seven days a week – and who does? – your total movement time equals 420 minutes, out of a possible 10,080. About 4 per cent of your time.



Health and fitness providers could offer more classes and activities outdoors



Running outside instead of on a treadmill has the added benefits of fresh air, vitamin D, interaction with phytoncides and distance-looking

"The other 96 per cent of your weekly minutes is spent the same way as the non-exercisers: in the same home furniture, in the same office chair, staring at the computer screen, with arms and necks frozen, wearing the same geometry-altering footwear."

Our lifestyle habits have changed, but our physiology is the same as it was in our hunter/gatherer days and Bowman says we should still be walking more and doing a range of movements, like squatting, climbing and using our arms.

"Our bodies don't need seven hours of exercise a week. They need more like eight hours of movement a day, approximately 3,000 minutes a week,"

“

Our possessions often present a physical barrier to getting what we need. I've got rid of most of my furniture – we use futons to help improve the mobility of our knees and hips

she says. "Hunter/gatherers would have engaged in about 10 times as much movement, which makes a huge difference when it comes to the strength of a tissue like bone. Our lack of movement is causing muscles, bones and cells to starve."

NUTRITIOUS MOVEMENT

Bowman says that although we have come to realise the importance of a varied and nutritious diet, there is a lack awareness of the need for varied movement, or what she calls nutritious movement. "People need to eat a huge variety of movement nutrients and need to eat them way more often," she says. "Most people aren't getting the

full spectrum of movement nutrition necessary for human function. Some of the signals of a poor movement diet could be diseases like osteoporosis, bad knee or backs, frequent headaches, pelvic floor problems, or digestive issues. The chances are people are either lacking movement nutrition entirely, or they are eating a ton of movement oranges; meaning they use the same types of exercise moves over and over again and have never reached for the movement equivalent of a kale salad. We need as much variety in our movement diet as we do in our food."

One of the reasons this is happening is because of the societal move to outsource everyday movements. Deciding to hire a gardener, or a cleaner – frequently to free us up for more desk-based work – might be a conscious decision, but many of our outsourcing movement decisions are made unconsciously.

Bowman cites electronic car keys

as an example. "To avoid moving around a car to unlock it, or avoid turning our wrists, we have accepted plastic (future landfill) and a battery," she says. "Making these car keys has required other humans, elsewhere in the world, to labour, extract resources from the earth and sometimes even wage war. Without us even realising it, sedentarism is linked to consumerism, materialism, colonialism and destruction of the planet. In order to move less, we are expecting someone else to move for us."

"Apples are another example. By coring and slicing apples for my nine-year-old son, I have unwittingly been contributing to another negative trend. In 2014, Americans ate 511 million sliced apples, which is driving the food industry to focus on pre-sliced, treated and packaged apples, which are more expensive, less healthy, not natural, and have negative repercussions for the environment in terms of

the packaging and the fuel used to manufacture the packaging. My son has been told to start working his jaw."

PROCESSED MOVEMENT

Obesity and inactivity are the biggest health crises of our time, which could put the NHS out of business. Exercise professionals believe they have the answer and the gym industry is chomping at the bit to partner the NHS in helping people to be more active and lose weight. However, Bowman believes that exercise for the sake of exercise and repetitive movements in a gym aren't sufficient to maintain a healthy body.

She says that this is the movement equivalent of processed food.

"Our response to all this lack of movement indoors is to eat fewer calories and boost the intensity of our one hour of exercise," Bowman says. "But we should be focusing instead on creating a movement-rich life."



Animal Flow founder Mick Fitch teaches varied movements



It's important to use a body in as many ways as possible, Bowman says

"It's vitally important to your health, down to the cellular level, that you use your body in as many ways as you can, for as much of the time as you can: get a standing desk, walk to work, sit on the floor instead of the couch. Of special importance are those movements we'd be using a lot were we were still living as hunter/gatherers, like walking for miles, squatting, climbing trees and using your arms for something other than typing. These movements which have been natural to humans for thousands of years, are essential to physical processes like digestion and circulation."

As well as moving more of our bodies, more often, Bowman says we need to be spending more time outdoors. Getting outside, in nature, has crucial health benefits according to Bowman, who sends her two small children to an outdoor school.

"Light, vitamin D and distance-looking are all aspects of being outside," she says. "Dirt and fresh air are good for the body, as are varying temperatures and interaction with phytoncides, the airborne chemicals emitted from plants to protect them from rotting. Like trees, our bodies

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Like trees, our bodies adapt to the environment. Currently, they're adapting to an indoors, seated environment where we look at something two feet away

adapt to the environment and currently they are adapting to an indoors, seated environment where we look at something two feet away."

STACKING YOUR LIFE

It might seem hard to find the time to be outside, as well as doing everything else we need to do in a day, so Bowman has come up with a concept called "stacking", or meeting multiple needs with one activity. Walking while making your work phone calls is stacking – although she points out

that you should be walking within work time, not making work phone calls during down time in nature.

Active commuting is stacking. Doing something outside with the family scores very highly in the stacking stakes, especially if it involves foraging for the evening's dinner. Shopping ethically and locally is stacking. Something as simple as eating outdoors is stacking because you're removing the need for heating and lighting, you're looking into the distance and experiencing nature. However, exercise in the gym is unstacked movement as it only uses movement to improve one part of our lives, our physical structure and health. "Going for a 30-minute walk to strengthen your muscles and burn some calories is an example of exercise," says Bowman. "But walking a mile to the store to pick up something for dinner is an example of movement. They use muscles in the same way, but there is a big-picture difference regarding how biological needs are being met."

Bowman argues that the affluent ailments affecting our society, such as obesity, cardiovascular disease,

cancer and osteoporosis, have been brought about by our attempt to live outside of nature. We live inside walls which limit how far we can see, chairs which prevent our hips and knees from bending all the way to get us to the floor, and thermostats which keep our body temperature at a constant, with no physiological work involved.

Added to this, Bowman says that there are entire categories of movement missing from the list of recommended exercises for health, which is why exercisers, couch potatoes and manual laborers who do a lot of repetitive movement are all prone to the same diseases, joint replacements and need to take the same medication. They are all engaging in limited motions of exercise, for a limited period of time, which will not solve the problems created by our sedentary lifestyles.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

So, is there anything the health and fitness industry can do to help? "Health and fitness providers could help by presenting exercise in a broader context of movement," says Bowman. "Teaching the difference between movement and exercise, clearly stating that it's not



Taking desk breaks and making work calls while walking help boost our daily movement quota

only exercise we need, but all-day movement. The exercises they teach can help prepare people for more varied movement."

Health and fitness operators need to think outside of the box. They need to make sure they are offering enough choices for people to move in a range of ways and also educating them about the importance of doing so and making sure they have a varied (nutritious) programme of exercise.



Health and fitness providers could offer more classes and activities outdoors





Yoga, pilates and natural movement classes incorporate a wider range of movement than other gym activities

As well as encouraging members to think about being active all day – active commuting, taking desk breaks to move and walking while making phone calls – gym owners could be getting their members outside more, for example with group exercise classes in the park, walking or running groups, or urban fitness classes such as StreetGym.

Activities such as yoga and pilates incorporate a wide range of movement and there is also a growing trend in the US for classes that incorporate a range of natural movements, such as MovNat, Animal Flow and the Ido Portal Method.

Finally, Bowman explains why it helps to have less stuff: “We have mistakenly equated getting more

“

Our possessions often present a physical barrier to getting what we need. I've got rid of most of my furniture – we use futons to help improve the mobility of our knees and hips

stuff with meaning that we are getting more out of life, but our possessions often present a physical barrier to getting the essentials we require. I have got rid of most of the furniture in my home – chairs and sofas, dining room chairs. We have a low table to eat from and the sprung bed has been replaced with a futon, in order to help improve the mobility of our knees, hips and ankles.

“We need more movement, more awareness, more nature, more time with family and friends, more time in nature with family and friends,” she says. “We need to minimise the stuff in our lives, but maximise our natural structure, to create a robust body, within a robust community, within a less taxed environment.” ●

Introducing... GEN Z

The oldest Z-ers
were aged 10 when
Facebook went global

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Aged 21 years or younger, Generation Z are the next customers and employees of health clubs worldwide. Tom Walker asks generational researcher Denise Villa, PhD, how this tech-savvy and social media-driven generation will affect the industry

The emergence of Generation Z, the cohort following the millennials (the group also known as Gen Y), signals an important landmark.

Never before has there been an entire generation unable to remember a world without the Internet.

"Born in 1996 or after, Generation Z is a very diverse and digitally entrenched generation, which is now taking the trend-driving mantle from the millennials," says Denise Villa, PhD, CEO of the US-based Center for Generational Kinetics (CGK), one of the world's leading generation research firms.

Gen Z, or "Z-ers" is one of the largest generations ever and is eclipsing even

the baby boomers in numbers. In the US, Zers now make up around 25 per cent of the population. But what can we expect from these youngsters who've never experienced a world without social media – the oldest Z-ers being just 10 when Facebook went global?

BEHAVIOURAL TRAITS

There's a small but growing volume of research into the mindset, priorities, habits, and behaviours of Generation Z. One of the first major research studies in the field was conducted by the CGK. It has now produced two publications on Z-ers: *Gen Z: 2016 National Study on Technology and the Generation after Millennials* and *The State of Gen Z 2017: Meet the Throwback Generation*.



Generation Z will know much more about healthy lifestyles, from a very young age, than any previous generations, which means a great future for the fitness and wellness industries



According to Villa, the two studies produced some startling discoveries – one being that Zers are reverting to earlier ancestral characteristics.

“Zers are exhibiting attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that combine their tech-saturated world with elements of generations past,” she says. “Gen Z are very conservative and careful with their money. In our studies, more than 10 per cent of Zers are already saving for retirement, because they have no expectations on social security or ever having a state pension – so they’re already putting together saving plans for old age.”

This perhaps, suggests that while millennials have become notorious for splashing the cash on fitness trends, heavily driving the growth of the boutique sector, Zers may be more cautious spenders, choosing to spend their money only with fitness operators they feel truly aligned with.

FITNESS CONSUMPTION HABITS

When it comes to health and wellness, Generation Z will have heard all about the benefits of an active lifestyle and regular exercise. Raised with the perception that wellness is about holistic balance, Zers could even

be the generation that reverses the worrying trend of expanding waistlines and soaring levels of lifestyle diseases.

“As our whole society begins to take more notice of health, wellness and nutrition, we predict that Gen Z will start leading that trend,” Villa says.

“Generation Z will know much more about healthy lifestyles, from a very young age, than any previous generation. Having a health-aware generation means a great future for the fitness and wellness industries.”

Villa also passes on some concrete advice to those looking to attract Zers to their facilities. “Make sure you’re on Youtube,” she says. “I think one message we’re seeing is that if you’re not on Youtube, showing people what you do, giving people information and building your following – be it as a personal trainer or a gym – then you’re totally missing this generation.

“As well as Snapchat, Youtube is where Zers go to search for information, to learn how to do things and to follow influencers they admire. So if a gym or health club has a

particular trainer who’s charismatic, she or he needs to get on YouTube and start doing videos and giving people information in order to build that authenticity and to build that following.

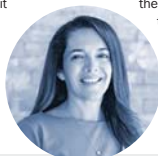
“That’s what’s going to give you credibility with this generation. You have to give out information and be able to offer ‘how to’ experiences in order to get people develop a relationship with you.”

ENGAGING GEN Z

As a generation that has grown up with the internet at their fingertips, operators looking to capture loyal custom from Zers cannot just focus on having a strong presence on social media – they must make those social media channels accessible in

their facilities. This means that services, such as free wi-fi and phone charging points will need to be available in gyms as standard.

Les Mills’ CEO Phillip Mills believes that traditional clubs must indeed evolve to meet the needs of Gen Z. He says



Generational researcher
Denise Villa

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Generation Zers have grown up in a health-aware age and understand the benefits of an active lifestyle

that, like millennials, members of Gen Z are keen users of boutique fitness, which presents a key opportunity for operators – as long as they are prepared to make small changes to their facilities and marketing strategies to appeal to the group. Experiential boutique studios within the club environment, cool marketing campaigns and new-generation group workouts are some of the features Mills suggests could help to engage Gen Z.

And there's good news for smaller operators, as according to Villa "Generation Z definitely doesn't look for – or immediately trust – a brand just because it is a big name," she says. "They have grown up in an environment which is saturated by

advertising. They have a mistrust of adverts and aren't going for big brands, they're going for best value.

"Instead of brands, Z-ers are looking to online influencers to guide them: popular social media accounts, bloggers and real people – on YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat – to tell them about products."

Z-ERS AS A WORKFORCE

An analysis conducted by global research specialist Ipsos MORI for the BBC's *Newsbeat* programme, which questioned more than 1,000 Gen Z members (aged 16-22), found that they care most about family and education – not celebrities, social media and the pursuit of "experiences", as is the

case with millennials. Ipsos MORI also identified a generation wanting to fight back against the perception that they are lazy and social media-obsessed.

"Generation Z is a generation more optimistic about its future than older generations think it should be – and one that sees itself as hard-working and creative," the Ipsos/BBC study states.

With the view that hard work will pay off, Z-ers seem to abhor the "work hard, play hard" attitude. This, says Villa, means that employers, who might only just have learned how to create a culture where millennials can thrive, must now adjust to meet Generation Z's different work ethic.

The studies also indicate that while the stereotypical millennial is infamous for working for a "higher purpose" rather than a paycheck, the top motivators for Z-ers are fair pay and job security. Villa says that this attitude of Z-ers will make them loyal employees – ones who could outshine their millennial peers.

"That hard-working attitude – give me a chance and I'll prove what I can do – is a very different attitude from what the millennials had," Villa says. "As a result, we actually forecast that we'll see some big struggles between millennials and Gen Z in the workforce, as more Gen Z will start coming through and taking up jobs.

"We predict Z-ers will begin to leapfrog a lot of millennials on the career path, who've had very different expectations of worklife that have never shifted."



