

## New Trade Show Honors the Wellbeing Trend

The mix of participants is unique, the event location almost a bit magical: with Synergy – The Retreat Show, Laura Montesanti has launched a new event concept that fully taps in to the mega-trends of wellness and wellbeing. The inaugural event took place on Ibiza, and LuxuryWise participated as a media partner. One thing becomes evident immediately: Montesanti is on the road to success – and she does not hesitate to travel it. Which is why the next show will take her very far away from Europe.

by Cathrin Lühns



Binnnnngggg! The singing bowl rings out, helping the participants of the meditation session relax before the frenetic trade show continues. What looks like "only" a wellness exercise is something entirely different here: a new trade show that is completely dedicated to the topic of wellbeing. The icing on the cake? There are also classes and workshops. The concept is designed to bring together buyers, exhibitors, and retreat leaders. Experts give talks and exchange ideas on specific wellbeing topics, mostly inspired by the luxury travel industry. "There hasn't been a trade show that combines all of that and also makes wellness and wellbeing tangible," says Laura Montesanti, organizer and creator of Synergy. "This realization came to me during the pandemic. I've always worked in wellbeing and hospitality, and during that time I realized that people are now looking for more than just wellness."

And the word is out – to many travel agencies. The demand for wellbeing trips in the luxury sector has been rising for a long time, and with it the need for advice. It's an area where many travel professionals eventually stumble, because the subject is both broad and complex. This is where Synergy comes in: agents can train with a holistic approach to increase their expertise in various ways, as the opportunity to experience different kinds of treatments for themselves is a huge plus.

### Innovative Trade Show Concept

And it shows. "The feedback I've received has been consistently positive," says Montesanti. According to the organizer, "What's particularly rewarding is that the community harmonizes so well, and that the gap has finally been closed between travel-trade-only shows and special events just for retreat leaders." The positive energy of the event is almost palpable on the agritourism estate that provides the setting for Synergy. Summer sunshine at the end of October puts everyone in a good mood, and the fact that they can spend three days focusing exclusively on wellbeing is a highlight for all 230 participants. The best part is that absolutely everything happens outdoors. "The location is beautiful and I really like all the open areas," says retreat leader and wellness expert Sonal Uberoi. "The casual dress code also fits the concept very well." Dana Albers, owner of Dana Albers travel agency, sees other advantages to the event concept: "I was very surprised that sustainability and wellness are so closely linked here," she says. "And the fact that so many small, unique hotels are exhibiting here totally benefits my business."



Laura Montesanti is on the road to success with Synergy – The Retreat Show, the new trade show focused on wellbeing.

Positive statements also come from the exhibitors, who have gathered all their stands in one tent. The trade show gives everyone the opportunity to get an overview of what is currently happening on the market, so there is a lot of information to absorb. For example, Mary Rose Woelfle of Chenot Espace sees Synergy as a great platform to present the Chenot vision to a trade audience. "Everyone here is speaking the same language in terms of wellness," she says enthusiastically. Like Woelfle, numerous other attendees see it the same way. There is a lot of food for thought about what is important when it comes to wellness and wellbeing, and how ideas can be pushed forward together. Astrid Oberhammer, owner of representation agency Lobster Experience who arrived with four hotels in tow, agrees. "You can learn an incredible amount from each other here," she says, "and it's great that retreat leaders are also given a platform here." She plans to enter the same segment next year: her successful Loop trade show brand will tackle the topic at a dedicated wellbeing event in January.

The enthusiasm for the first retreat show makes organizer Laura Montesanti very happy, though she was very confident in her instincts. While preparations for the Ibiza event were still underway, she was already planning the next event: Synergy Emersions. Behind this euphonious name are very exclusive fam trips, each of which is linked to a retreat. "We want to hold this format about three times a year in different destinations in the future," Montesanti explains. And by very exclusive we mean only a maximum of 15 participants will be admitted to each event.

For everyone who came away empty-handed trying to get to the first show, the second edition of Synergy - The Retreat Show will be on next fall. Instead of Ibiza, it will take place in Mexico from October 24 to 27, 2023 as wellness professionals will be welcomed by the host hotel, Palmaia - The House of Aia on the Riviera Maya. This announcement has generated great enthusiasm in the European markets. The first tour operators, such as the new brand "Retreats by Discovery," are already planning to offer short B2B retreats on site as a pre- or post-program. This shows once again the importance wellness and wellbeing have reached in the luxury travel industry – and the sky is the limit.

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## Synergy – Top Trends

The wellness and wellbeing industry is constantly evolving. At the new trade show Synergy – The Retreat Show in Ibiza, three new trends emerged that travel professionals should definitely know about. Here they are!



### Art Retreats

The combination of physical activity with extensive learning on how the body works makes this type of wellbeing trips very popular. Dance retreats in particular are becoming more important. The focus is usually not on the type of dance, but on the body work. Besides holistic approaches, there is also a neuroscientific one which assumes that dance and movements, plus lectures and workshops, contribute to the prevention of diseases that affect the brain. In addition to dance retreats, events that focus on theater, painting, or music are also thought to have a positive impact. For many clients the aesthetic aspect is a trigger point in these offerings, as well as the chance to rediscover their own self-confidence.



### Feminine Awakening

Right now there is a particularly high interest in wellness and wellbeing offers for women. At its core, it's about discovering and living one's femininity. In workshop and holistic retreats, women are given practices to get to know themselves better, to love themselves, and to learn to understand their own meaning and role. Yoga and Tantra as well as spiritual rites play a major role. Offers for women in unique stages of life are also becoming important. These include menopause retreats, which help women through this often difficult time. Good to know: Even these women's retreats are not always just about healing. Prevention in general is becoming more and more important in the wellbeing segment.



### Psychedelic Retreats

Granted, this sounds a bit like hippie stuff. In the wellbeing world, however, retreats based on plant medicine are very popular. Mushrooms are used as psychedelic drugs, and the active ingredient in them is called psilocybin. Experts believe that psilocybin can alleviate some mental illnesses, as it helps the brain make new connections, and there are already initial studies on this. In the wellbeing framework, mushrooms are believed to help find oneself, and to find closer connection with the earth. Of course such retreats are not yet legal everywhere. There are currently offers in Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, the Netherlands, and in Colorado and Oregon in the USA.

More Features on Synergy – The Retreat Show:

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