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PHOTO: GETTYIMAGES

ON THE COVER

Paltrow is just one of many stars who go to the Ashram in California (p36)

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Cancer and the spa market

In this issue, Mary Tabacchi reports from the Inspiritas Spa at the START Center for Cancer Care in San Antonio (see p46). Designed for people with cancer and their family, friends and those caring for them, Inspiritas offers a retreat with advice and practical support to help them through their treatment.

What makes the Inspiritas wellness centre so special is the dedicated nature of what's on offer. The concept is based on research which indicates that making patients feel better about themselves and helping them achieve a positive mindset, can bolster healing and strengthen the immune system.

Inspiritas recognised that both patients and medics have little experience of integrative medicine, so the centre runs free educational group classes each month to explain the science and practicalities of treatments

Dr Amy Lang, a medical oncologist and one of the driving forces behind Inspiritas, says: "Cancer isn't just a physical disease – it affects a person's physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. We knew our patients were suffering in ways medications weren't able to address, so we made a commitment to creating an integrative oncology wellness centre that would address the whole patient."

Inspiritas and the START Center have a policy of giving patients the benefit of both traditional allopathic treatment and complementary therapies. And just as spa operators have begun to acknowledge the importance of scientific proof, so the centre only offers complementary treatments which have a clear evidence base, such as acupuncture for nausea and pain control, yoga to improve quality of life, sleep and 'sense of wellbeing' and mind:body interventions such as hypnosis, to aid relaxation and help people cope with the anger and fear which can come with a cancer diagnosis.

Education is also a focus and the visionaries behind Inspiritas recognised that both patients and medics may have little experience of integrative medicine, so the centre runs free educational group classes each month to explain the science and practicalities of treatments to patients, their carers and also their doctors. They find helping people understand what's happening to their bodies and how treatments can help is enormously reassuring and empowering.

So can the spa industry get involved with this work? The team at Inspiritas say there's most definitely a role for generalist spas to work with cancer sufferers and suggest spas partner with local medical oncology groups to offer support

Expertise is the key to success, as many treatments can be contra-indicated and need to be carefully administered. However, once this expertise, knowledge and best practice has been brought into the business, spas can help cancer sufferers continue their self-care regimes closer to home, as – inevitably – access to centres like Inspiritas is limited by their capacity.

Liz Terry, Editor
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Letters

Do you have a strong opinion, or disagree with somebody else's point of view on topics related to the spa industry? If so, *Spa Business* would love to hear from you. Email your letters, thoughts and suggestions to theteam@spabusiness.com

Spas selling alternative therapies should consider more modern marketing techniques

Neil Bradley, holistic therapist and associate producer, Sightline

Modern spa customers are well versed in using the internet to get information and buy online, but there's other technology that could be of use to spa businesses.

As an oxygen therapist, I know how difficult it is to explain some lesser known treatments and consumers hesitate to book them. Yet careful use of video could bridge that knowledge gap and enable potential clients to grasp the nature of a treatment they may know nothing about. Operators could tie the video in with a real-time booking system so that with the click of a button, users can view treatments on video, decide what they want, access the spa diary and book.

Video marketing gives customers freedom to choose in comfort, at a time when they're not pressured by queues and enables them to be fully informed, because it brings the experience alive.

Savvy operators could take marketing a step further by using touch-screens in reception areas to give clients instant access to spa services they might not have even been aware of and in hotel spas, if they book a treatment, it can then be billed to their room.

There are so many amazing alternative therapies in spas, video marketing – which is growing in popularity – is another way to sell these highly beneficial services.

PHOTO: WWW.SIGHTLINE.CO.UK

Videos enable potential clients to grasp the nature of alternative treatments, such as oxygen therapy

Video marketing gives customers freedom to choose [alternative therapies] in comfort and enables them to be fully informed, because it brings the experience alive

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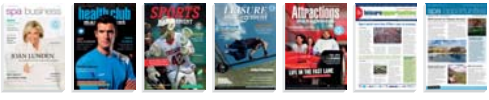

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The average age at which women start using beauty products has gone down from 17 to 13.7

The beauty youth market is escalating and is here to stay

Ed Schack, owner, EES Cosmetic Solutions

With over 25 years in the cosmetic and personal care industry, I've seen multitudes of beauty trends come and go. One that's gained momentum in recent years and even appears to be spiking upwards is the youth cosmetics industry.

The NDP Group Inc reports that in 2005, the average age a woman began using beauty products was 17; today it is 13.7. What's more, 43 per cent of six- to nine-year-olds use lipstick or lip gloss, 38 per cent use hairstyling products and 12 per cent use other cosmetics, according to market research company Experian.

This trend is driven, in part, by working mums who want to spend more 'girl time' with their daughters and pass on products and behaviours that will foster greater self confidence. This 'princess movement' has resulted in many girls focusing on their physical appearance, fuelled by a image-focused media and celebrity culture. New beauty and self care product lines have hit the market for teens, tweens and even younger girls. Girls are throwing spa parties – with manicures, pedicures and facials – for their birthdays.

The youth cosmetics industry will focus on natural products lines. The younger set are even more aware about what they put on their face and bodies

Salons and spas today have service menus and retail items tailored specifically for young girls. Yet with so much opportunity, companies will continue to invest in this profitable new demographic well into the future. The global spa industry could carve out considerable market share as mothers actively seek providers – whether at home or on vacation – that allow their daughters to take part in the same spa experiences they themselves enjoy. Offering packages, parties and product lines at hotels, destination spas and even on cruise lines that are geared toward the youth market is an emerging and growing strategy.

The youth cosmetics industry will take a similar path as the adult market – focusing on natural and organic product lines. The younger set are even more aware about what they put on their bodies and faces. Mothers, too, want to make sure that products used by their daughters – with delicate, young skin – are free of chemicals and potentially harmful ingredients.

While no one is ever really too young to learn about personal care, hygiene and the importance of maintaining one's skin, the notion of beauty – and related products – are now part of our youth culture … like it or not. And the manufacturing industry does.

Embrace beauty, but remember your core values

Katie Welch, vice-president of global communications, Bliss

I was interested to read The Race for Beauty feature in the last issue of *Spa Business* (see SB11/1 p20). I agree with the points made – that adding beauty services not only round outs your spa menu, but also has the potential to encourage greater loyalty from existing clientele.

However, pitfalls and false starts abound. First, beauty services must be authentic to the brand. It is important that brand tradition and quality are not compromised in an effort to provide a 'one-stop shop'. Ardent clientele at Bliss love the spa: its smell, touch, colour and space and new beauty treatments need to fit seamlessly with this spa experience and ambiance – nothing jarring or bleak.

Secondly, placement of new services must give the clientele the confidence of an educated choice, not an add-on or bait. Staff training is paramount, and commitment in any new beauty service must be evident at every turn. It's important that our technicians are known as experts with unique talents and professionalism, not simply jack-of-all-trades. For Bliss, a foray into beauty treatments must be flawless and authentic to our brand

An example of bringing a beauty product to market would be the recent launch of He-Wax (men's waxing) in the US. We saw a gap in the market and created this service in response to what our clients were requesting. Technically, men are not new to Bliss, however, He-Wax was a clear opportunity to grow our client base. But the launch still presented a few challenges from staffing, training, and communication. As we began to format our services, attention was given to perfecting procedures, client comfort level – especially important with waxing – and technician rapport. The name of the product also had to have fit in with the Bliss 'tongue-in-chic' voice. The strategy was to make the client's encounter quintessentially Bliss.

To conclude, it's important to be forward thinking in services offered to clients – and that includes embracing beauty. But you should never compromise on your core values or alter your brand.

First phase of Soul scheme in Queensland pushed back

PETE HAYMAN

Work on the first stage of construction at Juniper Development Group's multi-million dollar Soul project in Surfers Paradise, Queensland, Australia, has been pushed back. The mixed-use plans include a retail complex and a 77-storey residential tower, which is set to feature a spa, sauna area, a gym and an indoor lap pool.

A spokesperson for Juniper Development Group said that issues affecting construction work had caused it to revise its timings for the completion of stage one.

IMAGE: STD LEE

The floating spa includes outdoor hot tubs

Floating spa unveiled in Montréal quay

PETE HAYMAN

A new floating spa concept, onboard a refurbished, stationary 1950s ferry, has launched at the Quays of the Old Port of Montréal in Canada.

Sid Lee Architecture designed the spa, called Bota Bota, which is spread across five decks. The lower decks feature 20 treatment rooms and a Bota Chic lounge area. A yoga and meditation studio is also included. Meanwhile, the upper decks boast wet spa facilities – including a steamroom, saunas, hot tubs and rest areas.

Inquiry launched into the safety of fish spas

TOM WALKER

The practice of using toothless Garra rufa fish to perform pedicures at spas is to be probed by the UK's Health Protection Agency (HPA) and environmental health officers, following concerns over the safety of the treatments.

Fish therapies have become popular and some operators, such as London-based Aqua Sheko, base their entire business model on the Garra rufa. An HPA spokesperson told *Spa Business* that the agency was looking into the matter following queries from health officers around the UK.

300 spas for Four Fountains

PETE HAYMAN

India-based spa operator Four Fountains Spa has confirmed its intention to launch 300 new facilities across the country within the next three years. The majority of the new sites (85 per cent) are set to be franchisee owned and operated, with 10 per cent to be franchisee owned and company operated and 5 per cent to be in-house.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/©FALKO MATTE

Four Fountains' plans include opening sites across India's 50 top cities

Four Fountains Spa director Sunil Rao said the company was looking to realise its ambition of "creating a health and stress-free India" by offering affordable therapies. The company currently runs 11 spas – three in Mumbai; four in Pune; and locations in Goa, Manali, Aurangabad and Bhopal. Rao told *Spa Business* that the expansion plans would see Four Fountains open sites across India's top 50 cities with a "strong pipeline" already in place.

"Although the spa market in India is small, it is growing at a scorching pace of nearly 35 to 40 per cent per annum. This growth will be primarily driven by new customers coming to spas due to rising stress levels in urban India," said Rao.

"Our intention is to bring spa therapies within people's reach by making them affordable."

Ritz-Carlton to debut in Israeli market

TOM WALKER

Ritz-Carlton is to invest US$160m (€110m, £98m) in opening a luxury hotel in Herzliya, Israel.

The hotel operator has agreed a management deal for a 12-storey property which will feature a 110-bedroom Ritz-Carlton hotel, with the top six floors featuring 85 Ritz-Carlton Residential Suites.

The property was initially meant to be the first Nobu-branded hotel

The property, owned by Israel-based Tidhar, is the same that US restaurant chain Nobu intended to develop as the first Nobu-branded hotel and spa – those plans were cancelled in 2009.

An opening date has been scheduled for March 2012 and facilities at the hotel include a luxury spa, a rooftop outdoor pool and a restaurant. Exact details of the 510sq m (5,500sq ft) Ritz-Carlton Spa have yet to be confirmed, but according to the company the facility will offer "rejuvenation and restorative experiences" as well as a number of exclusive signature spa treatments.

Simon Cooper, Ritz-Carlton's president and CEO, said the hotel will target both leisure and corporate guests and is part of the group's expansion plans for the region.

The Siam hotel & Opium Spa for Bangkok

TOM WALKER

The Siam hotel with its Opium Spa is set to open later this year in Bangkok, Thailand.

Spa facilities will include a number of treatment rooms, a bath house, a steamroom and a sauna. Products will be supplied by Sodashi.

The 39-bedroom Siam hotel has been designed by the hotel group's creative director Krissada Sukosol Clapp, together with architect Bensley Design Studios. The property is located on 3 acres (1 hectare) of prime real-estate on the banks of the River of Kings.

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Asian market report published

TOM WALKER

Thailand and Australia are the two largest mature spa markets in the Asia-Pacific region according to a report released in April. Between them, the two countries generate 43 per cent of the region's total spa industry revenue.

Other findings of the report show that there are currently 3,500 facilities operating within the region – with 60 per cent of Asian countries considered as emerging and potential spa markets.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/©PALKO MATTE

The region's spas generate US$2bn annually and employ 50,000 people

Compiled by specialist research company Intelligent Spas on behalf of The Asia Pacific Spa and Wellness Coalition, the report suggests that there are also plenty of development and business opportunities across Asia. It shows that the region's spas collectively generate annual revenues of around US$2bn (€1.4bn, £1.2bn) and employ more than 50,000 people.

Collected using Intelligent Spas' Global Spa Benchmark Program, the report shows that the spa industry is active in 31 of the 42 countries (74 per cent), with nine countries considered mature spa markets, seven as growing spa markets, 15 perceived as emerging spa markets and 11 countries are described as potential future spa markets. Details: www.intelligentspas.com.

Club Med enters Chinese market with ski resort

TOM WALKER

French resort operator Club Med has opened its first site in China.

The Yabuli ski resort, located in the Heilongjiang province in the north-east of the country, includes two luxury hotels, 18 ski slopes of varying difficulties and a Club Med Spa by L'Occitane.

Facilities at the Club Med Spa by L'Occitane include 10 treatment rooms, two foot reflexology stations, a relaxation lounge, a tranquil indoor pool and an outdoor spa pool.

Spa opens at GoldenEye resort after delay

TOM WALKER

The Island Outpost Group, owned by music mogul Chris Blackwell, has launched the GoldenEye resort – the former home of *James Bond* author Ian Fleming – at Oracabessa, Jamaica. The luxury resort will include 23 guest units amid 52 acres (21 hectares) of coastline, lagoons and tropical gardens.

Resort facilities include a spa which, according to a spokesperson, is smaller than initially planned. The Field Spa at GoldenEye will be located in a redeveloped villa and boasts four large treatment rooms.

GoldenEye resort is the former home of *James Bond* author Ian Fleming

A treatment menu of body scrubs, massages and facials will be administered by five full-time therapists. Guests will also be able to have treatments in the beach cottages.

The own-branded products used at the spa incorporate natural ingredients produced at the nearby Pantrepant organic farm – which also produces all the fruit and vegetables for the Island Outpost Group's six other main properties in Jamaica.

New spa law proposed for Serbian wellness sector

PETE HAYMAN

The Serbian Spas and Resorts Association (SSRA) has announced that one of its main aims for 2011 will be to draft a new spa law for the classifications of the country's wellness sector. Vladan Veskovic, secretary of the SSRA, said ahead of the Serbian Spas Congress on 17-18 May that the current legislation could not be successfully revised.

It is expected that the draft law will be completed by the 3rd Serbian Spa Congress, at which point it will be presented to the public for consultation.

Payne was also head of spas for IHG Asia-Pacific

Payne joins Amanresorts as spa operations director

TOM WALKER

Greg Payne has been appointed as the new spa operations director at hotel group Amanresorts (see SB10/2 p24). Payne replaces Heather Blankinship in the role, who left the company to set up her own spa consultancy.

Before joining Aman, Payne most recently worked as an international hotel and spa consultant and earlier this year launched a wellness centre called Verita in Singapore. Previously, he also headed up spas for InterContinental Asia-Pacific (SB09/1 p26).

Anni Hood introduces K.I.S Lifestyle

TOM WALKER

Anni Hood, former group director of spas at Jumeirah, has launched a new consumer-facing company called K.I.S Lifestyle. The company focuses on providing customers with a "collective approach to optimising health" by integrating a range of services – classic spa treatments, medical expertise, life coaching and nutritional guidance.

Anni Hood said: "The need to 'keep it simple' (KIS) and deliver an uncomplicated and inspiring reason to indulge in improved and better health is a compelling one."

Mia Kyricos joins Core Performance

TOM WALKER

Mia Kyricos, former director of global spa brands at Starwood, has joined fitness company Core Performance.

Kyricos has been appointed Core's vice-president of corporate wellness and will be responsible for the implementation and success of wellness centres and related programming at a host of Fortune 500 companies. Core Performance is backed by Polaris Ventures – a venture firm managing more than US$3.5bn (€2.4bn, £2.1bn) worth of investment.