Gen Z-ers have different needs from the Millennials who precede them

■ Generation Game

The silent generation (born 1924-1945)

The "silents" got their name from the tendency to be focused on their careers – rather than on activism – and people in it were largely encouraged to conform with social norms.

The baby boomers (1946-1964)

Named due to skyrocketing birth rates and economic growth following World War II, baby boomers are associated with a rejection or redefinition of traditional values.

Generation X (1965-late 1970s)

Born during a time of shifting societal values, X-ers had reduced adult supervision compared to previous generations, a result of increasing divorce rates and increased maternal participation in the workforce. Generation X are characterized as cynical and disaffected.

The Millennials (Gen Y) (1980-1996)

The children of the baby boomers, also described as "Generation Me". Their attitude to work is characterised as having a need to producing meaningful work and finding a creative outlet.

GETTING READY

The entrance of Gen Z into the fitness industry – as consumers and employees – presents an exciting era for the sector. With predictions already presenting Z-ers as hardworking and loyal, the upcoming decade could bring with it a shift in work culture, from the gym floor to senior management level.

Gen Z also appears set to drive clubs firmly into the tech age. With offers like immersive technology already growing in popularity and most gyms active on social media, Gen Z presents an opportunity for clubs to capture the hearts of a group who, it seems, are willing to spend big with gyms they feel are aligned with them. ●



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Zers favour a holistic approach to wellbeing and readily use digital apps to make healthy living easier

A closer look at GEN Z



Hayley Ard, head of consumer lifestyle at innovation research and trends firm Stylus, explores how Gen Z's unique generational profile is already altering the health and wellness industry

Gen Z is one of the most health-conscious demographics we've seen. Indeed, a report by cross-cultural marketing agency Sensis found that 78 per cent of US teens exercise at least once a week. And according to NHS data, smoking and alcohol use are at their lowest levels among young people in England since records began. This consumer group is weathering unpredictable times and its members are investing in many aspects of health to boost their resilience.

Mental health

Increasing isolation means that members of Gen Z are much more likely to develop mental health problems than their predecessors. A 2016 study of more than 300,000 people aged under 25 showed that the number of US teens experiencing a major depressive episode has increased by 37 per cent since 2012.

Unsurprisingly, Gen Z is looking for empathetic engagement from brands, whether in digital or spatial form. Two key examples are Huddle, a video support group app for people suffering with mental health disorders, and Marks & Spencer-backed

Frazzled Cafés, safe spaces where people can voice their concerns.

Mindfulness

Unlike previous generations, Gen Z takes a holistic view of wellbeing and sees mindfulness as a must-have. A trend report by J. Walter Thompson Intelligence suggests that a third of Gen Zers in the US consider mindfulness as important to health. "Gen Zen" is also powering the rise of mind gyms, as evidenced by digital content group Lucid Performance, which reported a 35 per cent weekly rise in users of its mental fitness training app since August.

Healthy eating

Teens now spend more of their money on food than clothing, with Piper Jaffray & Co's recent survey of 5,500 teens revealing that food makes up 24 per cent of their overall expenditure. This shift in buying behaviour is creating lucrative opportunities for food brands to renew their health focus. For example, KFC has introduced a healthier menu at its K Pro concept restaurant in Hangzhou, China, replacing its fried chicken with fresh juices and salads.

Perform

For wellbeing brands looking to target Gen Z, there's never been a better time to invest in smart sustenance. The power players in the new performance economy are Four Sigmatic and LGND – two companies that are creating the brain brews Gen Z are craving.

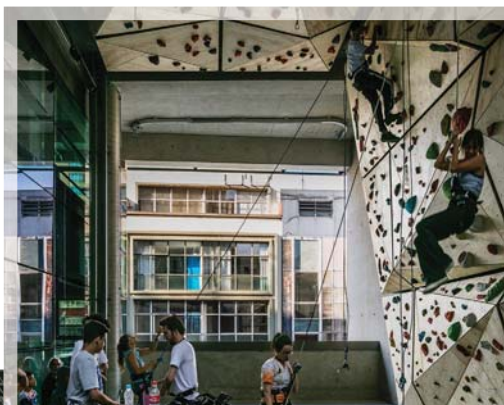
Four Sigmatic makes 'mushroom coffee' using adaptogenic mushrooms, while LGND's energy drinks are packed with nootropics to support brain function without a sugar crash.

In short, health isn't a status symbol for Gen Z: they see it as an essential piece of armour. That means exercise is about lowering stress and enhancing cognition, not flexing muscles.

Hayley Ard leads the consumer lifestyle division of Stylus, a research and trends membership service. She enables more than 500 global brands and agencies to stay relevant by alerting them to how people and technology are changing. www.stylus.com



Created for Brazilian non-profit SESC, the 14-storey building has been reimagined as a vibrant fitness, sports, leisure and cultural destination for the people of São Paulo





TOWERING ambitions

A disused tower block in central São Paulo has been converted into a vibrant fitness, sport and leisure destination for the city, as Kim Megson reports

Brazilian design studio MMBB Arquitetos and legendary architect Paulo Mendes da Rocha have collaborated on the transformation of a disused tower block in central São Paulo into a vibrant leisure destination for the city.

Created for Brazilian non-profit SESC, the 14-storey building, situated on Rua 24 de Maio and Rua Dom José de Barro, has been stripped of several unnecessary elements – including a bankrupt department store at its heart – to clear space.

New facilities have been introduced in their place, including a health club, climbing wall, library, restaurant, galleries, cafe, dance studio, rooftop swimming pool and a subterranean theatre. Hanging gardens, covered squares and balconies create additional mini public spaces across the building.

Circulation has been enhanced with the introduction of large ramps



connecting each floor. According to the design team, “in addition to their main function, these live up to the visitor experience, allowing an unleashed and playful stroll through the building.”

“Our design approach was to make the whole building breathe better to ensure it was more suited to its new uses,” they added in a statement.

The structure’s glass cladding has been revamped to expose life inside the building, inviting pedestrians in and providing panoramic views right across the city for its users.

Da Rocha is famous for his cultural buildings in Brazil, particularly in São Paulo. These include the Athletic Club of São Paulo, the Brazilian Sculpture Museum MuBE, Patriarch Plaza, the Pinacoteca do Estado gallery and the FIESP Cultural Center. ●

Paulo Mendes da Rocha

The future of leisure in times of austerity

In today's environment of austerity, a Lancaster leisure centre has proven that a little investment in leisure services can have a big impact

According to the Local Government Association (LGA), which represents more than 370 councils in England and Wales, between 2010 and 2020, local authorities will have seen reductions of £16bn to their core government funding. The LGA says the funding gap facing councils will be £5.8bn by the end of the decade.

At the same time, much of the UK's stock of public leisure facilities is in need of investment. The most recent figures from Sport England, which were published in 2015, showed that 58 per cent of sports halls and 60 per cent of swimming pools were more than 20 years old and, of these, nearly a quarter had not been refurbished in 20 years.

Faced with ever declining budgets and leisure centres which are no longer fit for purpose, is it possible for the public sector to encourage wider participation in physical activity?

It is. And the recent £5m transformation of Salt Ayre Leisure Centre proves it, says Paul Cluett, managing director of Alliance Leisure.

"We know that modern leisure centres with the right mix of facilities and services can change lives by

engaging people of all ages and abilities in activity," Cluett says. "Partnering with the private sector allows local authorities to maximise investment in their centres by reducing the risk of rising costs and increasing the possibility of securing



Paul Cluett, managing director, Alliance Leisure

additional funding, thereby increasing the impact of government capital."

Just two years ago, the tired and ageing Salt Ayre centre was an expensive drain on council resources making an annual loss of £800,000. The situation was unsustainable and



Gravity, the UK's first outdoor Flight Tower, has six descent options, including zip line and free fall



THE TRIP™, Les Mills' immersive studio group spin class, has been popular



VISITS AND ACTIVITY (Mar/Apr 2016 to Mar/Apr 2017)

- Total visits (members and non members) increased by 72% from 31,795 to 54,828
- Visits for fitness classes increased 83% from 9,491 to 17,343
- The Les Mills TRIP class accounted for more than 3,500 visits in Mar/Apr 2017, making it the most popular class
- Whilst no specific work was carried out on the swimming pool, visits increased by 10% from 11,307 to 12,449
- Family swim visits increased by 52% within this period
- Visits for the fitness suite increased by 83% from 7,249 to 13,274
- Visits for activities (those that do not take place in the swim or fitness suite areas) increased by 267%
- The new adventure facilities (Energy, XHeight & Gravity) created over 10,000 visits to Salt Ayre Leisure Centre

significant changes were required if the centre was to survive.

The team at Lancaster City Council was determined to find a way to reinvigorate the site and at the same time encourage the wider community to participate in physical activity.

Alliance Leisure, which was working with the council as part of a newly secured 10-year development partnership agreement, was invited to discuss the possible regeneration

of Salt Ayre Leisure Centre. Just one week after their appointment, Alliance Leisure began scoping a development project to create a vibrant sport and physical activity hub which would inspire the entire community and increase engagement.

A phased approach to the development was adopted, with the final element of the transformational project – a luxury spa – marking its completion in October 2017.

MEMBERSHIP DEMOGRAPHIC

(Mar/Apr 2016 to Mar/Apr 2017)

- Member visits increased by 419% from 5,450 to 28,302
- Active memberships increased by 101% from 1,314 to 2,639
- Active female members increased by 178% to make up 58% of the membership base
- Average age of members has fallen from 43.7 years to 37.9 years
- The new Junior membership has proved popular, with 300 sales since Mar/Apr 2017





“ The centre has been transformed from a shabby, uninviting and uninspiring facility to a vibrant community hub with a host of new attractions ”

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT

The centre has been transformed from a shabby, uninviting and uninspiring facility to a vibrant community hub with a host of new facilities and attractions designed to stimulate participation.

These include the Les Mills immersive indoor cycling experience, THE TRIP™, Europe's first outdoor Flight Tower, an 80-station gym, an adventure play area, an XHeight climbing wall, barista-style café and a spa.

Following the completion of the first phase of the project in early 2017, Alliance Leisure and the council approached the ukactive Research Institute to evaluate the economic and social impact of the £5m investment. The findings exceeded all expectations.

Since the redevelopment, visits to the Salt Ayre Leisure Centre have increased by 72 per cent, with the average number of monthly visits per person increasing from 4 to 10.

Gym and fitness class attendance has risen by 83 per cent, with the Les

VISIT FREQUENCY

- The average number of visits increased by 161% from 4.1 visits a month in Mar/Apr 2016 to 10.7 visits a month in Mar/Apr 2

2017

- 63% of members say they are visiting more often since the redevelopment
- Average distance of members' homes from Salt Ayre has increased by nearly a kilometre

Mill immersive experience attracting over 5,000 visits alone. Adventure facilities like XHeight and Flight Tower have generated over 10,000 visits.

There has been a shift in user demographics. Female users have increased by 172 per cent, now representing 58 per cent of the

membership, and members' average age has fallen from 43.7 to 37.9 years.

The centre is also attracting visitors from further afield, with people travelling from almost a kilometre further away to use the new facilities.

"Without doubt, the decision to invest in Salt Ayre is one of the most important decisions taken by the city council in recent years," says Darren Clifford, cabinet member with responsibility for culture, leisure and tourism. "We're now seeing the clear rewards of that investment and the achievement of our collective ambition of providing affordable leisure and fitness activities to people of all ages and abilities."

Based on current usage levels and revenue generation, the centre is projected to be in a revenue-neutral position in less than three years.

Salt Ayre is a genuine success story and proves that by investing in the right facilities, local authorities can inspire whole communities to get active. ●

What will your next development look like?

- ✓ Providing access to sport and activity for everyone
- ✓ Innovative facility developments that meet demand
- ✓ Tackling inactivity through engaging facilities
- ✓ Local facilities for your local community
- ✓ Protect and enhance existing leisure facilities



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Aaron Simpson

Serving canapés in volcanos and carpeting beaches are just some of the services Quintessentially provides for its clients. Co-founder Aaron Simpson talks to Kath Hudson about the concierge service and what wealthy people want

6

It could be a request for a kickaround in the back garden with David Beckham, or a fashion show with Karl Lagerfeld

9

What is Quintessentially?

We started out as a concierge service, but now we have media, education and real estate businesses. As members begin to ask for things in volume, we create our own vertical markets.

The business is broken down into three main sections. Travel is one of our largest areas and can be anything from a simple flight to an extensive honeymoon or a round the world trip.

We also have an entertainment division, with the inside track on restaurants, clubs, cocktail bars and insider information on cities.

Thirdly, we have a catch-all bucket of lifestyle requests, whether our clients want a plumber, a dog walker, an experienced event manager, or to meet a famous golfer or tennis player.

Does the subscription reflect the level of service clients receive?

Membership starts at £5,000, rising to between £25,000 and £50,000 a year. We have two main levels. The first is a dedicated service where clients are looked after by an account manager who has an in-depth understanding of



Quintessentially's travel arm arranges tailor-made dream trips for its clients

their needs and what's happening in their fields of interest. So, if they like golf, then maybe we'd organise a ticket to a Wentworth charity tournament; or a backstage pass for a theatre or pop performance, if that's their preference.

The second level is the elite level, where the client is dealt with by multiple account managers in multiple cities. This is a jet-setting clientele with multiple homes around the world.

The elite level is by invitation only. We have 30 or 40 members in each city. They can get whatever they want.

When and why did you decide to set up a concierge service?

Ben Elliot, Paul Drummond and I came up with the idea while sitting around a coffee table in my old office in Golden Square, London. Initially, we planned to set up an online members club for accessing pre-market retail items. It was 2000, when doing a website was an expensive hobby. We quickly realised this service would be a waste of time so we developed the idea into an offline private club designed to help people access the inaccessible.

American Express was doing it at the time, but they had an inventory to sell and we don't operate like that.

It soon took off and we opened the New York office in 2002. Now we have 70 global offices and 3,000 employees.

What are and have been the main challenges?

