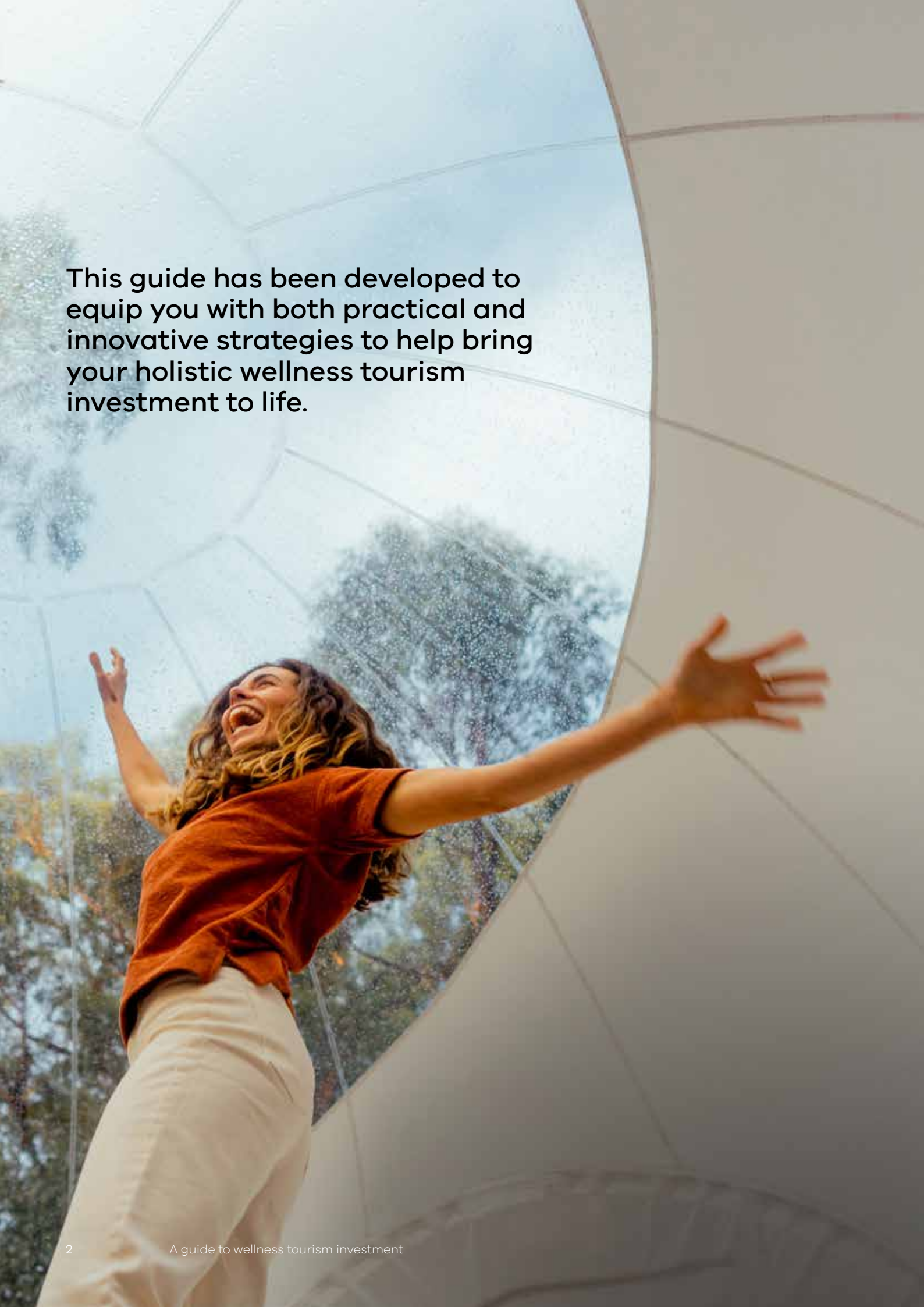


A guide to
**WELLNESS
TOURISM
INVESTMENT**
from concept to reality



This guide has been developed to equip you with both practical and innovative strategies to help bring your holistic wellness tourism investment to life.

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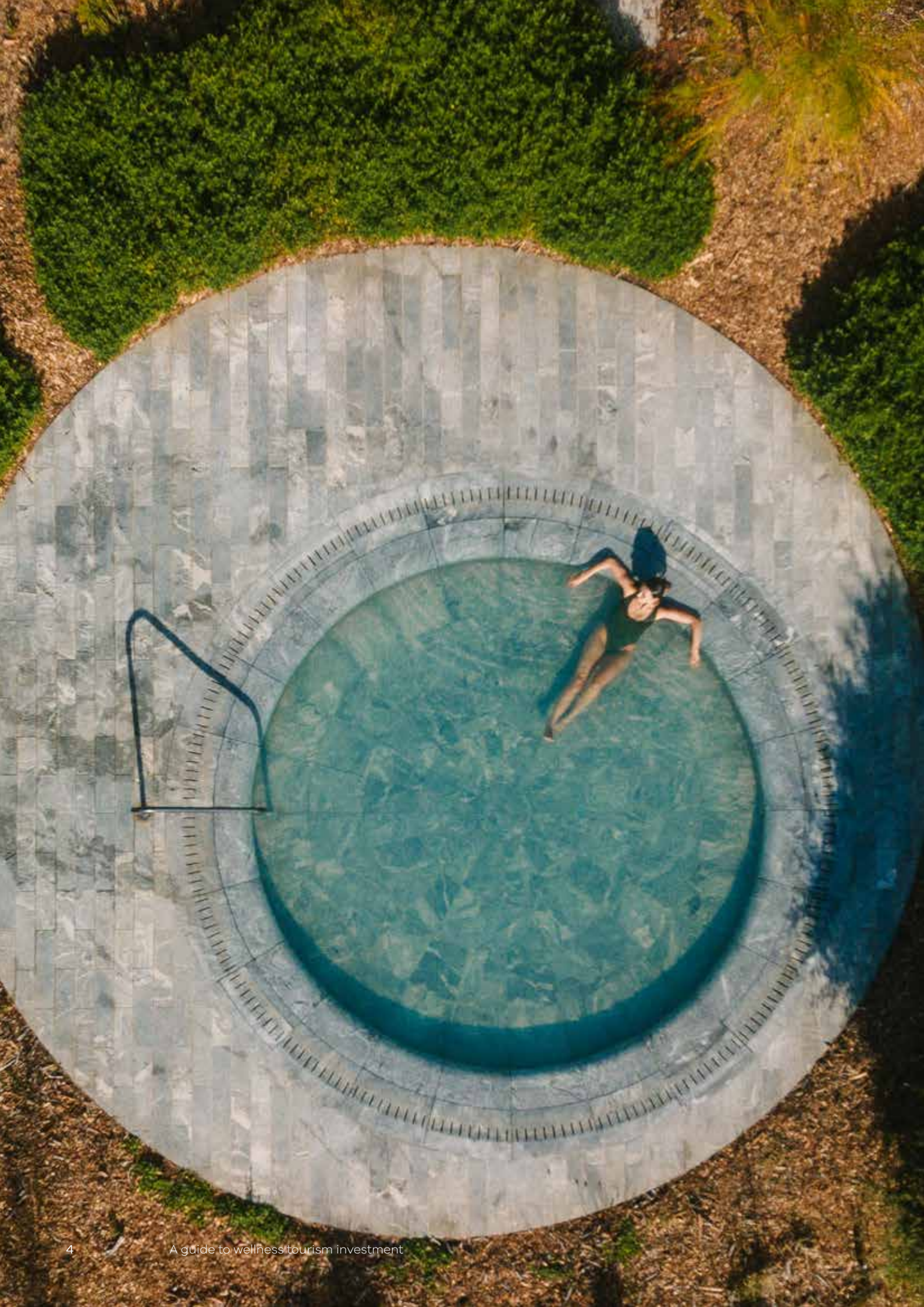
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Message from the Minister

Whether it's the sense of rejuvenation from soaking in a spa, the soothing relaxation of a massage or the nourishment of a meditation session, it's easy to understand why more and more people are shaping their holidays around wellness experiences.

Victoria is well placed to capitalise on this opportunity and build on the strong reputation it already has for spa and wellness activities. As visitors look to embrace the rejuvenation and relaxation offered across the wellness sector, Victoria's operators and investors have an incredible opportunity to be part of an industry that is forecast to be worth more than \$1.5 trillion globally within the coming years.

That forecast growth is also why 'Wellness' is one of the five pillars of our Experience Victoria 2033 strategic plan that aims to grow the state's visitor expenditure towards the projected \$58 billion by 2033.

This guide has been prepared by the Victorian Government, in consultation with investors, relevant government agencies and industry operators, to support established wellness businesses looking to expand and to encourage new investment within the wellness sector.

It is supplementary to *A guide to tourism investment: from concept to reality* and specific to the wellness industry, exploring how investors and operators can capitalise on Victoria's natural and cultural advantages to establish innovative wellbeing businesses.

As our broader tourism industry continues to make a significant contribution to Victoria's economy and drive the creation of new jobs, the Victorian Government is proud to continue our support of the sector to grow and enhance wellness tourism experiences.

We'll also continue to work with wellness businesses and operators from across the tourism sector to make the most of growth opportunities that arise within this space, and to further Victoria's position as an innovator, and leader, within Australia's wellness industry.



Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Tourism,
Sport and Major Events



Artist – Dixon Patten, Yorta Yorta and Gunnai

This artwork depicts the department, its people and its commitment to developing the economy by helping to create Aboriginal employment opportunities, supporting inclusion and economic prosperity and thriving Aboriginal communities.

The bigger circle in the middle represents the broad work of the department and its eight different Groups working together to achieve this.

The pathways represent the opportunities for the Aboriginal community to achieve personal and economic prosperity and improved employment outcomes.

The various smaller circles represent the different mobs within the Aboriginal community and the footprints represent the diversity of knowledge, skills and resources the community have.

The artefacts represent our traditional economy and are a reminder of our trade/barter system(s) and the connection to our cultural practices and ceremonies.

The emu and kangaroo tracks represent the department's commitment to moving forward, as these animals can't walk backwards.

Acknowledgement of Country

The landscapes of Victoria are home to diverse Nations. For more than 60,000 years, the First Peoples in Victoria have cared for and nurtured Country. The lands and waters are a living cultural landscape.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters throughout Victoria, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise the rights and aspirations of Victorian First Peoples and acknowledge their self-determination is a human right enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Building on this, and guided by the 11 principles of First Peoples' Self-Determination, we aim to enable true self-determination for Victoria's First Peoples by working towards a treaty – or treaties – with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians.

This document acknowledges the growing demand for experiences celebrating Victoria's rich and diverse First Peoples' culture. It aims to encourage greater dialogue with Traditional Owners and the First Peoples of Victoria to ensure initiatives are self-determined and reflect their aspirations and priorities.

Language statement

We recognise the diversity of First Peoples living throughout Victoria. While the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe First Peoples of South-East Australia, we have used the term 'First Peoples' to include all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.



About this guide

This guide has been prepared to support tourism businesses, operators, developers and investors through the process of developing, planning and operating a vibrant wellness tourism business. For the purpose of this guide, wellness tourism includes products or experiences that focus on health and wellbeing. They are immersive and holistic in their nature, focus on maintaining or enhancing personal wellbeing and may encompass healthy eating, exercise for fitness, mind-body practices, nature experiences, and connection to local people or culture.

The demand for wellness tourism is growing as people all over the world focus more on their health and happiness. In turn, this is driving growth and investment opportunities in the sector.

Victoria is well placed to be a wellness tourism leader in Australia, owing to its natural and cultural attractions – its mineral springs, relaxing coastal thermal baths, beautiful and diverse natural scenery and established epicurean and cultural offerings.

Capitalising on these strengths, wellness tourism is growing, and a uniquely Victorian brand is emerging within the tourism landscape. Urban, regional, coastal or one of the many diverse natural environments offer sizeable opportunities to expand wellness offerings with new products. Destinations that complement and enhance the qualities of each place create authentic experiences.

Purpose of this guide

This document investigates market trends, feasibility, funding, technical details and approval processes specific for wellness tourism, offering a user-friendly guide for creating vibrant and sustainable wellness tourism destinations. It is supplementary to *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality*, which is focused on advice for the progression and development of broader tourism projects and experiences.

This guide has been prepared to support investment in wellness tourism consistent with the vision of *Experience Victoria 2033*, the visitor economy strategic plan. The plan identifies five product priorities: Wellness, First Peoples-led experiences, Arts and Culture, Food and Drink and Nature.

Acknowledgement of contributors

The Victorian Government has engaged with investors, operators, and developers within the wellness tourism sector to create this guide. Local councils, government departments and subject matter specialists also gave their time, insights and advice. We acknowledge and thank these contributors for their support to develop this document.

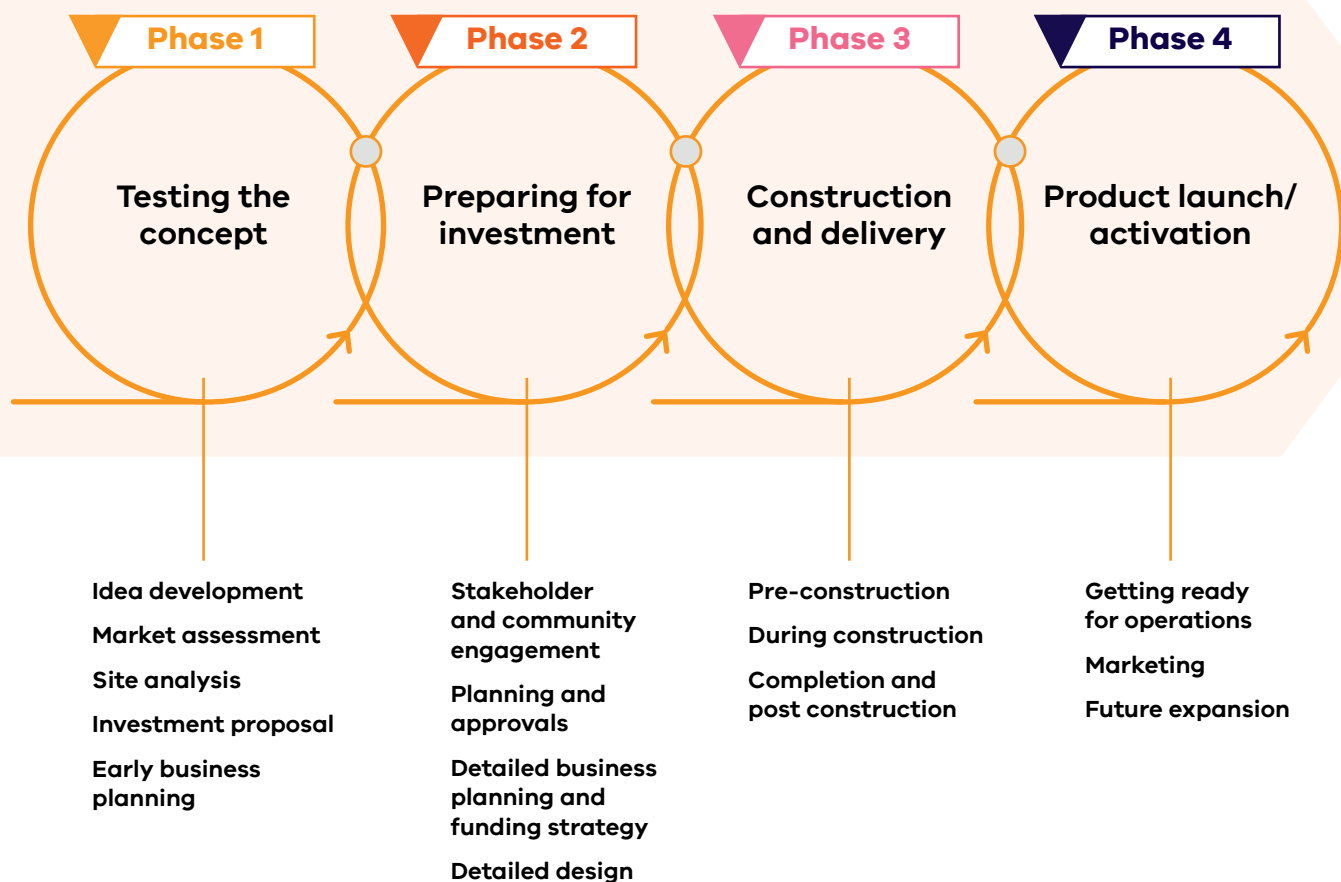




What is the Investment Lifecycle?