Kerry is a new design-led urban hotel brand

Shangri-La introduces Kerry brand in China

MARTIN NASH

Shangri-La has opened the 31-storey, 574-bedroom Kerry Hotel Pudong, Shanghai, China – the debut of the company's new design-led urban hotel brand.

Each hotel in the new brand will boast a Kerry Sports-branded leisure offer, which also includes a spa. The 275sq m (2,960sq ft) day spa at Kerry Hotel Pudong has nine treatment suites – including a couples' suite – and specialises in traditional Chinese medicine treatments based on ancient Wushu healing traditions.

Andermatt resort spa details revealed

TOM WALKER

The 426-bedroom Chedi Andermatt Hotel at the skiing resort of Andermatt in the Swiss Alps will include a 1,620sq m (17,000sq ft) luxury spa when it opens in 2013.

Facilities at the spa, designed by Zürich-based architects Hotz Architekten AG, will include 10 treatment rooms; a 125sq m (1,350sq ft) relaxation zone; indoor and outdoor swimming pools; a sauna world with a number of saunas, steamrooms and plunge pools and a 290sq m (3,100sq ft) health and fitness club.

Energy spa debuts in South Africa

KATIE BARNES

QUANTUMSPA™, a new spa brand which boasts South Africa's first energy-medicine programme, has launched at the Radisson Blu Hotel Waterfront in Cape Town.

The spa concept has been developed by wellness specialist Rob Cowling, who believes that the use of energy plays an important role in preventative healing processes. In a joint initiative with HealthTech Sciences (HTS), a health equipment company in Norway, he's created PATHWAYSTO HEALTH™ – a bio-resonance wellness programme which uses magnetic field therapy and bio-feedback devices to detect and restore energy imbalances at a sub-cellular level in the body.

The signature AQUAJOURNEY™ includes a Vichy shower experience

Other facilities at the first QUANTUMSPA include 10 treatment rooms, a vitality pool and a fitness centre. Another unique feature to the spa brand is AQUAJOURNEY™, a treatment comprising sequential Vichy shower, rasul, kneipp, sauna and aroma-mist experiences.

The second QUANTUMSPA is to open in Johannesburg imminently and the long-term goal is to roll out the concept further afield. Thomas Aksnes, MD of HTS has used a similar model to open 140 energy clinics in Norway.

Hotel Du Cap-Eden-Roc revamp completed

TOM WALKER

Hotel Du Cap-Eden-Roc in Cap d'Antibes on the south coast of France, re-opened in April after a four-year, €45m (US$63m, £40m) restoration project.

The redevelopment is the first major work undertaken on the privately owned property since the 1950s and has been designed to restore the hotel to its original design.

As part of the phased revamp, the spa facilities are set to undergo a multi-million euro redevelopment next year (2012).

The spa of the famous hotel will receive a multi-million facelift in 2012

The hotel's spa and wellness centre currently includes five treatment rooms offering La Prairie's signature treatments, a large relaxation zone and a sauna area with sauna steamroom and hammam.

Funded by the current owners, the Oetker family, the redevelopment was designed by architect Luc Svetchine. Work has seen the refurbishment of all rooms and public areas; a new grill restaurant with a sushi bar; and a new swimming pool and beach area.

French operator enters Cambodia with luxury offer

TOM WALKER

French hotel group Accor has opened Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra, the first new five-star hotel to open in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, since the 1990s. Accor has invested US$70m (£43m, €50m) in the 201-bedroom hotel which includes eight restaurants and bars, a So SPA by Sofitel-branded spa, two swimming pools and the Phokeethra Sports Club.

Spa facilities include six treatment rooms, a hammam, a sauna, an outdoor swimming pool and a fitness suite.

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KLAFS
MY SAUNA AND SPA

Thann Sanctuary reveals new spa in Singapore

PETE HAYMAN

A new Thann Sanctuary spa has opened at the 86-bedroom Hotel Fort Canning, Singapore – a former British command base during World War Two. Housed within a two-storey glass block, the new spa boasts a total of four treatment rooms - each including a private bathroom and elevated resting platform.

Guests will be able to take advantage of a range of treatments designed to reflect a 'holistic emphasis on re-discovering inner physical and mental wellness'..

The hotel spa boasts an outdoor relaxation area

Jouvence Spa debuts at private hotel in Africa

TOM WALKER

A day spa has opened at the privately-owned Myosotis Résidence Hôtel et Spa in Cotonou, Benin.

The 250sq m (2,700sq ft) Jouvence Spa boasts six treatment rooms, a spa pool, hammam, Vichy shower and a relaxation area.

Swiss product house After the Rain supplied the spa products and also acted as the overall consultant on the project, offering its expertise in architecture, human resources, training and operations.

Mövenpick takes over Hilton Cebu

TOM WALKER

Mövenpick Hotels & Resorts has expanded its portfolio of Asian properties with the signing of a management deal for the Hilton Cebu Resort and Spa on the island of Mactan, Philippines.

The Swiss hotel group will rebrand and rename the Mediterranean-inspired property Mövenpick Resort & Spa Cebu. Whether Mövenpick will alter the spa facilities is yet to be confirmed, but current amenities include indoor and outdoor treatment areas with a menu offering both holistic and beauty treatments.

Kids spa concept launched

TOM WALKER

The first installation of the new concept has opened in Switzerland

German sauna specialist Klafs has launched a new child-friendly sauna and spa concept which the company is looking to roll out across European hotels.

The Steigenberger Hotel Gstaad-Saanen in Switzerland has devoted an entire floor of its Spa Luxury World, which is spread across three storeys, exclusively to children.

The installation is part of the hotel group's strategy to cater for a changing demography among its spa guests. And younger couples with children have been identified a key group to target.

Facilities in the 150sq m (1,600sq ft) kid's area include a tree sauna with a mild top temperature of 40˚C, designed to offer a gentle introduction to bathing enjoyment. There is also a water grotto for children to cool down in, with an adventure shower and waterfall. Sensory experiences include soft tropical raindrops and sudden thunder and lightning effects – creating an element of excitement.

The area is fully supervised by staff and kids are able to try out many healthy therapies and choose their favourite for a full treatment.

PBA report predicts upswing for US spas

TOM WALKER

Capital spending, such as investment in new treatments, is on the up

The latest edition of the US Professional Beauty Association's *Salon/Spa Performance Index* (SSPI) paints an encouraging picture for the future of the country's spa industry.

Figures from the SSPI's fourth quarter report (Q4 2010) show that the sector bounced back from a decline in retail sales for the third quarter of the year and posted a small growth of 0.2 per cent in the fourth.

Salon and spa owners' outlook for capital spending activity also picked up in the fourth quarter with 56 per cent of owners planning to make a capital expenditure for equipment, expansion or remodeling in the next six months.

The SSPI is based on the responses to the Professional Beauty Association's *Salon/Spa Tracking Survey*, which is distributed quarterly among spa owners across the US. Details: www.probeauty.org

New spa for Dominican Republic resort

PETE HAYMAN

Secret Resorts and Spas has launched a new 20,000sq ft (1,857sq m) Secrets Spa by Pevonia at its Secrets Sanctuary Cap Cana resort in the Dominican Republic. Facilities include nine treatment rooms across a main spa building and six private suites; an outdoor relaxation garden; a thermal hydrotherapy circuit; and a beauty boutique.

Treatments and products at the spa, which include the Myoxy-Caviar Facial, will be supplied by the US-based brand Pevonia.

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Aman Spa opens on private island

PETE HAYMAN

The Amanpulo (Peaceful Island) retreat on Pamalican Island in the Philippines has been upgraded to feature an Aman Spa – the operator's signature, full-service wellness offering.

Situated on a slope above the treetops with views of the Sulu Sea, Aman Spa is composed of a series of pavilions constructed of native wood.

The reception pavilion features a lounge and retail space, as well as a finishing salon for manicures, pedicures and hair treatments. A separate three-storey fitness pavilion houses a fully equipped gym, a pilates studio with Allegro Reformers, and a spa wet area offering male and female lounges with steamrooms, cold plunge pools and outdoor relaxation verandas shaded by a tree canopy. There is also a yoga and meditation pavilion.

The retreat now boasts an Aman-branded bespoke spa and fitness offer

A further three pavilions accommodate a total of six treatment rooms, with each room containing a deep-soaking bath tub, a washroom, a dressing area and a steam shower.

Amanpulo resort comprises 40 beach, hillside and treetop casitas modelled on authentic bahay kubo dwellings.

Red Door Spa for New York's Long Island

TOM WALKER

Red Door Spas is to open a 4,700sq ft (440sq m) spa on Long Island in New York, US.

The spa boasts five treatments rooms, a private couples' treatment area, four manicure stations and three pedicure thrones. There will also be two make-up stations for beauty treatments and a full-service hair salon.

The spa will carry Elizabeth Arden skincare products and is the 31st full-service Red Door Spa. The Red Door Spas brand is owned by North Castle Partners (see SB10/2 p24)

SOKO expands with three Chinese sites

TOM WALKER

Chinese wellness operator SOKO Fitness & Spa Group has expanded its presence in its core Northeast China market with three new facilities.

The group recently opened its second day spa in Shenyang, a beauty salon in Dalian, Liaoning Province, and a health and fitness club in Dalian, which is operated under a management agreement.

Covering 7,000sq ft (650sq m), Legend Spa Wanda in Shenyang is situated in the downtown area of the city and comprises 11 treatment rooms.

Tong Liu, CEO of SOKO, said: "These openings present opportunities to expand into new markets without significant initial capital costs while maintaining control of our facilities."

SOKO has opened a 7,000sq ft Legend Spa Wanda in Shenyang, China

The openings increase the number of facilities in the SOKO portfolio to 24. Seventeen of the properties are wholly-owned, while six are majority owned and one is minority owned and operated under a management agreement.

DIARY DATES

16-18 MAY
Beautyworld Japan
Tokyo Big Sight, Tokyo, Japan
New products, treatments and trends for the Japanese beauty market are showcased at this event.
Tel: +81 3 3262 8939
www.beautyworldjapan.com

17-19 MAY
The Hotel Show
Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE
Showcases four different sectors: Interiors & Design, Security & Technology, Operating Equipment & Supplies, and The Resort Experience.
Tel: +971 4 438 0355
www.thehotelshow.com

24-26 JULY
Cosmoprof North America
Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, Nevada, US
The international beauty and cosmetics fair, now in its ninth year, attracted 700 exhibitors and 25,000 visitors in 2010.
Tel: +1 480 281 0424
www.cosmoprofnorthamerica.com

6-7 AUGUST 2011
VITASPA Spa Expo & Medical Spa Conference
Sheraton Hotel, Buenos Aires, Argentina
The official World Congress Spa Society event, is organised by the Argentine Spa Association and supported by the magazine *Vita Spa*. The conference is aimed at spa owners and managers as well as spa staff.
Tel: +54 11 4468 0879
www.vitaspaweb.com

13-14 AUGUST
Sydney International Spa & Beauty Expo Conference
Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia
One of Australia's largest spa and beauty trade events.
Tel: +61 2 9422 2535
www.internationalbeautyexpo.com.au

28-30 AUGUST
1st Brazilian Spa Congress
Sheraton Hotel Sao Paulo, Brazil
The inaugural spa event in the country aims to attract local and international professionals and will be held jointly with the Medical Travel Meeting Brazil.
Tel: +61 2 9422 2535
www.medicaltravelmeetingbrazil.com

KATIE BARNES » MANAGING EDITOR » SPA BUSINESS

The Sanctuary Spa Group, UK, uses a mix of full- and part-time staff

PHOTO: SANCTUARY SPA, COVENT GARDEN. UNIFORMS BY FASHIONIZER SPA

everyone's talking about...

FLEXIBLE STAFFING

Last year, the number of part-time staff in the spa industry was equal to full-time employees for the first time ever, according to statistics from the *ISPA 2010 US Spa Industry Study* (see SB10/4 p34). This was undoubtedly a response to the economic downturn as companies downsized their labour force and reduced overheads.

There are disadvantages to relying on part-time staff. They are likely to be less loyal, especially if a full-time position presents itself elsewhere, so companies may be reluctant to invest in their training which will ultimately impact on service standard.

However, the model of having a core team and then bringing in extra staff when required has worked successfully in other sectors. It's commonplace in restaurants, for example, in helping owners to maximise revenues and minimise costs. So could a similar type of staffing model work well within the spa industry?

> Could part-time employees be the answer to higher yields?

Because spas presently have a fixed number of therapists for a set amount of time, customers choose their appointments according to the options presented and on how a spa can best 'fit them in'.

Yet there is an argument that being more flexible with staffing would be better for business. Rather than restricting appointment times, spas could allow customers to freely pick slots at a time of day and on a day of the week suitable to them. This would reduce turnaway numbers that can be as high as 20 per cent of customers (see SB10/3 p54).

Then operators could look at customer demand a short-time beforehand and bring in extra therapists if needed. As payroll is the biggest overhead in a vast majority of spas, this model could also be a way of keeping expenses down.

While this all sounds good on paper, how feasible would in be in practice? What contractual considerations would need to be given when employing part-time therapists? We investigate.

 ©Cybertrek 2011

BOB SCHRADER

President,
Aston Remick

Restaurants have used part-time servers to supplement their core full-time teams for years. The model allows owners to better tailor the staff to guest ratio and maximise their margins.

Forecasting the number of potential customers is key to this flexible staffing approach. Resort spas have an advantage in forecasting as they have a better idea of demand based on seasonal hotel occupancy trends, the type of hotel guests and predicted capture rates. Resort spa guests are also more inclined to book treatments farther in advance compared to day spa customers.

Restaurants typically look at numbers a week beforehand and staff extra servers if required. Restaurants really don't have a cut off point for calling in staff – it's just a matter of how short of a notice the employees will tolerate. Unfortunately reliability and quality of part-time staff is a bit of 'a chicken or the egg' scenario – typically high-caliber, part-time servers will be more reliable if they're offered consistent work in a busy restaurant; but if you don't have high-caliber, dependable servers then the chances are that the restaurant won't be as popular and thus not as busy. Another issue when looking at part-time staffing could be location – you're more likely to have a bigger pool of part-time staff in a major metropolitan area than in some retreat in the mountains.

One difference between F&B and spa employees is that, typically, servers earn minimum wage and depend on gratuities for the majority of their income. Therapists, on the other hand, can earn higher hourly wages and guaranteed commissions. In the US, labour laws require staff to be paid for a minimum of two hours – so bringing in a part-time therapist for just one treatment wouldn't be cost effective. Other costs, including uniforms and benefits for additional staff, should also be considered.

Some disadvantages to part-time team members are: it can be difficult to instil company values; they receive less day to day training; they are not fully indoctrinated to the culture and standards of a company; employers are more reluctant to invest in training dollars for part-time staff; and they contribute to a higher level of therapist dissatisfaction as a result of not feeling included. All of which can impact on the quality of service.

In the past, spa operators could afford to employ a greater number of full-time therapists on the basis that if they had staff available, customers would book. But with the poor economy and soaring costs over the last couple of years, they've become more in tune to the cost of being over staffed. Flexible staffing can be a solution to this problem. Operators have to strike a balance between staffing costs and excellence of service. Because spas are a high-touch business, labour costs will remain a significant factor to budget for and control.

> "The flexible staff model allows owners to better tailor the staff to guest ratio maximising their margins... forecasting the number of potential customers is key to this approach"

Bob Schrader specialises in corporate, multi-property and property-based management – including operational restructuring – in the luxury hospitality sector. Companies he's previously worked with include Four Seasons, Ritz-Carlton and Miraval. Details: www.aston-remick.com

KIRSTY MacCORMICK

Corporate director of spas
Onyx Hospitality Group

Most hotel spas rely on creative scheduling and opening hours to ensure they capture the majority of guests at optimum times. But as the current practice is to book treatments at the last minute, turnaways and missed opportunities are an issue.

The business model of large destination spas and health resorts is to calculate the capacity of the facility along with the capacity of staff and sell packages based on this. They do not base their bookings on the schedule in place, instead the therapist schedule is created based on the packages sold.

