

The Zoe Report

Is The Blue Mind Theory The Next Wellness Travel Trend?

By by Lindsay Cohn November 20, 2024



Social media is flooded with content about the Blue Mind theory. For anyone taking an Instagram and TikTok hiatus — or with a different algorithm than ours — it's the now-viral idea that being close to water (whether it's a lake, ocean, hot springs, or babbling brook) can make people happier, healthier, and more peaceful. The theory was originally popularized by marine biologist Dr. Wallace Nichols in his 2014 book *Blue Mind*. Over the last decade, a multitude of researchers have reported on the positive impact of blue spaces on mental health and well-being.

Of course, we don't need methodology or studies to confirm what cultures around the world have long understood (and vacationers know to be true), and that's the connection between humans and water — especially as it relates to well-being. Floating in the cenotes of the Yucatán is partially a rite of passage for quieting the mind and nourishing the skin. Japanese onsen bathing traditions date back centuries. Ditto goes for the practice of “taking in the waters” in storied European spa destinations like Budapest and Evian. In Nordic countries like Estonia and Finland, it's all about cold plunges or "avantouinti" (ice swimming).

To be clear, water-focused wellness programming at hotels and resorts isn't entirely new, but it used to be way more niche. As the tides of tourism have shifted and holiday-goers are increasingly looking for escapes that prioritize

mental and physical health, the number of properties betting on blue has grown exponentially. Traditional practices of Watsu, a therapeutic massage-like treatment in chest-deep, warm water, are having a resurgence at newly built resorts. And we're seeing way more hydrotherapy circuits as part of the spa facilities that used to just include saunas and steam rooms. Beyond the spa itself, hotels are packing activity brochures full of water-centric pursuits (think: aqua fitness classes and guided meditation steps from the waves) that provide well-being boosts.

Want to dip your toes in the next big travel wellness trend? Take a Blue Mind-influenced vacation at these hotels that pair dreamy ocean and lakeside locations with water-fueled well-being offerings.

Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa: St. Barths

It's not uncommon for Le Barthélemy Hotel & Spa guests to enter an almost hypnotic state while watching turquoise tides lap the pristine white sand from the comfort of a private ocean-view villa. The stunning five-star property levels up the relaxation even more with "Atma Janzu," a mind-body meditation practice in which the rhythmic movements of water guide participants into a deep state of calm. To double down on serenity, tack on an aquatic Tibetan sound healing therapy session.