We've weathered a couple of recessions in the past. The biggest ongoing challenge is maintaining the quality of service globally. Maintaining high levels of service, innovation and engagement, as well making sure that the lifestyle specialists are fulfilling the needs of our clients, presents a massive policing job, which is a constant challenge.

What training do your staff have?

We do our training in-house and look for people who strive for excellence at all times. They are trained for two to three months and mentored by a current employee, so there is vast knowledge sharing. We also have a database which has 15 to 20 years of information and is an invaluable



A Quintessentially member got to meet JK Rowling

Extravagant requests

■ A member wanted to watch a romantic movie on a beach near the restaurant he had booked, but didn't want to get sand on his feet, so the restaurant staff covered the beach with carpets.

■ One member's 12-year-old daughter's hero is JK Rowling. Quintessentially made her dream come true by arranging a meeting.

■ A James Bond-obsessed member wanted to do something special for his birthday, so Quintessentially arranged a Bond experience which involved a high-speed car chase in a special edition Aston Martin.

Quintessentially

INSIGHTS

12%

increase in requests related to **spa, nutrition and wellness**

20%

decrease in **nightlife requests**, corresponding with the 'health is wealth' trend

20%

increase in **educational experiences**

55%

increase in **experiential opportunities** compared to luxury goods

18%

increase in **requests relating to the finest jewellery and watches**

15%

in foreign spend in UK on **luxury goods** from the Far East

Simpson runs a lifestyle service for the super-rich



tool. We've usually been asked for something before and can provide answers within seconds.

What sort of requests do you receive and can you always accommodate them?

Restaurants are still the most frequent requests, closely followed by travel. We never say no if we can help it, but sometimes we have to offer an alternative. Often it's for the simplest requests, like a booking to the hottest restaurant in London at the time. Sometimes the restaurant just does not have a table – and we do stop short of building an extension – but we're always able to accommodate our clients with something equally as good. It's a case of supply and demand and

sometimes demand is so overwhelming you have to supply an alternative.

It's not common for people to ask to meet a celebrity or sportsperson, but it happens at least 100 times a year. Sometimes they want to connect for charitable purposes. We did a private dinner for the opening of the play *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* and held a charity event. JK Rowling came along and we raised a lot of money for children's charities. It could be a request for a kickaround in the back garden with David Beckham, or a fashion show with Karl Lagerfeld.

How can you facilitate those sorts of requests with celebrities?
Ah, that's our business! We build great relationships with all our suppliers

THE HEALTH EFFECT

■ The "Waitrose effect" is now the "health effect", as people become more concerned with their lifestyles. We are seeing a strong trend for living more healthily, with a 30 per cent increase in people investing in property near parks, the river, gyms, yoga studios and wholefood outlets and juice bars.



People are more invested in their health

■ Extravagance and luxury is a longstanding trend among billionaires that is unlikely to change, but now they are looking for status outside the possession of luxury goods. Status is now "who I am" rather than "what I have".



A Quintessentially trip

- Eat canapés, drink champagne and listen to an opera singer during a private tour of the magma chamber in a dormant Icelandic volcano
- Dive with whales in Tonga, with the experience captured by an award-winning marine photographer
- Travel across the North Pole on a dog sled to look for polar bears
- Have the near-exclusive use of a tropical African island

Some members want to scour the North Pole for polar bears

and maintain those relationships because we deliver on our word. Some of the celebrities and sports people are also our clients.

Building up good relationships is vital though. It used to be the three founders going to restaurants and clubs every night, but now we have a team of younger people, with far more energy.

What do you look for in a supplier?

There's a well-trodden path to our supplier relationships. We have a business development team for interested companies to get in touch with and we are always looking for new and exciting colleagues to partner with. Partners need to be well regarded, have a great track record in delivering what they say they're going to deliver and be willing to go the extra mile when we require it.

How do you find your members?

Members tend to come to us. We do run events and some PR and



marketing, but overall allow our members tend to introduce people.

We're growing at 30 per cent per annum, and it's not just elite either. Yes, we do have extremely wealthy people at the top end, but we also have young architects and professionals. We're very much about getting the right people to use the services and add value to their lives.

Everyone wants expertise in their lives. There is digitisation going on in our industry, but when you're booking a vacation or making a real estate purchase, you might want to talk to someone who has the expertise to help you make the right decision. We can provide a knowledgeable sounding board to help someone make a well informed decision quickly – more so than a computer.

What plans do you have going forward?

We're looking to become operators. We're building a mega yacht and we're looking at the hotel space, private clubs – and we already have an offer on a property in Hong Kong. ●



We envision our cities of the future to have a network of fitness oases between home and work where you could stop and recharge more than just your car

Alfred Byun,
senior associate, Gensler

Fuelling fitness

Fitness brand Reebok has partnered with global architecture practice Gensler to create 'Get Pumped' – a proposal which sees redundant gas stations across the US turned into fitness hubs. Health Club Management's Kim Megson reports



Consumers may not need gas stations anymore, but instead of wasting them, we're recycling them, and maximizing the space so that they become places of community

Austin Malleolo, head of fitness facilities, Reebok

The rising demand for electric cars has promoted visionary architects Gensler to image a time when gas stations are no longer needed and can be repurposed as fitness hubs.

The proposal, called Get Pumped, is a long-term vision for adaptive reuse, created in partnership with Reebok.

Gensler have imagined various ways in which these redundant facilities could become community spaces which are dedicated to wellbeing – "where people can prioritise their mental and physical wellness and access fuel for their bodies."

Scaled to fit the opportunity

Alfred Byun, senior associate at Gensler, said: "We envision our cities of the future to have a network of fitness oases between home and work where you could stop and recharge more than just your car. Imagine an option to leave the traffic jam to unwind with yoga, get your

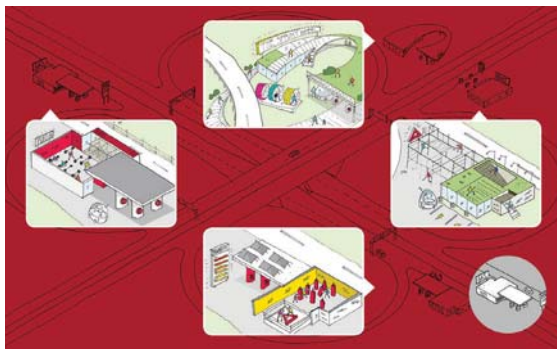
Crossfit Fix, or pick up a green juice and your weekly farm shop all in one place, while also charging your electric car from renewable sources."

The concept takes on three different forms, reflecting the different types of gas/petrol stations which are scattered across the US – The Network, for major interstate rest stops; The Oasis, for larger gas stations and The Community Center for local and small town gas stations (see details, left).

Austin Malleolo, head of fitness facilities at Reebok said: "Reebok believes that we're always training to be our best. This design work with Gensler allows us to imagine a future where there is zero barrier to entry for an opportunity to work out and be healthy."

"Consumers may not need gas stations anymore, but instead of wasting them, we're advocating recycling them, and maximizing the space so that they become places of community."

In the spotlight: Get Pumped's Fitness Hubs



THE NETWORK

Major interstate rest stops will be reimagined as places where travellers can stop and generate energy through spinning and boxing, Crossfit, Les Mills classes, and running trails.

There'll also be a range of wellness activities and services on offer, from massage treatments to mindfulness and meditation. A range of healthy food and food shopping options will also be available.

THE OASIS

Larger gas stations that commuters pass on small, local highways will be turned into recharge zones, to capitalise on the type of mental and physical rest those commuting need.

There will be real food offerings from farms to table eateries and juice bars, as well as yoga and meditation pods. The exteriors will provide sustenance in the form of herb gardens and outdoor tracks where you can run in the fresh air.



THE COMMUNITY CENTER

Small town gas stations will be transformed in four ways for communities to enhance their healthy life. People will be able to charge electric cars, attend nutrition classes and access minimarts offering local, healthy food. Pop-up trucks will offer crossfit and spinning classes. ●





PHOTO: ANDY MOORE

Many UK species, like the wren, are found in woodland, farmland, moorland and gardens



PHOTO: MATTHEW ROBERTS

Back to Nature

The UK boasts some incredible wildlife, but with development, climate change, agriculture and fishing, none of it can be taken for granted. Kath Hudson discovers how Stephanie Hilborne, CEO of The Wildlife Trusts charity, wants to involve everyone in preserving British nature

Guardian of 2,300 nature reserves – Stephanie Hilborne is CEO of The Wildlife Trusts,



PHOTO: THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS



Never has there been a more important time for The Wildlife Trusts to exist. According to Stephanie Hilborne, CEO of the charity, the latest big report on the state of nature sounded a real wake-up call, establishing that more than half of the UK species studied have declined in number since 1970.

"Wildlife is struggling with threats from development, infrastructure projects, climate change challenges, and fishing and agricultural practices, which have a detrimental impact on nature," she says. "It's shocking that so much of the wildlife I remember from my childhood is no longer common – even the number of house sparrows is decreasing, and hedgehogs are under threat from habitat loss."

Most of the laws that protect wildlife and the environment are tied to the UK's membership of the EU, including the strongest legislation for protected



The organisation has
45,000 volunteers
ready to lend a hand

“
We help
people to get
outdoors and be
active, offering
something for
every age group

wildlife sites and effective regulations that manage sea and river pollution.

Although Brexit brings huge challenges, it could also bring opportunities to safeguard and enhance protections, and create a greener UK for future generations, but these will need to be fought for to ensure the position improves rather than weakening.

The UK-wide movement of 47 Wildlife Trusts has its work cut out. Fortunately, it has the passionate Hilborne at the helm, plus the support of 45,000 volunteers, who are prepared to do everything from hay making to river clearance, and 800,000 members who will dig deep when called on. They recently rallied to an urgent appeal to buy a nature reserve in Norfolk, which is an important wetland home for birds like the booming bittern.

WILDLIFE GUARDIANS

The Wildlife Trusts manage around 2,300 nature reserves in the UK, including bogs, moors, ancient woods, wildflower meadows, heaths, inner city nature parks, caves, lakes, islands, beaches, cliffs, disused quarries and marine conservation projects around



Woodbury Wetlands is a London reservoir and urban wetland oasis



About 50,000 people, schools and businesses signed up to the 30 Days Wild challenge, pledging to connect with nature every day

Engaging with the tourism industry

Reserves and visitor centres provide a range of amazing wildlife experiences, both on the coast and inland. Trusts around the country are keen to work with tourism businesses that want to offer their guests a wildlife experience.

✓ In Yorkshire, the local Wildlife Trust leads **The Yorkshire Nature Triangle**, a partnership which promotes the value of ecotourism to the area, including highlights such as the UK's largest mainland colony of gannets, and the most easily viewable mainland colony of puffins.

The network of environment and wildlife experiences aims to extend the day tripper into a tourist who stays for a couple of days. Two-thirds of accommodation providers now say that coming to experience nature is one of the top reasons for tourists to stay with them.

The Nature Triangle has lots on offer, including advice to businesses to make themselves more nature friendly for visitors: for example, putting up trail cameras to film local wildlife. The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust now has its own ecotourism officer.

✓ Individual Wildlife Trusts have also worked with **Center Parcs** to help guests enjoy nature as woodland, lakes and waterways are at the heart of many of their holiday villages. Wildlife Trusts have monitored and reviewed species and habitats, and Center Parcs villages have been awarded The Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark. Some local Wildlife Trusts work with members of the British Holiday and Home Park Association, advising on creating on-site nature havens, which are not only attractive for visitors, but can provide vital corridors, allowing wildlife to move between important habitats.

LM 2017



Atlantic Puffin, Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, UK

COLOUR



Ranger's Ramble at Center Parcs



Forest School programmes introduce inner city schoolchildren to nature

► the coast. It runs 107 visitor and education facilities, ranging from small wooden buildings to state-of-the-art, eco-friendly, visitor centres, complete with cafés and shops.

As well as campaigning and lobbying government, the Trusts have a bottom-up approach, inspiring people to get out and have fun in nature. More than 12 million people visited its nature reserves last year, taking part in a range of activities that included photography days, kingfisher walks, bee identification and hedgehog habitat workshops – and even wild yoga at Woodberry Wetlands in London.

“For more than a century The Wildlife Trusts have been saving, protecting and standing up for wildlife and wild places, increasing people’s awareness and understanding of the natural world, and deepening their relationship with it,” says Hilborne. “We help people get outdoors and be active, offering something for every age group, from nature tots to activities with care homes. Inspiring future generations is hugely important, and encouraging an early love of wildlife in children has been a central part of our work for decades.”

With support from players of the People’s Postcode Lottery, The Wildlife Trusts have established a number of life-changing Forest School programmes for hundreds of schoolchildren in inner

The Wildlife Trusts FACTS & STATS

► Wildlife Trusts around the UK are supported by the 800,000 members and also receive funding from charitable trusts and lotteries, the Landfill Communities’ Fund, local authorities, corporate partnerships and statutory agencies.

► This June almost 50,000 people, schools and businesses signed up to the 30 Days Wild challenge, pledging to connect with nature every day.

► Stephanie Hilborne OBE has worked in nature conservation for more than 20 years and was CEO of Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust before joining The Wildlife Trusts as chief executive in 2004. She is a trustee of the Green Building Council and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. She was awarded an OBE in 2010 for Services to Nature Conservation and an honorary doctorate by Bristol university in 2015.

► The Wildlife Trust movement originated in 1912, when Charles Rothschild held a meeting to discuss his radical idea about saving places for nature. Together with like-minded people, Rothschild formed the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, which eventually



became the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts and signalled the beginning of modern UK nature conservation. After World War II, a UK-wide movement of Wildlife Trusts formed and widened the aims to include inspiring and educating people about the natural world.

► The Wildlife Trusts successfully campaigned to secure the first effective marine conservation legislation through the Marine & Coastal Access Act 2009 and the also the visionary *Natural Environment White Paper* which was published in 2011.

