

# FEEDING A HEALTHY HABIT

As business travellers aspire to a healthier travel lifestyle, hotels have been quick to innovate

WORDS KATE FARR & RACHEL READ

**T**here was a time when business travel was synonymous with unhealthy habits – heavy room service meals, uninviting fitness centres and all-too-easy access to the hotel bar – leaving departing guests in considerably worse shape than at check-in. But with a marked increase in the concept of “wellness travel”, hotels across the world are stepping up to offer a wide range of tailor-made, health-conscious services, innovative initiatives and amenities designed to boost nutrition, improve fitness and ensure a better quality of sleep – all within the comfort of your own room.

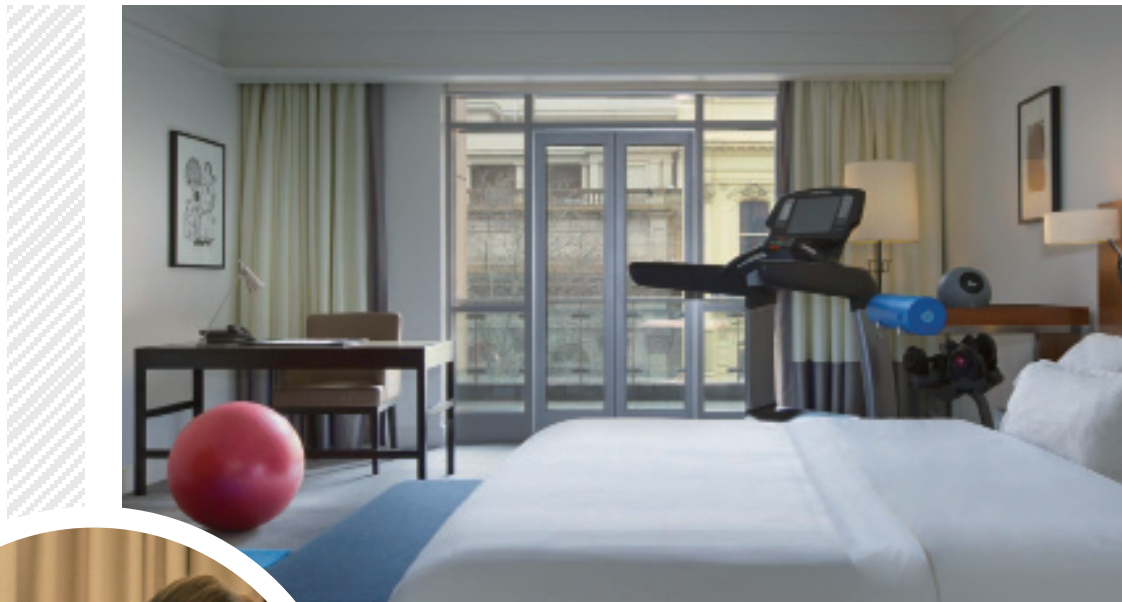
## WHY WELLNESS?

Is this new-found preoccupation with health and wellness just another passing fad? According to Gaynor Reid, vice-president of communications and CSR Asia Pacific for Accorhotels, “Wellness tourism grew by around 9 per cent in 2017 – 50 per cent faster than overall global tourism – so we know there is a growing demand from our guests for wellness offerings.” But what is behind this marked upswing in health-consciousness? “We believe people are more aware of the impact of diet and exercise on longevity and mental health, and also that there is a greater search for balance in life,” Reid says. “The bottom line is that health and wellness is no longer a trend; it has become a reality.”

Sean Hunt, area vice-president of Marriott International for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, agrees. “I think we’re seeing hotel guests – both business and leisure travellers – prioritising wellness because they’re realising that maintaining their routine and healthy lifestyle on the road helps them feel better both during and after their stay,” he explains. “In today’s world, looking and feeling good is seen as a luxury.” →



JW Marriott



WORKING IT OUT

A key part of this experience is, of course, fitness. However, with many business travellers short on time, it can be impossible to squeeze in a full gym session – which is why many hotel brands are now bringing the workout direct to guests.

“Pullman Hotels and Resorts recently collaborated with renowned fitness guru Sarah Hoey to develop a programme designed to help travellers adopt a healthier lifestyle,” Reid says. This tailor-made programme includes a series of short yoga and fitness videos that are available in-room, created to support and encourage guests to incorporate workouts into the busiest of schedules.

Fairmont, another Accorhotels premium brand, offers its President Club loyalty members free use of sneakers and gym clothes from Reebok – a particularly helpful perk for business travellers who often travel only with carry-on luggage.

Meanwhile, Westin Hotels’ “Let’s Rise” campaign includes a series of in-room HIIT (high-intensity interval training) workouts created by health coach Rachael Finch, that are suitable for all fitness levels. The workouts are especially designed for hotel guests and can be

comfortably achieved in any guestroom without the need for special equipment. Westin also offers the option of pre-booking rooms that include a treadmill or a stationary bike, meaning dedicated runners and riders needn’t give up their goal of a PB while on the road. (Westin has also joined forces with New Balance to provide workout gear for guests to use throughout their stay.)