The guidance in this document is framed around the Investment Lifecycle and covers the key stages and activities required to establish a successful tourism product.

Investment Lifecycle



Key success factors

By the end of this document, you should understand what success looks like in developing a wellness offering.

Your project should consider:

Market Alignment

- Conduct comprehensive market research to deeply understand current consumer preferences and emerging trends in wellness experiences.
- Identify target demographics, their needs, and willingness to pay.
- Ensure offerings and the overall visitor experience aligns with market demand and appeals to the identified target market.

Financial Viability

- Determine an optimal pricing strategy through rigorous financial modelling. Assess potential visitation and demand at various price points, benchmark competitors, and understand the target market's appetite to pay.
- Balance delivering an attractive yet accessible experience while ensuring long-term profitability, avoiding overcapitalisation, and covering ongoing operational costs.
- Articulate the vision for the project, the intended visitor experience, and specifically, how these transfer into a commercial product that would be financially viable and would sustain operating costs and required capital rates of return.

Expertise and Capacity

- A wellness tourism business will require a broad suite of skills and expertise and it is essential to plan for the right experience and capabilities, to deliver high-quality, customised wellness experiences.

Strategic Location and Authenticity

- Select a location that complements the wellness concept and offerings, with strong accessibility and supporting amenities to drive consistent visitation.
- Leverage the local environment, whether natural or urban, to provide an immersive and authentic experience that connects visitors with the surroundings.

Regulatory Compliance

- Understand and plan for potentially complex regulatory requirements early, particularly for projects involving geothermal waters or sensitive environments.
- Seek advice early as your concept is developing and recheck through the process as your design (physical buildings/structures and operations) evolves to ensure your proposal is permissible.
- Obtain necessary permits and licenses for water extraction, use, and disposal to minimise delays and ensure full compliance with local regulations and permissible activities.

Stakeholder and Business Engagement

- Engage with local communities, industry stakeholders, business networks, Traditional Owners and/or Registered Aboriginal Parties to gain support and foster a lasting wellness legacy.
- Consult with these groups, incorporate feedback, and outline the project's benefits to mitigate potential issues and align with community interests.
- Build partnerships with local wellness practitioners and experts to enhance authenticity, quality and visitor experience.

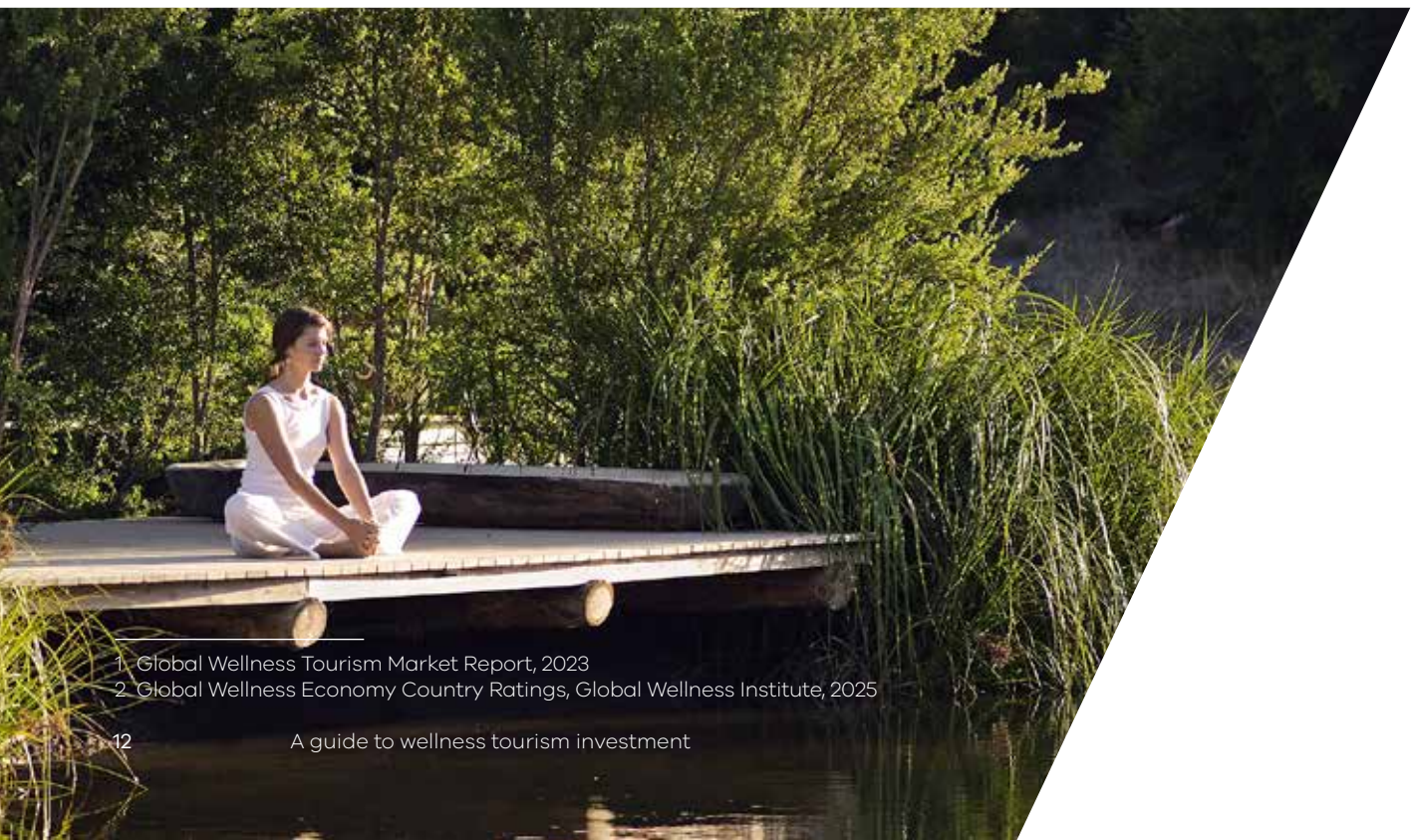
Market and product overview

Global market growth

Wellness tourism is a flourishing trend globally and the total wellness tourism market is predicted to exceed US \$1 trillion (A\$1.5 trillion) in the coming years.¹ Visitors are looking for experiences that improve their physical and mental wellbeing during their holidays, going beyond a hotel massage into more immersive experiences such as a multi-day self-care retreat. This means the wellness tourism industry is expected to grow significantly in the future.

As the interest in wellness tourism continues to increase it is likely to boost the Australian wellness tourism industry, generate jobs and local economic

activity, and expose visitors to complementary tourism offerings outside of wellness experiences. Australia is currently ranked fourth in the Asia Pacific region and tenth globally for its wellness economy.² To grow and compete internationally, Australia must offer high-quality products and experiences that meet the standards set by renowned wellness tourism destinations in Japan, Indonesia, New Zealand, and Europe. This ensures that both international and local visitors, accustomed to high-quality services, have exceptional experiences within Australia.



1. Global Wellness Tourism Market Report, 2023

2. Global Wellness Economy Country Ratings, Global Wellness Institute, 2025



What is wellness tourism

Wellness tourism is understood as a subset of tourism that specialises in products or experiences that focus on health and wellbeing. The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) is the internationally accepted authority on the wellness industry and it defines wellness tourism as **“the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.”**

The GWI developed a definition model that identifies six dimensions of wellness, including mental, spiritual, emotional, environmental, social and physical. These are delivered through ‘products’, ‘activities’, and ‘experiences’. Figure 1 demonstrates how the elements of wellness experiences integrate together. It incorporates a visitor’s desires, the activities that can satisfy those desires, the associated places and facilities, and the investible products within the bounds of wellness tourism.

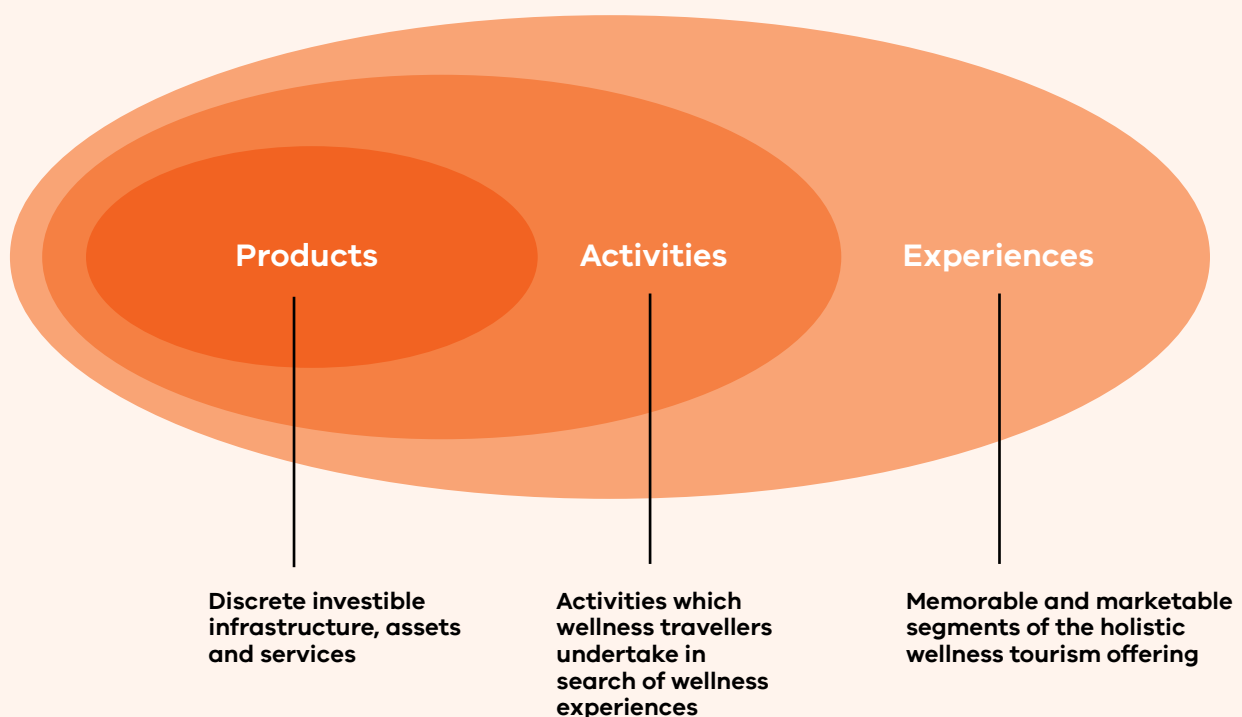


Figure 1 Immersive experiences are created when activities and products are integrated seamlessly

Who are wellness visitors?



Figure 2 Profile of a wellness visitor

Age range of highest consumers of wellness tourism

- **Globally:** People aged 25 to 45 years old
- **Victoria:** People aged 15 to 59 years old
- **Emerging national trend:** Increase in 30 to 44 years olds since the COVID-19 pandemic, while other age groups have fallen considerably.⁵

Demographics

- Wellness experiences are of more interest to younger Australians (15-44 years old), women, and people born in Asia.⁶

Parents and family appeal

- Parents are a particularly significant consumer group of wellness tourism
- Families make up a small proportion of demand, with wellness trips with friends or couples more common
- **Trend:** Increasingly parents are partaking in overnight wellness trips.

³ Tourism Research Australia, Austrade, 2023

⁴ International Visitor Survey, Tourism Research Australia, 2020

⁵ National Visitor Survey, Research Tourism Australia, 2023

⁶ Brand Health, Visit Victoria, 2023

Primary wellness visitors:

trip or destination choice is primarily motivated by wellness. While they may also do other visitor activities during their travel, their itinerary is centred on participating in dedicated wellness experiences. Primary wellness visitors tend to:

- have a higher daily spend
- seek boutique, tailored and high-quality experiences.

Secondary wellness visitors:

seek to maintain wellness while travelling or who participate in wellness experiences while taking a non-wellness specific trip. Secondary wellness visitors:

- made up 92 per cent of global wellness tourism trips and 90 per cent of wellness tourism revenue in 2020⁷
- have grown at a 64 per cent,⁷ higher rate than primary wellness travel, as visitors incorporate wellness into business and leisure trips
- enjoy massages and wellness experiences, during non-wellness specific trips.

Drivers for the pursuit of wellness tourism

Both the primary and secondary wellness visitors are motivated by similar factors when seeking out wellness-based experiences. Of the key drivers identified by the GWI, five are particularly relevant for developing wellness offerings in Victoria:⁸



Culture and tradition:

There is a rising interest in ancient and traditional ways of being well, and wellness seekers are increasingly engaging in ritual.



Nourishment and healing through nature:

There is a growing demand for connection with nature and visitors wanting their travel to have a regenerative impact on natural landscapes.



Global values reset:

There is an increased interest and uptake of conscious and cultural travel which focuses on respect and recognition of local communities, Indigenous cultures and environments.



Self-care for self-preservation:

There is a growing recognition of the importance and value of self-care to long-term health and wellbeing, particularly through preventing chronic disease, engaging in self-care, and improving mental wellness.



Mental wellbeing takes centre stage:

The increasingly strong pressures of modern work and life are emphasising the importance of mental wellbeing.

⁷ Global Wellness Tourism Economy, GWI, 2022

⁸ The Global Wellness Economy: Looking Beyond COVID, Global Wellness Institute, 2021



Investible products and experiences

A range of investible and revenue-generating wellness products have been identified and presented at table 1. These wellness products have been classified into tourism product types and experiential services. This guide primarily provides guidance on the investment and development process of tourism product types, however, much of the guidance would also apply to the development of experiential services.

Tourism product types

Geothermal baths
Mineral springs
Saunas and spas
Camping and glamping sites
Luxury accommodation
Nature-based accommodation
Restaurants and food outlets*
Retail outlets*

Experiential services

Massage and body treatments
Beauty therapies
Alternative relaxation/health therapies
Yoga and fitness programs
Mindfulness and spiritual programs
Life coaching
Stress-relief programs
Anti-aging treatments
Culinary experiences
Detox and nutrition programs
Cycling and hiking tours

Table 1 Investible products and experiences
*In conjunction with a dedicated wellness experience

To further streamline guidance, the tourism product types have been classified into four categories.

