

13

Wellness Management during Crises and Pandemics

The Covid-19 pandemic that began in early 2020 changed the world. With over 532 million reported cases and 6.3 million reported deaths (the actual numbers are likely much higher) as of June 2022 (WHO, 2022a), people around the globe felt isolated by forced quarantining and social distancing, yet united by fear of the disease and the unknown. This chapter opens with a case study of G Adventures' Wellness Tours, then defines relevant terms around a crisis and pandemic, outlines the phases of a crisis, and discusses wellness management during times of crisis.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter, students should be able to do the following:

1. Discuss G Adventures' Wellness Tours and how they encourage all kinds of wellness.
 2. Define a crisis and a pandemic, and the phases of a crisis.
 3. Understand complications and concerns in travel's recovery from a pandemic.
 4. Describe the physical, emotional, occupational, intellectual, and spiritual components of wellness.
 5. Discuss the future of the wellness economy
-

Case study: G Adventures' Wellness Tours

In 2018, adventure tour operator G Adventures introduced Wellness Tours. Although they were paused during the Covid-19 pandemic along with most other travel around the world, as of June 2022 Wellness Tours are planned in Iceland, Bali, and Costa Rica (G Adventures, 2022a). One important effect of the Covid-19 crisis is the emphasis on a broad definition of wellness—it's not only about being physically healthy, but also includes emotional, spiritual, social, occupational, and intellectual health (this chapter will go into more details about each of those categories), and G Adventures' Wellness Tours include components of each.

G Adventures' 2022 Wellness Tours range in price from \$1,349 USD for 9 days in Bali to \$2,719 for 7 days in Iceland (not including flights). All are small group tours, meaning an average of 12 people and a maximum of 16 people, and they require all travelers to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19. The physical intensity ratings range from 2 (light) to 3 (average), meaning the itineraries have some light hiking, biking, rafting, or kayaking, but nothing too strenuous. The Wellness Tours are in an upgraded service level category, meaning they include higher-level accommodations, private transportation, and elevated meals.

Each tour incorporates elements from various aspects of wellness, not only physical activity. In Costa Rica, guests can practice yoga overlooking the Arenal Volcano, visit hot springs and take mud baths, enjoy healthy local food experiences, visit the Mi Cafecito Community Coffee Plantation and a G for Good project supporting 200 local farmers, try paddleboard yoga and surfing, enjoy extended meditation periods, and more (G Adventures, 2022b). These activities are specially designed to encourage not only physical movement, but also emotional and spiritual growth and practice. Connecting to local communities through experiences like the Community Coffee Plantation visit and project, and facilitating interactions among guests in a small tour encourage social wellness. The actual act of taking a vacation aids in occupational wellness by encouraging work-life balance, and intellectual wellness is gained through learning about other cultures and taking in new experiences.

Discussion questions

1. Who are G Adventures' target market segment(s) for their Wellness Tours?
2. What other activities could G Adventures include in their Wellness Tours?
3. What impacts (positive and negative) do these Wellness Tours have on the local communities hosting visitors from these groups? Could G Adventures do anything to mitigate the negative impacts?

Definitions of crisis and pandemic

As of 2022, the world is still recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 (or Coronavirus) pandemic, and it is possible that more crises affecting wellness in tourism and hospitality will occur in the future. This section will discuss the definitions of a crisis and pandemic, and the following sections will look at the phases of a crisis, and management of all facets of wellness during these times.

Description of a crisis

A **crisis** as it relates to wellness in tourism and hospitality can be defined as “a condition of instability or danger, as in social, economic, political, or international affairs, leading to a decisive change” (Dictionary.com, 2022a). Covid-19 certainly falls in this category, as it has the potential to dangerously affect every person in the world. This caused global instability and an almost complete standstill in travel for months during 2020 and 2021, to try to avoid the spread of the virus with so many unknown attributes and effects. As of mid-2022 the decisive change has primarily been to require and document vaccinations as much as possible (although the challenges of this will be discussed later in the chapter), and to encourage more socially distanced travel.

Description of a pandemic

A **pandemic** is a type of crisis, generally related to health, defined as “a disease prevalent throughout an entire country, continent, or the whole world” (Dictionary.com, 2022b). Covid-19 meets this definition precisely, with cases being reported in every country around the world (BBC, 2022).

Phases of a crisis

While there are multiple frameworks and ways to divide a crisis into stages, some are very simplistic (e.g., pre-crisis, during crisis, post-crisis), and others do not align well with the topic of wellness in tourism and hospitality. Therefore, for the purposes of this book, Mitroff’s five-stage model for crisis management (see Figure 13.1) will be discussed in more detail, the phases being: (1) signal detection, pursue to detect threatening signs and search for preventative actions; (2) probing and prevention, work on initiating to eliminate/limit threatening factors; (3) acute/crises/damage containment, after crisis occurs, actions are taken to limit its spread and its negative impacts; (4) recovery, efforts to return to normal operations; and (5) learning, reviewing all crisis management efforts including its causes and learn from the process. (Mitroff, 1994).



Figure 13.1: Mitroff’s five-stage model for crisis management. Adapted from Mitroff, I. I. (1994)