► A report from Essex University, commissioned by The Wildlife Trusts, adds to the growing body of research which shows nature is good for you. The key finding was that wildlife-rich environments reduce stress and social isolation and improve mood.

cities. The Trusts oversee Our Bright Future, a programme funded by The Big Lottery which gives skills and opportunities to teenagers and young adults to boost their confidence and create the next generation of leaders. The Trusts' junior branch has more than 150,000 members and runs more than 200 Wildlife Watch clubs, leading activities like bushcraft skills, nature walks and rock pooling.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

As well as delivering fun, engaging programmes across the country, the Trusts seek to develop partnerships with local stakeholders, such as farmers and producers. One success story is the forging of a partnership with the farmers who grow cereals for Jordans, who have pledged to manage 10 per cent of their land for wildlife.

"Many recognise that wildlife friendly farming is good for us all and can make economic sense too. Where would we be without bees to pollinate our



We need an ambitious, visionary and long-term recovery plan for nature

crops?" says Hilborne. "We all need to recognise that farming is not only about food production, but wider benefits like flood alleviation and clean water too."

The Trusts are also working with developers to create more holistic ways of building. "Where it's in the wrong place or too damaging to wildlife, The Wildlife Trusts oppose development, but housing estates don't have to be wildlife-free zones," says Hilborne. "We work with developers on more holistic ways of building, such as using natural surroundings like existing old trees and hedges, and developing green corridors to create gains for nature and better health for residents."

SAVING OUR SEAS

Hilborne is eager to secure a bold Environment Act that restores wildlife and wild places and recognises the value of nature. "We know people care deeply about the natural environment and cherish our wild places on land and at sea, so we need the

Rock pooling is an activity offered to children in the Trusts' Wildlife Watch clubs



PHOTO: BERTIE GREGORY



PHOTOS: STEVE WATERHOUSE / ALEX MUSTARD



LM 2017



Basking shark

Marine and coastal wildlife is also facing environmental risks and challenges



The Trusts are pushing for a network of protected marine areas

government to act," she says. "We need an ambitious, visionary and long-term recovery plan for nature: one that sets measurable aims to which government can be held to account and that is adequately resourced."

The Wildlife Trust is currently working with a coalition of environmental groups to ensure environmental protections are not diluted post-Brexit. They are also talking to MPs about how joined-up policies can benefit everyone: for example, managing the land to alleviate floods, provide cleaner air and stop precious soil being washed away.

Having been damaged and neglected over decades, the seas and marine life also face big challenges and this is another area of focus. "We want to restore natural ocean processes and enable seabed habitats to recover so our seas adapt well to climate change, improving the resilience of the natural environment," says Hilborne. "We are championing the designation of a joined-up and well managed network of protected marine areas around the UK. But we also need to ensure that there is space for the sustainable maritime

industries and activities to support a sustainable blue economy."

Hilborne says that investing in nature is investing in all of our futures, because spending time in nature is so good for physical and mental health and wellbeing. "Quite simply, we want to see a greener UK, with wildlife-rich landscapes and seas. This is essential for our health, wellbeing and prosperity," she says.

"My plans for the future are to keep on standing up for wildlife – both on land and at sea. I believe everyone should have the opportunity to experience the joy of wildlife and wild places in their daily lives, and I want to make that a reality. The Wildlife Trust believes everyone can make a positive difference, and by working together we can ensure nature thrives, and bring people closer to wildlife." ●



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TOURISM

RIGHT TO ROAM



At a time when the world needs love, Sweden is throwing its arms open and inviting everyone to come and stay - for free, if you don't mind a spot of wild camping. Kath Hudson speaks to Jenny Kaiser from VisitSweden USA, about the welcome sign they have just hoisted up



The Freedom to Roam
campaign promotes
Sweden's natural beauty

VisitSweden worked
with Airbnb on the
campaign design

SWEDEN ON AIRBNB

EXPLORE THE FREEDOM TO ROAM

SWEDEN: THE FACTS

A Scandinavian country in northern Europe, Sweden borders Norway to the north and west and Finland to the east. It is connected to Denmark in the south west by a bridge tunnel.

At 450,295sq km (173,860sq mi), Sweden is the third largest country in the European Union by area, but with only 10 million citizens, its has a low population density of 22 people per square mile. About 85 per cent of the population live in urban areas. Southern Sweden is largely agricultural and the north is heavily forested.



We don't have iconic monuments such as The Eiffel Tower, Times Square or the Great Wall of China. What we do have is our unique and accessible nature, our lifestyle and our values

Jenny Kaiser, president, VisitSweden USA

Indeed, nature is the bedrock of VisitSweden's headline grabbing campaign: the jaw-droppingly beautiful nature of the country and the hospitable nature of the Swedes, thanks to their freedom to roam policy.

Listing the whole country on Airbnb and inviting the world to grab a tent and camp anywhere sums up Sweden's attitude. Of course, VisitSweden doesn't expect everyone to rock up with a tent and stay on the borders of civilization for their whole trip, but it's a brilliant marketing hook that encapsulates what the country has to offer.

AIRBNB CAMPAIGN

Charged with finding a brand identity to differentiate Sweden, advertising agency Forsman & Bodenfors came up with the idea of focusing on *allmansrätten*. Protected by Swedish law, *allmansrätten* – literally, everyman's right – is the right to access and roam freely in the Swedish countryside.

"Sustainability is a natural part of Swedes way of life," says Jenny Kaiser,

president of VisitSweden USA. Indeed, the country has even run out of rubbish, its recycling system is so efficient.

"We're investing heavily in ecotourism, so when the agency came up with the idea to place *allmansrätten* on Airbnb, with Sweden as the host, we thought it was a brilliant way to differentiate Sweden on the global market, at the same time mirroring what Sweden is all about for global travellers."

Partnering with Airbnb's global creative team in San Francisco, California, the initiative is primarily aimed at engaging American travellers, although VisitSweden does hope to get a global response, including with its domestic market.

The campaign urges people to use the lakes as infinity pools, mountain tops as terraces and forage for mushrooms and berries. "Feel free to take a morning jog, or a bike ride across open fields or challenging mountain terrain. Should you want an upgrade, no need to ask anyone, just find the place and surroundings which suit you."





PHOTOS: CLIVE TOMPSETT

The Freedom to Roam campaign invites people to explore the wild and to camp, but most people are likely to opt for tourist accommodation





Most tourists
to Sweden are
experienced
travellers

SWEDEN: IN NUMBERS

The growth in tourism has resulted in more than **5.8% more jobs** in the **tourism sector** which stands for **1.5% of Sweden's total workforce**

The **US market** is the **seventh biggest**, with **\$49,000 visitors** in 2016

During the first four months of 2017, there was a **38% growth in bed nights** from the **US**

The biggest market is Norway, followed by Germany and Denmark

In 2016, Sweden had approximately **15.6 million bed nights** from international travellers

This was an **increase of 2.8%** from 2015



What we hope to accomplish is to attract more travellers over time and to encourage them to leave the big city rim and visit nature

But could this magnanimous offer end up backfiring? People may take advantage of the free to stay and roam aspect, but they may not have the same respect for the environment as the Swedes do. Could this initiative end up damaging the environment they are so proud of?

Kaiser isn't concerned about this. VisitSweden expects its guests to be respectful, visit for five to seven days and divide their time between the cities and a guided nature experience, such as a day hike or an archipelago cruise.

"Travellers visiting Sweden are internationally experienced ones; they usually combine a big city trip with a few days or a week in nature," explains Kaiser. "Usually they go on guided tours, or if they are really passionate about a certain activity, such as hiking, they prepare themselves and plan their trips in detail. What we hope to accomplish is to attract more travellers over time and to encourage them to leave the big city rim and visit nature."

Kaiser adds that the campaign urges people to be respectful: "With great freedom comes responsibility. The general rule for spending time in nature is do not disturb and do not destroy, just like in any other home."

ON THE BUCKET LIST

Although the Airbnb campaign plays up the "stay for free" aspect of wild camping, Kaiser expects most visitors will stay in tourist accommodation.

"If they choose to camp for a couple of days, they are welcome. But the campaign is not aimed at free visits, but attracting new visitors and getting Sweden on people's bucket lists."

The campaign is part of a drive from the Swedish government and Svensk Tourism, to double the value of foreign visitors spending between 2010 and 2020 and to make Sweden a first choice for a prioritised target group.

The campaign caught the media's attention, with 550 publications writing about it, including *Fortune*, *Condé Nast Traveler* and the *New York Post*. It spread widely on social media.

"This initiative is one of many more to come regarding our ecotourism offer and freedom to roam," says Kaiser. "We believe more people deserve to experience our unique country and connect with the people living here."

"Spending time in nature is good for you. As long as we treat it – and all the creatures living in it – with respect, the freedom to roam will remain and the countryside will remain accessible for future generations to enjoy." ●

Stephen Hulme

As Everyone Active celebrates its 30th anniversary, CEO Stephen Hulme talks to Leisure Management about how it all started and how he and his team have built one of the most successful operating companies in the UK

How did you end up as CEO of SLM?

After school, I decided not to go to university, and instead accepted a training role at Oldham Borough Council: I was a keen swimmer and played waterpolo at national level, which is partly why I chose the industry.

After a series of promotions in local government and completing an MBA, I moved to Hinckley and Bosworth council, arriving just as finances were prompting them to start looking at alternative management options.

I approached the chief executive – who was very supportive – and asked if I could set up my own company to tender for the work. It wasn't a well thought out plan – more a reactive response.

I'd just moved my family to the area, had an eighteen-month-old daughter and had enjoyed the security of a local government job, so the risks were massive, but with the benefit of hindsight it was absolutely the right decision.



How did it go?

It wasn't a well-planned strategy to move into the sector and running a new business from scratch with next to no financial backing and trying to keep my head above water was the biggest challenge by far. Every time my bank manager phoned me, I wondered if he was going to pull the plug.

Almost overnight, I became responsible for the employment of 55 colleagues and I never underestimated

that. It was challenging coming to terms with a completely different role.

I was lifeguarding during the day and cleaning changing rooms until 11.00pm at night.

Looking back, what would you have done differently?

I'm sure we made lots of mistakes, but given we had very little time to form the company before commencing operations, I like to think we got more things right than wrong, and in light of that, I probably wouldn't have done anything differently.

SLM has grown to be one of the biggest operators in the UK. What have been your biggest successes?

Whenever we've won a contract, we've always significantly increased the number of people using the facilities and also enhanced the quality of facilities and services offered.

I'd put this success down to the quality and breadth of facilities we offer – many of our centres surpass those offered by the private sector.

Our centres typically have a pool – 25m or longer – indoor climbing, gyms with over 100 stations and multifunctional studios. We're also starting to introduce more high-end spa facilities and hot yoga studios.

I'd also say our level of service allows us to create a point of difference when compared with both budget gyms and other leisure operators. We have higher colleague ratios and invest more in colleague development than many of our competitors, this represents significant change from where the local authority sector was 10 or even five years ago.



Everyone Active and Alex Danson's hockey programme

National Fitness Day is an important fixture in the Everyone Active calendar



Our centres have some of the most diverse facilities you'd find in a leisure centre – from hot yoga to spas – we offer facilities above the 'traditional' local authority offering



How has the industry changed?

It's changed beyond recognition. There's no comparison in terms of the quality and number of facilities.

30 years ago few leisure centres had gyms – mainly swimming pools or sports halls. Today our centres have some of the most diverse facilities you'd find in a leisure centre – from hot yoga to spas – we offer facilities above the 'traditional' local authority offering.

The management challenges have also changed, along with the competition – particularly the growth in private sector provision.

When SLM was formed, if you wanted to go for a swim, you had no choice but to use a local authority facility; there were very few private alternatives, now there are many.

What are the biggest opportunities and threats the sector is facing?

The opportunities and threats are inextricably linked. We have an opportunity

to demonstrate the correlation between sport and leisure provision and the health and wellbeing of our communities. The challenges are massive, but are recognised and supported by bodies such as ukactive.

You rebranded as Everyone Active in 2007. Why?

Everything from swimming lessons and children's activities to our fitness brand, had a different name – there was no common identity, so we recruited a marketing agency to look at how we could approach this better: we wanted everyone to be active, regardless of gender or age, so Everyone Active was born to communicate that message.

In 2014, SLM launched Everyone Health. How has that been going?

There's a definite link between the health agenda and what we do in sport and leisure. Everyone Health came about in response to changes in

policy with regards to commissioning services and the Local Authority responsibilities. We were one of the first companies to establish a dedicated public health division.

It was an obvious diversification for us, particularly given our belief that the two sectors will be increasingly linked. I think it's a big opportunity for the company and one that's going to grow over the next five years.

We've already seen a significant increase in opportunities. Everyone Health already manages contracts on behalf of Cambridge and Nottingham county councils and Nottingham City Council.

What's your SWOT analysis of SLM?

By far our biggest strength is our people at all levels. If you asked me one reason I've been successful, it's because I've been lucky to have such excellent colleagues. Many of them have stayed with us for 10, 15, 20 years.

Everyone Active Key moments

1988:

First contract at Hinckley Leisure Centre awarded to SLM

2002:

Tenth contract awarded is Ashfield to manage six leisure centres

2000:

Sale of SLM to Castlevision

2007:

Start of the Everyone Active brand and opening of the 50th site as part of the Bristol contract

2010:

Everyone Active wins Leisure Operator of the Year at ukactive's Flame Awards (and again in 2011, 2012, 2015 and 2017)

2012:

Plymouth Life Centre Opening

2013:

Commencement of the Ealing, Brent & Harrow contract

2014:

SLM sets up Everyone Health

2015:

Everyone Active signs leisure joint venture with Sunderland City Council to manage nine sites

2016:

- Everyone Active wins' contract with Westminster City Council to manage eight sites
- Everyone Active wins' contract with Southwark Council to manage eight sites
- Everyone Active sets up Sporting Champions programme to support athlete development

2017:

Everyone Active wins Leisure Operator of the Year for the fifth time at ukactive's Flame Awards



“When I set up SLM, someone told me to never look back. They told me it would be one hell of a challenge and to just look forward”

We value them all – whether they're directors or lifeguards – it doesn't matter. Everyone has a pivotal role and that's in the ethos of the company.