Throughout this document, you will find guidance specific to each category presented as **colour-coded spotlights**.



Spa and bathing

- Geothermal baths
- Mineral springs
- Saunas and spas



Camping and glamping

- Camping and glamping sites



Wellness accommodation

- Luxury accommodation
- Nature-based accommodation



Restaurant and retail

- Restaurants and food outlets
- Retail outlets

Unlocking Victoria's competitive advantage

People around the world are placing more importance on their physical health and happiness which is a significant driver in their decision making. The recent pandemic has seen the global community becoming more interested in preventing diseases, physical and mental self-care, and actively improving awareness of the environment and society.

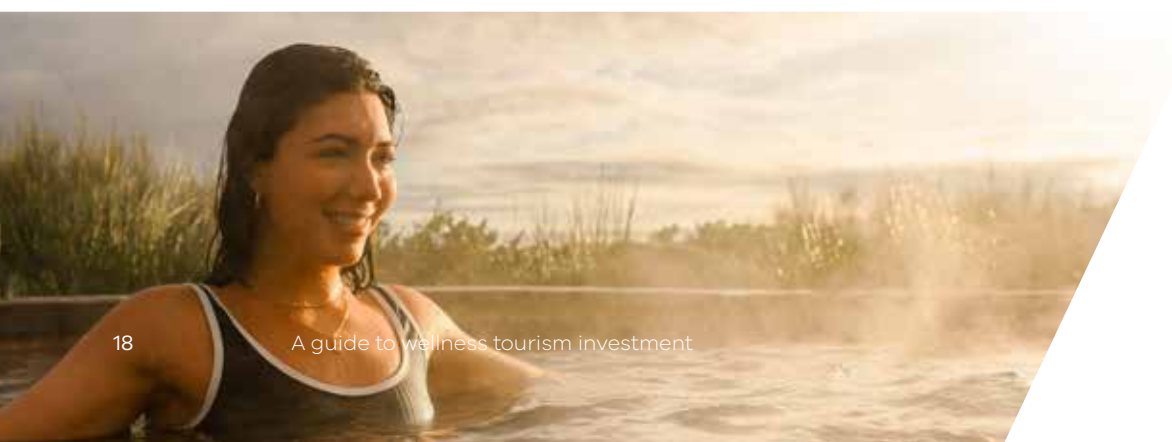
While wellness tourism is growing, it is still a relatively small part of the overall visitor economy in Victoria. Domestic and international brand awareness, compact diversity, and geothermal waters are just a few of Victoria's competitive advantages, and they create the ideal mix to realise business and investment opportunities in some of our state's most scenic locations.

Brand awareness

Despite wellness tourism in Victoria being a small part of the tourism offering, the state is well-known for thermal bathing and wellbeing experiences. Consumer research undertaken by Visit Victoria found that more than a quarter of Australians see Victoria as the top state for spa and wellness activities. Victorians view their state as a leading domestic wellness destination and are highly aware of the wellness options available throughout Victoria.

Geothermal, coastal and mineral waters

Victoria is taking advantage of the growing interest in geothermal, coastal and mineral waters for wellness tourism. Across the state there has been significant private investment in bathing experiences, with more planned. The extent of the geothermal springs along the coast from Cape Bridgewater in the state's west all the way through to East Gippsland has resulted in considerable interest in developing spa and wellness facilities. The greatest concentration at present is on the Mornington Peninsula, with two of the largest investments at Peninsula Hot Springs and Alba Thermal Springs and Spa providing immersive spa and wellness experiences.



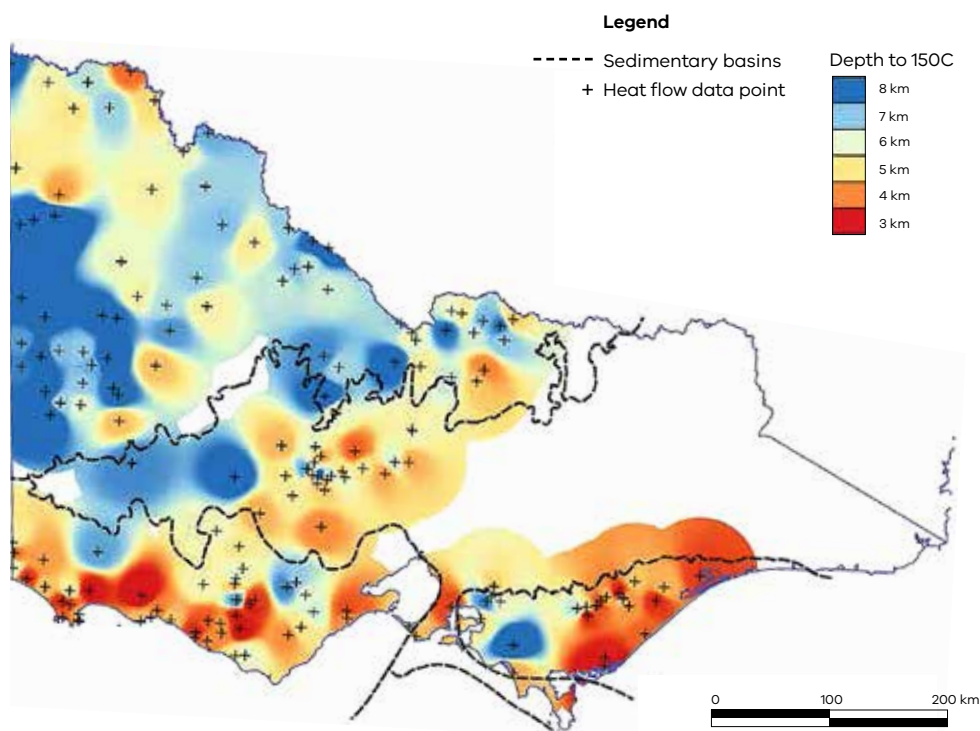


Figure 3 Predicted depth to 150°C in Victoria

Source Ben Mather (2015), Victorian Geothermal Assessment Report 2016, The University of Melbourne

The breadth of Victoria's natural mineral springs and thermal waters is a competitive strength for Victoria. Figure 3 demonstrates the predicted depth to 150°C in Victoria. Subterranean waters in Victoria's south-west coast, hinterland, and the Mornington Peninsula have led to the presence of geothermal water that can be used for bathing. The state also offers mineral springs in Daylesford and Hepburn Springs, as demonstrated in figure 4. These are world-renowned and form an important complementary appeal for Victoria's reputation as a bathing destination.

Mineral springs have played a significant role in Victoria's history and culture, valued for therapeutic properties, commercial bottling, and as alluring tourism destinations. The concentration of mineral springs around Daylesford and Hepburn Springs is unique in Australia, with over 100 recognised mineral springs in the state. Within the Central Highlands region there are 18 publicly accessible mineral spring sites located within national parks, state forests, local parks, and coastal foreshores. These sites provide access to 39 individual mineral spring outlets where tasting and collecting mineral water is possible via hand pumps and free-flowing pipes.



The *Victoria's Mineral Springs Master Plan 2025–2032* aims to provide a strategic framework for managing and promoting Victoria's mineral springs.

The plan has five key objectives:

- Traditional Owners determine their level of involvement in Mineral Spring management
- ensuring health and water quality standards
- recognising and protecting the heritage of mineral spring sites
- supporting land manager operations
- realising local community needs and regional tourism aspirations for both the mineral springs sites and outlets.

The plan seeks to balance the cultural, environmental, recreational, heritage and economic values of these natural resources while ensuring their sustainable management and protection.

For more information visit
Mineral Springs Victoria

Compact diversity

Victoria's landscapes are diverse and offer great variety for visitors to explore – all within close proximity to major cities and towns. Within a two-hour drive of Melbourne, visitors have countless opportunities to explore the city, mountains, forest and coastline.



from Melbourne



Figure 5 Victoria's compact diversity

When Victoria's diverse landscape, bathing trail and geothermal activity are combined, it presents a great opportunity for Victoria to become a world-renowned wellness destination.



Strong government policy support

The Victorian Government has long seen the potential of wellness tourism in the state. This is recognised in the overarching strategic plan for the visitor economy, *Experience Victoria 2033*. This plan aims to make Victoria a top destination for visitors now and in the future.

Experience Victoria 2033 highlights wellness tourism as one of the five product priorities:

- First Peoples-led experiences
- Wellness
- Arts and Culture
- Nature
- Food and Drink.

Wellness tourism in Victoria offers a holistic experience, combining First Peoples-led experiences, nature, food and drink, and arts and cultural experiences. This diversity allows for personalised offerings with broad appeal.

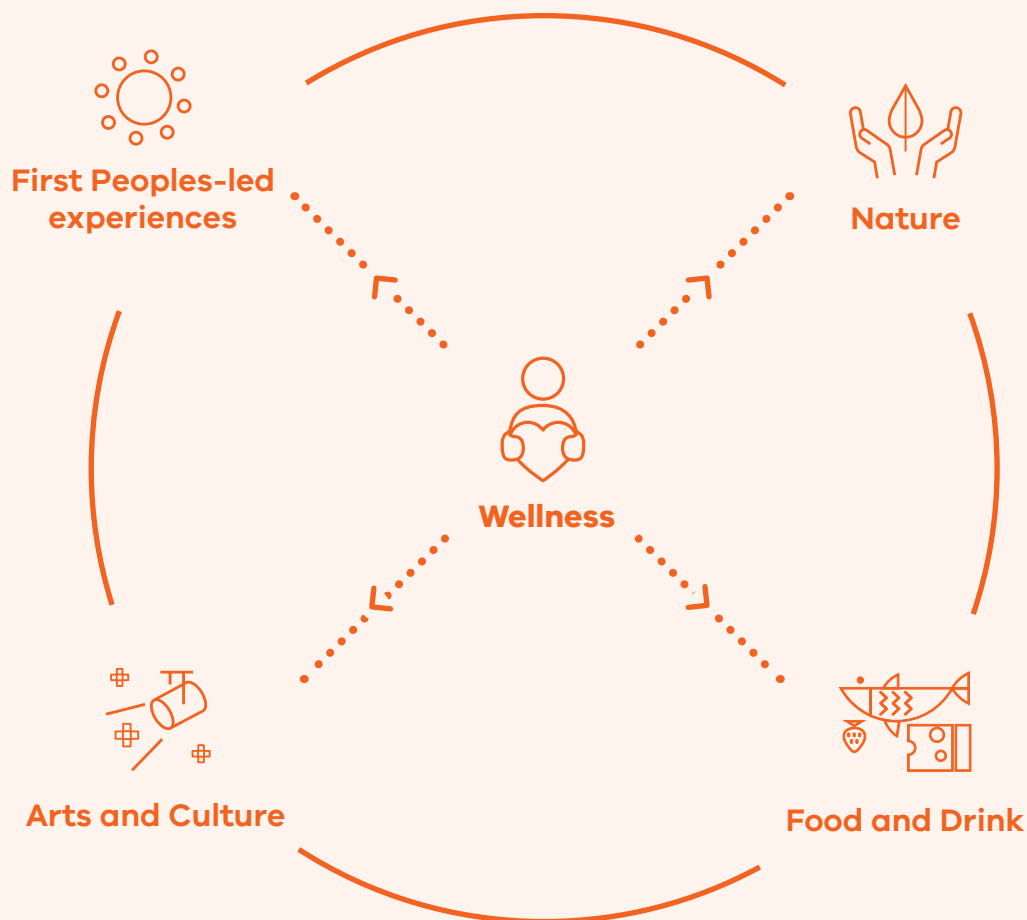


Figure 6 Wellness tourism interfaces with the other product priorities in *Experience Victoria 2033*

Victoria's product priorities can connect with wellness tourism in the following ways:



First Peoples-led experiences

Visitors seek to include First Peoples stories and cultural experiences in their wellness trips, desiring to connect with the Country, culture and history of a place. Through immersive activities, visitors can find rejuvenation and wellness by connecting with the land. These authentic experiences, designed and led by First Peoples guides, offer a profound sense of grounding and connection to the world's oldest living cultures. Tourism providers can collaborate with First Peoples communities to develop bespoke wellness offerings that incorporate traditional practices, medicines, and locally sourced natural products.



Arts and Culture

Some visitors look to blend art and cultural events into a complete wellness experience. Visitors can find rejuvenation through engaging with local art forms, such as painting, sculpture, or traditional dance performances. These artistic pursuits can serve as a form of creative expression, fostering mental wellbeing and personal growth. Additionally, cultural festivals and events celebrating heritage and traditions can provide a sense of community and connection, contributing to emotional wellness. Wellness tourism providers can curate experiences that incorporate guided meditation or mindfulness practices within historical sites or museums, allowing visitors to find inner peace while appreciating cultural richness.



Nature

Visitors are realising the health benefits of spending time relaxing and/or being active in nature. Many wellness tourism products can be situated in natural settings or take advantage of sensory experiences reminiscent of the natural environment. There are further opportunities for tourism providers to develop bespoke, locally sourced natural products for use in wellness experiences, such as Victorian native flora infused treatment oils.



Food and Drink

Healthy, organic and sustainable food is important for personal wellbeing and is often linked to detoxes and health. Wellness-focused food and drink experiences may include farm-to-table dining, cooking classes that highlight regional produce and flavours, or tastings of wines and craft beverages. Providers can offer nutritional guidance, mindful eating workshops, or even yoga sessions paired with healthy cuisine, creating a holistic experience that nourishes the body and soul. Exploring the gastronomic heritage of a destination can also foster a deeper connection to the local culture and community, enhancing the overall wellness journey.

At a local level, regional strategies like Regional Economic Development Strategies, and Destination Management Plans support the growth of tourism across the state. Many of these plans recognise the potential for unique place-based wellness tourism in various settings and provide more specific guidance relevant to your project.



