



Temple Country Retreat & Spa on a 90-acre estate outside Moate

A temple for clientele's wellbeing and health

Leaders understand the importance of innovation, and that's certainly the case with Declan and Bernadette Fagan, owner-managers of Temple Country Retreat & Spa, one of the longest established and most highly regarded spa retreats in Ireland.

Based in a period manor house on 90 acres of verdant parkland just outside Moate, Co Westmeath, Temple Retreat was established in 1992, at a time when spas were a novel concept. Since then it has evolved to incorporate 23 luxurious bedrooms, 18 treatment rooms and a 60-seat restaurant, along with a hydrotherapy suite, exercise studio and gym.

"The transformation of the Irish spa industry that has taken place over the last 15 years mirrors the transformation in the economic and cultural life of the nation, to the point where taking a spa break is now one of the most popular holiday activities," said Declan Fagan.

However, from their position as leaders within the sector, the Fagans feel the current phase of spa development has plateaued and "a new gap exists within the growing market to move beyond the sense of sameness that is attached to most new spas".

Research carried out amongst their own customers revealed that rest and relaxation, and not just pampering, are the prime benefits motivating the spa visit. "The spa



Declan and Bernadette Fagan, owner-managers of Temple Country Retreat & Spa

guest is looking for a sense of wellbeing and an antidote to the stresses of contemporary living," said Fagan.

The Fagans have identified two distinct, yet related areas of opportunity for evolution and growth within the sector. The first is wellbeing, in the sense of good health or physiological functioning, while the second is wellbeing in the sense of contentment, ease in our circumstances and surroundings.

Health opportunities

'Integrative' or 'mind-body' medicine is a recognised growth area in health care, said Fagan. "Mind-body medicine integrates modern scientific medicine, psychology, nutrition, exercise physiology and belief to enhance the natural healing capacities of body and mind. The Benson-Henry Institute

for Mind Body Medicine at Harvard has proven the effectiveness of mind-body medicine in helping thousands of men and women reduce the stress that can cause or exacerbate conditions such as heart disease, infertility, gastrointestinal disorders, chronic pain and more."

The recognition of the contribution of lifestyle and stress to less than optimum health, along with the spiralling costs of healthcare, will place increased incentive on individuals to be proactive in their own health management.

Fagan sees this as a perfect opportunity for Temple Retreat & Spa to take a segment of healthcare from the remedial environs of the doctor's surgery to the health-promoting facility of the spa. In other words, deliver on the health element implied in the description of "health spa".

"Together with rest, the spa

promotes good diet, moderate exercise, and encourages clients to acquire attitudinal skills to moderate the influence of stress. In future, the logical follow-up to a routine medical examination would be to prescribe a spa stay to implement any lifestyle recommendations needed to maintain or improve a person's health status," he said.

"With a growing recognition that good health derives in significant part from a sense of personal worth and a sense of one's value within the community, the opportunity exists for the next generation of spas to address body, mind and spirit in a deeper way than is currently offered, and to engage the spa guest in an exploration of what may be at the root of their stress, if only to bring a greater sense of equanimity.

"The current generation of spas are a long way from delivering on the experience of wellness and wellbeing envisioned in the word spa." To realise the identified opportunities for the next phase of spa evolution, the Fagans would like to partner with members of the medical profession and the wider healthcare community to create an active centre of wellbeing, a resource for healthier lifestyles, healthier ageing and to provide inspiration for living to our full potential.

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