This current staffing structure is necessary in higher end spas in certain regions in Asia such as Thailand where freelance therapists – who are typically just used in day spas – only get paid when they perform a treatment and demand a percentage of the treatment price: sometimes up to 50 per cent. Unfortunately, this can also have the issue of 'extra services' being offered to guests.

Less rigid staffing schedules do work successfully in their businesses. The majority of the fitness industry works on a flexible model which allows classes and personal training to be booked when required and restaurants work efficiently with staff working on split shifts due to business demand.

A similar flexible employee model with more part-time staff would help lower the number of turnaways in spas. However, it would not be sustainable entirely on its own. A core number of permanent staff would be essential with the flexible staff filling in when required or for specialised services

One disadvantage to freelance therapists is that they usually have a much higher hourly rate and transportation costs may even need to be covered if they are called in at the last minute. To make the most of part-time staff, operators could cluster appointments around the times that they're in for – but not by offering discounts as this wouldn't be cost-effective.

Another obvious challenge of using part-time staff is ensuring service levels and standards are met – freelance employees do not guarantee a quality treatment, rebooking or retail sales. And the differences in pay structure could cause friction with the core spa team.

To ensure high standards, implementation of initial and ongoing training would be essential. This would be an investment for the operation and should be built into the overall cost of this type of business model.

Based in Thailand, Onyx brought in Kirsty MacCormick in 2010 to oversee spa operations and development. She has 20 years' industry experience and has worked for MOHG and Spatality. Details: www.onyx-hospitality.com

CATHERINE ROBERTSON
Group spa director,
The Sanctuary Spa Group

The biggest mistake any operator can make is scheduling their rotas not to meet the needs of the clients and the business but to meet the needs of staff.

How do you do this? The only way that staffing levels can be achieved that truly meet the needs of the business is though flexible working, a combination of full- and part-time staff. There is no magic formula for the ratios, but inevitably if you get the balance wrong then you'll know. If you have too many full-time employees, you will have staff sitting around with no bookings, if you have too many part-time therapists it becomes harder to manage the total number of staff as you don't see them as often.

Having full-time staff drives loyalty of both the employee and the customer. It's easier to send full-time staff on training courses and the employer can ensure that there is continuous performance. Full-time contracts in the UK generally range from 35-40 hours per week, but the alternative is to have part-time therapists who work for a minimum of four hours a week or longer. The advantage here is that you can pay overtime when you have heavy demand without being contractually obliged.

Other businesses may use zero-hour contracts. This is a relatively recent contract under which an employer does not guarantee the employee a fixed number of hours per week. Instead, the employee is expected to be available for work on an ad hoc basis and only receive payment for the hours they work. A word of caution if applying this to your business – ensure that you are clear on holiday entitlement as well as the frequency of work; if an individual is working a set number of hours regularly, a zero-hour contract would not be applicable.

There are a number of ways to measure the effectiveness of staffing levels. Firstly, therapist occupancy – ie what percentage of the working week is filled with actual treatments. Eighty per cent is the benchmark for a well run business – always allowing room for new clients. Be mindful that this should not include time for stock takes, cleaning or replenishing towels – while essential, these are not revenue generating.

The second measure is through the ratio of payroll:sales. This is calculated by the total payroll costs divided by the total sales. Aim for less than 50 per cent payroll:sales, although this may vary depending on how much additional management hours you have within your spa. A payroll:sales ratio that is more than 100 per cent essentially means that you are paying out more in salary than you are taking in income. This is before you take any other costs into account and it is simply not a sustainable business model.

A word of caution, however, saving your way to a profit is not a long-term solution. Getting the employment contract right is the first step to success as an employer. Invest in your staff and ensure that you understand the needs of both your staff and your business. Ultimately you will achieve a happy satisfied workforce who meet the needs of your business and the customer.

> Businesses may use zero-hour contracts where the employee is expected to be available for work on an ad hoc basis and only receive payment for the hours they work

Catherine Robertson joined The Sanctuary in December 2010 and oversees all aspects of its flagship business in London and three boutique spas. Details: www.thesanctuary.co.uk

AMANDA WILSON
Director, Omdanne Boutique
Luxury Spa Consulting

Although demands differ between urban, hotel and destination spas, the best solution I've seen is where there is a core team of full-time employees, plus permanent part-time therapists who work as allocated (primarily during peak times). On top of this, was a data base of 'casual' and external service contractors who could be called in to cover surplus appointment requests or remain 'on call' for further guest requests.

In Australia, permanent part-time contracts may be offered by different categories (or bands) with a variety of working hours stipulated. For example, one band could range from a minimum of 16 hours to a maximum 24 hours per week. Any extra time on top of the maximum hours per band would be classed as overtime. A casual employee contract with a zero-hour minimum, where therapists are required to work on an on-call basis, is also an option. External contract service providers are also on call and may be contacted for specialist appointments or permanent staff coverage should it be required.

Probably the biggest challenge of this model is availability of people, as casual or contract workers usually have many different jobs or have their own personal client base. Casuals/contractors may also have a regular job elsewhere, so their contact may be more irregular. So they are still kept up to speed, my advice would be to invest in training and induction for casuals and contractors and be inclusive with all meetings and communications.

The restaurant, retail, hotel, gaming and airline industries are all examples of sectors which successfully addressing customer demand and staff productivity through flexible scheduling.

The most efficient way to improve your payroll to sales percentage is by increasing revenue by addressing guest demand; and matching staff rotas to this is the easiest way. Yet you will need to ensure that schedules are confirmed with staff at least one day beforehand.

If employing a flexible staffing model, generally you will have more booking hours available and the potential to extend opening hours. Remember, however, that the role of a spa receptionist or concierge is vital in maximising occupancy and driving bookings – especially based around initial solo appointments to ensure that the most is made of bringing in part-time staff. They can maximise occupancy and bookings by up-selling, adding-on, highlighting therapist modalities and offering special promotions or packages.

Based in Australia, the Omdanne consultancy oversees spa projects from conception and design, through to operations and management. Details: www.omdanne.com

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RAVI CHANDRAN

Banyan Tree is renowned for its holistic spas and leading service standards, but as the operator makes inroads into new markets – in Asia and further afield – how will it maintain its strong positioning? We talk to the senior vice-president and managing director of spa operations

NEENA DHILLON » JOURNALIST » SPA BUSINESS

When Banyan Tree unveils its 20,000sq ft (1,858sq m) spa and fitness club at the Marina Bay Sands integrated resort in Singapore in June, the launch will represent a much-anticipated homecoming for Asia's premier spa brand. This new facility is just one of four strategic spa locations being opened this year by Banyan Tree Holdings.

The Singapore-headquartered company began life in 1994 with a flagship resort, Banyan Tree Phuket, before transforming over a 17-year period into a leading manager and developer of premium resorts, hotels and spas. Established by founder and executive chairman Ho KwonPing, a Singapore native, the group has focused aggressively on the expansion of its spa operations in the past 10 years, with eight sites in 2001 increasing to 65 today. Ravi Chandran has been at the forefront of this growth, in a key position as senior vice-president and managing director of spa operations.

Honest, engaging and to the point, Sri Lankan-born Chandran admits he's had to pick up certain elements – such as marketing and treatment protocols – on the job. Originally an accountant, he joined Banyan Tree in 1997, moving to Phuket from London where he left behind a managerial position with Hilton. Initially tasked to oversee financial operations, he was later earmarked by KwonPing to front a dedicated spa business unit. His wide-reaching responsibilities today cover finance, business development, projects, human resources, spa academies, marketing, purchasing and operations.

In addition, he is charged with building the group's reputation as a pioneering spa operator and consultant, as well as overseeing the 1,000 staff that work under the unit. He says: "When the unit was created about eight years ago, my job involved a lot of flying but we now have cluster heads for different regions – Asia Pacific (excluding China), China, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas – who report back to me. I still travel when there's a big partnership on the table but my team is very au fait with handling business leads and contractual arrangements."

Chandran joined in 1997 and now oversees 65 outlets globally; the flagship resort in Phuket (below) launched in 1994

The spa at Marina Bay Sands will be the first time Banyan Tree has opened a site in Singapore, where it's headquartered

RESORT-LIKE ENVIRONMENTS

When it comes to developing spas, Banyan Tree operates resorts that it also owns; by 2013 there will be 50 such properties in the portfolio. Banyan Tree has three spa brands: Banyan Tree, Angsana and Elements Spa. The first two are sizeable spa facilities that are known for their holistic, high-touch, low-tech approach, although Angsana spas are more contemporary. The spas are ran through traditional hotel management agreements, as well as lease contracts where a facility is operated as an independent business unit although efforts are made to support a business partner in terms of revenue-generating initiatives.

New for 2011, the 15 treatment-room-spa and fitness club at Marina Bay Sands, which is designed and operated by Banyan Tree through a management agreement, has an aesthetic inspired by nature and also comprises a beauty salon, tea lounge and retail gallery. It occupies the 55th floor of two of the city resort's soaring hotel towers. "Our chairman is often asked why it has taken so long for the brand to land in Singapore but we simply hadn't found the right location before," Chandran says. "Singapore is very city centre-oriented but we needed a property with more of a resort feel to suit our brand. Las Vegas Sands Corporation, which owns Marina Bay Sands, is renowned for its casino and hospitality experience so we expect to have a healthy captive audience in terms of in-house guests. With the sky high positioning [of the spa] and enormity of the property, we think it will prove to be a high-profile window."

As with other major destinations, Banyan Tree has tailor-made two signature treatments to create a sense of place, one formulated with the high stresses of the bustling city in mind, and the other harnessing the power of the orchid, Singapore's national flower. In addition to targeting local spa-goers, marketing will focus on hotel and casino guests through signage, an in-room video channel, leaflets and newsletter. Although future competition can be expected from the planned ESPA spa (an opening date has not been confirmed yet) based at Singapore's other large-scale integrated development, Resorts World Sentosa, Chandran is unfazed thanks to the distance between the two and the size of the target audience at Marina Bay Sands.

The group's other three key openings this year – all based on management contracts with no equity interest – will be in China in Macau, Hangzhou and Shanghai. "China is a hot spot for the brand," confirms Chandran. "Our foray into this market [Banyan Tree entered China in 2003] is continuing at a fast pace in response to demand." ►

The group is exploring new markets such as Europe and the Americas – Banyan Tree Cabo Marqués in Mexico (above) launched in 2010

BRANCHING OUT

Chandran acknowledges the group's presence is focused towards the Asia-Pacific region: "Europe and the Americas are new markets for us, which we haven't fully concentrated on. Progress is being made as we successfully seek out locations that suit our brand profile." As evidence of this strategy, Banyan Tree opened a sizeable facility within Termas Estoril in Portugal last year, while in Mexico the group unveiled Banyan Tree Cabo Marqués.

In the next two years, Banyan Tree Kerala will be the first resort of its kind in India in 2012 (there is an Angsana operating in Bangalore) while Banyan Tree Tamouda Bay will signal the brand's entry into Morocco in 2013 (Angsana Riads Collection is present in Marrakech). Banyan Tree Costa Navarino will mark a debut in Greece in 2013 (see SB10/1 p32) and the group is also slated to open Angsana Santorini in the same year. Meanwhile the Middle East is also a focus, with spa outlets planned for Abu Dhabi and Kuwait.

"We're well known across Asia and in the UK, Russia and Germany because we have guests from these countries in our Asian resorts," says Chandran. "But in some of the new markets in which we are actively seeking opportunities, such as Brazil, Croatia and Greece, the challenge is going to be building up awareness through marketing."

PIONEERING ACADEMIES

Another potential hurdle will be to ensure that therapists in new markets are trained to the high standards Banyan Tree is reputed for. The first Banyan Tree Spa Academy, the brainchild of KwonPing, was founded in Phuket in 2001. Since then, two more educational academies have been set up in Indonesia and China, with a fourth being considered for Bali. "Our chairman had the foresight to realise that our success would come down to the consistency of training and service provided by our therapists worldwide," says Chandran. "There are other spas with great treatments but it's the way in which our service is maintained throughout the whole experience that really makes the difference. In fact, our service approach has been described as cookie cutter – a bit of a backhanded compliment!"

All new therapists undergo over 350 hours of rigorous theoretical and practical training that ranges from human anatomy and the skin epidermis; and from massage techniques and properties of herbs and spices, to setting up treatments rooms and greeting procedures. After tests and certification by one of over 20 head trainers, the therapist begins work and can then move on to intermediate, advance or specialisation level, with each of these requiring a further 300 hours of training.

Therapists who come on board join the payroll with all training costs covered by

BANYAN TREE HOLDINGS BY NUMBERS

- **Spa brands:** Banyan Tree, Angsana, Elements Spa by Banyan Tree
- **Spa outlets worldwide:** 65 in almost 30 countries, of which 50 per cent are managed directly and 50 per cent leased
- **Spa outlets by 2013:** Over 100 – of the 40 new planned openings, 75 per cent will be managed directly and 25 per cent leased
- **Spa academies:** three, including Banyan Tree Spa Academy in Phuket, Thailand (2001), Bintan, Indonesia (2003) and Lijiang, China (2007)
- **Total spa revenue for 2009:** SG$27m (US$21.4m, €15.1m, £13.3m)
- **Overall group revenue for 2010:** SG$305.3m (US$247.3m, €170.6m, £150.1m), down 3 per cent on 2009;
- **EBITDA:** SG$101.4m (US$80.5m, €56.7m, £49.9m), up 46 per cent;
- **PATMI:** SG$15.7m (US$12.5m, €8.8m, £7.7m), up 422 per cent

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the company, although they are required to sign a training contract for two years. In the event of early resignation, they will be expected to pay a compensation fee.

While many Asian therapists undergo training at the academies in person, senior therapists/head trainers are deployed to spas further afield, such as in Portugal, to train new staff on-site, although head therapists must attend one of the Asian academies. Refresher courses are scheduled monthly to refine skills and each therapist's progress is tracked.

"More than half our staff are university graduates," explains Chandran. "We are sometimes compared to Singapore Airlines in terms of our reputation, standards and consistency in recruitment, training, development and welfare. We are committed to promoting internally with our Fast Track and Management Trainee Programmes that identify individuals with the potential to advance to senior positions within two years. This helps in terms of staff retention and career development, as does the opportunity for our therapists to travel abroad. Five years ago, we noticed that other spa owners were poaching our staff but this happens less as we expand globally and because our therapists are encouraged to set their sights high."

To ensure spa protocols and meticulous touch points are being observed, the group conducts regular internal and mystery shop surveys. It also tabulates guest feedback forms to monitor consumer satisfaction. Testament to the policy's success is a stream of awards recognising Banyan Tree as a leading international spa brand and an outstanding employer.

LOOKING AHEAD

Of course, the group hasn't been able to escape the economic difficulties of the past three years but Chandran explains that it has weathered the storm pretty effectively by general cost cutting, reducing staff hours and introducing strategic promotions to ensure price competitiveness. More time has been invested, meanwhile, in training. He adds: "We're a fairly lean organisation and around 80 to 90 per cent of our staff are revenue generators, which helps to optimise profits. But with increasing labour costs in mind, we must continue to concentrate on the development of a strong labour force."