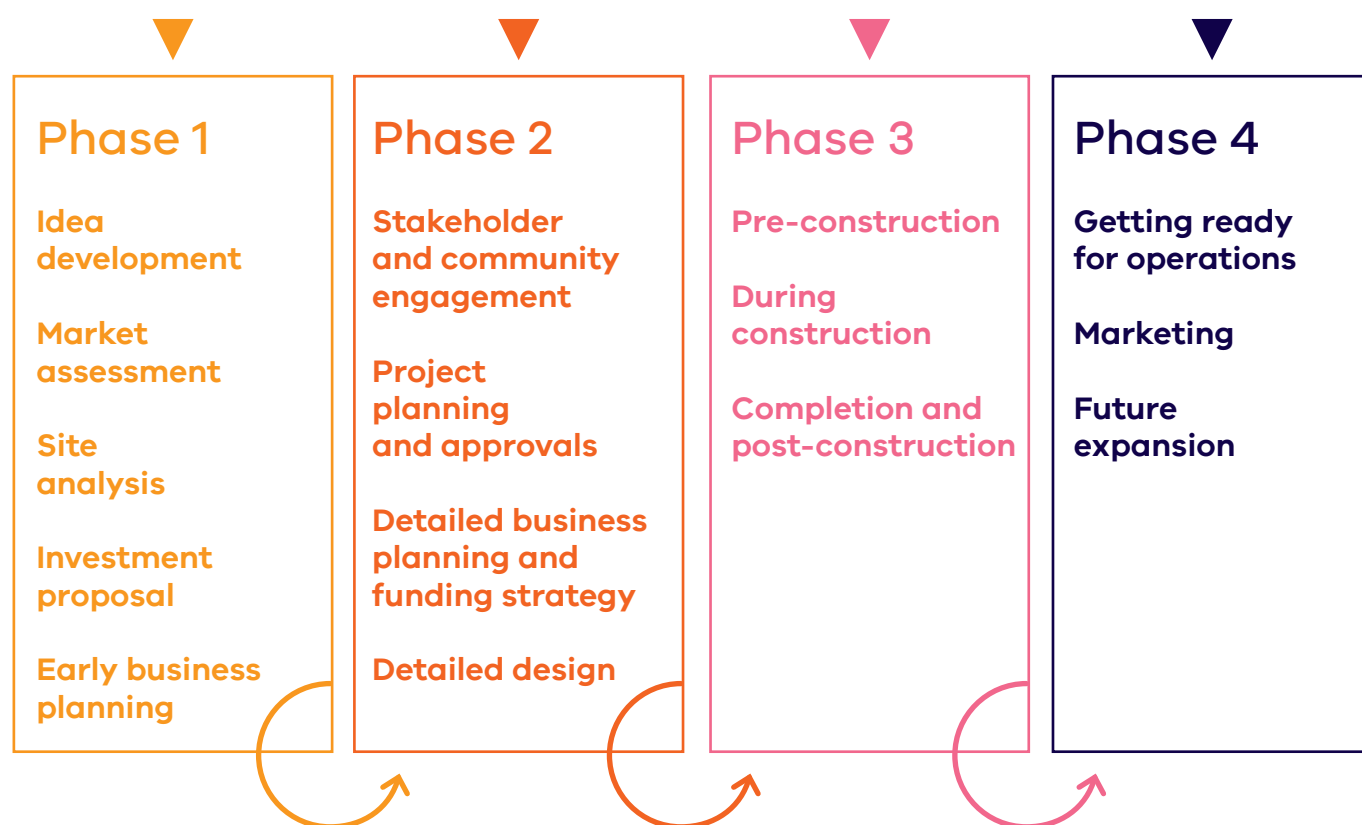


Wellness and the Investment Lifecycle

Tourism investment lifecycle summary

This guide is a companion piece to the overarching document *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality*.

This overarching document covers all tourism investments and provides detailed information across the four key phases to help you plan and develop tourism experiences and support long term sustainability.

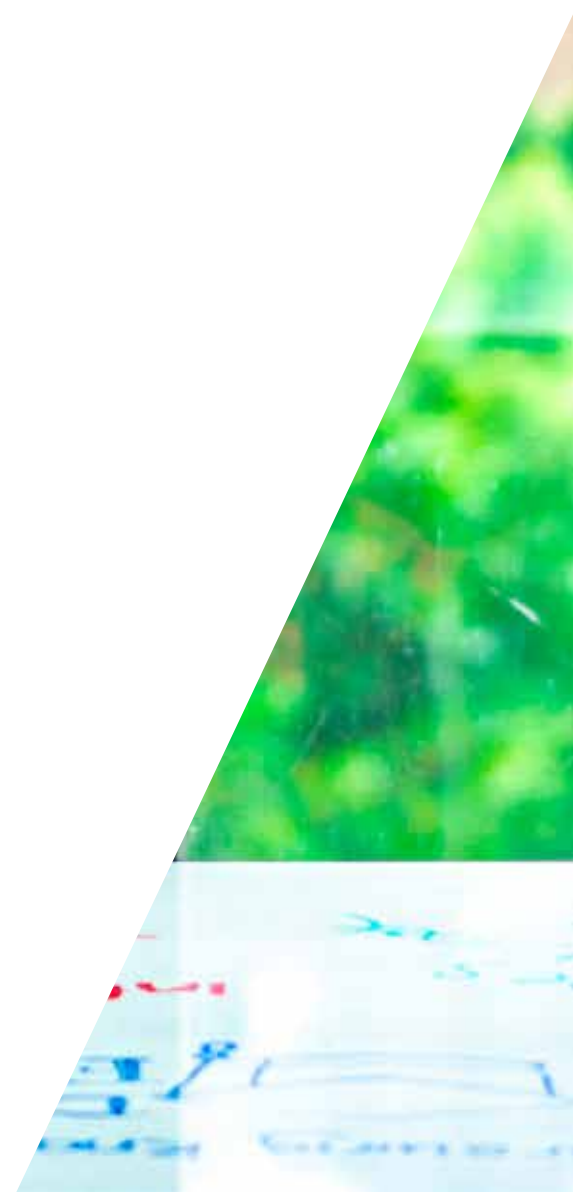


Following the **steps in this guide** can help you to turn an idea into an operational and sustainable product.

The advice contained within this document will adopt the same four-phase structure while providing specific guidance for wellness tourism products and experiences.

Testing the concept

Phase 1





Phase 1

Testing the concept

Idea development

To create an offering that fully delivers on the restorative potential of wellness, you need to think holistically and go beyond typical experiences. Wellness visitors are motivated by getting something of value from the experience, whether that be improved health, new knowledge, a sense of connection or a restored sense of self. Successful wellness product offerings are designed to be memorable, personal and engaging. They offer a blend of product, service, authenticity and end-to-end curation.

This section provides detail on the creative process of shaping your proposed development in line with both your vision and the broader market environment. This will help you to interrogate your project ideas and ensure they are suited to the wellness landscape and consumer preferences.

This section provides guidance on:

- how to define your idea so it appeals to your target markets
- the best design principles for wellness offerings
- your investment motivation and what that means for your wellness project.



Refer to page 22 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the idea development stage.

Defining your idea

For wellness offerings, full immersion through emotional impact, involvement and uniqueness is crucial. Wellness principles should be integrated into every aspect of the visitor experience, and the atmosphere and physical environment should contribute to each visitor's overall sense of wellbeing.

To define your idea, consider the four elements of a holistic wellness offering:

- food and drink
- accommodation
- experiences
- retail.

These elements should consider the end-to-end experience from planning, pre-visit, on-site and post-visit.

You should consider whether your offering will deliver all elements itself, or if you will need to build partnerships with other local providers and services to ensure that visitors have access to all four elements.

While considering the experiential aspects of your wellness tourism product, there are also practical implications of bringing your idea to life that need to be considered from the outset. Checking your local planning scheme in the earliest stage of your project planning will ensure that your wellness business is broadly permissible in your proposed location. You may need to pursue partnerships with existing, local providers if zoning requirements prevent you from offering certain elements (like accommodation) on your site.



Spotlight on wellness accommodation

Providing accommodation options can be particularly beneficial to your wellness offering. Overnight visitors generally spend more during their trips and will have longer to fully immerse themselves in your offering. You can consider providing your own accommodation onsite, if space and budget allow, or you can partner with a local accommodation provider whose values and vision align with yours. Through this partnership, you may be able to promote your offering to non-wellness visitors and expand your reach and appeal.

If your idea involves partnership with First Peoples or intends to incorporate elements of First Peoples culture and practices, your engagement with RAPs or Traditional Owners must start early in the idea development process. Think about how your wellness tourism project can offer economic opportunities for First Peoples communities that you are working with.

Design and partnership principles for First Peoples-led experiences include:

- partnering with RAPs, Traditional Owners and/or First Peoples owned and operated businesses if you wish to include First Peoples knowledge, language and cultural practices in your experience or offering
- respecting the land and its spiritual significance
- designing sustainably and in harmony with the environment.

First Peoples partnership principles

A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality provides advice on developing First Peoples-led tourism experiences. Refer to the document to understand:

- the role of Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), Traditional Owners, and First Peoples owned and operated businesses and how to engage with them and work collaboratively
- how to embed self-determination throughout all phases of the investment lifecycle
- details on Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights and appropriate engagement practices that protect and ensure ethical conduct and positive interaction with First Peoples and their continuing culture and heritage.



Defining the visitor experience

Visitors are seeking out far more personalised experiences in their leisure choices, so it is important to align your idea to visitor preferences – don't expect visitors to be attracted to generic or conventional experiences. Adopting a more informed approach will ensure that your wellness offering will not only grab people's attention but will also meet the specific expectations of modern visitors.

Successful wellness projects will often offer a curated suite of complementary activities, touchpoints and products. This includes all stages of the visitor journey from discovery and evaluation, through booking and planning, to the on-site experience and then the post-visit reflection. While visitors may be able to engage with certain offerings in isolation, it is the combination of complementary offerings that makes an attractive and compelling visitor experience in the wellness space.

Capacity management, robust online capabilities, and actively seeking feedback are also critical elements in the wellness tourism sector. Wellness tourism tends to be more entrepreneurial and recognises the necessity of a strong online presence. In a competitive market, offering "Instagrammable" experiences is vital, as people increasingly seek to connect and share their journeys via social media. Establishing a forum or tool to seek feedback ensures that you can continuously refine and enhance your offerings. This is particularly important in wellness, where delivering beautiful, memorable experiences can amplify your reach and appeal. Incorporating these elements into your strategy will ensure that your wellness project remains relevant, engaging, and successful.



Customisable vs curated

Wellness experiences are often deeply personal to individuals and expectations of wellness offerings can be quite specific. When developing your visitor experience, take time to consider what degree of customisation you will offer to customers. This decision will be influenced by your own vision, your target demographics, and any space and resource limitations.

Higher customisability will allow visitors to tailor their experience to their preferences and can appeal to larger groups and families with diverse interests. With a suite of customisable experiences, you can also set a wide range of price points to expand your potential customer base.

On the other hand, less customisable and more curated experiences can feel more unique and authentic. This is especially the case if the experience is closely tied to its geographic or social context. Additionally, high-end offerings that have very specific experiences can be perceived as more exclusive or aspirational.

The physical environment where visitors engage in activities is crucial to their overall experience. Equally important is the digital environment where they find, learn about, and book these activities. It is important to think about the immediate setting and other geographic considerations at the start of the idea development process. Offerings in urban settings may focus on top-quality facilities, shorter experiences, and high-end products, while rural or regional experiences might offer a sense of escape in more rustic facilities with hyperlocal product offerings.

To validate your proposed visitor experience, you should consider the following factors:

- **Enabling infrastructure**
 - condition and safety of connecting roads
 - availability of public transport
 - capacity and reliability of internet and other utilities (e.g. water, electricity, etc.)
 - signage and journey information.
- **Essential services**
 - access to high-quality fresh produce
 - availability of laundry and cleaning services
 - nearby accommodation options
 - proximity to medical services/hospitals.

Defining your investment motivation and budget

Wellness offerings can be transformative for local towns and communities but can represent a significant financial undertaking. Depending on your offering, it can be complex, involve higher upfront costs, and take longer to get up and running.

Therefore, it is important to understand your motivations for investing and ensure you have significant equity upfront. You should ensure that your motivation extends beyond immediate short-term returns and that you are prepared to be patient with your capital investment – meaningful commercial returns may materialise later than more conventional projects.

Like many new businesses, wellness offerings may experience peak visitation in the first 12 months after opening and, without continuous innovation and marketing efforts, visitation may steadily decline. Where wellness experiences are remote from populated destinations they need to generate awareness to attract visitors. This potential need for ongoing time and investment in new products, experiences, and marketing should be accounted for in your decision-making process.



It is likely that you will need to revise your idea and visitor experience as your project progresses, especially if you are developing a new and innovative offering. Revisions may be required when you learn new information about the market in **Phase 1: Market Assessment** or the site in **Phase 1: Site Analysis**.

Market assessment

Before progressing further with your idea, undertaking market research and assessment is essential. This will help to develop an understanding of the current market, what potential customers like, and how to engage with them effectively. This understanding will give you a better chance of achieving long-term commercial success.

This section provides guidance on:

- trends and market factors to consider for a wellness project
- potential partnerships that can enhance your core offering
- wellness-specific challenges to commercial viability
- useful focal points when branding and positioning a wellness offering.



Refer to page 25 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the market assessment stage.

Market assessment in 4 steps

A market assessment includes 4 key steps. These steps are not necessarily taken linearly and may need to be revisited throughout the project. These steps are:

- identifying and testing the potential market
- identifying potential competitors and alliances
- determining if the project is viable
- developing the branding and positioning strategy.

Tourism market information is often available in regional Destination Management Plans and this can help you understand the potential demographics for your experience. For some wellness offerings in Victoria, the visitor market is still growing, which can make it difficult to find useful information on your own. In these cases, you should consider engaging a market research and development consultant or agency to undertake the market assessment.



Now is the time to consider engaging a **specialist wellness consultant** who understands market dynamics and industry opportunity and/or a market research and development consultant to help you.



Step

01

Identifying and testing the potential market

Wellness offerings need to provide authentic experiences which align with the personal values and goals of their visitors. Therefore, it is important to thoroughly study your target market and audience and look into wider trends around wellness tourism and relevant products. Think about who might be interested, what they like, and what they are looking for. By curating experiences that match this, you can increase the chance of generating sufficient interest and visitation to sustain long-term growth and success.

Consider using mood boards and digital platforms to convey potential visitor experience offerings and allow potential consumers to understand what options are being considered to facilitate an informed and emotive response. Surveys and focus groups are also a useful method for market testing as wellness experiences can be complex and highly personalised.

Factors to consider for a wellness offering include appropriate price points, price sensitivity of the target market, and the overall attractiveness of your experiences to potential customers, including those that may not be primarily travelling for wellness. Additionally, it is useful to investigate the seasonality of visitation – are there peaks and troughs in visitor numbers at specific times of year and what are the drivers of this variation? Visitor numbers to nature-based or remote wellness offerings are often sensitive to weather and climate. You should understand the drivers of this variation and look for ways to motivate year-round visitation and reduce seasonal fluctuations.

**Spotlight on wellness accommodation**

In a reshaped world of work, the line between travelling for business and leisure has become blurrier than ever. An increasing number of business visitors are extending their trips for leisure or incorporating leisure and wellness activities into their itineraries.

The market for wellness-focused accommodation is therefore no longer limited to wellness visitors – accommodation which offers stress-reducing and restorative experiences can appeal to all visitors. Even traditional 'business hotels' now offer wellness add-ons and facilities like gyms, spas, massage centres, and healthy room service and minibar options. Consider adding wellness experiences to your accommodation offering to enrich the guest experience and expand your potential market.

Step

02

Identifying potential competitors and alliances

Although wellness tourism is an emerging sector in Victoria, it is still important to identify potential competitors and alliances. These parties may be local or operate further afield. While benchmarking directly comparable offerings might be challenging, you can obtain valuable insights by engaging with consumers through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Successful wellness offerings are often holistic and provide complementary services and experiences. To enrich your core offering and expand the audience and appeal, you should investigate partnerships with local businesses and service providers. These can include restaurants, retailers, suppliers, education and training institutions, industry groups, skilled practitioners, wellness experts, and medical professionals.



