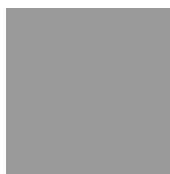


# SPAS

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A LIFESTYLE SPECIALIST COURSE





# Table of Contents

<b>About the Course</b>	<b>vii</b>
How Should I Study This Course?	vii
How Should I Prepare for the Lifestyle Specialist Test?	ix
How Do I Earn My Lifestyle Specialist Designation?	x
<b>Lesson 1: Introduction to Spa Travel</b>	<b>1</b>
Who Goes to Spas?	3
Demographics	3
Spa Visitation Patterns	3
Why Do People Go to Spas?	3
Speaking “Spa”	5
Building Spa Sales	7
<b>Lesson 2: Types of Spas</b>	<b>9</b>
Destination Spas	10
Hotel and Resort Spas	13
Hotel Spas	13
Resort Spas	15
Cruise Ship Spas	17
Day Spas	18
Medical Spas	19
Selling the Spa Categories	21
Spa Trends	21
<b>Lesson 3: Supplier Relationships</b>	<b>27</b>
Working with Spas	28
Qualifying the Spa	28
Commission Structure	31
Working with Tour Operators and Wholesalers	34
Using Supplier Web Sites	35
<b>Lesson 4: Marketing Partners and Strategies</b>	<b>39</b>
High-Potential Market Segments	40
Bridal/Honeymoon	40
New Parents	42
Meetings and Incentives Market	42
Men	43

Potential Marketing Partners	43
Effective Marketing Strategies	47
Direct Mail	47
Online Associations	47
Building Groups around a Personality or a Special Interest	48
Physical Handouts	49
Joint Events	50
<b>Lesson 5: Steps to Making a Spa Sale</b>	<b>53</b>
Matching the Client to the Spa	54
Who Is the Client?	55
Who Else Will Travel with the Client?	55
What Is the Client's Intention?	57
What Are the Financial Considerations?	59
How Experienced Is the Client?	59
Making Recommendations	63
Handling Objections	68
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>76</b>
Web Sites	76
Magazines	77
Books	78
Top Spas	78
<i>Travel and Leisure's</i> World's Best Spas	78
<i>Condé Nast Traveler's</i> Top Spas, 2003	80
<i>Mobil Travel Guide's</i> Top-Rated Spas, 2004	83
<b>Review Quiz</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>How Do I Earn My Lifestyle Specialist Designation?</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Lifestyle Specialist Test Request Form</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Experiential Checklist: Spa Specialist</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Certified Lifestyle Specialist Certification Form</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Course Evaluation Form</b>	<b>99</b>

**LESSON  
1**

# Introduction to Spa Travel

**▶ LEARNING OUTCOMES**

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- ✓ Describe the breadth and growth of the spa travel market.
- ✓ Profile the kinds of travelers who go to spas.
- ✓ Give several reasons why people choose spa experiences.
- ✓ Define words and phrases that comprise a spa vocabulary.

**BRAINSTORMING**

Please answer these brainstorming questions **before** you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. What are your reasons for choosing to use spas as a focus for sales? What do you expect from spa sales?

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2. Who is the typical spa client?

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3. What do you think is the main reason people go to spas?

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4. Would you expect spa clients to go alone or with friends or family? Why?

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5. How many specialized spa terms can you list off the top of your head?

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If you are choosing to focus on spa sales now, your timing could hardly be better. Spas collectively earned \$11 billion in annual revenue in 2002–2003 (more than did theme parks), and the approximately 45 million North Americans who made spa visits did so both on business trips and on vacation. According to the International SPA Association (ISPA), one out of five Americans visited some type of spa in the period between June 2002 and June 2003, and spa visits had already increased by 71 percent between 1999 and 2001. (ISPA currently analyzes the number of spa-goers rather than spa visits, so the last relevant comparison of spa visits was examined in the 2002 study.)

In addition, the number of spa locations has doubled every four years for the past eight years, with an average of 20 percent annual growth, but that is only part of the story; the quality of treatments and the range of available experiences are growing even faster.

Moreover, the recent pressures and concerns in America have made stress reduction and relaxation the number-one reason for spa visits. While increasingly popular among younger people seeking escape from stress, spas also appeal to aging Baby Boomers, who ensure continued growth in this market with their unprecedented discretionary income and absolute resistance to traditional aging. In this sophisticated market, consumers need careful guidance from educated travel professionals who understand the characteristics and needs of spa-goers.