Looking ahead, he identifies the proliferation of competition from local and international operators as one of the biggest challenges. This will call for strengthening of brand identity in combination with innovative strategies to further differentiate Banyan Tree from rivals. In terms of future opportunities, Chandran concludes: "We are gearing up through our academies to cater for the emerging wellness trend. Our staff have recognised that travellers are now seeking holistic wellness experiences that comprise therapies, relaxing activities such as yoga and advice about eating habits in destinations with a strong sense of place." ●

Banyan Tree was one of the first hotel group's to launch a spa academy and now it has three with a fourth being considered in Bali

PERSONAL FILE
Ravi Chandran

Favourite non-Banyan Tree spa: The Datai Langkawi, Malaysia
Favourite treatment: Our signature treatment – the Tropical Rainmist
What do you do in your free time? Play tennis, watch *BBC World News*, read papers and follow Arsenal football club
Favourite book: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell
Favourite film: *The Godfather*
Favourite food: Japanese cuisine
Favourite places: Lisbon and Cape Town
Who do you most admire in life? Nelson Mandela
Best piece of advice you have ever been given? Never take anything for granted; everything changes according to the law of the universe whether it is good or bad. We are only as good as yesterday

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The Ritz Hotel***** Paris, France

The Dolder Grand***** Zurich, Switzerland

Grand Hotel Kempinski***** Strba-Strbské Pleso, Slovakia

Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, Palm Island***** Dubai, UAE

The Ritz Carlton***** Istanbul, Turkey

Hotel Hout Bay Manor***** Cape Town, South Africa

Hotel Arlberg***** Lech am Arlberg, Austria

Crowne Plaza***** Kuwait City, Kuwait

Hotel Union***** Geiranger, Norway

Hotel Prezydent***** Krynica-Zdrój, Poland

Vidago Palace***** Portugal

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DEEP IMPACT

FIGURES FROM A NEW 2010 REPORT SHOW THAT SPAS WERE HIT HARD IN THE DOWNTURN, BUT ARE STILL IN DEMAND. WE ANALYSE THE FINDINGS AND GET THE INDUSTRY'S RESPONSE

LEONOR STANTON » CONSULTING EDITOR » SPA BUSINESS

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/AXYZ

PKF Hospitality Research's 2010 benchmark review – *Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry* – is the fourth annual review of an industry, which up until 2008 had experienced enormous growth over the previous two decades, and was crying out for robust market and financial intelligence. The survey, which reports on 2009 figures and is based on a sample of spas in 81 hotels in the US, shows what a horrendous year 2009 was for spas.

Despite the poor numbers, however, there is an increasing expectation that spas should be offered by luxury brands. Jeremy McCarthy, global spa development and operations director at Starwood says: "While 25 per cent of our hotels used to offer spa facilities, it is now probably 33 per cent and 50 per cent in our development pipeline. Furthermore, the one lesson we have learned from the financial crisis is that people want spas. While our group business might have dried up, hotel guests and locals still demanded a spa experience, even though some of them might have scaled back their expenditure."

THE SPA NUMBERS

Spas are considered an operating department of hotels in this study and overall, nearly 77 per cent of hotel spas in the sample suffered a decline at a departmental profit level between 2008 and 2009, with 7 per cent suffering a loss in 2009 – that's a loss before any undistributed expenses and fixed charges.

According to the survey, the average annual revenue per treatment room in hotel spas in 2009 was just over US$130,000 (€92,550, £81,350); this represented a 19 per cent drop on the previous year's revenue figures. The largest expense was labour, which in 2009 on average accounted for just over US$73,000 (€52,000, £45,700) – reduced by 19.5 per cent from 2008. After all other operating expenses, the average departmental profit per treatment room was around US$34,500 (€25,250, £22,200), also 19 per cent down from 2008. This average departmental profit represents 26.5 per cent of spa departmental revenue.

There is, however, a huge variation when the figures are analysed by type of hotel or by size of spa. Revenues vary from US$74,000 (€52,700, £46,300) per treatment room in spas with incomes of less than US$1m to nearly US$194,000 (€138,150, £121,450) in larger spas

Revenue per treatment room was just over US$130,000 in 2009, down 19 per cent from 2008

TABLE 1: CONTRIBUTING HOTELS - 2010 SURVEY*

	TYPE OF HOTEL		SPA REVENUES		
	Urban	Resort	$3m+	$1m–3m	Less than $1m
No of hotel spas (survey sample)	18	63	11	39	31
Sq feet/spa facility	7,979	13,606	26,727	12,849	6,635
Treatment rooms/property	10	14	21	14	8
Stations/property	4.0	5.0	8.0	5.0	3.0
Total spa revenue US$ per sq ft	162.86	131.66	153.64	143.92	92.17
Department income**					
US$ per sq ft of spa facility	35.20	36.13	54.42	34.52	13.29
% of spa departmental revenue	21.6%	27.4%	35.4%	24.0%	14.4%

** Based on 2009 figures ** Before deducting undistributed and fixed charges*

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Spas with revenues of under US$1m a year find it the most difficult to optimise profitability

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREY_POPOV

with total revenues greater than US$3m.

The differences in departmental profits are even greater – from US$10,700 (€7,600, £6,700) in spas with revenues of less than US$1m to US$68,700 (€48,900, £43,000) departmental profit per treatment room in spas with revenues of US$3m or more.

Table 1 shows the variations on a per square foot basis and confirms, as did the 2009 survey, that those spas with revenues of under US$1m per annum find it most difficult to optimise profitability.

FOLLOWING SUIT

As the economic downturn had such a debilitating impact on hotels in the US, it's not surprising that spas – as an operating department of hotels – followed suit. "Hotels suffered an unprecedented 35.4 per cent decline in the [US] dollar value of profits in 2009", according to Robert Mandelbaum, director of Research Information Services at PKF Hospitality Research (PKF-HR). He says that this was on top of the "3.8 per cent drop in the dollar value of profits recorded for 2008". This is the steepest decline in the eight decades in which PKF-HR has been surveying the industry. In fact, it was found that 95 per cent of the hotels in the 2010 PKF-HR *Trends* in the Hotel Industry USA* suffered a decline in net operating income from 2008 to 2009. Mandelbaum adds: "Hoteliers tried to cut expenses in all departments, but just couldn't overcome the tremendous declines in revenue".

GROUP BUSINESS, WHICH WAS GENERATING SUBSTANTIAL LEVELS OF DEMAND HAS VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED... YET THE LOCAL PIECE OF THE PIE INCREASED FROM 13 TO 52 PER CENT IN ONE CASE

CHANGING MARKET SECTORS

So, which market sectors declined causing the revenues to drop so dramatically? McCarthy says: "While all market sectors cut back, it was the group business which was previously generating substantial levels of demand that has now virtually disappeared as a result of the financial crisis. Companies simply felt it was too lavish to include a spa treatment as part of an incentive group booking, that is, if they even came to the hotel at all."

As hotels discounted in order to maintain volumes, many found that the demographic of their clientele changed. Shane Bird, director of Aji Spa at the Sheraton Wild Horse Resort in Chandler, Arizona says: "When someone can pay US$89 (€63, £56) for their room, it is hard to get them into the spa for a US$135 (€96, £84) service."

As reported in the PKF-HR spa review last year (see SB10/2 p30), many hotels turned to their local community to boost demand levels in the downturn. Lorraine Park, vice-president of spas at Remington Hospitality Services in the US says: "It is the locals that have been our saving grace. We really rely on them throughout the year to keep us busy... We have a LOL promotion – Love our Locals". Bird adds: "During the crisis, the local piece of the pie increased from 13 to 52 per cent of revenue at Aji Spa".

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION

So, how did spas react to the declining revenues? Spa directors had to cut costs across the board and, McCarthy says, "suddenly in the face of no support from PR firms or advertising agencies, they had to roll up their sleeves and be creative in terms of communicating with their customers. Those who have been most successful have created a local buzz within their communities by participating in charity events, for example."

Bird says: "Guerilla marketing and social media were the main tools used. Word of ►

Payroll costs in smaller spas are still unacceptably high at 66.5 per cent of total incomes

IT IS POSSIBLE TO CREATE SPAS IN SMALLER SPACES WHILE MAINTAINING THE DESIRED EXPERIENCE... BUT THE OPPORTUNITY COST OF ANY SPA SPACE SHOULD BE CAREFULLY ANALYSED

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/PRODAKSZYN

TABLE 2: PAYROLL ANALYSIS

	SIZE OF SPA			SPA TURNOVER		
Per square foot values	Spa sq ft greater than 15,000	Spa sq ft from 6,000 to 15,000	Spa sq ft less than 6,000	Spa revenue greater than US$3m	Spa revenue US$1m – US$3 m	Spa revenue less than US$1m
Total payroll costs US$	63.58	82.81	147.03	75.20	82.80	61.28
Payroll as % of spa revenue	50.9%	61.7%	64.4%	48.9%	57.5%	66.5%

mouth was also essential. This meant that those guests who were making it into the spa now became our marketing team."

Park adds: "We got creative. We used Constant Contacts, Twitter and Facebook for the majority of our advertising. We love PR and any chance we got to do that, we did – it was a low-cost, effective tool to get the word out. Partnering with the local convention and visitors bureau has also worked for us."

In addition, many operators also used creative forms of packaging and discounting to encourage usage. Suzy Johlfs, spa director at the Westin in Avon, Colorado, says: "We created stories around the discount to protect the value of the service. Being a ski resort we came up with a To Ski Or Not To Ski offer by matching the price of a lift ticket (US$105 – €74, £65) for a Swedish massage while the lifts were open from 8am to 3pm."

OPTIMISING PERFORMANCE

Every expenditure line was scrutinised for potential reduction and indeed costs were lowered significantly. Nevertheless, the payroll costs in the smaller spas are still unacceptably high at 66.5 per cent of total revenues (see Table 2). In certain hotels, however, some people are beginning to question the current workload on those who were lucky to keep their jobs. Yet most operators still believe that it is possible to cut labour costs without affecting the customer experience, particularly by optimising staffing schedules to meet the peaks and troughs of demand (see p22).

Mark Woodworth, president at PKF-HR says: "Enhanced cost containment strategies must not be forgotten. If these memories stay intact, we just might see profit growth sooner than later." Despite this, Mary Tabacchi, professor at Cornell University, wonders "what effect the cost cuts have had on customer as well as employee satisfaction". Most operators state that their goal has been to ensure that costs to compromise quality. Yet shorter treatments or a reduction in amenities do have a certain impact on the overall spa journey, particularly for core spa-goers used to experiencing the full offering.

On the other hand, there are certain lessons which can improve profitability while having little or no impact on the actual spa journey. McCarthy says: "Build it right and you get a better guest experience and higher profit margins." He feels that it is possible to create spas in smaller spaces while maintaining the desired experience. Tabacchi agrees and believes that the opportunity cost of any spa space should be carefully analysed.

In terms of marketing, utilising and optimising social media and guerilla marketing makes sense. Also, achieving high customer satisfaction which translates into positive word of mouth has always been seen as a key goal.

Any survey about the profitability of spas within hotels, raises the wider question as to their overall benefit. The PKF-HR survey reports on departmental profit, which excludes undistributed expenses and fixed charges. So, even if some spas might be profitable at departmental level, they may not be truly paying their way.

Tabacchi confirms that operators feel they need to offer spa facilities because "we know that hotel guests often say they want a spa or they will not book – but when they arrive at the hotel – the guest may never use the spa."

So, do spas increase hotel room occupancy, average achieved room rate or both? According to Tabacchi: "We know from the work of Jan Freitag [vice-president of global spa development at Smith Travel Research] that spas probably result in an increase in the average daily room rate or ADR and hence in revenue per available room or RevPAR – but probably do not for the most part increase room occupancy (see SB10/3 p42). I use the word 'probably' because there are other factors that cause an increase in ADR."

Given the levels of departmental profitability and loss reported in the PKF-HR survey, there will be hotels questioning, and analysing, the overall benefits of their spa space. ●

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TOUGH LOVE

It's known as the place movie stars go to get super-skinny – but that's not really what the Ashram is all about. Catharina Hedburg, the co-founder and director of the famous Californian retreat, shares the secret of its enduring

RHIANON HOWELLS » CONSULTING EDITOR » SPA BUSINESS

Tucked away in the foothills of California's Santa Monica mountains, the unprepossessing two-storey building seems an unlikely venue for a world-renowned wellness retreat. But if anything proves appearances can be deceiving, it's the Ashram. This nine-room facility, with just four bathrooms for 12 guests, is not only hugely successful – it's been fully booked for over 35 years despite never being advertised – but it boasts an A-list alumni, with celebrities from Oprah Winfrey to Gwyneth Paltrow signing up for its unique brand of tough love, including dawn wake-up calls, daily hikes of up to five hours and a strictly controlled diet.

It wasn't always so fashionable, however. When Swedish business partners Catharina Hedberg and Anne Marie Bennstrom opened the Ashram back in 1974, they had no idea if the concept – an intensive programme of hiking, yoga and group exercise combined with healthy eating and spiritual renewal – would catch on. Hedberg says: "I remember the beauty editor of *Vogue* came to stay and she said, 'Cat, you're crazy. You're taking people hiking, doing yoga with them and giving them vegetarian food… if I write about you, I'll lose my job!'"

PHOTO: WWW.MARTINADOLESSON.COM

But for Bennstrom and Hedberg – both of whom held degrees in physical fitness from Swedish universities – it made perfect sense. As the first events director at the prestigious Golden Door spa in southern California, Bennstrom had been an early pioneer of workout programmes to music. Back in Sweden, Hedberg had set up a wellness travel business, taking tourists to the Canary Islands. She was looking around for a new outlet when she read about Bennstrom in a magazine and, inspired, flew to California to meet her. The pair hit it off and soon agreed to collaborate on a new kind of wellness retreat.

They settled on a location in Calabasas, an hour north of Los Angeles, with stunning scenery and excellent hiking trails, and built the modest property from scratch. "It's pretty small and simple – we have four double rooms and five private ones, which are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis – and there are no frills," says Hedberg. "It's not the Four Seasons."

Hedburg is known as 'the mama Cat' who "just gives hugs and makes sure everything is working"

Despite *Vogue's* initial lack of enthusiasm, the word-of-mouth magic started working, and before long the retreat was fully booked months in advance.

WINNING FORMULA

Although in the beginning they were very much a team, Bennstrom, now 83 ("going on 40") has retired, while 66-year-old Hedberg remains director. "I'm just the overseer: the mama Cat, who gives the hugs and makes sure everything is working," she says.

According to Hedberg, the original formula has not changed significantly in 37 years. As well as the main building, there is a patio area with a pool and hot tub, some small cottages for massage therapy and a striking wooden dome for meditation and yoga. The highly structured week-long programme is also largely the same. A typical day at the Ashram starts at dawn, with yoga at 6am and breakfast at 7.30am, followed by a daily hike lasting four to six hours. After lunch, the afternoon is filled with group exercise classes and an hour-long massage, before a second yoga session at 6pm. The day ends with dinner and educational events; by 9.30pm everyone's in bed.

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Aside from the gruelling exercise, the other thing the Ashram is known for is the food, which is largely vegan (give or take the occasional egg) and organic, with much of the produce grown on-site and picked a couple of hours before being served. Unfortunately, articles in the press have tended to focus not on the quality of the food but on the alleged lack of it; some sources have put standard rations at around the 1,000-a-day mark (a claim Hedberg denies).

While Hedberg admits that portion control is strict – and guests who want to have been known to lose anything from 6 to 12lbs, not to mention several inches of fat – she rejects the suggestion that the Ashram is a 'fat camp'. "People don't complain about feeling hungry, because we feed them," she says. "We want them to feel good and have the energy to work out, and not everyone wants to lose weight, which is great. If someone wants extra food, they can have it."

In fact, today's guests are a lot less interested in shedding pounds than they were 30 years ago, says Hedberg. "In the 70s and 80s, people always asked, 'How much weight will I lose?' when they called up. In the 90s and now, people are more likely to say, 'I just need a place where I can realign myself and think about some things'."

Each day starts with yoga, followed by a four- to six-hour hike. There are exercise classes in the afternoon and an hour-long massage

"The ones [celebrities] who are divas I won't take. They have to be nice! If they want a private room and there isn't one, they can't come. And they have to share bathrooms"

Another label Hedberg rejects is that of 'boot camp', although she admits the programme is tough. "Boot camp to me is military-style, and that's not what the Ashram is about at all… it's a gentler approach. We give people a lot of love, we take care of them and listen to them," she says. "Yes, they work very hard physically, and with that comes a lot of emotional detox, but it's a very individualised journey."