When we take on a contract, the new teams are always pleasantly surprised by the extent to which they're encouraged to take responsibility and the level of support they get from regional and group colleagues. There's no doubt in my mind this is what differentiates us from our competitors.

I genuinely believe we haven't got many weaknesses, but as a business we constantly strive to improve, as we recognise there will always be things we could do better.

There are plenty of opportunities to grow the business in terms of the number of services we manage, and to show the link between the management of those facilities and the health and wellbeing of communities.

The biggest threat comes in the form of the financial pressures that local authorities are continuing to face.

Successive governments have been working to turn "sick care" into "health care" – including making activity a preventative measure available on the NHS. Is enough being done?

Absolutely not. It's a massive challenge. In conjunction with many of our 45 local authority partners we offer 'health services', many of which are free.

Even though services are free, it's a challenge to fill the number of places

we have, so I don't subscribe to view that the problem is all down to funding.

While there's a lot of excellent work being done, we have to get better in engaging with our target market.

I don't think it's a government thing. There are services being provided to educate communities about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, but the challenge for those of us managing services is to get enough people engaged with them.

There should be more of this – working to change people's perception of the benefits and the opportunities – I don't think providing more free services would necessarily mean more people using them.

What's the best bit of business advice you've ever been given?

When I set up SLM, someone told me to never look back. They told me it would be one hell of a challenge and to just look forward.

If you had the power to introduce one law, what would it be?

Local authority sport and leisure should be made a statutory service.

What will SLM look like in 30 years' time, when it celebrates its 60th?

I hope SLM will not only be the leading provider of sport and leisure, but also a market leader in the management of the health and wellbeing services, which are primarily being managed by the NHS at present. ●

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HYBRID

FITNESS

Fans of ESPA Life at Corinthia's new fitness service, BodySpace, are calling the concept "revolutionary". Lauretta Ihonor speaks to its founders to discover what sets it apart from the competition – and how it fits in with the flagship spa

Since its opening in 2011, ESPA's flagship ESPA Life at Corinthia spa in London has shown a distinct commitment to combining fitness with innovative holistic therapies. Last summer the spa added mindful fitness sessions to its mindfulness services. And earlier this year, it upgraded its fitness centre with the installation of a new, state-of-the-art Technogym.

In a further step, ESPA Life at Corinthia has now partnered with the new UK company BodySpace to offer a bespoke hybrid fitness concept that combines exercise, nutrition and innovative technology to help guests improve not only their physical fitness, but their overall quality of life. "Clients often say 'I want to lose 15 pounds,' but when you dig deeper, this evolves into 'I want to be fitter, feel better, have more energy and have more time for my

partner'," says BodySpace co-founder Stephen Price. "Once you nail it down, it's really all about quality of life."

ESPA founder Sue Harmsworth agrees. She says the concept's focus on maximising quality of life through technology and multiple treatment modalities perfectly complements ESPA Life's "philosophy of creating next-generation experiences."

"BodySpace is bringing a new, highly evolved fitness and nutrition offering, which fits flawlessly within the existing ESPA Life offering," says Harmsworth.

THE BIRTH OF BODYSPACE

BodySpace is the brainchild of wellness consultant Price and David Higgins, the man behind the London Pilates brands Ten Pilates and Bootcamp Pilates. Price, who founded the health, fitness and medical wellness consultancy SP&Co in 2001, has worked in wellness

consulting for 16 years. Prior to that, he oversaw the development of luxury hotels in Africa and Asia. Higgins began his career as a Pilates trainer, and has also worked as an exercise rehabilitationist for film studios.

The duo say it's this amalgamation of expertise that sets BodySpace apart from anything else on the market. "David and I have consulted in the hotel industry for years and we wanted to put our experience together and launch BodySpace," Price says. "We brought in health technologies from medical wellness clinics and the sports world and added them to David's Pilates and body movement experience – and it works perfectly."



David Higgins (left)
is behind the London
brands Ten Pilates
and Bootcamp Pilates



“

It's important to create
a platform where a
positive, evidence-
based message is used
to promote long-term
health and wellness

”



The BodySpace brand was created in early 2017, and its first project, Kingwood – a state-of-the-art gym and wellness complex in a residential development in Knightsbridge, London – opened in June. ESPA Life at Corinthia is the team's second project, and serves as their flagship hotel concept.

UNIQUE SELLING POINT

While traditional fitness services focus on metrics, such as fat percentage, weight and VO2max, BodySpace is centred on heart rate variability monitoring, which Price says is “probably the biggest physiological marker for those interested in reaping the benefits of personalised training for fitness and overall wellness. It's a great marker of things like hydration and sleep, as they all affect variability.”

BodySpace uses technology from Firstbeat, a physiological analytics company, to provide guests with personalised insights on stress, exercise and recovery – all calculated

from heart variability data. “This technology times the heartbeat,” explains Price. “We then look for the time between the beats and use this information to personalise the effect our training is having on you.”

Heart rate variability data is also used to determine clients' heart coherence – a measure of the pattern of the heart's rhythm. Research by the US HeartMath Institute has shown that coherence is an indicator of harmony between the cardiovascular, respiratory and nervous system, and as such, the ultimate measure of total body health. “Sometimes how you feel and the condition you're truly in are disjointed, so having an objective measure is useful,” says Price. “We want to help clients gain a better idea of their current state of health and wellbeing, measuring how this improves as they progress through programmes.”

These bespoke programmes – which cost anywhere from £750 to £4,400 and last between 10 days and 12

weeks – combine tailored fitness training with gut health and nutrition services, recovery, regeneration and compression treatments, and myofascial release therapy, alongside the other therapies on offer at the 3,300sq ft (307sq m) luxury spa.

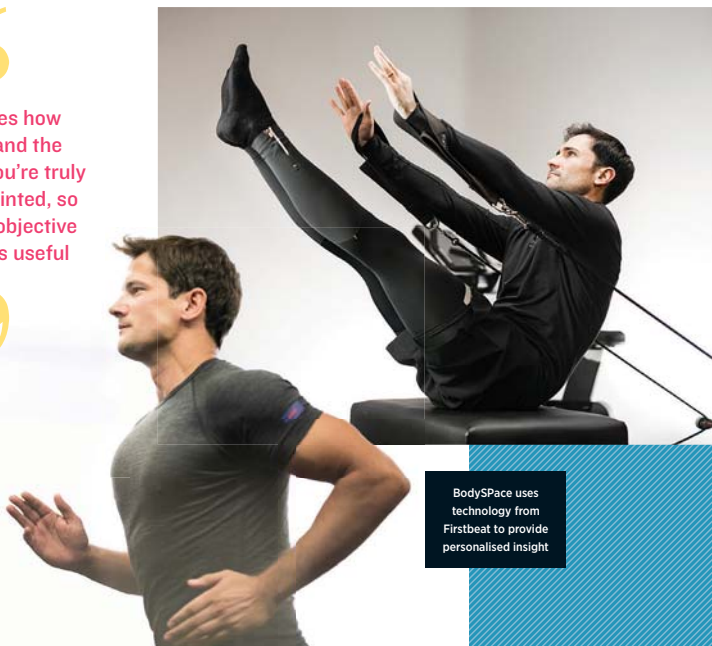
THE ROAD AHEAD

Price and Higgins plan to open more BodySpaces around the globe, but they're firm in their vision. “It's very important for us to create a platform where a positive evidence-based message is used to promote long-term health and wellness,” says Higgins. “We aim to deliver this to clients so they understand their bodies and minds better, and function at their most optimal across all aspects of life.” ●



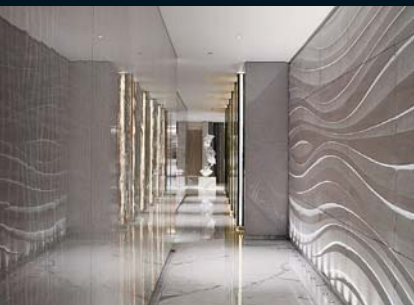
Lauretta Ihonor is editor of the Leisure Media publication *Health Club Management*. Email: laurettaihonor@leisuremedia.com

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measure is useful
”



BodySpace uses
technology from
Firstbeat to provide
personalised insight

The Corinthia Hotel London is located near the city's West End and the River Thames



ESPA Life at Corinthia is the brand's flagship, covering 3,300sq m and four floors



The spa lounge is one of several areas for relaxation at ESPA Life at Corinthia

About ESPA Life at Corinthia

- Located in the heart of London, ESPA Life at Corinthia is spread over four floors, covering 3,300 sq m.
- The spa, which opened in 2011, offers lifestyle programmes that incorporate complementary and alternative medicine, targeted fitness and injury rehabilitation.
- Offers include treatment pods, sleep rooms, Technogym's Artis range, a spa lounge and large thermal floor area that features a swimming pool, vitality pool, glass amphitheatre sauna, steam room and heated marble loungers.
- In June 2016, ESPA Life launched a suite of six mindfulness therapies for the restoration of mental and emotional wellbeing: mindful breathing, mindful meditation, mindful sleep, mindful fitness, mindful facial and mindful massage.
- In November 2016, the Corinthia Hotel and ESPA Life launched a year-long Neuroscience in Residence programme, led by US leadership coach and MIT lecturer Dr Tara Swart. Its aim is to examine the mental resilience of the spa and hotel's staff and guests. The resulting data will be used to create a special brain power study at the end of 2017.



TRANSFORMING ISTRIA

In Istria, Croatia, tourism firm Maistra is changing the face of hospitality in the region, with a series of intriguing design-led hotels. As its most ambitious hotel project takes shape, Professor Terry Stevens finds out more

Beautiful Istria, the heart-shaped peninsula south of Trieste, has a powerful and growing tourism economy



Croatia is steering a course shaped by a strong and focused tourism masterplan and political leaders who understand the industry

Along with Slovenia, Croatia is my favourite tourism destination is Europe. The reason is quite straightforward – over 45 years it has never let me down.

Since gaining independence in 1995, the country has worked hard to create a fresh approach to tourism and has succeeded through innovation, using its natural and cultural assets to competitive advantage by recognising the importance of tourism to normalising life and the economy.

Despite its obvious historical appeal to mass tourism, Croatia is steering a different course shaped by a strong and focused tourism masterplan and, political leaders who understand the needs of the industry.

Within Croatia, one of the most appealing destinations has to be Istria – a 3,600 sq km heart-shaped peninsula in the north, 50 km south of Trieste. The coast has traditionally been the focus of tourist activity with its historic towns such as Pula, Porec and Rovinj and the resorts of Umag and Novigrad. The Istrian interior is characterised by medieval hilltop villages set amongst rolling coun-



Professor Terry Stevens

try and forests – a region that lost almost 90 per cent of its population, who exited during the four years of war from 1991 – 1995.

Istria is now leading the re-invention and has become the epitome of a successful transformation in Croatian tourism. It too is driven by an enlightened masterplan which closely follows the themes of the national

Croatia has countryside and a rich heritage, creating a strong base for its tourism industry

strategy with the key 'actors' realising that quality and unique visitor experiences are the key to achieving a competitive advantage in the market.

One of the industry leaders, Maistra Ltd – the most substantial tourism and hospitality company in the region – is changing the face of tourism in the area, with a series of design-led hotels.

INVESTING IN DESIGN

Maistra is the hospitality arm of the Adris Group and was formed in 2005 following the successful merger of two local Istrian tourism companies.

Today Maistra owns and manages a portfolio of nine hotels and eight resort complexes in Istria in the towns of Rovinj and Vrsar. In 2014, Maistra acquired the Hilton Imperial Hotel in Dubrovnik, which is now operated by Hilton.

Over recent years the company has invested over €400m to create premium hotels. The elegant five star Monte Mulini and the 248-room design-focused Lone Hotel allowed Maistra to introduce two global brands to Istria – Leading Hotels of the World and Design Hotels. Other investments have followed with the renovation of the environment at Lone Bay; the





Maistra's Grand Park hotel is one of the the biggest investments in tourism since Croatian independence

refurbishment of the Adriatic Hotel and the opening of family hotel Amarin under the Kinder Hotel Brand.

GRAND PARK

The Grand Park Hotel Rovinj – which replaces the old Hotel Park in Rovinj – represents the single biggest tourist investment by Maistra so far, and one of the largest investments in tourism since Croatian independence. Croatian investment firm the Adris Group is the project's investor, and is also investing heavily to update Maistra's remaining hotel stock to four and five star

Maistra has enlisted the help of Croatian architecture and urban planning studio 3LHD and Italian designer Pierro Lissoni to create the five star hotel, which is due to open next spring. Facing the marina, the six level hotel has been built into the natural slope, and offers views of the sea and of old



town. The 'cascading' design of the hotel means that the entrance, lobby and the swimming pools are on the sixth floor, and many of the buildings are camouflaged with greenery.

The hotel will feature 193 rooms and 16 suites, several of which will have a private sauna and plunge pool, a sunbathing area and a garage. The hotel also features several bars and restaurants, a two-level 3,800sq m spa (the largest of its kind in Istria), and an indoor pool and three outdoor pools on the top floor of the building.

"When designing the hotel, our goal was to have all the facilities focused on the spectacular views of the sea, of Rovinj's old town and of the green island of Katarina," says 3LHD's Silvijs Novak.

"At the same time, to secure a suitable view of the hotel from Rovinj, we needed to incorporate the hotel's volume in the existing Golden Cape Park Forest. That's why the building was adapted to the slope of the terrain and why we've designed a 'cascading hotel', with the main entrance and the hotel lobby on the highest, sixth level.



The Hotel Adriatic has been reborn as a luxe art hotel with design by architects 3LHD



"At the front of the hotel, there are five pine trees, and the greenery that will be planted on the terraces and roofs will provide the guests with a sense of being surrounded by nature."

The project also involves the creation of new public spaces along the adjacent seaside promenade.

"The areas alongside the promenade are intended to be the new spaces for urban life and meetings – a point which connects the old town's urban

fabric with the tourist and park spaces of the Monte Mulini zone," says 3LHD.