Spotlight on restaurants and retail

The hyperlocal movement celebrates the radical shortening of distance between where food and products are produced and where they are consumed or used. Hyperlocal products have lower embodied energy and overall environmental impact due to reduced transportation requirements. Locally grown produce is also often tastier and more nutritious as it does not need to be harvested prematurely to cater for storage and transportation times. These benefits are well-aligned with the pursuit of physical and environmental wellbeing.

Examples of how you can introduce hyperlocal elements into your wellness offering include:

- establishing an on-site vegetable garden
- sourcing local produce from farmers and producers in the surrounding region

- focusing on farm-to-table or sea-to-table dining
- building relationships with local cooks and chefs to explore partnership opportunities
- stocking local handmade products and souvenirs.

These initiatives can lead to mutually beneficial partnerships with local farmers, producers, artisans, and service providers. These partnerships will generate economic returns for local businesses and can help showcase the unique local produce, culture, and craftsmanship. Additionally, celebrating the hyperlocal can also boost your wellness offering's authenticity and sense of place.

Step

03

Determining if the project is viable

Fundamentally, the long-term success of your wellness offering will depend on sustained visitation and revenue and overall, will visitors pay for the experience you are intending to offer. There are multiple factors which impact how many people visit your offering and how much they spend, such as size of target market segment, seasonal visitation trends, and existing competitor offerings.

This step involves you identifying these factors and deciding how your offering will respond to them. When it comes to wellness offerings, demand can often be highest when new experiences or products are released, then stabilise to a lower level over time. Other important factors to wellness offerings include appropriate price points, price sensitivity of the target market, the overall attractiveness of the experiences on offer, and the lasting wellbeing impact that the experience leaves on visitors.

By the end of this step, you should have enough information to understand if your project can generate enough revenue to remain viable in the long-term.



Now is the time you should consider engaging a **market research and development consultant** to complete this step, particularly as future partners or lenders may require this at further project stages.



Step

04

Developing the branding and positioning strategy

Wellness is deeply personal and wellness customers are likely to seek out specific products, atmospheres, and price points that appeal to them. A well-thought-out branding strategy will present a cohesive identity for your offering and distinguish it from competitors. For wellness offerings, a focus on environmental setting is a particular factor of success. A strong connection to place will appeal to the many wellness customers who are seeking authentic experiences that are unique to a location or community.

A positioning strategy will help to connect your intended customers with your offering. Positioning refers to where your wellness offering sits in the broader market – does your offering cater to couples or is it more suited for families with young kids? How exclusive is your offering and what kind of wellness experiences can people expect to participate in?

Together, a strong branding and positioning strategy will allow your wellness offering to stand out in the market, convey quality and authenticity, and draw in your target market. This will also help with project advocacy to assist with the progression of the project through the investment lifecycle.



Site analysis

Undertaking site analysis is an important step after Idea Development as it allows you to understand how suitable a site and identified location is for your idea. Wellness offerings are sometimes envisioned in areas that seem idyllic but may have sensitive site conditions. Conducting a thorough site analysis will help you to understand what is technically possible, permitted under planning regulation and commercially viable in a chosen location.

This section provides further guidance on:

- the importance of professional planning advice for some elements of site analysis
- the physical and spatial limitations of some sites
- some of the risks and benefits of particular site attributes.



Refer to page 35 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the site analysis stage.

Environmental factors

Consideration of neighbouring land uses

Although a site may be suitable for development, understanding surrounding land uses is also essential. Nearby agricultural or industrial land uses can bring unpleasant odours, noise, bright lights, or other environmental impacts that can impact premium wellness experiences.

This interplay between the site itself and its surroundings emphasises the need for a thorough evaluation of not only physical attributes of the location, but also external factors that may influence the ambience and quality of the wellness offering. By understanding these considerations, project owners can proactively address any potential challenges posed by external influences, enhancing their ability to create an exceptional and immersive wellness environment for visitors.





Spotlight on spa and bathing

Spa and bathing projects that harness natural mineral springs and geothermal waters require various technical assessments. Depending on the type of facility, this may entail geological, geothermal, surface water or groundwater assessments. Practically, a hydrogeological engineer will partner with a mechanical engineer to undertake this assessment.

The engineers will initially complete a desktop study to derive indicative capital and operating costs. If you are happy with these costs, the engineers will proceed to the on-site technical assessments.

A geological assessment will involve drilling bore holes and collecting rock core samples to evaluate the site's geological condition and suitability. Surface water and groundwater assessments will help to determine the existence and status of groundwater within and surrounding the site.

To undertake these tests, a drill rig may need to be brought on-site. Ground conditions such as soil composition, soil moisture, and land steepness can present significant challenges to this. This work can incur major costs and should be considered upfront costs at the outset of a project.

You should also consider that there are a number of areas within Victoria where the groundwater/geothermal water is fully allocated. Purchasing a property with an existing licence may be one way to address this problem if it is encountered.



Now is the time to consider engaging with your engineer to understand the logistics of providing access to heavy vehicles – these logistical considerations will also be relevant during the construction stage. It may be the case that difficulties in providing access to machinery make the selected site unviable. Now is also the time to consider engaging with local rural water authorities to determine if groundwater or geothermal water allocations are exhausted.

Social and community factors

Developing a successful wellness offering requires consideration of the perspectives and needs of the local community. It can have the potential to result in transformative effects on the local economy as a source of recreation and employment.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that local residents may have concerns relating to perceived impacts associated with the development. Issues such as the loss of native vegetation, heightened traffic congestion, or disruptions to local amenities and services can create concerns for local residents.

Engaging with local residents and understanding their viewpoints can help to create a positive relationship between the wellness offering and its community. By embracing community feedback and concerns, project owners can pre-emptively address potential challenges and mitigate any adverse impacts that may arise. This can also create a sense of shared ownership and collective responsibility towards ensuring that the wellness offering aligns with local values and priorities, creating an authentic experience.

Native vegetation

Wellness offerings in rural and regional settings are often in delicate natural surroundings. As these settings can be ecologically sensitive, the potential need for clearing native vegetation to facilitate development and ensure safe operational practices becomes a significant consideration. This process of vegetation removal, while sometimes necessary for infrastructure development, must be approached with an understanding of the environmental impact and a commitment to mitigating any adverse effects on the local ecosystem.

A careful balance between development requirements and environmental preservation is crucial to harmoniously integrate wellness initiatives within these pristine rural and regional environments. Refer to *native vegetation removal regulations* for an outline of how native vegetation removal is assessed and how any offsets can be calculated. To remove native vegetation, a *native vegetation site assessment* will be required.



Spotlight on camping and glamping

A major appeal of camping and glamping sites for wellness is their close proximity to flourishing natural ecosystems. This results in the balanced consideration of what native vegetation might need to be removed to establish a clearance for the camping or glamping site. You should consider how you can maintain that appeal without unnecessarily removing native vegetation. This may be through considering alternative nearby sites without native vegetation and engaging a landscape architect for advice on planting vegetation to create natural appeal for the camping or glamping experience.



Now is the time to consider engaging a professional environmental consultant to conduct this assessment.



Complementary businesses and services

When planning a wellness project, think about all the external services that can support it, such as food and drink, parking, laundry services, and more. These services play an essential role in enhancing the visitor experience and making operations run smoothly. If you are not planning to provide these services on-site, it's important to investigate what is available externally to ensure guests have everything they need for a cohesive wellness experience.

Wellness offerings often provide a broad range of goods and services, so it is also crucial to consider supply chains to and from such facilities. Sites in rural and regional settings may be challenging, as many locations are balancing proximity to an attractive environmental setting and supply chain limitations.

Accessibility factors

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (DDA)*, facilities must ensure access for people with disabilities. Accessibility fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment among individuals with disabilities, affirming their right to partake in wellness activities. Remote, isolated and heritage settings may make it difficult to provide inclusive access to wellness experiences. Under the DDA, facilities must ensure non-discriminatory access and use for people with disabilities.

Phase 1: Investment proposal provides advice on providing sustainable and accessible design for wellness experiences. It should also be acknowledged that further inclusion of Universal Design Principles should be considered and applied during **Phase 2: Detailed design**.

Transport factors

Commuting comfort and simplicity are key considerations for visitors seeking wellness experiences. While some tourism experiences benefit from remoteness and a sense of accomplishment in reaching or returning from a destination, wellness visitors typically desire experiences which are simple, convenient, and easy to get to and back from. Remote locations with limited transport accessibility are likely to incur higher construction costs as logistically they are more challenging to access and supply chains can be more constrained.

Regulatory factors

Consideration of land ownership and management

Land ownership, tenure and management is a major consideration for the development of wellness projects. Many wellness projects are located adjacent to publicly managed land or Crown land, particularly those set in natural environments or those involving the use of natural water resources.

Developing and operating an experience directly on publicly managed land or Crown land can be complex, requiring a separate set of approvals and licenses for development and commercial operations.

Alpine land is also subject to a separate set of regulations, and wellness offerings may be well-positioned in alpine areas.



Refer to page 89 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the regulatory environment for public and alpine land.

Phase 1

Phase 2

Phase 3

Phase 4

Idea development Market assessment **Site analysis** Investment proposal Early business planning

Consideration of the underlying zoning of land

As wellness offerings often include a combination of uses to provide a complete experience (e.g. spa, café and retail) the offering may not neatly be defined by one single land use in the Victoria Planning Provisions. In some situations, emerging and innovative wellness offerings are not well-described by any of the land uses in the Victoria Planning Provisions.

This can make planning approvals complicated if you are offering a broad range of land uses.



Now is the time to consider engaging a **planning professional** to help you understand what land uses you are intending on providing and if those land uses are permitted.

Heritage factors

You may wish to locate your wellness offerings in a historically or culturally rich location with strong heritage value. This will likely trigger additional restrictions and requirements when designing and developing your facility. You should broadly determine the heritage limitations and restrictions associated with a heritage location to understand if it would unreasonably restrict the delivery of your wellness offering.



Refer to page 84 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on how cultural heritage may impact your project.

The rural and regional settings that may be best suited for some styles of wellness offering are also more constrained in the land uses which are permitted. You should understand at this stage whether the proposed wellness activity is prohibited by the relevant land use zoning to determine key initial issues to address or whether securing an approval would be a significant challenge. This is explored further in **Phase 2: Project planning and approvals**.



Infrastructure and utilities

As wellness offerings are often in rural or regional settings, it is important to determine accessibility, connection to water, electricity, sewage, gas and telecommunication services.



Spotlight on spa and bathing

If you intend to extract groundwater, a hydrogeological engineer can assist during early engagement with environmental regulators. As early in the planning process as possible, you should indicate to the regulator what volumes of water you intend to extract from the ground. If these volumes are deemed impermissible, you will need to adjust your vision, facility design or site selection.

You should also understand how your facility's used or wastewater will be disposed. You may need permission to release water into the sewage or

stormwater systems or into the natural environment. This water may need to be chemically or mechanically treated onsite before being disposed. The used water could also be reused as grey water for irrigation, either on your own site or on a neighbouring site (assuming proper agreements are in place).

Further information can be found about how your specific wellness offering may navigate releasing waste water into the environment at *Environment Protection Authority Victoria*.



Investment proposal

The success of your project will rely on your visitors having consistently positive experiences. For a wellness offering, the quality of your facilities will heavily impact visitor perception – you should therefore put extra thought into your architectural design and vision. Certain types of wellness offerings will also require additional technical considerations, which may increase costs and extend timelines. These technical requirements should be identified during this stage.

This section provides guidance on:

- considerations when engaging a registered architect
- wellness-specific design decisions
- additional specialist consultant requirements.



Refer to page 41 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the investment proposal stage.

Architectural concept design

Architectural design is a significant component of wellness experiences. All buildings and external spaces, especially those serving the public, must meet certain design requirements, codes, and standards so they are safe to use or occupy. The spatial quality of your wellness offering will also impact your visitors' perception and experience.

You should consider engaging an architect with experience in the type of facility you are seeking to build. An architect who specialises in your particular wellness offering will understand:

- wellness-specific design considerations that ensure your facility offers the wellness experience you want to create
- how best to navigate the local requirements in the planning process
- which specialist consultants to engage and when.



Now is the time to consider engaging a **registered architect** to help with the concept design stage.



Table 2 is a non-exhaustive list of design considerations that can improve the experience of your wellness offering. Your architect should have a strong grasp of these elements, but do bring forward your ideas – a good design process should be collaborative and iterative.

Design elements	Wellness considerations
Spatial organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connecting indoor spaces with nature and the outdoors • green and open spaces • enhancing communal spaces to encourage social interaction • delineating between communal and private spaces • separating wellness spaces from external sources of noise • internal acoustics and noise management • separating kid-friendly areas from adults-only areas • flexibility of spaces • visitor servicing facilities and layout • consideration of universal design principles.
Lighting and ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maximising natural light • calming colour temperature of artificial lighting • natural ventilation and other passive cooling strategies.
Material and colour palette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • natural materials (e.g. wood, stone, natural fibres, etc.) • biophilic colours and prints (e.g. earth tones, blues, greens, organic patterns, etc.) • low CO₂ and Volatile Organic Compound (VOC)-emitting building materials.
Fixtures and furnishings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indoor greenery • water features • soft, sensory textures • comfortable seating • organic forms.

Table 2 List of design considerations



Spotlight on wellness accommodation

Good sleep is an integral component of health and wellbeing, and wellness accommodation offerings can play a big role in improving guests' quality of sleep. Wellness accommodation offerings can do this by employing various technologies and design elements, including:

- maximising natural light
- circadian lighting/sunrise lamps
- temperature and humidity control
- natural ventilation and good air quality
- adequate sound dampening and ambience
- biophilic design (e.g. connections with the outdoors, indoor plants, natural materials, organic forms and patterns, etc.)
- premium linens and bedding (e.g. natural fibres, hypoallergenic, memory foam, etc.).

Together, these technologies and design elements help to ensure that the overnight visitor experience is restful, restorative, and customisable for individual sleep preferences. In particular, circadian lighting reinforces the body's circadian rhythms to improve consistency of sleep and moderate melatonin levels before bed and after waking up. These benefits are particularly helpful for guests trying to overcome jetlag.



If you are seeking a bank loan and/or partnership funding for your project, you may be required to undertake certain elements of schematic design earlier in the development process in order to more clearly anticipate costs. Your architect can help you to navigate this requirement if necessary.

Early engagement of specialist consultants

Wellness projects can often be more complex than other developments, especially in natural landscapes. It is important to engage specialist consultants early in the development process to ensure that any risks, barriers and considerations are identified before significant investment is made.

Specialist consultants will be able to identify potential issues and provide cost estimates (capital and ongoing) for technical solutions. This minimises the chance of unexpected issues arising later in the project, causing time delays and budget overruns. An experienced architect will be able to advise on which specialists are needed and when.

Obtaining a clearer and earlier view of potential costs is also important if you are seeking funding for your project. This is outlined further in **Phase 1: Early business planning**.



Spotlight on spa and bathing

Spa and bathing projects often involve large volumes of earthworks and water, which calls for greater and earlier technical input. These projects also often have stricter requirements and longer approval processes. If groundwater access and extraction is required, the project will involve more environmental regulation and water authorities. An architect with experience in spa and bathing projects will understand and be able to account for these additional considerations.