As such, Hedberg has a consultation with every guest on arrival to discuss concerns and goals. During the week, the staff keep tabs on each person's progress, and while boundaries are pushed, they are not obliterated. "If someone can't go up a hill, we'll take them by a flatter route," says Hedberg. "But this is rarely a problem these days, as most guests are in good shape – in the beginning we could hardly get them up the driveway!" ►

The seasonal retreat in Mallorca (all pictures above) opened in 2004. But Hedburg is adamant she won't launch more, as her real love lies in having a close connection with guests

STAR TREATMENT

The Ashram Calabasas is now so successful that guests are advised to book six to eight months in advance to be sure of a space, and 70 per cent of the intake is repeat business. Sixty per cent of guests are women, the average age is 40 and most people come alone – which Hedberg likes. "We say come and do this by yourself, because you deserve to concentrate on yourself for a week."

As for celebrities, Hedberg is quick to stress that no one gets any special treatment. "The ones that are divas, I won't take," she says. "They have to be nice! If they want a private room and there's not one available, then they can't come. And they have to be fine with sharing bathrooms."

The advantage of the Ashram being so small is that it enables all guests to be treated as if they are special, and this is the main reason they've never expanded. According to Hedberg, it's this exclusivity combined with the high staff-to-guest ratio – there are around 30 employees – which justifies the US$4,500 (€3,100, £2,750) a week charge. "Because we're small, it needs to be that kind of price for the whole ship to float. But everything is included in that, and it's still a pretty low ballpark compared to other places [such as destination spas]."

ASHRAM ALUMNI:

- Dan Aykroyd • Cindy Crawford
- Faye Dunaway • Jane Fonda
- Ashley Judd • Queen Latifah
- Shirley MacLaine • Gwyneth Paltrow
- Amber Valletta • Oprah Winfrey
- Rene Zellweger

JUST FOR FUN

Not only have Hedberg and Bennstrom never had any interest in expanding the Ashram, they've also never had any serious interest in rolling it out. Hedberg says: "It's a pleasure to connect with the guests, and if I had four or five places that wouldn't do it for me."

Despite this, about 10 years ago, Hedberg launched a seasonal version of the retreat on a Brazilian island. The programme was well received, but after 9/11 Hedberg decided the time wasn't right and closed it after just one season. Then, in 2004, she revisited the idea of a seasonal retreat – but this time plumped for Mallorca, on the basis that it was easier for both Europeans and Americans to travel there. "The mountains in Mallorca are gorgeous," she says. "And I happen to love Spain so it was also a selfish proposition!"

For six weeks in the spring, and four weeks in the autumn, the company now rents a beautifully restored 17th-century olive farm near Porto Soller. The house can accommodate 15 guests in en-suite rooms – though as in California, most rooms are shared – and there's also a chlorine-free pool on-site. Overall, it's larger and a little more luxurious, but the programme and philosophy are exactly the same.

Despite having no marketing budget, the programme was an instant success and now gets booked out as soon as the dates are released. Around 60 per cent of guests are Americans, with the remaining 40 per cent coming from the UK, Sweden, Norway, Germany and Switzerland. Yet Hedberg is not tempted to extend the programme and is adamant she won't be launching any more. "Mallorca is for fun," she says. "But the heart of the operation is here in California."

Over the last four decades, Hedberg has watched the evolution of the wellness industry with interest. "A lot of spas have started to copy our formula – it's fun to see how they've tried to do the same thing in another format," she says. "There's room for all of us. Let it spread, so people become healthier!" ●

Turn to p40 to read about a first-person experience at the Ashram in California.

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FIRST PERSON:
JOSH BERGER, PRESIDENT AND MD, WARNER BROS ENTERTAINMENT, UK

"Earlier this year, I decided to have week off to focus on my body, and the Ashram in California came recommended by some friends. I love hiking and really wanted to get into yoga, so that was a big part of my motivation.

My friends had warned me about the Spartan accommodation and small portions of food, but the lack of luxury didn't bother me and from the start I thought the food was fantastic – it was healthy, fresh and delicious, and I enjoyed learning about vegan nutrition. Most of all, I was amazed to discover how little food the body actually needs. I felt hungry maybe a couple of times during the week, but I certainly wasn't thinking about it all the time.

Every morning at the Ashram began with yoga, which was a great way to start the day. Then, after breakfast, it was the daily hike. By the end of the week we were walking for four or five hours, and it was very difficult. One day, we did this incredibly gruelling climb for two hours straight. An hour and 40 minutes in, I did start to question if I could keep going, but luckily I had my iPod and the music helped me through it. The great thing about doing so much exercise is that it makes food taste even better. On one hike, the guide gave us a snack consisting of just three almonds and a prune – but it was the greatest prune of my life!

In the afternoons there were a variety of activities. But the absolute highlights for me were the daily massage – these were quite literally the best massages I've ever had – and the afternoon protein drink, which tasted like an ice cream shake. Massages and food aside, the best thing about the Ashram was the people. Everybody in the group got along well, and the employees were terrific; a lot of them had been there for years and were so knowledgeable.

By the end of the week, I'd lost 9lbs and several inches off various parts of my body. But the real change has been in my attitude to food. I'm eating differently now. I haven't become militant about it, but I eat a lot more greens and raw foods, and I feel much healthier. The Ashram has a high price point, but I don't think the rates are unreasonable when you consider they're keeping you busy from morning to night. And if I change the way I eat for the rest of my life, then what price can you put on that?" ●

PHOTO: WWW.MARTINADELISSON.COM

The early morning starts and exercise paid off for Berger, who lost 9lbs, but the real change is his new, healthier eating habits

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COMING SOON

What shape is the industry in following the recession? Where in the world is investment in new projects increasing and where is it still slow? We collate and analyse development pipeline plans of leading hotel spa chains to find out

KATIE BARNES » MANAGING EDITOR » SPA BUSINESS

There's no denying that it's been a tough few years for the spa industry. Existing operators battened down the hatches in an attempt to weather the economic storm, while new developments were put on hold the world over. Yet figures we've gathered from some of the sector's top hotel spa chains (see p42) show that investment is no longer at a standstill – far from it.

"Our spa development slowed, but the pace has picked up recently," says Anne McCall Wilson, vice-president of spas for Fairmont Raffles Hotels International. Jeremy McCarthy, director of spa operators at Starwood Hotels & Resorts agrees: "Our developments continue to grow globally at a substantial pace." As does Christopher Norton, head of the spa task force at Four Seasons: "We have many hotels around the world opening in the next five years and we do not launch without a spa. Spa demand continues to be strong and in my opinion never really stopped."

Over the coming years, we can expect to see at least 200 new spas. And that's just at the top-end of the scale and doesn't scratch the surface of smaller footprint, low-cost facilities. So, where in the world are the new openings planned and why? And where and why is spa development still slow?

AFRICA

With only 7 per cent of future openings planned in Africa (see pie chart on p42), which equates to 15 sites, this region is one of the least popular – second from bottom – for spa development overall in our investigation. Yet alongside the Asia-Pacific, it is the top choice development destination of Accor.

While staffing, training and sourcing/procurement issues were cited as deterrents to entering the African market, the recent trouble in Egypt and Libya is not considered a barrier by some. Norton says: "We see the political unrest in Africa and the Middle East as temporary and have no doubt that these will remain two of the most exciting and lucrative markets for us." McCall Wilson adds: "It's going to take a while for Egypt to regain consumer confidence. However, I think property development will come back fairly quickly."

Of those African countries where spa development is planned there are two clear winners – Morocco, with most activity focused in Marrakech; and Egypt, where Cairo is the most popular city for new spas. Aldina Duatre Ramos, resort and spa brand manager at Accor says: "Morocco is a key leisure destination for Sofitel. King Mohammed VI's Vision 2010 and 2020 strategies have earmarked substantial investment in tourism for the city, especially spa [see SB10/2 p64]. Also, more flights are going to the country from Europe, including from France, Germany and the UK, which is where our core clientele comes from."

ASIA-PACIFIC

Unsurprisingly , Asia-Pacific is the outright leader in future spa developments – 123 new spas are planned there, which accounts for 54 per cent of the global pipeline of our sample. This is despite many difficulties the region presents from language and cultural barriers to finding, training and keeping therapists.

Andrew Gibson, group director of spas for the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group (MOHG), says: "Development in Asia slowed in the economic downturn, but bounced back to normal quite quickly. Some of the emerging markets such as China and Vietnam are doing very well; whereas the more mature markets such as Thailand and Singapore are slower – but development has not stopped."

China is the country where the most spa development is happening. At least half of the Asia-Pacific openings for each operator are in China and for others the number is significantly more – seven out of the eight new properties for Four Seasons, for example, are in China. Beijing and Sanya, followed by Guangzhou and Shanghai are the top cities for future spa launches.

> Asia-Pacific is the outright leader in future spa developments – 123 new spas are planned there, which accounts for 54 per cent of the global pipeline of our sample

McCall Wilson says: "China is a huge growth opportunity. It's probably the least developed in terms of the spa industry. We have three spas there and we're seeing a real interest from locals – not just expats, but

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Beijing (below) and Sanya are the top cities for spa development in China; Fairmont already has Willow Stream Spas in the country (right)

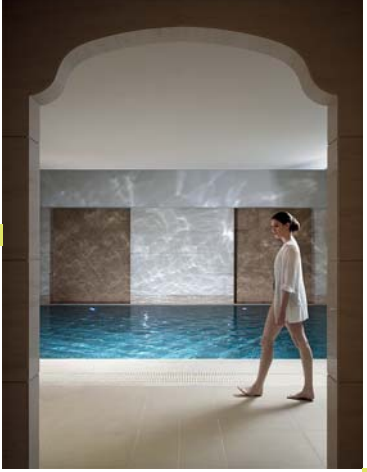


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/TESTING

local Chinese customers both male and female who are interested in luxury spas. Our positioning as an energetic, social spa fits in well with the traditional bath house culture in China and has big appeal."

McCarthy adds: "There will be 100 million outbound Chinese travellers by 2015 – more than the number of people who visit France each year. Having established brands in the Chinese marketplace gives these customers a chance to get to know our spas even before they begin travelling abroad – and once abroad they will naturally look to stay at our properties and take advantage of our world-class spas."

Gibson agrees: "China is an important market for us just is by very nature of what's happening there. Having hotels in key locations helps our brand from an internal perspective and externally by exposing MOHG to the Chinese so that when they travel they recognise our brand. Spas are important in all of our new developments and many of the projects in China are new builds with more space, in theory, to include all of the facilities you need [such as spas]. Also there aren't as many building restrictions or preservations orders that you might get in Europe, for example."

Next to China, India is the second most popular destination in the Asia-Pacific region for spa development in our sample (see SB10/4 p26). The key cities for openings include Mumbai and Bangalore. McCall Wilson says: "India has the biggest untapped potential market. There's a huge growing middle class there and what's interesting is that the country already has a wellness culture. But it is even more challenging [than China] to import products there and learning laws in any new country is complicated too."

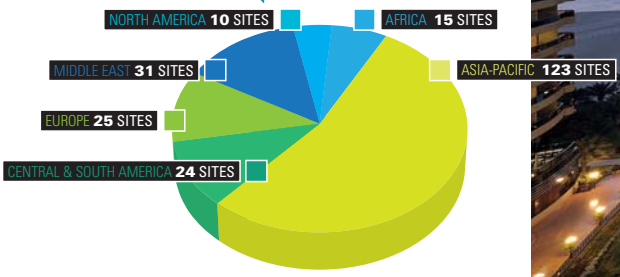
CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

According to our investigation, there are 24 new spas planned in Central & South America, accounting for 10 per cent of future growth. This makes the region the fourth most popular for spa development worldwide. The Turks & Caicos and Costa Rica are two of the top destinations earmarked for future spas.

Gibson from MOHG says: "The market has definitely slowed in Central America because of the American [economic crisis] affect. But the appeal is that there are already established tourism and hospitality sectors in most parts of the Caribbean. Plus there are 300 million Americans on the doorstep and it is a very attractive holiday destination from key parts of Europe. From a spa perspective, it is best to have a resort location, as you can develop wellness programmes and entice people for a seven day stay rather than a short, city break."

Most of Accor's spa work for Sofitel in this region of late has focused on rebranding – the brand is repositioning itself as a luxury offering and spas are key to this – as opposed to new properties. Yet, says Duatre Ramos, "The local distribution of products is a real challenge". For Four Seasons "it is only a question of finding the right location for us to develop a product of high quality," says Norton. ►

Spa development pipelines in the luxury hotel sector by world region



Starwood's McCarthy says: "Latin America has suffered from a lot of bad press in recent years [focused on issues such as swine-flu, drug-related crimes and socialist regimes of some countries]. This is unfortunate because this region is home to some of the most beautiful travel destinations in the world, with cultures rich in healing traditions that provide the perfect foundation for modern spa experiences. I expect the market to rebound strongly in coming years."

McCall Wilson from Fairmont adds: "It's much easier to manage spas in clusters, so that we can learn the business in that area and be successful. Clustering also helps to build brand awareness. South America is not on our radar at the moment because of this."

> "There's still a lot of investor interest in the Middle East, especially from domestic parties... there's also a huge regional market for expats on weekend breaks"

EUROPE

With 24 spas in the pipeline, Europe narrowly beats Central & South America in the development stakes. It is the third most popular region for new spas, with 11 per cent of new openings planned there. In terms of cities, there is no stand out location for future growth from the figures in this investigation of high-end hotel spas.

Gibson says: "Europe did not react as fast as America [to the economic crisis], so it took a little bit longer for the development to slow down. In under-developed or emerging markets such as Russia and Turkey, growth didn't slow down at all and resort-orientated areas suffered minimal impact too. The more mature markets such as the UK didn't have much [spa development] planned anyway, but what they did have just didn't take place. Europe is interesting for MOHG because there is already a certain amount of familiarity with our brand. That gives us the opportunity to create more in Europe especially as there are a number of major cities where we're not already represented that fit our entry requirements."

McCall Wilson adds: "Eastern Europe has a lot of potential for spa development, especially those countries in the former Soviet Union. There's a lot of hotel growth in these countries and we're really seeing them and development come alive as their economies grow. The money and the interest attract investment and a lot of the cities don't have luxury brands, so there's great potential for high-end hotel companies."

THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is the second most popular region worldwide in terms of future spa development in our sample. Yet with only 14 per cent of planned openings – the equivalent of 31 facilities – the actual figures for future development are not overly promising, especially in comparison to the Asia-Pacific region.

WHO WE SURVEYED

The numbers for this investigation came from nine of the industry's leading hotel spa operators and in each case we selected details from the brands at the top-end of the portfolio. The operators and brands include:

- Accor (Sofitel)
- Fairmont Raffles Hotels International (Fairmont)
- Four Seasons
- Hilton Hotels Corporation (Conrad and Waldorf Astoria)
- Hyatt Hotels Corporation (Andaz, Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Resorts and Park Hyatt)
- Marriott International (Ritz-Carlton)
- Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group
- Starwood Hotels & Resorts (Le Méridien, Sheraton, St Regis, W and Westin)

We've only included hotels with confirmed spa openings, but these consist of major refurbishments as well as new builds. There was no limit for how far in advance the openings were and the figures are inclusive of development pipelines from April 2011.

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Once again, the lack of good quality therapists and procurement challenges have been cited as obstacles to entering the market.

Although Norton from the Four Seasons points out that: "The Middle East is a remarkable destination where there is enormous room for spa development to grow."

The emirate which has attracted most future spa projects is Abu Dhabi, with five high-end hotel sites on the drawing board, followed by Dubai with three planned spas.

McCall Wilson says: "There's still a lot of investor interest in the Middle East, especially from domestic parties. A lot of luxury resorts are being built in this region and spas are expected in this offering. As with China, I've been surprised by the amount and importance of regional travel. There's obviously global business and tourist travel there. However, there's also a huge regional market for expats living in Dubai who want to travel to nearby destinations for a weekend break."

Gibson adds: "[Investors in] the Middle East had a knee jerk reaction [to the economic crisis], but on a long-term scale projects are still proceeding. We have a couple of sites we're working on, but they're some way off and I think that's wise given the present unrest."