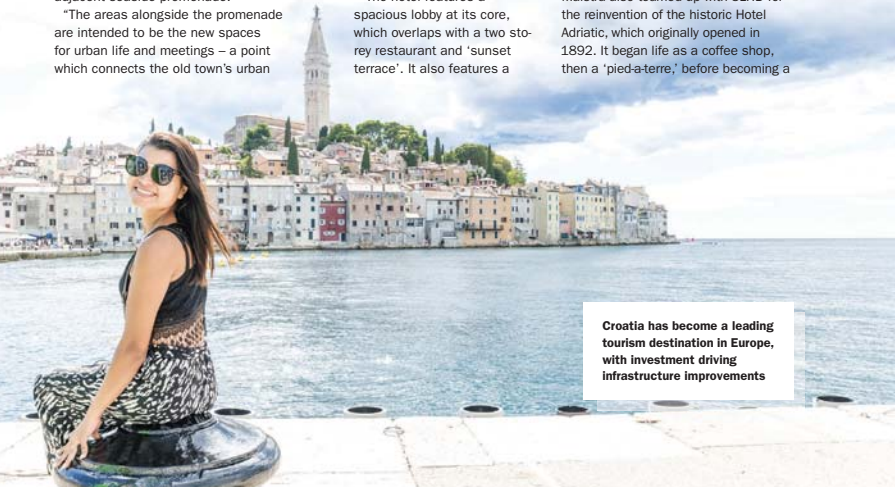
"A relaxing atmosphere is created by water surfaces, choice of paving and greenery, thus framing particular content zones and making the whole area attractive and accessible."

The hotel features a spacious lobby at its core, which overlaps with a two-storey restaurant and 'sunset terrace'. It also features a

'Secret Room' – the only room without a view – which will be used as a gallery displaying art pieces and new technologies, as well as a private meetings. It's due to open in spring 2019.

THE HOTEL ADRIATIC

Maistra also teamed up with 3LHD for the reinvention of the historic Hotel Adriatic, which originally opened in 1892. It began life as a coffee shop, then a 'pied-a-terre,' before becoming a



Croatia has become a leading tourism destination in Europe, with investment driving infrastructure improvements

The Hotel Adriatic originally opened in 1892 – it served many drab functions before its rebirth under Maistra's ownership



“ The big idea came over drinks at a bar – a hotel filled with original art, created for the hotel itself ”

hotel in 1913. During WW2 it became a German command centre. In 1952 tourists returned to Istria and Jadran – a city-run hospitality company – re-established the Adriatic as a 45 room hotel. This was short-lived, as after just two years Jadran made the building their offices. It was not until the late 1970s that it returned to being a hotel becoming a focal point for artists, writers and poets throughout the 1980s.

Recently, Maistra decided it was time to bring the Hotel Adriatic back to life.

“We had a vision for the Adriatic but it was blurry and took time to crystallise,” explains Tomislav Popovic, president of the management board of Maistra Ltd. “Together with architects 3LHD we brainstormed.

The ideation process took almost two years and then the big idea came over drinks at a bar – a hotel filled with original artworks created for the hotel

itself. The reaction of many in the industry was cautious and there were a lot of raised eyebrows.

“Our intention was to create a hotel that would make guests aware of the vibrant arts history of the town. At the beginning we didn’t want to take risks with the hotel but we actually ended up doing something very risky.

The result is amazing and it proved how important it is to have an open mind during the creative process.”

THE RESULT

This is more than a hotel with an outstanding art collection; it’s a hotel where the art fashioned the whole experience of the hotel. “It was the rebirth of the hotel that gave birth to the art,” explains Popvi.

The art collection was curated specifically for Maistra by Croatian art specialist Vanja Zanko, who

commissioned 14 visual artists to create Adriatic-specific work, ensuring that each of the hundred in-situ installations are organically tied to the building and the location.

With the original detail and spirit of the hotel being maintained, the interior has been reinvented to create 18 luxury bedrooms and suites, along with contemporary bars, restaurants and outdoor spaces.

“We needed to create an experience,” says Siljive Novak, partner at 3LHD.

“We decided to play with the paradigm of the hotel, creating a different type of space – in this case a gallery allowing us to treat guests to an experience they typically wouldn’t expect at a hotel. The idea was to transform the everyday into an illusion; a place of metamorphosis.”

Professor Terry Stevens is managing director of Stevens & Associates

Sean Sherman founded
The Sioux Chef to shine a
light on indigenous cuisine



SIOUX-PER FOODS

Native American communities have the highest rate of diabetes of any US population. Sean Sherman, founder of The Sioux Chef, wants to reverse this trend through the revival of indigenous food. Kath Hudson reports

North America is an unusual country – you can go to a city and find cuisine from Europe or Asia, or anywhere else in the world, but there is no reflection of the country's own indigenous past," says Sean Sherman, founder of The Sioux Chef. "The Culinary Institute of America doesn't even teach about indigenous food. American history has been rewritten, from the point the settlers came over, and its Native American origins have been all but wiped off the map."

Growing up on a reservation in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, Sherman says he was raised on a diet of "oppression food" supplied by the government, such as tinned salmon and fruit. As tribes were moved away from their original lands, their means to produce their own food was limited and they became increasingly reliant on a less healthy diet, which they weren't used to and which had a negative impact on their health, way of life and identity.

"Native Americans had lived on their own clean food for centuries, but the Europeans came and forced their diet on them," he says. "Tribes were isolated by government policies and became dependent on packaged, canned and processed food, which were high in fat and sugar, as well as foods they had never tasted, like cane sugar and wheat flour. As Native



Partner Dana Thompson and Sherman are bringing a lost culinary heritage back to life

Americans were unused to this diet, it has led to food-related diseases, like obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, as well as tooth decay, which was previously unheard of."

LOST GENERATIONS

Sadly, it wasn't just the diet which was lost, but the whole culinary culture and agriculture. Knowledge of how food was grown and prepared, which had been passed down through generations, was stopped in its tracks. With his company, The Sioux Chef, Sherman is committed to re-educating North America about its roots. He believes food will be a game-changer in reviving the health and cultural identity of the hundreds of Native American tribes still in existence, from South Mexico up to the Rockies.

When Sherman was 13, his family relocated from the Pine Ridge reservation, where there were few jobs and little money, to a touristy area in the Black Mountains. Sherman started working in restaurants, which served standard American dishes, like steak and potatoes. However, as many of the dishes were made from scratch, he honed his culinary skills.

Later, he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to study, continued working in restaurants and quickly moved up the ranks. "I came across a lot of different styles, such as French and Italian, but never indigenous American,"

The Sioux Chef

Formed by Sean Sherman and operated with partner Dana Thompson, The Sioux Chef is a team of chefs, ethnobotanists, food preservationists, foragers, adventurers, caterers and event planners from a number of tribes, including the Anishinaabe, Mdewakanton Dakota, Navajo, Northern Cheyenne, Oglala Lakota, Wahpeton-Sisseton Dakota.

A cookbook called *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*, written by Sherman and Beth Dooley, is available to buy now.



The indigenous diet

The diet of indigenous people was so clean that there were none of the food-related illnesses that are common today. Similar to the paleo diet, the native American diet is regional and therefore more diverse. It is a local micro diet, low glycaemic, low in salt and saturated fats and naturally gluten and dairy free, with no soy, processed sugar, beef, pork or chicken.

It includes native animals like bison, venison, rabbit, elk and quail, choke-cherries, dried mushrooms, elderberries and junberries and over 1,000 varieties of seeds. Each tribe ate according to the season and locality. For example, native people in the Pacific Northwest would harvest things like seaweed and seafood to sustain themselves, while indigenous tribes in the southwest depended on cholla buds, corns and beans.

“

Sherman's epiphany had come just in time: his great grandfather's generation had lived traditionally, and there were still enough elders alive from whom he could mine knowledge

says Sherman. "At this point, I had an epiphany. I was studying all of these different cultures, but knew nothing about my own heritage, so I started researching Lakota food.

"It was very hard to research as it was so fragmented and not much was written about it. I wanted it to be entirely traditional, not fusion. I wanted to understand the different tribes and create a model of indigenous food systems."

In 2006, Sherman moved to Mexico, where the food has retained a more indigenous influence than a Spanish one. "Take away imported food like dairy, pork and chicken, and the diet is still the same: corns, beans, squash and regional foods," he says. "It opened my eyes to indigenous cultures and I didn't know what I needed to know, but I knew what to look for."



Tatanka is the Lakota word for "big feast"

Tatanka on the road

In 2015, Sherman and Thompson worked with the Little Earth Community of United Tribes in Minneapolis to design and open the Tatanka Truck. The food truck serves up indigenous recipes of the Dakota and Minnesota territories, using seasonal and local ingredients. Its signature dish is Indigenous Tacos, with braised bison or smoked turkey over corn cakes.

BACK FROM THE BRINK

Fortunately, Sherman's epiphany had come just in time: his great grandfather's generation had lived traditionally, and there were still enough elders alive from whom he could mine knowledge. Added to this, he has dug through history, anthropology and ethnobotany books to find out about plants, medicines,

permaculture techniques and agriculture and to understand the plants and flora of different regions.

Sherman realised that a single restaurant wouldn't be wide-reaching enough to revive a culture, so, along with his business partner, Dana Thompson, he started a non-profit organisation, NaTIFs (North American Tribes Indigenous Food Systems). The plan is to open a network of restaurants in tribal areas, each with an education centre to teach people about traditional techniques, including food preparation, foraging for wild foods and seed saving. Sherman wants to pass on agriculture and permaculture skills as well as culinary skills because in those days it was everyone's job to be involved with food production.

Each restaurant will celebrate the food of that particular area and gradually the model will be introduced to big US and Canadian cities. However, it won't be expanded to other countries: the point is not to have a chain of restaurants, but to empower tribal communities to take charge of their culture and health once more. "By giving back knowledge we can reclaim the food systems," says Sherman. ●



Sioux Chef restaurants will celebrate the food of the local area

PHOTO: DANA THOMPSON

Ivo Gormley founded GoodGym as a way of fighting back against loneliness



Loneliness and isolation is such a huge and invisible problem – more than 1 million people say they are always, or often, lonely

Ivo Gormley

FOUNDER • GOODGYM

What is GoodGym?

We combine exercise with doing good deeds. There are two concepts: coach runs, where people run to visit an old person on a regular basis – we refer to them as their coach, on account of the fact that they provide ongoing motivation; and missions, where groups of runners help out with a community project or a practical household job, like sorting out an overgrown garden or painting a community centre. We also run in groups to help community projects.

How did it come about?

After I left university I stopped doing any sport and missed both the exercise and social aspect. I needed some motivation to start exercising again, so I began running to see an older neighbour a couple of times a week, stopping for

a chat and taking him a newspaper. He was a former soldier and gave me tips on how to build up my fitness.

In 2009, I started to think about extending this idea more widely, as loneliness and isolation is such a huge and invisible problem – according to Age UK, more than 1 million older people say they are always, or often, lonely.

I contacted organisations who work with old people, like the Red Cross and Age UK, and set up a basic website to try and match runners and old people. In 2013, I started working on it full time.

What was the main challenge in setting it up?

The biggest challenge is having to DBS check everyone to make sure they are appropriate, so we sometimes lose people in the sign-up process. Other



Groups of runners are motivated by the chance to help out on community projects

Mission projects might include carrying out practical household jobs, gardening or painting

We aim to be in every UK city in the next two years



than that the challenges are getting the idea across to people and then matching people in the same area, with the same availability, without keeping either party waiting for too long. If we had more runners, we could find more coaches.

How is it funded?

We are a registered charity, so it's free to participate. Many runners make donations and some coaches do and we get small grants from local authorities. We have also received some lottery funding and are now sponsored by BT and New Balance.

How many members do you have and how fast are you growing?

We have about 4,000 members but it's growing all the time as we actively spread into more cities. We are now setting up in Norwich, Birmingham and Cardiff. We aim to be in every UK city in the next two years.

Who does GoodGym appeal to?

All standards of runners, it's a great way to find an extra motivation to exercise.

Do you plan to diversify or expand going forward?

No, we will try to stick with what we are doing and get better at it. Parkrun really inspires me, it is an incredible and revolutionary organisation in the



GoodGym currently has around 4,000 members and is expanding across the UK





GoodGym offers people a way to keep their workouts varied and provides extra motivation

fitness world. They have stuck to one thing and focused on doing it really well and they work collaboratively with the community, so it's very flexible and open.

How could gyms engage?

Some gym operators, including Better, have been supportive by letting our runners use their facilities to meet up. It would be great if operators would like to collaborate with us and would market our work to their members, who could do a coach run as another of their weekly workouts, or sign up for a one off mission. It's a great way to keep your workouts varied and keep people engaged.

What are you most proud of?

I'm very proud of the culture we have created. Everyone is so friendly and supportive of each other and it's a wonderful thing to be able to help people who are living on their own. Both parties get something from the arrangement. Our evaluation has shown that it improves the



93 per cent of runners say GoodGym has boosted their motivation

wellbeing of both the runners and the coaches, with 93 per cent of the runners saying it increased their motivation to exercise. It gives both sides a sense of purpose.

The coaches benefit from the company and structure. People have said GoodGym has given them

hope, or changed their perception of young people. It's also helped ease social isolation: we've had instances where the old people have been hospitalised and the runners are the only people who visit them. I'm most proud of the ways in which GoodGym has helped people connect. ●

SHARING THE LOVE



Noma owners René Redzepi and Rosio Sanchez

The Noma experience was transported to the Mexican jungle



Restaurant relocation is gaining traction among some of the world's leading culinary experts, giving a different audience access to world-class restaurant experiences and providing a good marketing opportunity for the brands. But what's involved in moving a restaurant halfway across the world? Kath Hudson reports

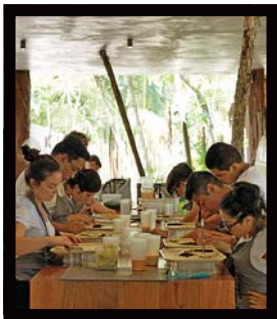
NOMA

Danish restaurant Noma is a fan of taking its concept on the road, going as far as employing two full-time project managers to oversee the task. After a two month pop-up in Tokyo in 2015 and a site at Sydney harbour in 2016, the team carried out one of their most ambitious projects to date with the creation of a restaurant in the Mexican jungle, from the ground up.