The table below presents a few specialists who may be relevant to the early stages of your project.

Specialist	Roles during early project stages
Hydrogeological engineer / hydrogeologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide indicative capital and operational costs for groundwater solutions assess ground conditions and support project feasibility assessment (as outlined earlier in Phase 1: Site analysis) advise on groundwater quality engage with the relevant environmental regulator and help obtain licenses and permits.
Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP) engineer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assess capital and operating costs, looking at elements like plant rooms, piping, and energy demands work with hydrogeological engineer to undertake ground assessments (as outlined earlier in Phase 1: Site analysis) advise on water treatment requirements based on groundwater testing.
Process engineer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advise on water treatment requirements based on groundwater testing.
Wellness consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> help design the visitor experience, including designing holistic, authentic wellness experiences, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity help determine operational considerations, including implementing sustainable, eco-friendly practices, prioritising local sourcing and workforce, comprehensive staff training on wellness principles, partnering with local wellness experts, establishing standards and quality control, and promoting responsible tourism practices.

Table 3 Relevant specialists

Sustainable and inclusive design

Sustainable and inclusive design principles can positively impact the community and environment. They can also provide a more attractive offering for an increasingly eco-conscious and diverse audience.



Refer to page 45 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on sustainable and inclusive design.

Inclusivity for diverse wellness-seekers

Wellness experiences are often intentionally personal and take place in intimate settings. Therefore, as you undertake your design process, it is important to consider how inclusive your facility will be to different demographics and visitor needs.

Table 4 is a non-exhaustive list of potential customer attributes and some associated inclusivity considerations you should explore when progressing your design. These are design considerations that go beyond the minimum accessibility requirements legislated in the DDA. These consider universal design principles, moving to a more dignified approach to access and design. You will be able to gain a more complete understanding of the inclusivity barriers that certain demographics face by engaging in direct dialogue with members of those communities.

Certain design choices can increase the inclusivity of your facility for various demographics. However, understand that there are no one-size-fits-all approaches to being inclusive – barriers to inclusivity are as diverse as the people seeking wellness. An inclusive facility does not need to attempt to meet every need, but by considering people's diversity, you can often achieve better design outcomes that benefit everyone. This can in turn increase your appeal to a wider range of visitors and potentially uplift visitation and revenue.



Attributes	Inclusivity considerations
Gender and sexuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the right combination of gender-neutral and gender-specific bathrooms, changing facilities, signage and bathing areas lighting quality (e.g. brightness, glare, light temperature, shadow patterns, etc.) unobstructed sightlines well-defined pathways.
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> modesty barriers aligning to cultural and religious practices clothed spaces for bathing, massage, etc. prayer rooms.
Cultural background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inclusion of design elements which feature First Peoples and First Peoples artworks as an element multi-language or visuals-based signage modesty barriers clothed spaces for bathing, massage, etc.
Neurodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> choice of colours and visual contrast quality and surface texture of materials and furnishings lighting quality (e.g. brightness, glare, light temperature, shadow patterns, etc.) acoustic quality (e.g. reverberation, background noise/music, ambience, etc.) quiet rooms.
Vision impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> audio cues and signage choice of colours and visual contrast avoidance of sharp materials, furnishings and fixtures lighting quality (e.g. brightness, glare, light temperature, shadow patterns, etc.) acoustic quality (e.g. reverberation, background noise/music, ambience, etc.) placement of structural elements openness of spaces well-defined pathways thoughtful organisation of spaces.
Hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lighting quality (e.g. brightness, glare, light temperature, shadow patterns, etc.) acoustic quality (e.g. reverberation, background noise/music, ambience, etc.) unobstructed sightlines.

Mobility impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• placement of structural elements• well-defined pathways• openness of spaces• thoughtful organisation of spaces• automated doors, windows, etc.• elevators/escalators• changing places facilities.
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• availability and comfort of seating and other furnishings• automated doors, windows, interfaces, etc.• elevators/escalators.
Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• availability and comfort of seating and other furnishings• avoidance of sharp materials, furnishings, and fixtures• thoughtful organisation of spaces.

Table 4 Potential customer attributes and associated inclusivity considerations





Inclusivity principles should not only be considered for customer-facing areas, back-of-house and other operational areas are equally deserving of considered and inclusive design. Offering a healthy, inclusive place to work and, if applicable, live, will help to improve employee wellbeing, boost productivity and support workforce retention.



Spotlight on wellness accommodation

Inclusivity in wellness accommodation offerings extends beyond the building. Additional things to consider include:

- ability to cater to diverse dietary requirements (e.g. room service, minibar, hotel restaurant, etc.)
- adjustable/lower bed heights
- choice of bedding materials
- choice of toiletry brands and ingredients
- design of door handles and locking/security mechanisms
- transparency/separation of the ensuite
- adjustable shower heads
- diverse and multilingual workforce
- cultural and sensitivity training for staff.



Spotlight on spa and bathing

The Victorian Government provides specific inclusivity advice for aquatic centres that are applicable to spa and bathing projects. Key advice includes:

- Consider inclusive programming that caters for people of all ages, such as sessions which welcome children and families and sessions which cater for older adults.
- Actively address discrimination which may be experienced by certain groups who may have been excluded by spa and bathing facilities. This could be done by providing sessions which deliberately cater to women, people with disabilities, or *LGBTIQA+* individuals.
- Ensure that user-operated spa and sauna facilities are accessible by providing removable seats and easy-to-access controls for facilities that need to be turned on and off.
- For spa and bathing experiences, some design choices you should consider for accessibility and inclusivity include wheelchair ramps and lifts for easy access to pools and treatment areas. It is also important to consider cultural factors that may impact how people interact with changing areas and bathing experiences.



Spotlight on camping and glamping

The Victorian Government provides specific inclusivity advice for camping areas that are applicable to camping and glamping projects. Key advice includes:

- Facilities and furniture provided in the area, including toilets, buildings, kiosks, recreation areas and installations like seating and drinking fountains, should be located on the continuous accessible path of travel.
- The ground surface of sites should be firm, level and slip-resistant in both wet and dry conditions to accommodate users with mobility issues. Power sources should also be easy to access and use.
- The area should have clear, easy-to-read signage at the entry incorporating international symbols, raised tactile and Braille elements to assist users with visual or cognitive impairments.
- An appropriate number of accessible cabins should be provided to cater to users with disabilities or mobility challenges.

Remember to communicate the importance of sustainable and inclusive design to your architect in early conversations to ensure that it is considered throughout the design process. Trying to integrate these principles later in the process will likely lead to additional costs and delays.



Refer to page 45 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on sustainable and inclusive design principles and their benefits.



Early business planning

Wellness offerings are often high-end and can be subject to inconsistent or seasonal visitation. This will have flow-on impacts to your revenue generation and may impact your ability to secure financing. Therefore, it is critical that you take the time to develop a robust business plan. This involves bringing together all the information about your project and creating a roadmap to finance, develop and operate your wellness offering.

This section provides guidance on:

- importance of commercial viability to wellness offerings
- potential need to stage your project
- increased requirements when applying for financing and/or securing funding partners.



Refer to page 51 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on business planning.



In *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality*, the detailed business planning and funding strategy stage is included in Phase 2. However, if you are seeking a bank loan for your project, you may be required to undertake certain elements of business planning earlier in the development process to increase the likelihood of commercial viability. As the wellness tourism sector is growing and becoming further established, elements such as revenue projections and defining potential market demand may provide project partners with confidence.



Commercial viability

Wellness is a smaller subset of the tourism industry, so it is important to carefully examine the market demand and revenue potential for your wellness offering. This will be driven by the research undertaken in **Phase 1: Market assessment**.



Spotlight on spa and bathing

Capital and operating costs for spa and bathing offerings can be higher than other development types. This is due to factors like more intensive initial earthworks, larger or more complex mechanical systems, and higher quality of finishes and fixtures. Costs can also be driven up by the upkeep required to maintain high levels of safety and cleanliness. Therefore, it is particularly important to examine the commercial viability of your offering and to adjust your vision, design or business model as necessary.

For some wellness offerings in Victoria, the tourism market is still growing, which means that there may be a limited number of precedent projects for you to reference. Therefore, it may be difficult to predict visitor demand and potential revenue. In such cases, you should adopt conservative estimates and consider engaging a market research and development consultant to undertake the market assessment. You should also consider your commercial viability under different visitation forecasts to ensure you are ready to adapt to all scenarios.

Revenue

Revenue is the money generated through your project's everyday operations. For many wellness offerings, a significant portion of revenue is generated through the add-ons offered on top of the core experiences. These offerings include retail, food and beverage, events/functions and accommodation. You could consider including some of these add-ons to your wellness offering to increase potential revenue and offer a holistic experience for visitors.

For example, accommodation options can be particularly beneficial to revenue. Not only do overnight visitors generally spend more during their stay on food and activities, but they also have the time to experience your offering more deeply. Other add-ons could include specialised or one-off events and activities, to attract a broader market or increase interest in the wellness offering.

To support more consistent revenue from your wellness experience, you should consider what offerings you can incorporate into your business plan that will build year-round visitation. This could include unique seasonal offerings that encourage repeat visitation or flexible offerings which encourage visitation in recognised off-peak visitation lulls. Offerings may include things such as events and functions, educational workshops, personal development programs and guided tours.

It is important to strike the right balance between levels of visitation, driving visitor yield and maintaining product quality and experience. By carefully managing these aspects, wellness tourism can attract discerning visitors and build a loyal customer base without compromising on the unique and high-quality experiences that define the brand.



Spotlight on retail

For many people, wellness is not a one-off experience, but a continuous journey. You can support this appetite for ongoing wellness by offering subscription programs or service packages. Benefits of these types of products include a more reliable revenue stream, better forecasting and inventory management, and increased customer loyalty and engagement. These products can often also represent better value for the customer per treatment or product.

Financing

During early business planning, you should understand how you will likely finance your project (i.e. how you will pay for upfront project costs). Financing can come from both equity and debt sources.

To secure financing for the project it is important to articulate the overall vision for the project, the intended visitor experience, and specifically, how these transfer into a commercial product that would be financially viable and which would sustain operating costs and required capital rates of return.

High-end wellness offerings typically require a higher quality of construction, which can correspond to higher capital costs. If you expect to have higher initial costs, this will factor into your detailed business plan. You can obtain a better idea of project costs by engaging a Quantity Surveyor to cost your architectural design. If this cost exceeds your budget, you may need to revise your design or consider staging your project.

Staging your project will spread project costs out over time and alleviate the need for significant financing upfront and may be a more realistic and achievable financing approach.



Now is the time to consider engaging a Quantity Surveyor to cost your architectural design.



Phase 1

Phase 2

Phase 3

Phase 4

Idea development Market assessment Site analysis Investment proposal **Early business planning**

Debt financing

Wellness projects can face difficulty securing debt financing (i.e. bank loans). Wellness offerings, like many other tourism products, typically experience a peak in visitation when they first open, followed by a period of decline. This means that they must continually innovate and refresh to sustain consistent growth and visitation.

This variability in potential revenue can increase risk from a lender's perspective. Lenders are more likely to provide loans to operators with existing sector experience, robust track records, and who have capacity to make a sufficient equity contribution. They are likely to see operators with the right skills, experience and track record in the sector as less risky. Experienced and skilled operators play a critical role in securing funding and mitigating risks associated with fluctuating revenue streams.

Additionally, banks expect to see evidence of rigorous due diligence and market assessment, specialist input, sufficiently detailed architectural design, and robust cost estimates.

For these reasons, you may need to invest more money during **Phase 1: Investment proposal** to increase the chance of securing a loan. Depending on the type of wellness offering you are developing, this money would be spent on tourism specialists, technical specialists, and detailed architectural design.





Peninsula Hot Springs, Mornington Peninsula

A Holistic Wellness Sanctuary on the Mornington Peninsula

Quick tips

Engage early: hot springs are technically complicated, and operators should engage skilled consultants early to ensure your project is sound.

Start small: successful hot springs developments develop naturally over time, allowing operators to start with a lower financial outlay, undue risks, and respond to market conditions

Think big: wellness doesn't stop at hot springs. Think about incorporating a broad range of wellness and cultural products into your offering.

Nestled within the serene landscapes of Mornington Peninsula, Peninsula Hot Springs is an immersive sanctuary dedicated to holistic wellness. At its core lies a commitment to nurturing all aspects of wellbeing, encompassing three foundations and seven pillars of wellness.

The three foundations include clean air, clean food and clean water, while the seven pillars address relaxation, movement, nutrition, sleep, mindfulness, education and creativity. Peninsula Hot Springs has had a significant impact on the region, elevating its reputation as a comprehensive wellness destination.

A Catalyst for Wellness Businesses

The allure of Peninsula Hot Springs extends beyond its physical beauty, attracting highly skilled practitioners and experts to the region, creating a mecca for wellness-focused businesses. This synergy has fostered a thriving ecosystem of complementary services and offerings, further enriching the overall experience for visitors.

A Journey of Patience and Long-Term Vision

Peninsula Hot Springs success is based on patience and its long-term vision. Thermal bathing projects of this magnitude typically require 8-10 years to come into operation, and the full maturation of the facility is a lifelong process. Starting with an overall masterplan for the site and a staged approach, Peninsula Hot Springs has progressively developed and expanded its offerings in response to growing demand, while remaining agile to changing market preferences.

This step-by-step approach has helped mitigate risks while building a well-known, high-profile brand and consistently adding excitement and new offerings for repeat visitors. This has allowed Peninsula Hot Springs to grow with demand-driven financial limits.

Navigating Complex Water Management

Like all thermal bathing offerings, Peninsula Hot Springs is required to navigate complex water management arrangements. Accessing geothermal waters necessitates expertise in hydrogeology and water licensing. Peninsula Hot Springs has worked closely with highly skilled consultants throughout their journey to ensure their operations are both compliant and excellent.

A Narrative of Wellness and Cultural Celebration

Peninsula Hot Springs isn't just a destination; it's a narrative of wellness and cultural celebration. As visitors immerse themselves in the therapeutic waters, they become part of a story that Peninsula Hot Springs has been writing for decades.

To learn more about the Peninsula Hot Springs, visit peninsulahotsprings.com



Sense of Self, Collingwood

Redefining Wellness Through Ancient Bathing Rituals

Quick tips

Focus on customer experience: investing in businesses that prioritise holistic customer journeys and gathering feedback can lead to higher customer retention and positive word of mouth.

Embedded inclusivity: supporting ventures that champion the value of inclusivity through design and service broadens the potential customer base and enhances brand loyalty.

Sustain quality in expansion: look for opportunities where the expansion is intentional and maintains quality, avoiding the dilution of the brand's core values and customer experience.

Sense of Self is an innovative urban wellness retreat that draws inspiration from ancient bathing cultures, offering a refreshing approach to self-care in Australia. The retreat emphasises relaxation and self-nurturing, free from societal pressures surrounding beauty standards and performance expectations.

Deeply rooted in European and Scandinavian bathing traditions, where communal bathing is a natural and unpressured experience, Sense of Self was influenced by the founders' extensive travels, leading to the creation of a sanctuary where guests can enjoy the benefits of bathing without any external pressures.