NORTH AMERICA

When it comes to spa projects on the drawing board, North America is bottom of the pile. Only 10 spas are in the pipeline for high-end hotels, representing 4 per cent of development worldwide in our sample.

With three spas planned in North America, Four Seasons still considers the region to be a strong one because "spas have become a way of life for many Americans" says Norton.

Gibson says: "North America had an absolution panic reaction when the economic downturn hit – we had 10 projects planned there in 2008, but by the end of the year all of them had been cancelled. I think spa development has started to pick up again, but not where hotel spas are concerned. Day spa development has increased, so has destination spa growth to a certain degree and there is definitely movement in the medi-beauty sector."

McCall Wilson says: "Fairmont would love more spas in North America because we know the market and do very well in it. The market is challenging for new hotel projects as credit is still tight for developers. Many projects were teamed with residential [elements] so the slow down in second home purchase also affects growth.

"Spa development will grow again in the region but it's going to be different. Labour and construction costs in spas are high, so that's going to drive some changes in spa design: such as considering areas that aren't so labour intensive – we're seeing an increased interest in fitness for example. There will be differences, but that's good. Every business in our industry grew really quickly and while it's still growing there's lots of fine tuning and I think one trend will be differentiating."

McCarthy concludes: "Spa development in North America slowed substantially, but does seem to be picking up. Many of our opportunities are coming from conversion projects as opposed to new builds. Growth will continue as the economy regains strength. But industry-wide, we'll see a movement towards smaller spas and leaner operations." ●

The Middle East is the second most popular region for future spas and Abu Dhabi is attracting most interest. Dubai is a top choice too and already boasts Le Royal Méridien Beach Resort & Spa (above)

MARY TABACCHI » PROFESSOR » CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Breath of life

Mary Tabacchi is inspired by the Inspiritas cancer care spa which uses complementary therapies and asks what the industry can do to help those suffering from the disease

Inspiritas is a transitive verb meaning to instil courage or life into others, or to fill with vigour. In Latin inspiritus means to instil breath, in French espirit means to fill with life or spirit. However you look at it, the word is a fitting name for a spa dedicated to integrative cancer care – which is helping those suffering from the cruel illness.

Featuring five treatment rooms, a quiet room, a Zen garden and an exercise room, the Inspiritas spa at the START Center for Cancer Care in San Antonio, Texas (see p48) opened in late 2010. While the spa is modestly sized, the difference it can make to people suffering from this awful disease is huge – patients often break out in tears because they feel so loved, cared for and supported in the environment that has been created.

The two women behind Inspiritas are oncology nurse and spa director Ginger Kemmy, who also has a certification in energy therapy as well as training in spiritual direction; and Dr Amy Lang, a medical oncologist at the centre who has been involved in the spa's development for over two years.

The spa, which is designed for people with cancer and their friends, family and carers was added in response to patient interest. Most guests are referred from the START Center for cancer patients, but the spa is open to the public and the policy is to 'never turn anyone away'. The concept of Inspiritas is based on substantial research which suggests that making patients feel better about themselves and helping them to achieve a positive outlook, can bolster healing and encourage the immune system to operate at its best. In an *MD News* article Lang said: "Cancer is not just a physical disease – it affects a person's physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. We knew that our patients were suffering in ways that medications were not able to address, so

Group stress relief sessions based on soft belly breathing take place in the spa's quiet room

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Over 40 new cancer drugs are being tested at the START Center as part of a groundbreaking US trial

we made a commitment to create an integrative oncology wellness centre that would address the whole patient."

EVIDENCE-BASED THERAPIES

All Inspiritas guests can receive free advice on wellness by attending monthly group classes on guided imagery, meditation, nutrition, beauty, massage instruction and cancer support. However, there's a fee for one on one services such as massage and acupuncture.

There are counselling services for a host of issues that guests face. Nurses trained in oncology can answer many questions that may worry these compromised individuals; and an oncology-registered dietitian can give advice about healthy eating and nutrition for those with cancer.

Or patients and caregivers might chose to sit in the spa's quiet room, with its beautiful, calming waterfall and meditate or relax.

Sensitive to the issue of hair loss, Inspiritas employs aestheticians who can fit patients with wigs and head coverings until hair growth returns; and there's also assistance with makeup to help improve self-confidence. A retail area features organic creams and oils by Naturopathica and Sanitas. Cancer patients should avoid synthetic preservatives such as parabens which can increase hormonal action and are believed to cause cancer because of their carcinogenic properties. The products are also hypoallergenic, as it's important to avoid possible irritants on an immune system that is already compromised during chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

> "Spas should immediately search out an oncology practice to partner with. Patients, physicians and spas would all have much to gain"

In short, the Inspiritas concept is an example of integrative medicine at its best – it gives patients the benefit of both traditional western medicine, plus complementary therapies such as yoga, t'ai chi and qigong, acupuncture and reiki as well as massage and healing touch.

But before we continue with the terrific work of Lang and Kemmy, it is important to point out that the spa's focus is not on 'alternative medical treatments' as that implies that these therapies should be used in place of sound western medical treatments. Instead, Lang and Kemmy have been very careful to only use evidence-based complementary modalities.

Acupuncture, for example, has been demonstrated by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the US to reduce chemotherapy-associated nausea and vomiting. It controls pain associated with surgery and relieves dry mouth after radiation therapy. While yoga has been shown to improve cancer patients' quality of life, sleep and sense of wellbeing.

Mind body interventions such as guided imagery and hypnosis have also been found by NIH to relax and diminish the feelings of fear and anger that comes with cancer. "By providing guided imagery, patients are able to tap into their inner resources, which help them heal," said Kemmy in the *MD News* article. "Research has shown that addressing these emotions can even help to improve the immune system."

Lang and Kemmy are quick to point out that learning about self-care is considered equally as important as patient support and treatments at Inspiritas. After all, integrative medicine is a paradigm shift for many patients and even their physicians. That's why the complimentary group classes are offered each month to patients, their families, friends or carers.

"New patients who are about to embark on cancer treatment are facing a physical and emotional roller coaster. An integrative approach helps even out the ups and downs and brings a sense of control," says ►

Patients often burst into tears because they feel so loved, cared for and supported

"Massage is a great pain reliever, but the pressure has to be modulated if patients have bone cancer to prevent injury"

Lang. "Finding out how to manage through the confusion and pain is a bit of a journey." The spa should be praised for this focus on education and giving patients access to advice from qualified, highly experience professionals in the field.

WHAT COULD SPAS DO?

When asked how the spa community could follow their example, Lang and Kemmy strongly suggest a partnership with a medical oncology group. They believe that western, medically-oriented physicians are now inclined to incorporate integrative or complementary treatments in their offering due to the strong evidenced-based research conducted by the NIH.

Just as cosmetic surgeons have long partnered with spas – so can oncology groups. Spa operators, cancer physicians and patients would all have much to gain through such collaboration. Spas should immediately begin to search out an oncology practice that they can partner with.

The rule of thumb is the medical creed 'first do no harm'. Of course this creed applies to all of us in the spa industry. Since most spa personnel are not trained in the medical sciences, however, constant contact with partnering physicians would be vital.

In addition to carefully choosing organic products, for example, deep thought must be given to the type of massage offered. At Inspiritas, all massage therapists employed hold a certification in oncology massage. They know that while massage is a great stress and pain reliever, pressure has to be modulated if patients have bone cancer to prevent injury. In some cases, such as lymphedema, massage should be avoided altogether. This is a condition which causes swelling of the arm that may occur after surgery or as a result of the cancer; this swelling can be made permanent by massage.

Great care would also need to be taken over prescribing dietary and nutritional supplements. While supplements are popular at spas, they can often interfere with cancer therapies and decrease the efficacy of many cancer drugs. It would be vital to seek medical assistance with this.

It would benefit the spa industry to support the Inspiritas concept. Another crusade it should embrace – is encouraging insurance companies to help support these wonderful healing experiences.

How else might the spa community help fight this debilitating disease? We are known for our preventive stance. We know that obesity, lack of exercise, alcohol, smoking, poor diet and other lifestyle factors may encourage cancer growth – especially as we age. Spas can work with exercise physiologists and registered dietitians, who can in turn help their staff and clients to develop lifestyle habits which strongly reduce the risk factors for cancer. Spas could also remind their own guests regarding early detection.

Of course the idea is that people should never have to experience cancer in the first place – yet none of us are untouched by the malady. Almost all of us have friends or family who need our support and our knowledge to reduce risk factors. ●

START CENTER

- The START Center for Cancer Care is headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, US, but consists of eight other sites in the city and across south Texas
- It offers a range of clinical care for cancer patients including chemotherapy, state of the art radiation therapy and hormonal therapy
- There is also focus on wellness with the Inspiritas cancer care spa and DIVA exercise and nutrition programme
- The centre is home to a team of 30 physicians who focus on a combination of customised, streamlined cancer treatment with groundbreaking, accelerated drug developments
- One of the largest phase 1 clinical trial programmes on cancer in the US is underway at the START Center. As part of the trial, more than 40 promising new drugs are currently being tested for the first time on patients

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TAKING CONTROL

The Oberoi Group brought the management of its spas in-house in 2009, the director of spastalks about the challenges of running high-end facilities in India

Hays has a daunting task, as 14 spas don't have spa managers

By her own admission, Christine Hays is not one to rest on her laurels. During our interview, she has one eye on me and the other on what's going on around her as she dives into treatment rooms adjusting unsatisfactory elements. Such attention to detail is perhaps not surprising for someone who spends her life travelling to hotels within the five-star Oberoi Group: she's come to expect very high standards.

Hays is the director of spas for Oberoi, a daunting responsibility given that 14 of the group's 19 spas don't have spa managers. I suspect another reason for her quest for perfection is the fact that her boss, Mr PRS Oberoi, is the son of the original founder. At 82, he still has a keen eye for detail and his involvement runs to personally choosing the uniforms and bindis worn by staff.

FIRST CLASS

Since it opened its first hotel in India in 1934, the Oberoi Group has grown its portfolio to 28 hotels in five countries under the luxury Oberoi and Trident brands (see p52). To distinguish between the two, Mr Oberoi affectionately refers to an Oberoi hotel as the equivalent of flying first class and the slightly-less-onerous-on-your-pocket Trident brand as like flying business. One imagines, either way, that guests don't have a problem with lost luggage.

Oberoi Spas are a relatively recent addition to the group's portfolio. Although originally the hotels had health clubs and massage rooms, it was only nine years ago that spas became part of the offering. With little or no commercial spa industry knowledge in India at that time, the Oberoi Group took on Banyan Tree (see p27) to operate its spas. In 2009, to take back control of its spa division, it employed Hays as spa director and took the management of its spas in-house. In the role, Hays travels extensively, alternating her time between the Oberoi and Trident Spas, spending several days a time in each, during which she has to assess what is and isn't working operationally.

"Oberoi guests have very high expectations," she explains. "That's why we constantly audit our spas to make sure they're up to standard. I won't let a therapist perform treatments unless they've been trained to the highest standard and they have to have good English communication skills which enables them to engage each guest with charisma." In fact, Hays says she drills her staff so much, she has to be wary of creating robots and tries to encourage them to let their natural personality shine as much as possible.

CHALLENGING TIMES

All this may make Hays sound slightly controlling. On the contrary, spending time with her is a bit like getting together with an old friend and within minutes, she's leaning towards me with a conspiratorial whisper, giggling over the fact she's spilt tea over the table. It's this warmth and sense of humour you imagine keeps Hays sane during the

In the next two years there are plans to open 10 more spas in India, the Middle East, the UAE and north Africa

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Oberoi is the favoured employer of a new spa academy near New Delhi, which has made recruitment slightly easier

frequent trials of living and working in one of the world's most populated and impoverished cities. "There are little things about running a business in this part of the world that inevitably, you just have to get used to – like wires hanging out of walls that I'm constantly having to get fixed," she says.

However, compared with some of the attitudes from employees in previous spa director roles, she insists working in India is a breeze. "The therapists really feel blessed to have a job, so they try very hard at what they do," says Hays.

Though she has relatively few issues with her staff, finding good employees in the first place is a challenge. Changes to the visa system brought in by the Indian government in September 2010, means that she can no longer recruit therapists from Thailand and Indonesia, unless she can prove they have skills she's unable to find within India. And therein lies the problem. "The population in India is huge and there are many people unemployed, yet the spa industry is so new here that people don't recognise it as a legitimate career." She says. "From an operational point of view, this causes a problem."

In the last six months, staffing has become easier since the opening of an academy in Noida, near New Delhi. The Lambency Chrysalis Academy has an intake of 200 students per year and runs six-month training ▶

Changes to the visa system in September 2010, means you can't recruit therapists from Thailand and Indonesia, unless you can prove they have skills you can't find in India

Travelling to luxury properties in the Oberoi Group means Hays has acute attention to detail

EXISTING OBEROI PROPERTIES

Oberoi hotels:

INDIA
The Oberoi Amarvilas, Agra
The Oberoi, Bangalore
The Oberoi Cecil, Shimla
The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata
The Oberoi Gurgaon
The Oberoi Motor Vessel Vrinda, Kerala*
The Oberoi, Mumbai
The Oberoi, New Delhi
The Oberoi Vanyavilas, Ranthambhore
The Oberoi Rajvilas, Jaipur
The Oberoi Udaivilas, Udaipur

EGYPT
The Oberoi Philae, Nile Cruiser*
The Oberoi, Sahl Hasheesh, Red Sea, Egypt
The Oberoi Zahra, Luxury Nile Cruiser
Mena House Oberoi, Cairo*

INDONESIA
The Oberoi, Bali
The Oberoi, Lombok

MAURITIUS
The Oberoi, Mauritius
Saudi Arabia*
The Oberoi, Madina*

Oberoi hotels are described as first class and Trident hotels (above) as business class

Trident hotels:

Trident Agra*
Trident Bhubaneswar*
Trident Cochin
Trident Chennai
Trident Gurgaon
Trident Jaipur*
Trident Bandra Kurla, Mumbai
Trident Nariman Point, Mumbai
Trident Udaipur*
**Hotels which don't have a spa*

> *"Oberoi guests have very high expectations and that's why we constantly audit our spas to make sure they're up to standard"*

programmes in spa, beauty, nails and hair. As soon as Hays found out about the school, she met with the owners and now Oberoi is its favoured employer, which gives Hays the pick of the best students. Once students have completed their course, they're given five to six weeks of Oberoi-specific training on things like brand standards, grooming and the philosophy and treatment practices of ayurveda before they get placed in one of the Indian-based Oberoi Spas.

A MANAGEMENT ISSUE

Like most spa directors who oversee multiple operations, Hays depends on the managers in each location to help with the successful running of the spas. Five of the spas have a dedicated spa manager; the rest are looked after by other department managers. "I tell them there is no book you can pick up to learn about spas quickly," she says. "I explain that the relationship between a therapist and guest is completely different to any other in the hotel. Sometimes part of a therapist's role is to be sensitive to their most personal problems."

The largest spa in the Oberoi Group has eight treatment rooms, so Hays says the expense of a spa manager is not always justified. The spas are open to hotel guests only and on average, the Indian-based spas do 90 treatments per day overall. That said, Hays relies on her managers to report back on the day-to-day running of the spa operations.

On average, the capture rate at the spas is 15 per cent with a ratio of 65:35 male to female guests. A one-hour treatment costs around INR4,500 (US$101, €71, £63) but guests can stay in the self-contained treatment/relaxation room for half an hour after a treatment finishes, so turn around times are not fast. Despite this, Hays says each spa is a revenue generating business for Oberoi as well as being part of the group's overall strategy to offer guests everything they could ever want from a hotel.

INDIAN EXPERIENCE

Oberoi avoids a cookie cutter approach to the design of its spas by decorating them with local artefacts, but the set up of each treatment room is the same and Hays tells me I would get the same standard (but slightly lower priced) treatment in a Trident spa – the only difference between the two brands is the products they use. Oberoi uses Hungarian mineral brand Omorovicza for its facials and Indian brands Forest Essentials and Kama for its signature body and ayurveda treatments. Trident uses Sundari, a luxury ayurveda-inspired product line.