Made possible thanks to a partnership with La Colibri Boutique Hotels, the idea came about through Noma owners, René Redzepi and Rosio Sanchez, staying at the hotel over the years and discussing their dreams on the beach.

"We believe the future of Noma and the development of our future requires more cross-pollination, more friendship, more expansiveness and not isolating ourselves in the cold North," says Redzepi.

The restaurant was built under the canopy of the jungle, among birds, snakes, caimans and jaguars, across the road from the beach and Colibri's La Zebra hotel. The design had to be true to both the Noma concept and its



A team of Mexican architects and builders created the venue

Mexican location, so the team partnered with a group of local architects, designers, builders and artisans and drew inspiration from Mexico, including the traditional markets, and the original Noma, with the open kitchen.

As Mexico is such a diverse country, it took the Noma team a long time to scour it for everything they needed to make the restaurant reflect its environment. To source local ingredients, the team connected with local communities

through a non-profit organisation called the Traspasio Mayo, which helps support communities and their food traditions, including helping them to recover ancestral seeds to maintain the indigenous ingredients of the region.

As a result, 15 Mayan communities are supplying Noma with staple foods of the region, including corn, beans and pumpkins, as well as some more unusual ingredients like the rare, sweet Ixil onions, Mexican grasshoppers (chapuline), red worms (gusano de maguey) and local speciality, Ek, a bee



We are excited to be working with wonderful communities, who have a remarkable history and possess a wealth of knowledge about food



Local cuisine and ingredients inspired the menu at the pop-up



Noma's Mexico pop-up ran for seven weeks and hosted 7,000 guests

larvae, which can only be harvested during a crescent moon, when the larvae are in development.

"There is an explosion of possibility when we apply our processes to the ingredients of a new culture and landscape," says Redzepi. "The ingredients have been selected for their incredible taste and quality. We are excited to be working with wonderful communities, who have a remarkable history and possess a wealth of knowledge about food."

The décor was given a native feel through Noma's work with Colectivo 1050°, a network of potters and designers who worked together to create traditional ceramics. The platters selected was produced in three villages, one of which, Santa Maria Atzompa has been producing pottery for more than 4,000 years. The team travelled around the country looking for craftspeople to collaborate with for glassware, knives, wooden spoons, ornate decorated linens, woven pieces, tools and artworks.



All this work and attention to detail doesn't come cheap. Noma had to relocate its team, rent apartments, find schools and daycare and guarantee a Danish wage standard. The restaurant prices reflected this. The cost for dinner was more than US\$600 per person, meaning the experience was only accessible to the wealthy.

Redzepi says these restaurants contribute locally by supporting the economy, providing work and celebrating its cuisine and ingredients. Noma also created a scholarship fund to allow Mexican culinary students to travel to Copenhagen and intern with Noma's best chefs. "We can proudly say these collaborations make a difference to a lot of people we have been working with," says Redzepi. "Personally and professionally, the pop-ups have been the highlight of my life and why we keep coming back for more: to learn and be challenged, to build bridges to cultures which are different to ours, to connect with the team in a profound way and to explore life's opportunities."

The pop-up was billed as four hours of food theatre, with a 15-course feast

PHOTO: ASHLEY PALMER_WATTS



PHOTO: KARON PHOTOGRAPHY

After the pop-up, Dinner by Heston Blumenthal launched in Melbourne

THE FAT DUCK

Unable to bear the idea of closing his Bray, Berkshire-based, three Michelin-starred restaurant, the Fat Duck, when it needed an essential six-month refurbishment, Heston Blumenthal decided to up sticks and take his entire team, and some of the furniture, to Melbourne for an Australian sojourn in 2015.

Renowned for his theatrical and experimental approach to cooking, Blumenthal said he had harboured the ambition to open a restaurant in Australia since a visit in 2003. "I fell in love with the country immediately. From that very first moment, the idea took root – someday I wanted to have a restaurant there," he says.

"The restaurant scene is fantastic, the diversity exciting and the produce incredible, but better than that, the people are great fun. I love how Australian people celebrate good food; there is such a love of everything from coffee shops to gourmet restaurants and everything in between."

A site for the 50 cover restaurant was secured at the Crown Melbourne Resort, a large integrated resort, with three hotels, function rooms, a casino, restaurants and shopping. Interest was keen, with not even the A\$525 (£300) per head price tag putting off prospective diners. Reservations were offered via a ballot system,



PHOTO: PA / DAVID GOSLAND

Heston Blumenthal operated a pop-up restaurant in Melbourne in 2015

chef, Ashley Palmer-Watts, spent months sourcing.

When the Bray restaurant refurbishment was completed and the team moved back home, Blumenthal retained a permanent presence at the resort, with Dinner. This restaurant is more low key than the Fat Duck, but still caused an Internet sensation when chefs created an entrée of kangaroo tail on a bed of saffron risotto – the meat and threads of saffron were arranged to look like cockroaches. ●

Chefs caused an internet sensation when they created a dish of Kangaroo tail on saffron risotto. The meat and threads of saffron were arranged to look like cockroaches

which received a staggering 89,000 applications.

Hailed as four hours of food theatre, the menu was a 15-course feast which included snail porridge, red cabbage gazpacho, salmon poached in a liquorice gel and whisky wine gums. It retained all the theatrical elements of the original concept, while reflecting its new location with local ingredients, which head



PHOTOS: PAUL SLATER IMAGES

Oomph! uses varied and enjoyable activities to get people moving and help them feel stimulated

SPICE OF LIFE

Oomph! founder Ben Allen is on a mission to bring more variety to the lives of elderly people living in residential homes. First he brought them exercise, now he is facilitating days out. Kath Hudson reports

When you talk to people living in care homes, and witness their quality of life, you see their frustration," says Oomph! founder Ben Allen. "Take away the time they are sleeping, being fed and cared for, and they still have 11 hours a day when they need to be given a reason to live. A real life is a varied life, not lived exclusively indoors, which is the current experience of many people in residential care."

Allen believes most people working in the sector, including commissioners, want better for their charges, yet finances are always an issue. Allen

has set about removing these barriers, creating cost effective solutions to, firstly, exercise and now day trips.

EXERCISE PARTY

As a fitness instructor, Allen specialised in exercise for older people. After travelling abroad, he returned to his home town of Scarborough and noticed two things symptomatic of seaside towns: lots of care homes, and high levels of unemployment and seasonal employment.

"I thought I could solve two problems at once, by training unemployed people to deliver fitness sessions in care homes," he says. "Full of optimism, I visited the care home opposite my parents' house with the idea of introducing chair-based exercise classes. The manager was also optimistic and up for trying it."

Oomph! was born. Unlike previous exercise interventions for elderly people, which were clinically led and therefore a bit stale and boring, Oomph! was all about fun, creating a party-style atmosphere with activity as a by-product.



An evaluation by Cumbria University showed a 14 per cent improvement in quality of life



Ben Allen has overcome care home budget constraints to help boost residents' quality of life

Oomph!'s exercise sessions are fun and try to create a party atmosphere



Demand was good and the concept swiftly caught on, with 200 care homes buying in Oomph! services and 30 fitness instructors being employed.

However, because of the cost to the home, the old people were only getting to do an exercise session once or twice a month, which wasn't enough to bring about any meaningful benefits.

"Care home budgets are constrained: they want to provide the service, but it's expensive for them," says Allen. "We looked at how we could improve the frequency and impact, which led to a pivot in the business model. Instead of sending in our own instructors, we started training care home staff to run the sessions. They already have relationships with the residents and are ideally placed to deliver the sessions."

As a result, the cost per session plummeted from £45 per session to £6, which was cheap and sustainable. Now Oomph! works in more than 1,000 care homes across the UK and clocked up 940,000 participant hours last year, with people taking part three times a week on average.

"We have partnered with universities and appointed a head of impact to constantly monitor and analyse

RESIDENTS' FEEDBACK

$4.6/5 = \text{average}$
participant rating for trips

71% were more
physically stimulated

83% were more
socially engaged

88% had an
improved mood

83% of the staff said
at least half of the
residents were more
engaged in other activities
after going on trips

64% of participants
were wheelchair users

results," says Allen. "An evaluation by Cumbria University showed a 14 per cent improvement in quality of life in our latest annual impact report, measured via industry standard tool EQ 5D-SL. The survey was done before and after the intervention and assesses self-reported wellbeing."

Allen didn't stop there, keen to find other ways of stimulating care home residents, a second service was launched in 2015. Activity Leadership in Care is all about running other life-affirming activities, such as art, music and singing. A qualification is offered and homes that subscribe receive support, resource packs and ideas to run the activities. This costs £3,000 to £4,000 per home, and includes an annual package of support and training for multi-disciplinary staff teams and managers in exercise and activities leadership. So far Oomph! has trained around 2,000 co-ordinators in 1,000 care settings.

DAY TRIPPERS

Both interventions have had a huge impact on the quality of life for the residents, but Allen was concerned that it was all still based indoors:

OUT & ABOUT

Brooklands Museum of Motoring and Aviation

A former motoring journalist, 94-year-old Martin, asked to visit the Brooklands Museum of Motoring and Aviation, a place he had been to many times, as a child and a journalist.

It was the first time he had opted to go on a trip, and it inspired him to pick up a pen, for the first time in many years, to record the trip. He is now planning more articles for his care home in Epsom.

"I haven't actually written anything for a long time, so when this opportunity came up to start again, it was wonderful," said Martin.

His activity leader, Debbie Bailey, said she was delighted to see the difference in Martin: "He's taken a lot from this trip. It's actually brought back a lot of his old passion and all the lovely feelings he used to have about work."



A visit to a transport museum inspired a resident to write again

Bombay Sapphire Distillery

Eve used to travel a lot. She lived in Malaysia and used to buy gin from the market. When she said she'd like to drink gin again, Oomph! arranged to take her to a gin distillery. As some of the residents and their families had worked there, it had special meaning.

Eve loved the trip. Laura Hack, activity leader at the home, said it helped them to connect with Eve again: "Eve is a very funny lady who makes us laugh every day, but with her dementia it can be hard to reach her."

Kew Royal Botanical Gardens

One lady didn't go on the trips because she suffered from anxiety, but a chance to visit Kew Gardens again piqued her interest. The excursion eased her anxiety and since then she has participated in many other trips – and persuaded other residents to go along.

"It was lovely to be back at Kew Gardens, it felt like coming home," she said. "Like holidays you take when you're younger, there are always happy memories when you get back."



A trip to the Bombay Sapphire Distillery meant a lot to the residents

"People said they wanted to feel the wind on their faces again."

The idea to launch a minibus service began to take root. "Getting residents out is difficult because it's so expensive," says Allen. "A minibus costs up to £2,400 per month, but in reality they're used about three times a month, so the cost per hour is up to £800. Added to this, many homes have a bus, but no driver."

Allen devised a plan where 10 to 20 care homes could pool a minibus, and in 2017, the first five minibuses were acquired, along with



As well as exercise sessions, Oomph! also provides training for art and music-based activities

drink gin, so we organised a trip to Bombay Sapphire Distillery."

To keep the offer varied, Allen is keen to engage with different types of leisure venues and build partnerships with leisure operators who offer suitable day-trip destinations. "Swimming pools or cinemas offering dementia-friendly screenings

would be great. There's little required of the operator, other than a welcome."

Oomph! currently has five minibuses, but Allen says this will expand to 300 within three years, across the country, liberating elderly people from a life spent indoors. "The service will keep growing and we're full of ideas," says Allen. "I've gone from seeing people scream in frustration to laughing and having fun – it's very rewarding." ●

For any national or regional leisure groups who think they'd make a great destination for Out & About trips, please contact benjamin@oomph-wellness.org about partnership opportunities

drivers. The cost per trip now is £160 for eight people, including staff.

"The homes using the service are running two trips a week on average," says Allen. "We do all the risk assessments of a destination, check out the disabled access and visit care homes to find out where the residents want to go. Sometimes it's Marks and Spencers to go shopping. Another time, someone said they wanted to



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HIGH FLYERS

Access is vital in unlocking the potential of a tourism destination.

Projekt Spielberg, an Austrian leisure destination and airline bmi, joined forces to grow its British audience with the launch of four weekly flights between Birmingham and Graz. Kath Hudson reports

Jochen Schnadt

Chief commercial officer, bmi

How did this partnership come about and what does it involve?

Centred around the Red Bull Ring, a Formula One racing track, Projekt Spielberg hosts a number of international events, as well as one-day track experiences with former F1 drivers, such as David Coulthard, a music festival every August. Projekt Spielberg offered great potential, as the management team were keen to build it into a 365-days-a-year adventure playground for adrenaline seekers, with added facilities, such as hotels and restaurants. The UK has the second biggest market for motor sports, so it was a logical partner to work with and a great opportunity for bmi to work with an established brand.

What do you look for when setting up a route?

We look for a strong destination and people to collaborate with who have the right mindset. As two thirds of our customers are business travellers, we look at the



Jochen Schnadt recognises the appeal of an adrenaline-driven adventure playground like Projekt Spielberg for a British audience

businesses within the catchment and their needs to travel from A to B, as well as if they are likely to use the service. There is a big difference between seeing huge potential and successfully unlocking it.