## Who Goes to Spas?

To be effective in selling spa travel, it is important to understand the demographic profile of spa-goers and their patterns of visitation.

### Demographics

While the majority of spa-goers are women, the incentives that spas have offered to male clients have worked: during the year 2002–2003, 29 percent of spa-goers were men (see Figure 1.1). (In fact, this percentage may be higher if day spas, which typically attract a mostly female clientele, are excluded from the survey.) With an average age of 41, 14 percent of people choosing spas were 16–24 years old; 28 percent were 25–34 years old; 23 percent were 35–44 years old; 16 percent were 45–54 years old; 10 percent were 55–64 years old; and 10 percent were 65 or older (see Figure 1.2).

The 2002–2003 ISPA study found that 55 percent of spa-goers are college graduates, and the average income is \$72,200. White clients dominated the market at 87 percent, while black consumers accounted for 5 percent, and Asians and other groups each accounted for 4 percent.

### Spa Visitation Patterns

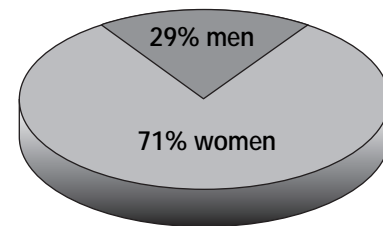
ISPA's 2002–2003 study shows that 57 percent of all spa-goers (51 percent of men and 61 percent of women) went to spas alone. Of those who went to a spa accompanied, men were more likely to go with a significant other, while women more often were accompanied by a friend.

## Why Do People Go to Spas?

Besides knowing the demographic and visitation characteristics of spa travelers, another crucial element of selling spa travel is understanding why people go to spas (see Figure 1.3).

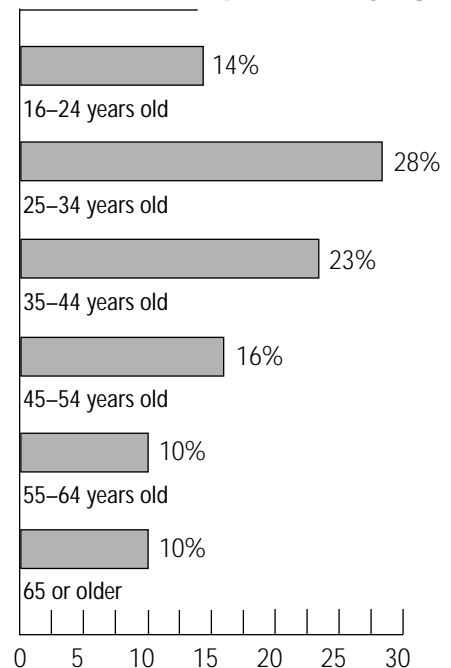
According to the 2002–2003 ISPA study, the number-one reason for a visit to a spa was to relieve stress or feel

**FIGURE 1.1** Spa-Goers by Gender



Source: ISPA, 2002–2003.

**FIGURE 1.2** Spa-Goers by Age



Source: ISPA, 2002–2003.

**FIGURE 1.3**

**Top 10 Reasons for Visiting a Spa**

1. Relieve stress or feel relaxed
2. Pampering and self-indulgence
3. Feel better about myself
4. Redeem gift certificate
5. Improve mental health
6. Improve physical health
7. Improve appearance
8. Enjoy a special occasion
9. Regulate body weight
10. Prescribed by a medical doctor

Source: ISPA, 2002–2003.

relaxed. Sixty-eight percent of spa-goers (63 percent of men and 71 percent of women) rated this as a driving force in booking spas. Pampering and self-indulgence ranked second, with 57 percent naming this as an important factor, and 38 percent said they went to spas to feel better about themselves. Slightly more consumers mentioned improving mental health (31 percent) than physical health (29 percent).

Improving appearance was a factor for 27 percent of the spa-goers, and enjoying a special occasion was mentioned by 23 percent. While 9 percent went to a spa to help regulate body weight, 8 percent said the visit was prescribed by a medical doctor.

As a spa travel specialist, it is important to understand the intentions that underlie your clients' desire to visit a spa. A person who is grieving a loss or going through a life-changing experience or turning point is looking for a different experience than one who wants to lose weight and change his or her eating habits. Some clients may seek to counter the effects of stress and aging, while others may want to deepen their spiritual life.

**CHALLENGE**

For each of the following categories, describe an intention that may underlie a client's desire to visit this type of spa.

Contemplative/meditative \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Health and healing \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Luxury \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Native American \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_