"Guests don't come here to cure their arthritis or their ailments, they come here to stay in a luxury hotel to have a relaxing treatment," says Hays, explaining why Oberoi offers their version of ayurveda, which is all about relaxation rather than cure.

In the next two years, there are plans to open 10 more spas in various locations in India, the Middle East, the UAE and north Africa. All hotels will be in prime locations. "My aim is to bring spas to the next level," says Hays. "I want to improve on the quality of treatments, increase revenues (especially retail) and, most importantly, incorporate a training academy."

As we finish our interview, I ask Hays whether she ever gets fed up with living in hotels. Her eyes open wide in mock astonishment. "Look around you," she says. "Would you mind if you spent your working days in this kind of luxury? ●

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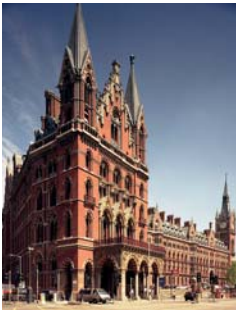
LONDON CALLING

This year sees several major hotel and spa openings for London, as the capital hosts the royal wedding and gears up for the 2012 Olympic Games. We take a look at some of the biggest launches and also try out some ourselves



St Pancras Rennaisance's spa will feature Cinq Mondes products

St Pancras Spa at St Pancras Renaissance Hotel

Victorian Gothic masterpiece, the 245-bedroom St Pancras Renaissance Hotel has been one of 2011's most hotly anticipated hotel launches. It opened officially in May following a £150m (US$241m, €171m) restoration.

Set in the bowels of the building, the 6,226sq ft (578sq m) spa has five treatment rooms including a couple's suite, a spa pool in an elegant tiled room and a relaxation area featuring historical paintings and sculptures set under Victorian arches.

French spa brand Cinq Mondes has devised the entire menu based on its beauty rituals from around the world such as the ko bi do Japanese facial, an ayurvedic inspired slimming ritual, a Siam papaya scrub and a traditional Moroccan and Egyptian massage.

In addition, the hotel will feature the Gilbert Scott Restaurant – operated by celebrity chef Marcus Wareing – named after the architect who designed the building.

The former Midland Grand Hotel, originally opened in 1873, has been painstakingly refurbished by the Manhattan Loft Corporation and London & Continental Railways. Its reopening sees it function as a hotel for the first time since 1935.

The renovated red brick hotel features 50 foot high windows, restored gold leaf ceilings, ornate wall murals and the famous grand staircase. It is the final piece in the St Pancras regeneration project, now the home of Eurostar with international rail links.

Kallima, The Spa at London Syon Park

A little further out, the London Syon Park, a Waldorf Astoria Hotel, sits on the edge of the 200-acre (80-hectare) Syon House estate, a few minutes from Kew Gardens.

Opened in March, the five-star property offers a country hotel experience and includes 137 bedrooms, a restaurant and martini bar. It also comprises a rooftop lounge, a spa, the Grand Syon Ballroom a butterfly house in the lobby.

Kallima, The Spa at London Syon Park boasts 11 treatment rooms, including a double VIP suite, a personal hydrotherapy suite and a Vichy suite with equipment by Unbescheiden; a relaxation space called the snug; a nail spa; a pool; a whirlpool; and a sauna and steamroom; along with a fully-equipped gym and team of personal trainers.

On the outskirts of the city, London Syon Park offers more of a country hotel experience

Spa guests are welcomed by a Kallima host, who acts as personal butler throughout their journey, while treatments are tailored to customer needs. "Kallima will introduce an entirely unique experience, with a bespoke approach to wellness that is designed to surprise and delight each and every guest," says spa director Rachel Tebble.

In addition, cosmetic surgeon Alex Karidis has opened his first non-surgical treatment rooms within Kallima, offering anti-ageing services such as botox, dermal fillers and HydraFacial, as well as tightening and sculpting body treatments. Product brands include Anne Semonin, Terraké, Voya and Leighton Denny (for manicures and pedicures).

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ESPA Life, a new wellness concept, will debut at Corinthia London

ESPA Life at Corinthia

The five-star Corinthia London is set to open at the end of April, despite worries it would face sanctions as it is backed by Libyan investment. The Libyan Arab Foreign Investment Company (Lafico) owns around a third of Corinthia London. Lafico is subject to sanctions by the EU and the US, meaning the hotel's managers had to seek assurances from the Treasury that the opening could still go ahead.

Corinthia London features 294 bedrooms (including 43 suites), two restaurants and a concept bar. It also houses the very first ESPA Life – ESPA's new wellness concept.

The hotel is set off Trafalgar Square in an imposing Victorian building overlooking the Thames. Interior design, with a mix of traditional and modern elements, has been led by GA Design International – which also worked on the spa – and David Collins Studio created the interiors of the bars and restaurants.

The 3,300sq m (35,520sq ft) ESPA Life at Corinthia is spread over four floors and has been hailed as "a leading voice in the next generation of spa". It will boast a fully integrated wellness approach – including revolutionary lifestyle programmes which will be delivered by holistic health professionals and influential specialists – alongside a luxury spa experience.

Chuan Spa at the Langham

The historic Langham Hotel London launched a new Chuan Spa in late February, incorporating traditional Chinese medicine into its signature treatments and design. It features six treatment rooms – including a couples suite – a pre and post treatment relaxation area, a vitality pool and herbal steamrooms and saunas. There's also a fitness with Technogym equipment and 16m pool.

Thalgo and Chuan Spa-branded products are used in the treatments; the Chuan Spa products have been created exclusively for the brand by a Chinese healthcare expert. Signature treatments include the Chuan Tao of Detox, which incorporates a body wrap, neck, back and shoulder massage and a Thalgo Oxygen Facial.

A fully qualified traditional Chinese medicine practitioner is also available for private consultations and therapies including acupuncture, cupping and moxibustion.

The Chinese-styled Chuan Spa aims to "transport guests to another world"

"The western style spa with a modern, minimalistic style is everywhere," says Barry White, director of spa operations for Chuan Spa. "We're going to back to the idea that spas should transport guests to another world: our moongate [the circular designed entrance] in Chinese architecture is about going from one world to another. That's what we hope you feel when you come here."

The Langham launched in 1865 and was billed as Europe's first purpose-built grand hotel. In 2009, it completed a five-year, £80m (US$128m, €91m) refurb of its 380 guestrooms, 15 function rooms and its public areas. ►

Coming soon:

The Bulgari Hotel:

Bulgari Hotels and Resorts signed an agreement in February for The Bulgari Hotel in Knightsbridge, which is set to open by the second quarter of 2012. The hotel is being designed by Antonio Citterio and Patricia Viel & Partners, with Squire and Partners as the local architect. It will feature 85 bedrooms, a 2,000sq m (1855q m) spa and fitness centre with a 25m pool, a restaurant and bar, a ballroom and a private cinema. This is the third hotel for Bulgari Hotels and Resorts, following the launch of the Bulgari Hotel in Milan in 2004 and the Bulgari Resort in Bali in 2006.

London EDITION

In November 2010, Marriott International announced that it had acquired the historic Berners Hotel in London and planned to redesign and redevelop it into an EDITION hotel. The funky, boutique EDITION brand was conceived by Ian Schrager in partnership with Marriott, and the first in the chain opened in Hawaii late last year. The renovation will take 18 to 24 months.

InterContinental London Westminster

InterContinental is to open its second site in London in early 2012. It will include 258 bedrooms and will be within walking distance of Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament. The group's first London property – InterContinental Park Lane – reopened in 2006 following a £60m (US$96m, €68m) overhaul. It features a 3,230sq ft (300sq m) spa with Elemis treatments.

The Shangri-La

Late 2012 will see the opening of the 202-bedroom Shangri-La in The Shard. The five-star hotel will take up 18 floors of the 70-storey, Renzo Piano-designed Shard building on the bank of London's River Thames. As well as two bars and a gourmet café, there will an indoor swimming pool and fitness centre, both with panoramic views, but it will not include a Chi Spa – the company's signature wellness brand.

The spa has a contemporary edge, but remains true to the brands Asian roots

Mandara Spa at Park Plaza Westminster Bridge

Bali-based operator Mandara opened its first spa in Europe at the Park Plaza Westminster Bridge Hotel in London in February.

The 700sq m (7,500sq ft) spa has a contemporary edge, but maintains a luxury Asian feel. There are nine treatment rooms and the spa will be the first in the world to offer Mandara's bath, body and home product line alongside its body therapies, Elemis treatments and Bliss beauty services. Mandara is a subsidiary of Steiner, which also owns Elemis and Bliss

The Park Plaza Westminster Bridge, which opened in early 2010, was one of the capital's largest ever purpose-built hotels. The £350m (US$561m, €398m) hotel has more than 1,000 bedrooms.

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: LIZ TERRY, EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

LIZ TERRY

London's new Mandara Spa is several floors underground, but the high ceilings and very clever lighting create a very airy feel.

The spa is reached by a lift which opens onto a lobby with a reception for the health and fitness area [pool and gym] which the hotel operates. The dedicated spa reception is down another corridor with separate staff. It's a little puzzling having two reception areas, but the set-up of the business has obviously led to this outcome with Mandara taking a management role of the spa.

The spa journey starts off with a fairly standard questionnaire in a stylish, modern lounge with designer samavar, teas, cakes and fruit on offer. The therapist offers a choice of four different oils to customise the treatment and my Balinese massage begins.

The treatment is very professionally delivered, but it's clear right from the start that it's an ambitious undertaking and the therapist is going to have to work fast to get through everything she needs to do in the allotted time. I wouldn't say it was rushed, but she works very quickly.

The treatment is delivered very much to a script, with no attempt made to customise it to my body. In the end the therapist manages all four limbs, back and chest, stomach and feet and a few ritual elements all in 50 minutes.

I'm left with the impression of Mandara being a very organised, professional and commercial operator with well-trained staff which is good at delivering fairly-priced treatments effectively and in a very timely manner, but that it's not somewhere to go if you need to have a specific physical issue addressed, due to the lack of customisation.

> The treatment is very professionally delivered, but the therapist had to work very quickly to get through everything in the allotted time

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The views of the city from the spa, located on the top floor of the hotel, give a real sense of place

The Spa at Four Seasons Park Lane

The Four Seasons Park Lane opened at the end of January after a two-year renovation project carried out by ReardonSmith Architects and interior designer Pierre Yves-Rochon.

The 11-storey hotel features 192 guestrooms – including 45 suites – an Italian restaurant and a sleek new rooftop spa which was unveiled in March.

The spa and gym were previously in the basement, but have been moved to a new extension on the 10th floor. Designed by architect Eric Parry, the spa features nine glass-walled treatment rooms and individual relaxation pods, a relaxation lounge – with a real fire and 360˚ views of Hyde Park and London's cityscape – a café and a fitness centre with views of Big Ben and the London Eye. The men and women's changing rooms each feature a vitality pool and a steamroom and sauna. Product houses include ESPA, The Organic Pharmacy and Omorovicza.

"I think the position of the spa at the top of a luxury hotel on Park Lane must make this space one of the most prime pieces of real estate in the city," says Christopher Norton, head of the spa task force at Four Seasons. "The fact that Four Seasons has put a spa at the top of the hotel (rather than a restaurant) speaks volumes about how much we value spas. The USP of all of our spas is to create a sense of place: if you look at the amazing views we have here, plus our sleek design, we've created something that is distinctive of London."

The design of the spa was inspired by Hyde Park, which sits opposite the hotel, and it features lots of dark oak and light stone as well as a relaxing water sculpture.

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: KATIE BARNES, MANAGING EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

KATIE BARNES

The 10th floor at the top of one of London's leading hotels isn't the place where I would expect to end up for a spa treatment. Usually I'm ushered to a lower ground level to a tucked away space. So as I sat in the sauna at the new Fours Seasons Park Lane Spa, overlooking the hustle and bustle of the city below me I felt at peace and also privileged.

I'd arrived early to enjoy the heat experiences in the women's changing rooms, but a bit of time was wasted trying to find the reception which was behind closed doors and wasn't sign posted. Not one to stand much heat, I had a quick steam and sauna session and wallowed in the vitality pool for a bit too long as I didn't realise there was a waiting area where I could have quietly sat and read a magazine and nibbled on the appetising snacks.

However, these niggles were fast forgotten when I was shown my treatment room: the calming VIP Sky Suite had floor-to-ceiling windows which let in lots of light. The £175 (US$280, €200), 80-minute Hyde Park Awakening signature treatment was designed exclusively by The Organic Pharmacy and uses ingredients that can be found in the park such as St John's wort and marigold. It comprised a soothing aromatherapy foot soak, a vigorous body exfoliation and a back massage to finish.

The lively, Jane Austen-esque, harpsichord music was a bit off putting to begin with, but faded away as I switched off under the touch of my therapist who executed the experience perfectly. She had a friendly, professional and highly knowledgeable manner and picked up on all the small points which really made a difference – checking the pressure, giving me an extra pillow when she noticed I wasn't comfortable and even wiping my wet slippers. Tailoring the massage to work the knots out of my shoulders was an added bonus and although the treatment didn't work miracles, I did leave the spa feeling less tense and certainly more relaxed.

AWAY Spa at W London, Leicester Square

The UK's first W hotel opened in February, following a post-BAFTAs celebrity party the night before. The 10-storey W London – Leicester Square was designed by Amsterdam-based design team Concrete, consists of 192 rooms and is clad in translucent glass that changes colour according to the time of day.

The hotel also offers an AWAY*Spa, two bars and a SWEAT fitness club. There are also three spa suites in the hotel, which boast a steamroom and treatment bed as well as a centrepiece bathtub.

The AWAY Spa is located on the sixth floor and features five treatment rooms. In keeping with the deliberately British feel of the hotel, signature product lines are by British brands REN and Aromatherapy Associates. The design is funky and bright, featuring vivid colours, coloured mood lighting and 'imaginative sounds'.

"With the 'work hard, play hard' attitude of Londoners and W London visitors, we have created bespoke treatments to liven up the city's spa scene and introduce fun and memorable experiences which will leave spa-istas ready to face the world again," says Arlette N Gobeh, director of AWAY Spa W London.

The signature product lines include British brands REN and Aromatherapy Associates

Guests enter through a glass door and are met face on with a tiny reception desk

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: LIZ TERRY, EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

LIZ TERRY

The small, but perfectly formed spa at the newly-opened W Hotel in London's Leicester Square is buried among hotel rooms on the 6th floor.

Security at the hotel is pretty tight and the lift can only be activated with a room key, so the spa's unlikely to attract much passing trade. On my first scouting mission I was told it was reserved for hotel guests but that there were plans eventually to open it up to outside visitors. My appointment for a treatment was made a week later by the concierge at another London hotel.

THE EXPERIENCE

After a warm welcome and completion of a standard questionnaire, I was led to a shower room facing a bank of lockers. Getting ready involved carrying my robe and slippers to the shower room, changing while balancing everything on a stool and then carrying clothes back to the locker.

The AWAY Spa has two shower/locker rooms and four treatment rooms. I wasn't sure about the disproportionate number of lockers, however, the adjacent gym links through the same corridor, so perhaps they're also for storage while people are working out? I imagine the narrow corridor would get congested during a busy changeover. While I was there, one other spa guest and I were already managing to bump into each other.

The treatment rooms are spacious, well-equipped and comfortable and my therapist was excellent – well above the standard normally found in a hotel spa. With a background in sports massage, he customised my treatment carefully, thoughtfully and skillfully and I'd definitely go back to the spa for another treatment as a result.

After the treatment I headed back to wrestle with the locker/shower room setup – this proved even less fun once the floor was wet and juggling clothes on the tiny stool got even more challenging.