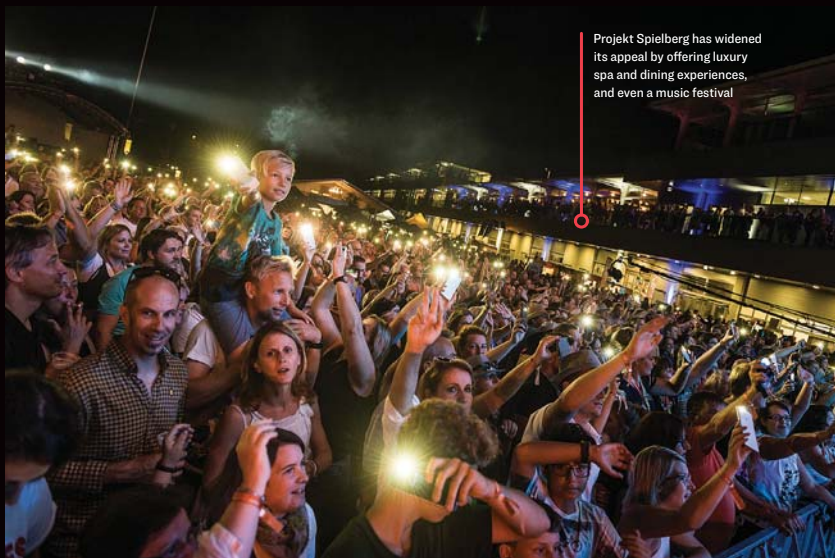
Have you done any joint marketing activity?

This partnership gives us a great opportunity to run joint promotions and social media competitions to drive bmi, Projekt Spielberg and the surrounding Murtal region. We ran a social media competition offering a day return to 10 people for the Austrian Grand Prix. They enjoyed a guided tour, a gourmet meal, met the Red Bull racing coach and had a grandstand ticket for the race. We have also been sharing databases and running features in our in-flight magazine. We will also be promoting the Red Bull Ring as a location for business meetings and incentives.

Do you have any other new routes?

We are always looking for possible new routes. We have just started a route to Nuremberg from Birmingham. People in the UK might not have known much about this city, apart from maybe its unfortunate history as the host to the trials after World War II. However, Playmobil is made there and it is home to the popular theme park Playmobil Fun Park. ●





Projekt Spielberg has widened its appeal by offering luxury spa and dining experiences, and even a music festival

About Projekt Spielberg

Centred around the Red Bull Ring, a Formula One racing track nestled between the Styrian Alps, Projekt Spielberg hosts a number of international events, as well as one-day track experiences with former F1 drivers, such as David Coulthard. Boasting decades of motor racing history, all the greats have raced at the Red Bull Ring, including Jochen Rindt, Niki Lauda, Alain Prost and Michael Schumacher. In order to create a year round attraction and broaden the appeal, Projekt Spielberg has invested in a number of ancillary leisure businesses, including spa experiences, gourmet restaurants, luxury hotels and winemaking. Every August it holds a music festival.



International events take place at the Red Bull Ring

The power of airlines

BELFAST

Ryanair opened a base at Belfast in March 2016, which has been a significant factor in growing tourism to the Northern Ireland city during the past year. Annual tourism statistics published by the NI Statistics and Research Agency showed tourism spending in the North increased by 11 per cent to £851m (€983m) in 2016. Ryanair will carry 1.3m people to and from Belfast this year on 12 routes, including to the UK, Germany, Spain, Poland and a new route that began in October to Malta.

BERGAMO

In 2002, before Ryanair began operations there, Milan Bergamo was a tiny airfield with no passenger traffic. Now it is Italy's third largest airport, carrying almost 12 million people a year. Ryanair accounts for more than 85 per cent of the airport traffic, transporting in excess of 10 million customers to and from 78 routes across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.



Bergamo has been changed by Ryanair

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Times of austerity have hit UK theatres hard, particularly those outside major cities. Kath Hudson looks at how provincial theatres have had to adapt and what the future holds

Whether it's to watch a ballet or a pantomime, a musical or a play, there are few experiences which are as immersive, memorable and can gladden the soul quite like a trip to the theatre. But sadly, the UK's smaller theatres have been one of the biggest

victims of stretched local authority budgets during times of austerity. Provincial theatres have seen their local authority funding dwindle to a trickle, or be pulled altogether. Five years ago, Nottingham Playhouse found out, via Twitter, that it would be losing all of its Nottinghamshire County Council funding within a few months. Worcester Live has seen its funding from Worcestershire County

Council go from £25,000 six years ago, to £800. The Dukes Theatre, in Lancaster, Lancashire, received £160,000 from the local authority in 2010, but will get nothing this year. This is despite a study showing its economic impact to the area is worth £3.3m and it supports 89 full-time jobs in the supply chain.

For some, the funding shortfall has proved impossible to make up. The

The Dukes Theatre staged an outdoor production of *The Hobbit*



PHOTO: DARRIN ANDREWS



North Devon Theatres' Trust went into administration last year after running into financial difficulties and had to close its two theatres in Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, blaming cuts in grant funding and a 20 per cent decrease in audience figures. The council struck a deal with Parkwood Theatres to reopen both theatres in March 2017.

PRESSURE ON TRUSTS

Chris Jaeger, chief executive of Worcester Live, which operates the UK's smallest producing theatre, a festival, two weeks of outdoor events, a week of Shakespeare at the cathedral and a city ghost walk aimed at tourists, says he has to raise £650,000 every year in order to keep his organisation afloat.

Fortunately, as this cultural activity is integral to Worcester's tourism offering, the city council values it and awards the organisation a generous £100,000 of its £12m budget. Despite this, Jaeger has to spend a lot of time making funding applications, which are becoming ever more competitive.

"I make approximately 250 funding applications to arts trusts each year, and I'm usually successful in about

“
Worcester Live raised
£8,000 by simply
sending out stamped
addressed envelopes
to its 30,000-strong
mailing list, asking
people if they could
donate a fiver each



Chris Jaeger, Worcester Live

The general public

The general public has become another essential revenue stream. As well as running friends, patrons and guardian schemes, some theatres are going further than this and applying directly to individuals for donations.

"In the US, it is generally recognised that people will fund their community arts – up to 80 or 90 per cent comes from this source," says Jaeger. "This is growing in the UK too: 10 years ago less than 10 per cent came from this means, but now it's more like 30 per cent."

Worcester Live raised £8,000 by simply sending out stamped addressed envelopes to its 30,000-strong mailing list, asking people if they could donate a fiver each. The company also runs regular fund raising campaigns, like promise auctions and a 100 club which yield an impressive £50,000 a year.



We do Pay What You Can nights, but most earned revenue comes from a handful of demographics

and Ivan Wadeson, chief executive of The Dukes, would like to extend the bar, which isn't big enough to cope with a capacity audience.

NARROW AUDIENCES

The other problem facing theatre operators is that theatre still does not draw in the mass market. "We aim for our audience to reflect the mix of demographics in our area," says Stephanie Sirr, chief executive of the Nottingham Playhouse. "Nottingham is a reasonably culturally diverse city, with some terrible pockets of deprivation.

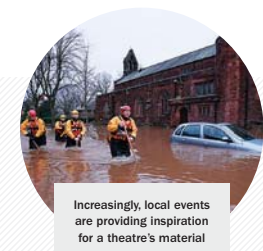


Stephanie Sirr, Nottingham Playhouse

20," he says. "I never know if I'm going to get £300 or £10,000. We receive nothing from the Arts Council."

As the traditional funding streams diminish, there are more organisations fighting for a finite amount of funding from arts trusts, and Brexit is likely to lead to the loss of more funding. Theatre operators are having to up their game and expand their skill sets beyond producing good theatre.

Many theatres have adapted, not by cutting their programmes or staff, but by tightening up operations, expanding their programme and finding other sources of income. However, they are always on the back foot and there are no reserves for unforeseen costs and keeping the ageing buildings at their best. Jaeger worries about a lift which needs fixing,



Increasingly, local events are providing inspiration for a theatre's material

REFLECTING THE COMMUNITY

Increasingly there's a trend to take a local story and give it back to the audience. "People are feeling a bit bruised at the moment and looking for shared experiences. We aim to tell local stories, which reflect their lives back at them," says Sirr. "We have just commissioned a play about the Nottingham Riots, which preceded the Notting Hill riots, but people outside Nottingham have rarely heard of them."

The Dukes is doing the same with a play called *Black Out*, about a three-day power cut in 2015, which resulted in floods and took out phone lines. "It revives a scary, but also liberating time," says Wadeson.

Running a tight ship

Many theatres are looking at their ticketing. Wadeson says The Dukes' complex range of concessions and group ticket prices have been rationalised in order to boost ticket yield.

Nottingham Playhouse successfully replaced all of its funding with ticket income, by reassessing its price bands and increasing the price of the top seats. With a larger capacity of 750, the theatre has had more scope in this respect than smaller theatres. Sirr says the aim is to further drive ticket sales and improve on the current 68 per cent capacity and ticket yield.

Most theatres try to boost income from food and drinks. The Dukes has grown its catering offering and doubled its revenue since 2008/9.



Ivan Wadeson runs The Dukes Theatre

Worcester Live makes a profit on the two bars at the venue, raising half its revenue from that.

The Dukes has looked at a variety of income streams and ways to control costs behind the scenes. "We've moved to a smaller, cheaper store and rent workshop facilities as and when we need them rather than all the time," says Wadeson. "We now do 600 film screenings a year,

which is a healthy income. This includes parent and baby screenings and films for those living with dementia and their carers."

Jaeger has become more defensive about deals. Rather than pay a band or an artist a set fee he gives them a box office split, so the artist takes the risk. "Eighty per cent of the box office is the norm, but I try to get 70 per cent," he says.



PHOTO: ROBERT DAV

Touched at Nottingham Playhouse

AMBITIOUS PROGRAMMES

Rather than cutting its programme, The Dukes has stayed ambitious.

"We're a small organisation, but we punch above our weight and have just recruited a new artistic director, who will bring energy, ambition and new plans," says Wadeson.



PHOTO: LUCY FIDLES

The Dukes' production of *The Hobbit* won awards



The Guardian said there was something Hobbit-like about a regional theatre taking on a big Hollywood film

The theatre runs four productions each year, aimed at bringing three generations together for a shared experience and providing more than half the theatre's income. Its major success story is its annual Walkabout Theatre, which runs for six weeks in a local park.

Last year it was *The Hobbit*, which took £250,000, played to 94 per cent attendance, scooped the UK Theatre Award for Children and Young People and received national reviews. "The Guardian said there was something Hobbit-like about a regional theatre taking on a big Hollywood film," says Wadeson.

Sirr says there is an appetite for risky work. "When times are tough, I think people want to go out," she says. "We're a producing house and don't host many touring companies. Our pantomime is popular and two of the most popular plays we have produced recently, *The Kite Runner* and *Touched*, were thought-provoking, rather than mainstream."



PHOTO: ROBERT WORKMAN

***The Kite Runner* was chosen because it's thought-provoking**

We do Pay What You Can nights, but still most earned revenue comes from a handful of demographics."

Jaeger says he also remains dependent on the same core audience and despite efforts to change the programme to reflect different groups, such as the Pakistani community, or the student population, his audience remains broadly the same. "The majority of my audience is white and over 40," he says. "If I don't programme for them, they don't come either. One year I

targeted the 18 to 30 market and put programmes on with them in mind, but there was little interest and it alienated the core audience."

The situation is unlikely to change regarding local authority cuts and it's the theatres outside London that face the toughest challenges. London fares well: the 2013 report, *Rebalancing our Cultural Capital*, said the city receives £20 of funding per head, compared to £3.60 elsewhere. London also has access to the tourists and the lion's share of sponsorship and philanthropy

– 88 per cent of sponsorship goes to 4 per cent of arts organisations.

Happily, many theatres are showing skilled and creative leadership to find other sources of income while continuing to anticipate the tastes and trends of the audiences. The theatre manager's job might not be easy, but it does continue to be rewarding.

"Arts are at the core and centre of human existence," says Jaeger. "We take people somewhere else. Every week I see something in my venues which makes me glad to be alive." ●



Retreats can lead to long-term health improvements

The benefits of retreats

A team of researchers has looked at 23 studies relating to the health impacts of retreats. Jane Kitchen talks to lead researcher Professor Marc Cohen about the findings

Retreat experiences appear to have positive health benefits, including benefits for people with chronic diseases such as multiple sclerosis, cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart conditions and mental health issues.

This is according to research conducted by Professor Marc Cohen of RMIT University in Australia and a team of researchers who examined 23 studies relating to the health impacts of immersive residential retreat experiences. The findings were published in January 2018 in the journal *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine*.

"The findings from the reviewed studies suggest there are many positive health benefits from retreat experiences, which include improvements in both subjective and objective measures," says Cohen. "It's likely that improvements in health are due to a combination of psychological and behavioural factors that lead to better coping mechanisms, lifestyle choices, and enhanced resilience to stress."

The studies involved 2,592 participants from a wide range of geographical and demographic populations – everything



Reported improvements include decreases in the frequency and severity of health symptoms and reductions in body weight and blood pressure

from luxury resort guests to unemployed adults and even prison inmates.

Seven studies examined objective outcomes such as blood pressure or biological markers of disease, while 16 had subjective outcomes, mostly involving self-reported questionnaires on psychological and spiritual measures. All of the studies reported post-retreat health benefits ranging from immediately

after the retreat to five years after.

"The results suggest that retreat experiences significantly improve people's lives. This is evident from reported improvements in quality of life and subjective wellbeing, decreases in the frequency and severity of health symptoms, reductions in body weight, blood pressure and abdominal girth, and positive changes in metabolic and neurological pathways," says Cohen.

Four studies looked at retreats aimed at improving quality of life for cancer patients, and all showed benefits, including improvements in quality of life, depression and anxiety scores, and increased telomere length, with benefits being recorded up to five years post-retreat.

"The finding that retreat experiences can lead to sustained and significant health improvements long after participants return home suggests they help guests make positive lifestyle changes and adopt healthy behaviours," says Cohen.

He also says that more research is needed, with larger numbers of subjects and longer follow-up periods. ●

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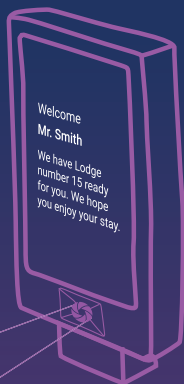


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