Modernising Ancient Practices for Contemporary Needs

Honouring these ancient practices, Sense of Self has modernised them to cater to contemporary needs. The retreat offers a space focused solely on relaxation and cleansing, devoid of beauty expectations. This approach seamlessly blends modern needs with ancient traditions, making wellness accessible and comfortable for everyone.

Sense of Self stands out by providing a hospitality-style service where customers' needs are met in an environment of exceptional design. It offers a unique experience without relying heavily on offers and packages – guests are invited to take exactly what they personally need from their visit.

Fostering a Diverse and Inclusive Community

The retreat attracts a diverse clientele, reflecting its welcoming philosophy. The audience includes people of various ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds who come for a range of reasons, whether it's a rejuvenating solo visit or to celebrate special occasions.

Engaging Through Social Media and Community Outreach

Sense of Self's strong social media presence results from its focus on hospitality and community engagement. The retreat uses social media for direct communication and maintains frequent interaction and quick responses. This generates meaningful, positive word of mouth, which helps drive customer loyalty and attracts new visitors.

Prioritising the Entire Customer Journey

The retreat prioritises the entire customer journey, from planning a visit to post-visit follow-up. The team actively seeks and personally responds to all feedback, ensuring continuous improvement in offerings, staff training, and management approaches. Investments in communication and reducing booking friction are ongoing priorities.

Promoting Accessibility and Inclusivity

Creating a space where everyone can feel comfortable and relaxed is embedded in every aspect of the experience. Universal design principles and staff training aim at improving accessibility by ensuring the retreat is sensitive to diverse needs and fosters an inclusive environment for all guests.

To learn more about Sense of Self, visit sos-senseofself.com

Preparing for investment

Phase 2





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Phase 2

Preparing for investment

Stakeholder and community engagement

Stakeholder and community engagement is particularly important for wellness projects as they can be transformative to communities and take some time to move through the investment lifecycle.



Refer to page 72 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on **Stakeholder and Community Engagement**.



The Victorian Government has prepared a **Visitor Economy Community Engagement Framework** with tools and resources to help you deliver effective community engagement activities.



The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) *Tourism Infrastructure Facilitation* team is able to provide assistance to projects to support and advise on the progression of the project.

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For wellness projects, you should consider
engagement with these additional authorities:

Authorities	Reason
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)	Licensing: DEECA is responsible for bore construction licenses and groundwater extraction licenses. water.vic.gov.au/water-sources/groundwater/accessing-groundwater Land management: wellness projects are likely to interface with Crown land which is administered by the Victorian Government.
Water Corporations	Depending on the context for your proposed development, you may be engaging with a metropolitan water corporation, a regional urban water corporation, a hybrid regional/urban and rural water corporation, or a rural water corporation. water.vic.gov.au/about-us/how-we-work-with-water-corporations
EPA Victoria	EPA Victoria administers groundwater discharge permits and the associated environmental requirements. epa.vic.gov.au/for-business/permissions/permits/types-of-permits/discharge-or-deposit-of-waste-to-aquifer
Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)	Wellness offerings are often proposed in environments which are highly environmentally and culturally sensitive. RAPs are critical for navigating this challenge and should be meaningfully engaged for successful project outcomes and the required approvals. RAPs are also critical for the preparation of Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs). firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au/cultural-heritage-management-plans

Table 5 List of additional authorities



Project planning and approvals

Project planning and approvals can often be lengthy, and if completed incorrectly can delay the opening of your experience. Early planning assessment will identify what approvals your project will require to proceed, as well as the associated considerations, processes, risks, and timelines.

This section provides guidance on:

- planning and approval considerations depending on the sensitivity of the setting and the type of land use proposed
- rural zones and how they permit or prohibit wellness-related land uses
- overlays and potential limitations that may constrain development.



Refer to page 77 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the project planning and approvals stage.



Spotlight on spa and bathing

Spa and bathing projects generally have a high permit and licensing requirement due to their engineering complexity, water use and discharge requirements, and health and safety regulations. Larger spa and bathing projects will likely have more complicated approval requirements that will involve a wide range of approvals from several different authorities and agencies.

Major new spa and bathing projects in rural and regional settings usually meet the threshold for the State Significant Planning pathway (as outlined in Clause 53.22 of the Victoria Planning Provisions) and may benefit from the *State facilitation and approval process* offered by Department of Transport and Planning. *If you are seeking to develop a spa and bathing project, it is highly recommended that you engage planning professionals and relevant Victorian Government agencies early.*

A hydrogeological engineer can assist in acquiring the required licensing, permits, and approvals during this stage.

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Spotlight on camping and glamping

Camping/glamping sites generally have lower regulatory complexity in rural and regional contexts as a planning permit can be applied for in the Rural Living Zone, Green Wedge Zone, Farming Zone, and Rural Activity Zone. Camping/glamping sites are typically more suitable than permanent accommodation in rural areas where developing permanent infrastructure and connecting to utility services is more challenging and expensive.

The need for a building permit for glamping structures can depend on a number of variables. It is advisable to engage a building surveyor or contact your local council to determine how building regulations will apply to your project.



Spotlight on restaurant and retail

Restaurants and retail wellness offerings are typically developed in conjunction with other wellness facilities and may have a high infrastructure and utilities requirement. Depending on the regulatory setting, you may be restricted in the amount and type of food, beverage and products you can offer, which might include limitations on patron numbers. Broadly, the operation of wellness-centric restaurants and retail does not differ in land use or requirements when compared to conventional restaurants and retail – though the level of service and quality of the product may vary.



Spotlight on wellness accommodation

Wellness accommodation typically requires high levels of service, and the delivery of high-capacity accommodation can be challenging in rural and regional Victoria where lower density development is typically encouraged. Luxury accommodation has a high infrastructure requirement, while nature-based accommodation is typically lower density, and some elements may be self-contained/off-grid. Development in natural settings can face significant regulatory challenges due to natural disaster risk, native vegetation, cultural sensitivity and accessibility.



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Urban and regional strategic planning considerations

The strategic direction of urban and regional contexts can be very different – and it is important to understand how your proposed project aligns with the objectives for the local area. Projects that are aligned with an area's strategic direction are more likely to be facilitated and approved by the local council. Understanding the needs and desires of your local council is a critical element of achieving both immediate approvals and long-term success.

As a starting point, you should consider the following when assessing the strategic planning context of your proposed development:

- Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS)
- State Planning Policy Framework
- local planning schemes (including Municipal Strategic Statements, local planning policies and applicable Zones and Overlays)
- council economic development strategies
- Destination Management Plans.

Land use definitions and zoning

Victoria's planning schemes include a classification of land use types to help guide planning permit decisions. These land use classifications are broad and often don't neatly describe the range of activities that take place within an immersive wellness experience. To understand where your proposed land use sits within the Victoria Planning Provisions, it may be necessary to review *Clauses 73.03 Land Use Terms* and *73.04 Nesting Diagrams*.

It is important to be aware that even if a land use is permitted in your zone, a planning permit is not guaranteed, and it may come with conditions that influence the way you can design or operate your development. In some zones, land uses are permitted but only under particular conditions and only where they are operated for a limited number of days per year.



Now is the time to consider contracting a statutory planning professional to understand what land uses apply to your proposed development.

As the land use terms are very broadly described, there is a level of discretion as to how different wellness products can be defined. Table 6 outlines the primary land uses which could be considered for each of the four wellness product categories. While this is not a definitive list of land uses that may apply to each of the products, it serves as a general indicator of how the planning scheme will view your product.

Wellness and product types				
Planning scheme land use terms	Camping and Glamping	Spa and Bathing	Wellness Accommodation	Restaurants, Retail and Studios
	Camping and caravan park	Leisure and recreation	Accommodation	Bar
	Group accommodation	Medical centre	Group accommodation	Indoor recreation facility
	Host farm	Indoor recreation facility	Host farm	Medical centre
	Bed and breakfast		Bed and breakfast	Restaurant
			Residential hotel	Primary produce sales
				Winery
				Function centre
				Place of assembly

Table 6 Wellness products and their potential land use associations



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Table 7 outlines the general planning complexity (low, medium, high) of each of the above land uses in the 3 primary developable regional zones.

Key



Land Use Term	Green Wedge Zone	Rural Living Zone	Farming Zone
Accommodation (other)	High	Medium	High
Caravan and camping park	Low	Low	Low
Group accommodation	High	Medium	Medium
Bed and breakfast	Low	Low	Low
Residential hotel	High	Medium	High
Host farm	Medium	Medium	Medium
Leisure and recreation (other)	Medium	Medium	Medium
Indoor recreation facility	Medium	Low	Low
Medical centre	High	Medium	High
Restaurant	High	High	Medium
Bar	High	Medium	High
Winery	Low	Low	Low
Primary produce sales	Low	Low	Low
Function centre	High	Medium	Medium
Place of assembly (other)	Medium	Medium	Medium

Table 7 Planning complexity for the primary developable regional zones

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Ancillary uses

In some cases, you may be allowed to include supplementary or 'ancillary' land uses (such as a small retail area) as part of your overall primary offering. The planning assessment is carried out for the 'primary' land use. For example, your small retail area selling wellness products and treatments and local produce (that would usually be considered a 'shop') may be able to operate in your development as a small shop despite 'Shop' being a prohibited land use, because the primary land use is defined as 'Leisure and recreation'.

The Planning Scheme allows councils to recognise the retail component as a secondary land use and to focus its assessment on the primary land use that applies to the majority of the site.



Now is the time to reach out to the relevant local council to understand their requirements for an operation to be considered an ancillary use.

Planning Overlays

Planning Overlays apply across the majority of land parcels across the state – particularly in more sensitive rural and regional contexts. These overlays require responsive designs to protect different landscape and amenity values.

Examples include:

- The Vegetation Protection Overlay (VPO) limits the extent to which a site can be cleared and requires careful consideration of existing trees and other vegetation.
- The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) applies to land that may be affected by significant bushfires and includes provisions to ensure that adequate bush fire measures are in place for any new development.

- The Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) often applies in highly desirable natural locations which are otherwise well-suited to the development of natural mineral spring and coastal thermal water destinations. This requires care balancing the risk of flooding and inundation against the desire to develop excellently located wellness experiences.
- Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) applies to natural locations that are designated to be protected and maintained based on their visual appeal and amenity. Proximity to SLO can benefit the wellness offering as many of these landscapes are located along journeys to and from wellness experiences, adding to a holistic approach of appreciating valued ecological assets. Development within an SLO also requires careful designs to protect the visual appeal of a natural landscape.

In these cases, advice from planning professionals and local council becomes particularly crucial. Councils' economic development units can also be a source of support for project owners, so consider contacting the economic development department of your relevant local council for advice.

You may require a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP), or Cultural Heritage Permit, to protect places or objects of heritage value. If you require a CHMP, it must be approved before a planning permit can be issued. This may be particularly relevant for wellness experiences that cover a large extent of the site or involve the use of or discharge of water.



Refer to page 84 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on CHMPs.

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Detailed business planning and funding strategy

As visitation and revenue for wellness offerings can be variable, it is critical that you take the time to develop a detailed business plan and financing strategy. A detailed business plan builds on the work completed in **Phase 1: Early business planning**.

Wellness offerings can have inconsistent visitation and revenue and often have high project costs, especially if the facilities are high-end. Wellness is a competitive market and operators are constantly refreshing their offering to maintain visitation and revenue. To ensure that your project will be commercially viable, it is recommended that you undertake detailed business planning and develop your funding strategy early in the development process. This will help you to understand what your anticipated project cashflows will be and where money for your project will come from.

Considerations specific to business planning:

- Often higher capital and ongoing costs for luxury products and experiences, as well as spa and bathing offerings that require geotechnical and water assessments.
- The intangible nature of wellness experiences and the importance to articulate the commercial potential of these projects and how these transfer to revenue and commercial return.
- The lack of precedent projects in market, which can make demand difficult to predict without rigorous market demand and consumer propensity to pay analysis.
- The seasonal and varied visitation and revenue.
- The need to consistently reinvest to sustain capital replacement and revenue over time through infrastructure, universal design and workforce training and improvements.



Refer to page 92 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the detailed business planning and funding strategy stage.



Wellness tourism experiences can require **specialised workforces** with unique skills and experience, and you should consider how you can maintain a reliable, skilled workforce that can deliver a consistent, excellent experience for visitors.

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Detailed design

In the detailed design stage, your architect will progress your concept design to the construction stage and help to confirm construction costs. When designing a particular experience, you will need to ensure your document conveys your vision in a way that an architect can understand and accurately translate. This should incorporate the desired sense of quality, ambiance, and overall guest experience.

Clearly articulating your goals for the look, feel and functionality of the space will allow the designer to capture the essence of what you are trying to achieve. A concise brief for the designer with a defined budget will need to align with the project feasibility review and business plan. The critical part of this stage is ensuring the execution of the approved concept to create tender-ready documentation.

If you are seeking a bank loan or project funding partners for your project, you may need to undertake some elements of detailed design earlier in the development process to more clearly anticipate costs. They may also often want to see market assessment and demand forecasting before granting a loan. These considerations have been outlined in **Phase 1: Early business planning**.



Refer to page 98 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the detailed design stage.





The Benev, Beechworth

A Holistic Wellness Sanctuary: The Benev's Journey

Quick tips

Invest in authentic experiences: properties with unique historical or cultural significance can offer unmatched guest experiences and stand out in a crowded market.

Focus on community integration: engaging with and supporting the local community can enhance the sustainability and reputation of the business.

Adapt and innovate: flexibility in operations and a willingness to innovate, especially in response to market demands and external challenges, are crucial for long-term success.

Drawing on over 28 years in the wellness industry, The Benev has emerged as a unique offering. It is an immersive experience that seamlessly blends historical and architectural significance with modern wellness practices. Established initially as an independent spa, The Benev has evolved into a comprehensive wellness retreat, encompassing accommodation, treatments, events, products, and community engagement initiatives.

Bridging the Gap: Integrating Wellness into Everyday Life

While wellness tourism has gained momentum, seamlessly incorporating wellness practices into daily routines and travel experiences remains a largely untapped opportunity. The Benev aims to address this gap by offering an all-encompassing wellness journey that goes beyond typical health retreats. Their approach emphasises a holistic perspective on wellbeing, environmental consciousness, historical appreciation, and high-quality, personalised services tailored to individual needs.

Catering to Diverse Wellness Needs

The Benev caters to two primary markets – one seeking human connection and value experiences, with ample time to explore and engage in wellness activities, and another comprising time-poor weekend travellers and their families seeking high-quality, short-duration getaways that offer rejuvenation and relief from their busy schedules.

A Unique Blend of History and Modernity

What sets The Benev apart is its unique location, historic building, and the authenticity of its offerings. Operating independently, The Benev offers a personalised touch in every aspect of its services. The property itself, a renovated heritage building, adds to the charm and appeal, offering guests a unique blend of historical significance and modern comfort.

Community Engagement: A Cornerstone of Success

A crucial aspect of The Benev's operations is its deep-rooted commitment to the local community. By supporting local businesses and engaging with residents through various initiatives, such as hosting local events and creating opportunities for community members to benefit from the wellness offerings, The Benev enhances the local economy and fosters a sense of community and belonging among guests and residents alike.

