

Berlin – Health capital in the tourism industry

Health-related travel is a future segment for urban tourism / More and more medical tourists are travelling to Berlin

Berlin, 12 January 2012 Health in the city? More and more patients coming to Germany for medical treatments are choosing to come to Berlin. With a good 18,000 specialist doctors, 121,500 hotel beds, six large congress centres and halls as well as state-of-the-art spa facilities, the German capital provides excellent infrastructure for medical and health-related travel. Nowadays all the large Berlin hospitals have “international offices” to look after foreign patients and numerous hotels make special provisions for these visitors.

Wellbeing and health-related tourists are an interesting target group for the German capital. While a typical visitor to Berlin will stay for 2.3 days on average, hotels are finding that health visitors stay for 10–14 days. Moreover health-related travel is currently *en vogue*. The Charité University Hospital alone recorded a 20 percent growth in international patients last year. The areas of oncology, transplantation medicine, neurosurgery and cardiology are particularly popular. However health tourism doesn't end with the patients. Berlin is an important destination for the continuing education and training of medical professionals as well as for large medical conferences.

"Combining Berlin's two big players, the health care sector and tourism, is the obvious thing to do", says Burkhard Kieker, Managing Director of visitBerlin. "A good year ago we began to gather together all those involved so as to promote the wellbeing and health tourism sector. So as to be well prepared for the future the city is tapping into this trend in urban tourism and we see great growth potential for Berlin".

Petra Hedorfer, CEO of the German National Tourist Board (GNTB), has the following to say on health and medical-related travel being a future segment in urban tourism for international visitors: "We have firmly anchored the health mega trend in our marketing and sales activities. Our central marketing platform, the GNTB website, www.germany.travel, provides information on the topic of health and medical-related travel in 26 different languages including Russian and Arabic. With the website we provide potential guests from important source markets with extensive information on 'Germany – The travel destination' and promote the country as one of the leading health cities in the world".

For about a year now, visitBerlin has been actively marketing health tourism abroad. A close network of partners has grown up and in spring 2011 a website on this topic was launched in English, Russian and Arabic as these are the countries where demand is highest. At international trade fairs such as Arab Health in Dubai, visitBerlin advertises the German capital as a destination for health-related travel often in collaboration with Berlin Partner, Health Capital Berlin-Brandenburg and the GNTB.

(2,995 characters)