For those who prefer their workouts with a touch of elegance, JW Marriott Hotels and Resorts’ newest venture is totally on point. “Behind the Barre” is a series of in-room fitness videos created in partnership with the Joffrey Ballet; aiming to fuse the elegance of a ballet class with a good workout, it can be incorporated into any existing exercise routine. The partnership is also rolling out “Barre to Bar” pop-ups throughout Asia, merging ballet-infused classes with boozy Sunday brunches for the ultimate in #workoutgoals.

**HOLISTIC HELP**

Of course there’s more to feeling good than exercise – which is why many hotel groups are focusing on developing a well-rounded approach to their guests’ wellbeing.



For a 360-degree approach to wellness, look out for Swissôtel’s Vitality Room concept, which launches in Asia in 2018. Launched in collaboration with style tome *Wallpaper* magazine, the room is designed to be a complete sanctuary for weary travellers, featuring air purifiers, modifiable circadian lighting that eases jet lag and promotes a restful environment, and bathroom options that include individual scents, coloured lighting and even adjustable water pressure for the ultimate in bespoke bathing.

The brand also has a strong focus on improving mental as well as physical wellbeing, offering guests at their Singapore and Sydney properties a set of specially designed postcards that come complete with Caran d’Ache coloured pencils for a mindful adult colouring session.

Westin have also focused on the positive mental health benefits of art, partnering with renowned artist Johanna Basford to create three detailed adult colouring sheets. Available across the Asia-Pacific region, the sheets subtly highlight the hotel’s “Pillars of Wellness” concept, which encourage guests to sleep, eat and move well throughout their stay. The designs feature elements of Westin’s wellness offerings – cups of chamomile tea, running shoes, healthy fruits, etc – woven into intricate patterns that aim to boost guests’ creativity and create a dedicated space for meditation.

And to deepen your meditation practice on your next business trip, look no further than Morgans Hotel Group. The chain, which has properties across the US and in London, Istanbul and Doha, has collaborated with Mindfulness Everywhere, creators of the popular Buddhify app, to produce ten guided meditation sessions for hotel guests to download. Offering the opportunity for reflection, relaxation and recharging, these short and easy-to-use sessions aim to make meditation accessible to everyone.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Westin offers in-room equipment and gear as well as HIIT workout programmes created by Rachael Finch (pictured) **ABOVE:** JW Marriott combines ballet with a workout

Accessibility is at the heart of The Peninsula Hotels’ new “Yoga in the Mornings” initiative. Rolling out this summer, with the group’s Hong Kong and Shanghai properties among the earliest adopters, all guestrooms will contain a dedicated phablet that details a simple yoga routine for guests to try at their leisure – with yoga mats available on request from housekeeping.

The “Season of Wellness” at 137 Pillars Suites and Residences Bangkok – which runs until June 24 – takes a different approach, flying in four “Masters of Wellness” to offer their expert skills, with wellness therapy, massage treatments and peak performance coaching variously on offer. “With today’s ultra-hectic lifestyles, we wanted to bring in some of the world’s best wellness practitioners, so guests can discover how best to find balance within themselves for a healthier and happier life,” says Bjorn Richardson, 137 Pillars’ general manager.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

Forget old-school room service menus of uninspiring sandwiches and quick-fix snacks; these days, in-room meals are designed to be both nutritious and delicious.

Leading the way is Intercontinental Hong Kong, which collaborated with the Hong Kong Adventist Hospital to create its “ihealth” initiative. Based on academic nutritional guidance from the hospital, Intercontinental’s culinary team created an all-day menu designed to address the prevention of four of the most common health concerns worldwide: diabetes, cardiac disease, hypertension and the need for antioxidants. These dishes have been thoroughly analysed by the hospital’s trained dieticians and formulated with key ingredients chosen to help tackle these issues; icons on the menu denote which of the specific health concerns each dish has been designed to target – with breakfast, lunch and dinner options all available 24 hours in-room. ➔





Health is also on the menu for Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, whose “Food. Thoughtfully Sourced. Carefully Served” philosophy has seen the group commit to healthy, sustainable and responsible dining across its properties globally. Initiatives include vegetarian and gluten-free options, a focus on portion control and balanced meals, dishes made with reduced sodium, sugar and calories, and cooking with organic produce, naturally raised meat and sustainably sourced seafood – qualities all reflected in the group’s “Healthy Balance” in-room menus worldwide.

Whilst exact dishes vary between properties – allowing individual chefs to exercise their culinary creativity – they are all tailor-made to offer “flavourful, healthful and perfectly portioned options”. This is showcased in the “Create Your Own” section, where guests customise their dishes with a choice of proteins (typically available pan-fried, grilled or steamed), vegetable-centric sides and sauces.