A Journey of Growth and Innovation

The Benev's journey has been filled with opportunities for growth and innovation. While renovating a heritage building presented logistical and financial challenges, it allowed The Benev to showcase its ingenuity and resourcefulness. Unwavering commitment to their vision has not only driven continuous growth and success but has also strengthened The Benev's reputation as a dynamic and steadfast institution in the wellness tourism industry.

To learn more about The Benev, visit thebenev.com.au



Wai Ariki Hot Springs and Spa, Rotorua, New Zealand

An Experience of Cultural Immersion and Artistry

Quick tips

Embrace cultural authenticity: investing in wellness destinations that honor and integrate local cultural practices can create a distinctive market niche and attract a loyal customer base.

Informed site considerations: acknowledging that the optimal site will require dedicated time and research to ensure sustainable operations and the long-term success of the investment.

Enhance the customer journey: focus on a seamless and personalised customer experience from start to finish can drive repeat visits and foster positive word-of-mouth, essential for sustained growth.

Wai Ariki Hot Springs in Rotorua, New Zealand, masterfully blends the region's geothermal heritage with modern wellness practices. The springs pay homage to the ancient Māori tradition of using geothermal waters for healing, offering a unique experience that deeply connects visitors to the land and its cultural history.

At the heart of Wai Ariki's offerings is a deep respect for Māori culture. The facility integrates traditional Māori healing practices with contemporary spa treatments, creating an authentic wellness experience. Guests are invited to engage in rituals passed down through generations, enhancing their visit with a profound sense of place and purpose. In keeping with tradition, the facility is controlled by the original landholding Trust. The Elders and their successors inherit these shares and are remunerated annually.

Sourcing the Spa of the South Pacific

Since the turn of the century, Rotorua has aimed to become the 'Spa of the South Pacific'. A thorough investigation of potential sites led to the development of Wai Ariki, delivering the 'Water of the Gods'. Informed site considerations over a span of fifty years included: water convergence points of hot and cold temperatures, tribal and historical significance, potential existing infrastructure, competition from other industries for location, cost-effectiveness and affordability.

The Essence of Integrated Authenticity

The fusion of luxury and tradition provided by Wai Ariki caters to discerning visitors seeking both comfort and cultural enrichment. In the competitive landscape of wellness tourism, Wai Ariki distinguishes itself through its unique cultural offerings. Unlike conventional spas, Wai Ariki provides an immersive experience that educates and heals. Cultural education through induction and workshops led by cultural elders, forms a centrepiece of the overall visitor experience. This strategic positioning appeals to a growing segment of wellness tourists looking for authenticity and depth in their travel experiences through personalised service.

Wai Whakaora – The Restorative Journey

Designed to be the core experience at Wai Ariki, Wai Whakaora begins with a Karakia beside a mauri stone from Tarawera, where guests are invited to take a handful of water and press their hands to the stone to cleanse the spirits. From here Te Ahi Tupua, or Tongariro Fire & Ice, offers 3 different sauna experiences from salt, hay and traditional saunas. A Kneipp ice water walk past the mosaic image of the mountains of Tongariro will give relief to legs and work the circulation. The journey continues with geothermal pools, herbal pools, and volcanic mud experiences, leaving you re-invigorated and connected to the people and practices of Ngāti Whakaue culture.

To extend the journey, guests can purchase locally sourced geothermal skincare products and traditional Māori crafts. This focus on local products not only enhances the guest experience but also supports the local economy.

To learn more about Wai Ariki Hot Springs and Spa, visit wai-ariki.co.nz

Construction and delivery

Phase 3





Phase 3

Construction and delivery

Phase 3 of the investment lifecycle comprises the "Pre-construction", "During construction", and "Completion and post-completion" stages. This phase will see your project progressing from plans and drawings on paper to a fully built offering.

With your registered architect's guidance, you will obtain various approvals, engage construction contractors, and acquire permits and certificates for occupation.



Refer to page 105 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for detailed guidance on Phase 3 of the investment lifecycle.



Spotlight on spa and bathing

When constructing spa and bathing experiences, special attention should be paid to drainage and waterproofing for wet areas, installing specialised plumbing and filtration systems for pools and hydrotherapy areas, providing adequate ventilation and humidity control, and using slip-resistant and easily cleanable surface materials. Consulting experts on hydrotherapy equipment, water treatment and spa facility design may assist in creating a safe, hygienic and luxurious bathing environment that meets industry standards and guest expectations.



Product launch

Phase 4





Phase 4

Product launch

Getting ready for operations

This stage involves developing your organisational structure, finalising business processes, and getting licenses and permits to operate.



Refer to page 120 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for detailed guidance on the getting ready for operations stage.



Marketing

A visitor's experience begins from when they first find out about your wellness offering – a great first impression sets the tone for a memorable and positive experience. Wellness is a growing sector, so there are opportunities to make a big impact with your offering and its branding. By highlighting the unique aspects of your visitor experience – be it the natural beauty of your setting or the restorative qualities of your activities, you can establish your offering as an obvious choice over other domestic and international competitors.

Strong branding and a compelling marketing strategy are integral to the success and reputation of your offering. A marketing strategy outlines your marketing goals and objectives, target market and audience, pricing and promotion. This section will provide guidance on:

- the motivators for visitation to wellness offerings and their impacts on marketing your visitor experience
- using the wellness definition matrix (outlined in table 8) to inform your marketing strategy
- marketing wellness offerings to broader audiences.



Now is the time you should consider engaging with a marketing partner to ensure your wellness experience reaches its targeted audiences.



Refer to page 124 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for more comprehensive guidance on the marketing stage.

Motivating factors for visitation

A strong marketing strategy will help you to generate interest, attract new customers, and maintain visitation. Understanding the motivations of your customers is an important first step.

Encouraging people to escape their everyday lives and seek out wellness experiences is a strong motivator for visitation. By highlighting these factors, your marketing strategy may encourage potential visitors to evaluate their day-to-day routines and recognise a need to improve their wellbeing.

Examples include:

- **Desire for a getaway:** visitors view wellness as an important element of a getaway, and incorporating wellness experiences can create meaningful memories and enhance usual experiences.
- **Health concerns:** a desire to improve one's health or address specific health issues can be a major motivator for seeking wellness experiences. Some wellness facilities offer medicinal or remedial treatments for visitors.
- **Stress:** job-related stress, demanding schedules and a lack of time for self-care can push individuals to seek refuge and rejuvenation at a health resort. This is a long-standing appeal of wellness experiences – as a refuge and break from busy life.
- **Routine of daily life:** a desire to escape everyday routines and problems can be a motivator for some individuals. Wellness experiences can give people time and space to reflect on their lives and what changes they might like to make.

- **Doctors' recommendations:** in some cases, a doctor may recommend a stay at a health resort as part of a treatment plan. This may be as a remedy for a specific condition or to improve general physical or mental health.
- **Social isolation:** some individuals, such as retirees, may be motivated to attend a wellness experience by a desire to socialise with peers and combat loneliness. Social wellness is a key element of overall personal wellbeing and wellness offerings can provide an environment for people to meet and socialise with like-minded people.

Additionally, highlighting the positive qualities of your experience and creating an emotional connection as part of your marketing strategy will showcase the strengths of your wellness offering and inspire visitation by people who may or may not have been in the market for wellness experiences.

Examples include:

- **Cleanliness and safety:** a clean and safe environment is a major requirement for many people seeking wellness experiences.
- **High level of care:** access to quality medicinal products and services is a driver for those seeking to improve or restore their physical or mental health.
- **Wide range of services:** wellness offerings with a variety of services, such as fitness programs, spa treatments, thermal bathing, and high-quality dining options appeal to people in search of holistic wellness experiences.
- **Natural beauty:** nature-based wellness offerings should lean into the strong correlation between wellness seekers and nature seekers.
- **Immersion:** wellness facilities which offer opportunities for social interaction and cultural experiences appeal to people seeking to connect with others or to immerse in local culture.



Marketing the different elements of wellness

Table 8 maps the list of previously identified wellness products against the GWI's six dimensions of wellness (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, environmental and social). The matrix highlights which of these dimensions each wellness product particularly responds or appeals to.

Use this matrix to understand which wellness dimensions are important to your offering. You can then use these dimensions to inform the language, imagery, audience, and medium of your branding and marketing campaigns in order to maximise exposure and market capture.

Wellness tourism products		Wellness tourism experiences					
		Physical	Mental	Spiritual	Emotional	Environmental	Social
Physical/infrastructure products	Geothermal baths						
	Mineral springs						
	Saunas and spas						
	Camping and glamping sites						
	Luxury accommodation						
	Nature-based accommodation						
	Restaurants and food outlets						
	Retail outlets						
Experiential services	Massage and body treatments						
	Beauty therapies						
	Alternative relaxation/health therapies						
	Yoga and fitness programs						
	Mindfulness and spiritual programs						
	Life coaching						
	Stress relief programs						
	Anti-aging treatments						
	Culinary experiences						
	Detox and nutrition programs						
	Cycling and hiking tours						

Table 8 Revenue-generating wellness tourism products and services against GWI dimensions

Marketing wellness to broader audiences

Most visitors to wellness experiences in Victoria are domestic visitors primarily travelling for another purpose (e.g. visiting friends and family, visiting nature or seeking out food and wine experiences).

You should consider how you can market your wellness offering to capture more of these visitors who may otherwise not have considered engaging with a wellness experience. Strategies may include:

- partnerships with other tourism operators
- wellness packages
- specific messaging and campaigns that align with a visitor's primary travel motivation
- marketing partnerships with wellness and bathing trails.

Future expansions

Eventually, you may wish to expand your operations and undertake further works, either to cater to your growing customer demand or to add components deferred due to budget.

You should consider how you can refresh your experience to induce repeat visitation by creating new experiences or new ways for your visitors to engage with or reflect on the wellness experiences on offer. You should also consider integrating other product priorities of First Peoples-led experiences, arts and culture, food and drink, and nature-based tourism into your wellness tourism experience.



Refer to page 125 of *A Guide to Tourism Investment: from concept to reality* for further guidance on the future expansion stage.





Shizuka Ryokan, Daylesford

Embracing Authenticity and Wellness

Quick tips

Authenticity and cultural immersion:

success can come from offering authentic cultural experiences in areas like accommodation, cuisine, and rituals. Investors should target opportunities that respect cultural authenticity and avoid misappropriation.

Innovation and adaptation:

modernising traditional practices and continually improving through feedback is key. Investors should focus on businesses that balance tradition with innovation to stay relevant.

Exceptional customer experience:

prioritising personalised service and staff training enhances customer satisfaction. Investors should seek businesses that emphasise guest satisfaction to drive repeat business.

Shizuka Ryokan, Australia's only authentic Japanese inn, is an indulgent retreat that seamlessly blends traditional Japanese hospitality with a holistic approach to wellness.

Inspired by the founder's transformative experiences at Japanese wellness destinations and a deep appreciation for Japanese culture, Shizuka Ryokan offers a unique sanctuary where guests can immerse themselves in the art of living well.

Modernising Ancient Traditions

Shizuka Ryokan is dedicated to preserving the essence of Japanese culture while adapting it for contemporary needs. Inspired by the Japanese philosophy of genuine hospitality, the retreat offers a transformative wellness experience through simplicity and authenticity.

Rooted in traditional Japanese practices like the art of bathing rituals, mindful cuisine, and nature appreciation, Shizuka Ryokan modernises these ancient traditions to create an accessible and comfortable environment where guests embrace wellness as a sustainable lifestyle.

Fostering Authenticity and Expertise

Authenticity is at the core of Shizuka Ryokan's success, emphasising genuine Japanese experiences. The retreat's team, including knowledgeable therapists and instructors, impart evidence-based wellness knowledge with guests.

To maintain this authenticity, Shizuka Ryokan recruits Japanese staff, including working holiday makers, who are passionate about sharing their culture. This commitment to authenticity extends to the culinary experience, where homestyle Japanese cooking highlights local, seasonal ingredients and offers accessible recipes for daily wellness.

Embracing Community and Continuous Improvement

Shizuka Ryokan values strong connections with the local ecosystem and tourism industry, engaging with organisations like the Regional Tourism Board for insights and collaboration. The retreat focuses on continuous improvement by responding to guest feedback and refining offerings. Their recognition through industry awards promotes the retreat and attracts top talent, reflecting a commitment to excellence.

Sustainable Growth and Vision

Shizuka Ryokan stays true to its values while evolving its vision and services to meet changing guest needs. This approach keeps the retreat fresh and relevant, preserving its authenticity and commitment to wellness.

By investing in team development and creative solutions like recruiting an executive chef, Shizuka Ryokan demonstrates its dedication to continuous improvement and sustainable growth.

To learn more about Shizuka Ryokan, visit shizuka.com.au

Glossary

Term	Definition
Biophilic design	Biophilic design is an approach to architecture and interior design that seeks to connect people more closely to the natural environment. It incorporates elements of nature, such as natural light, plants and natural materials, into the built environment to promote health, wellbeing, and a sense of connection to the natural world.
Brand awareness	Brand awareness refers to the extent to which a consumer can recognise or recall a particular brand. It is a measure of how well a brand is known and how easily it comes to mind when a consumer is considering a purchase of a particular product or service category.
Destination Management Plans (DMPs)	A Destination Management Plan is a comprehensive strategy developed by Visitor Economy Partnerships (VEPs) / Regional Tourism Boards (RTBs) that coordinates the various aspects of a destination, including attractions, amenities, services, marketing and environmental concerns, to enhance the visitor experience and ensure the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the destination.
Experience Victoria 2033 (EV33)	Experience Victoria 2033 is a comprehensive strategic plan developed by the Victorian Government to guide the growth and development of Victoria's visitor economy over the next 10 years.
Global Wellness Institute (GWI)	The Global Wellness Institute (GWI) is a nonprofit organisation with a mission to empower wellness worldwide by educating public and private sectors about preventative health and wellness.
Hyperlocal	Hyperlocal refers to content, services, or products that are focused on a very small, specific geographic area, such as a neighbourhood, town or community. Hyperlocal information and offerings are tailored to the unique needs and interests of the local population, often providing highly relevant and timely information or services.
Investment Lifecycle	The Investment Lifecycle includes the key steps required to establish a successful tourism project. It is a straightforward process to move from idea development to construction and product launch.
Regenerative tourism	Regenerative tourism is an approach that aims to have a net positive impact on the environmental, social, and economic systems of destinations through practices that actively regenerate and revitalise local ecosystems, communities, and economies.
Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS)	Victoria's Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) identify strategic directions to further drive growth and prosperity in regional Victoria. The REDS represent a new direction in Victoria's regional economic development, recognising that each region has unique strengths, challenges and opportunities.
Spa and bathing	Spa and bathing experiences refer to the use of water, whether in the form of mineral springs, thermal baths or other hydrotherapy treatments for the purposes of wellness.

Wellness	The active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.
Wellness tourism	Travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal wellbeing.
Wellness accommodation	Accommodation specifically designed to facilitate wellness experiences.
Wellness activities	Activities which wellness visitors undertake in search of wellness experiences.
Wellness experiences	Memorable and marketable segments of the holistic wellness tourism offering (derived from GWI's six dimensions of wellness).
Wellness products	Discrete investible infrastructure, assets and services in the wellness sector.