Wellness lies at the forefront of the latest additions to The Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong’s room service offerings – a selection of fresh juices and an acai bowl designed by leading iridologist and detox expert Jennifer Thompson. These creations are packed with superfood ingredients that deliver a wide range of antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, fibre and omega-3, all carefully chosen to achieve different goals. For instance, the “Recharge” juice is ideal for reviving those suffering from

CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PAGE TOP: Intercontinental Hong Kong ihealth in-room breakfast; Swissotel’s Vitality Room; a “Master of Wellness” at 137 Pillars Suites and Residences Bangkok; Morgans Hotel Group’s Buddhify app; and Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong’s healthy juices

jet lag or too many late nights, whilst the “Energy” acai bowl is the perfect breakfast for those looking to power up for a busy day ahead.

Have a health-conscious company event planned? The Ritz-Carlton Bali’s innovative Healthy Meeting options have got you covered. Split into three categories (Detox, Energy Boost and Revitalising Secret), these four- to six-hour experiences include team-building exercises like r’ai chi or beach volleyball, alongside several nutritious group meals. Delegates can enjoy a healthy organic breakfast and three-course lunch, plus wellness breaks for purifying juices, infused waters, health-enhancing teas and nourishing snacks. All meals have been devised to focus on food with a low glycaemic index to aid digestion – a definite improvement on unappetising spreads of sandwiches and biscuits in anonymous conference rooms.

SWEET DREAMS

After a hard day’s work, nothing beats crawling into a comfy bed – and hotels are taking the art of getting a good night’s sleep to a whole new level.

This can be seen in Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong’s Entertainment Suite, which features the FreshBed Sleep System. This system utilises patented climate-control technology that allows guests to adjust the bed to their preferred temperature, with silent ventilation to ensure allergen-free air, combined with an ergonomic mattress for the utmost comfort. “Guests



travel to different time zones and weather conditions, and their daily schedules can be tight – wellness is essential for them to maintain a positive energy and healthy body,” explains Gladis Young, the hotel’s director of communications. “FreshBed treats our guests to a longer, deeper sleep, making them feel fitter, improve their mental agility and helping them perform at their very best.” Those who have difficulty nodding off can also try tuning in to some soothing spa music on the in-room television to help lead them into the land of nod.

Four Seasons’ signature bed is equally impressive; created in partnership with the experts at Simmons Bedding Company, its mattress uses advanced technology to keep you cool throughout the night and provide optimal support for your frame. You can also pick between three mattress toppers for your preferred level of firmness, and peruse a pillow menu filled with choices suitable for different types of sleeper – including a buckwheat option for relieving allergies and neck pain, or a stone type that provides a cooling sensation and head support.

The rooms themselves have been fully kitted out to promote an excellent night’s sleep, with thorough soundproofing, in-room temperature controls, lighting chosen to complement the body’s circadian clock, and even interior design elements scientifically proven to have soothing effects on the brain.



Westin takes a similarly multifaceted approach. In addition to the brand’s “Heavenly Bed” that features “ten layers” of comfort, there’s a “Sleep Well” bedside amenity – a lavender balm infused with essential oils that ease tension and help guests wind down naturally – and in-room dining menu, curated by nutritionists at SuperFoodsRX, to feature ingredients that promote rest and recovery. Guests can also opt for a scheduled “Bedtime Call”, a reminder of when you should turn in for the night depending on what time you need to be up in the morning, based on guidelines from the World Sleep Society.

Six Senses is also getting serious about sleep, collaborating with acclaimed sleep doctor Michael J Breus to ensure guests get the optimum quality shuteye. After filling out a sleeping habits questionnaire, guests receive personalised tips on how to improve their quality of sleep. Those who opt for the “Sleep with Six Senses Upgrade” – available at the group’s Vietnam, Thailand, Oman, Seychelles and Portugal properties – bag themselves a dedicated “Sleep Ambassador” to help prep their room and provide support throughout their stay.

This includes a Sleep Bag filled with specially developed sleep aids, including bamboo fibre pyjamas, ear plugs, a jasmine sleep spritzer, a worry journal for jotting down anxieties that keep you up at a night, and a thumb drive containing videos featuring suggestions and professional advice from Dr Breus himself.

Additional sleep-boosting items like dehumidifiers for climate control, a Sound + Sleep Ecotones Machine loaded with 30 different sound profiles (including a white noise setting), and speciality pillows are also available on request.

A lucky few in Bali in May 2018 were able to attend COMO Shambhala Estate’s first ever Sleep Awakening Workshop, where renowned sleep consultant Trish Kelly helped guests take control of their sleep patterns and learn how to deal with insomnia – meaning better sleep in the long run, regardless of where in the world they find themselves bedding down for the night. **BT**