Emerging with wet hair and only half an hour to get to my next meeting, I was told the spa didn't have hair dryers or a vanity area, as the noise might upset customers having treatments, so I paid and left with dripping hair intending to go to the first-floor ladies loo and dry it under the warm air dryer.

I shared the lift down with a man who [rather fortuitously] revealed himself as the hotel's room manager and very kindly insisted on taking me to an unoccupied bedroom and providing a hair dryer.

So overall, I would say I had a good – if a little bemusing – experience.

With a background in sports massage, he customised my treatment carefully, thoughtfully and skillfully and I'd definitely go back to the spa for another treatment as a result

Multicolour backlighting gives the perfectly white, shiny reception desk a warm feel. The porthole is a design metaphor of a window providing a glimpse into a new world.

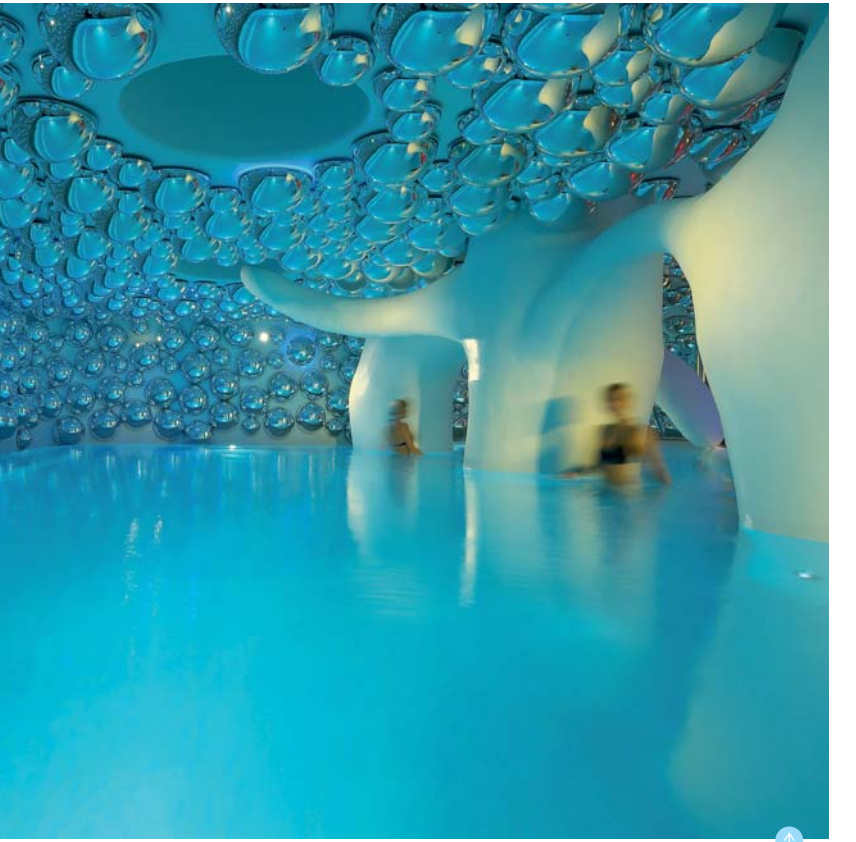
ALL PHOTOS ©JURGEN EHEIM

BUBBLING HOT

1,200 metallic, shimmering bubbles have helped to create the award-winning design of Simone Micheli's Atomic Spa Suisse in Italy

Just like champagne bubbles rising to the top of a glass, the "melted metal drops" in the Atomic Spa Suisse in Milan, Italy, are attached to the walls and ceilings sparsely at the entrance and get denser the further you venture. This is just one feature of the 600sq m (6,458sq ft) spa that helped it to clinch *Interior Design* magazine's 2010 Best of Year Beauty, Spa, Fitness title – ahead of stiff competition such as the spa at the W Hotel, Doha, the Four Seasons Seychelles and Revel Spa in San Francisco. Only opened for just over a year, it has also claimed the Annual Club Space Award as part of the Modern Decoration International Media Prize in China. The accolades are quite fitting for a spa that resides in Boscolo Exedra – an eclectic, ultra-modern hotel – in the very heart the fashion capital of Milan.

The man responsible for Atomic Spa Suisse is Italian architect Simone Micheli, whose brief from Angelo Boscolo – owner of the Boscolo Hotel chain – was to "create a work capable of touching emotions and involving people… and of stimulating mind and body perceptions". Inspired by Belgian-Flemish Art Nouveau designer Henry Van de Velde and Walter Gropius, one of the masters of the modern architecture movement, Micheli has created a dream-like environment. The sculpted white columns, walls and ceiling in the centre of the spa are reminiscent of big sinuous trees. Here guests discover a relaxation



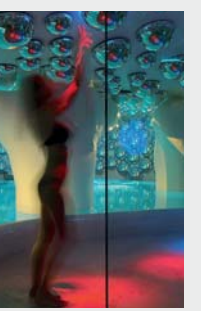
area and a pool which boasts hydromassage jets illuminated by LED lights. Beyond this are six treatment rooms, including a circular sensory cabin for two, a sauna and a white pearl-mosiac lined Turkish steamroom.

Spa Suisse is a franchise concept created by the BLEW (beauty, luxury, emotion and wellbeing) Group. Atomic Spa Suisse is BLEW's second franchise and the company's aim is to 28 more spas in the next five years in cities in Italy and Switzerland.

The swimming pool represents the origin of a bubble explosion, where the compact mirrored spheres collide with kaleidoscopic effects

A 10m projection creates a constantly changing virtual landscape in the relaxation area

The sauna is lined in cedar and features a long bench and three cylindrical seats



The showers are shielded by a full-length bevelled glass panel. Red and blue LEDs show whether you can expect warm or cold water.

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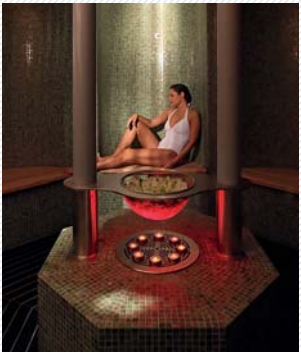

Most custom will come from guests staying at the Es Saadi Palace hotel (above); there are many heat experiences in the Oriental Thermae (left)

BEAUTY & BEYOND

The Dior Institut at the new Es Saadi Palace Spa, Marrakech, is the first to open in a spa environment. We find out more

"From my experience, massages in spas are great but I'm often disappointed with the quality of anti-ageing services and products," says Caroline Bauchet-Bouhlal, director of spas and marketing at the Es Saadi Gardens & Resort in Marrakech, Morocco. "So when I created our new spa, I wanted to have a leading brand in anti-ageing and Dior gave me this for both the face and body. Having an institute in a spa is something quite new and it was an idea that seduced me."

The Dior Institut, which opened as part of the Es Saadi Palace Spa last October, is the first of its kind in a spa – although there are 10 other Dior Instituts worldwide, most of which are stand-alone facilities. An extension of the Christian Dior fashion brand, the beauty institute has three core elements: 3D massage, a massage said to be based on an in-depth knowledge of muscle fibres and energy circuits; micro-dermabrasion with sapphire particles; and skincare products featuring Dior anti-ageing concentrates.

The institute at Es Saadi has its own reception area, two treatment rooms, a make-up studio and outdoor relaxation terrace. It offers an array of face and body treatments, as well as make-up lessons and beauty make-overs.

"Most women would like to have more beauty treatments, but they don't have the time in their daily lives," explains Bauchet-Bouhlal. "Coming here on holiday gives them the perfect opportunity to do this. Plus Marrakech is a glamorous place where you go out to dinner and have parties." She explains that after hammams and massages, the make-up services are a very popular choice at the spa.

At a time when beauty is making a comeback in spas (see SB11/1 p20), the inclusion of the Dior Institut at the Es Saadi Palace Spa is certainly on-trend. It's also a standout feature in a city where high-end hotel spas are booming – there are at least 15 currently in development, plus many already open (see SB10/4 p40). But what else does this new 3,000sq m (32,000sq ft) spa have to offer? And how was the concept developed?

"Most women would like to have more beauty treatments, but don't have the time in their daily lives. Coming here provides the perfect opportunity"

SPA DEMAND

The Es Saadi Gardens & Resort, situated in a luscious 20-acre (8-hectare) private garden near the centre of Marrakech, was founded by entertainment entrepreneur Jean Bauchet in 1951 and has been owned and operated by the Bauchet family for three generations.

Caroline Bauchet-Bouhlal, who is married to deputy general manager Jean-Alexandre (Jean's grandson), joined the family business in 2001. With a background of marketing and finance, Bauchet-Bouhlal had worked in various countries for luxury brands like Lancôme and Lacroix and for mass market companies such as bottled water group Danone. "I've always had a passion for whole body wellness," she says. Her initial task at Es Saadi was to create and manage the Oriental Spa, now in its 10th year.

The Oriental Spa is used by guests at the Es Saadi Hotel, a 150-bedroomed property which was built 1966. However, with the opening of the new 90-suite Es Saadi Palace hotel and 10 luxury villas in 2008, time had come to extend the resort's spa offering.

"The [hotel] customers were so happy to have a spa and demand kept increasing,"

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Bauchet-Bouhlal says. "Now we have two spas and we expect this will bring more guests to the resort – especially spa-goers – and the new spa is a marketing asset because it enables us to offer new stay packages and a fresh angle for press."

TREE HOUSE

From the years of running the Oriental Spa, Bauchet-Bouhlal had a strong idea of what would and wouldn't work in the new spa. Over this time she also visited wellness facilities worldwide and kept up-to -date with the latest industry innovations at trade events. As such, the well-researched Es Saadi Palace Spa is a robust and innovative facility.

It is spread over three storeys, with the ground floor featuring a swimming pool with a hydrotherapy path, a hair studio and barber shop and the organic Bio du Bled restaurant. Here you'll also find three private hammams and the Oriental Thermae – a heat experience area featuring a laconium, a Finnish sauna, four steamrooms, a bio herbal bath, a foot whirlpool, experience showers and an ice fountain.

At a time when beauty is making a comeback in spas, the Dior Institut is on-trend. The make-up services are particularly popular with guests

On the first floor there are 14 treatment rooms as well as the Dior Institut. There's also a spa suite with its own hammam and balneotherapy baths; and the fitness facility which includes a weights and cardio training room, plus Power Plate vibration equipment, and a yoga and pilates studio.

The top floor of the spa consists of a 1,000sq m (10,800sq ft) sun terrace with views over the city and the nearby Atlas Mountains. Al fresco features include a yoga and meditation area, whirlpools and a juice bar.

While the architecture and design by Marrakech native Aziz Lamghari has been inspired by oriental palaces – with subtle, yet striking Moroccan-style carvings and décor throughout – the focal point is a 100-year-old eucalyptus tree. Encased in glass, the tree forms a central column which the rest of the spa has been built around. "The philosophy of the family is to protect mother nature and this tree was so beautiful and strong, so instead of pulling it down, we built the spa facilities around it," says Bauchet-Bouhlal. She also says that it is a symbol of mind body connection. "You follow the tree from its roots at the pool and experience the treatments at different levels. At the top of the tree you reach elevation and spirituality."

The organic restaurant is also a nod to sustainability and general healthy living. It abides by the Slow Food movement and most produce is sourced from the resort's 10-hectare (25-acre) 15-year-old farm on the city ►

Instead of pulling down the "beautiful and strong" 100-year-old eucalyptus tree in the middle of the site, they built the entire spa around it.

outskirts. Its fruit and vegetables are grown without chemicals and are hand harvested.

A key selling point of the spa is its product partners La Sultane de Saba, a body and skincare range based on eastern rituals; Micheline Arcier aromatherapy; Thalisens marine cosmetics; and Phyto haircare. "We have studied all of them very carefully and picked those companies with a real expertise," says Bauchet-Bouhlal. Overall, she says the Palace Spa concept has three main focuses – the Dior Institut, the Oriental Thermae and total wellness. The notion of total wellness, is based on the idea that the extensive facilities and services combine to provide guests with the utmost choice and expert delivery.

ONE BIG FAMILY

With a number of high-end hotel spas in Marrakech, the main differentiation at the Es Saadi Palace Spa will be its quality of service. Of course that's what every top operator claims, but Bauchet-Bouhlal says that this is something that's ingrained in the business. "Our family is on-site and whenever we can, we will talk to guests – my mother-in-law makes a point of saying hello to everyone in the restaurant," she says. "We really do add a personal touch and create a warm, welcoming feel. Our staff is an extension of our family and they follow our lead. With 800 employees, that makes us quite a big family!"

In total, there are 25 spa staff at the latest facility, 14 of which are therapists who have to have at least four to five years of experience. To ensure a high standard, they are monitored extremely closely with training on a daily basis. "Our spa is expected to be an independent profit centre," says Bauchet-Bouhlal. "Yes, this is a challenge, but that's why I keep such a close eye on things. A spa can be profitable, but it's down to strong management day to day." Although she's reluctant to disclose figures, the impression is that a quick return on investment is expected. "We're waiting to see how the spa will perform, especially in the second year."

"My aim is to create a destination spa of such quality that it will make people want to stay at our hotel because of it... and to continue to provide a cutting edge offer"

The biggest challenge so far, has been to ensure the spa was full from day one. The staff was fully trained and the facility was ready, but to boost numbers they planned the launch date to coincide with the Marrakech film festival, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2010. "We had lots of French stars here and we got off to a flying start," she says. "And then at the end of the year we had the holidays, so the spa was full again. It helped that the two hotels were fully booked." The capture rate at the moment is 17 per cent, but she's aiming for 50 per cent of palace hotel and villa guests, and 25 per cent of the original hotel guests, in the future. Bauchet-Bouhlal adds: "My objective is to fill the spa and to have a good return rate thereafter."

Eight months on, the Palace Spa is still busy and interestingly hasn't taken custom away from the Oriental Spa. "They attract a different clientele," says Bauchet-Bouhlal. "The Oriental Spa, which is situated at the Es Saadi Hotel attracts most of its guests from there, while the Palace Spa will satisfy the demand of the nearby Es Saadi Palace." She hopes day spa guests will bring in extra business just as they do at the Oriental Spa, where 30 per cent of customers are from outside of the hotel.

"Overall, my aim is to create a destination spa of such quality that it will make people want to stay at our hotel because of it," she says. "My other goal is to maintain our level of expertise and to continuously evolve our treatments to provide a cutting edge offer. It's going to be an ongoing learning process, but that's what I enjoy about my job, as well as its diversity and the fact that I get to work for a company that I love." ●

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spa creators

Cyprus-based Spa Creators has earned an international reputation for its consultancy work in the luxury spa market. Now the company is moving in new directions, with the launch of a management services arm, a new spa brand and an exclusive distribution partnership with Australian supplier LI'TYA. Co-founders Chris Anastassiou and George Tavelis share their vision

How did you come to set up Spa Creators?

Chris: We set up Spa Creators in 2000. At that time, I was managing a hotel group with properties in Cyprus and Greece, and I was in the process of setting up one of the first boutique hotels in Cyprus. George's background is in spa and leisure management, so he came on board to help me design and open the hotel's spa. It was then that we recognised how integral spa and wellness was to the luxury hotel sector – both as a direct and indirect contributor to revenues – and we saw a gap in the market for a highly professional, individualised approach. That was the beginning of Spa Creators.

Chris Anastassiou and George Tavelis

Who does what?

Chris: I'm executive chairman, George is CEO and we're both key stakeholders. My expertise is in working with hotels and resorts, while George has the specialised spa knowledge.

George: I served on the International Spa Association (ISPA) board for three years, and I'm currently president of the Cyprus Spa Association, so I'm very immersed in the industry.

Which of the projects you've opened to date are you proudest of?

George: We've helped create more than 30 luxury spas in the past 11 years. But the two we're best known for are Le Spa at Le Méridien Limassol Spa & Resort and The Retreat Spa at Aphrodite Hills in Cyprus, both of which have won multiple industry awards.

What's motivated the move into spa management?

Chris: We started offering management services last year, because we saw a gap for a cost-effective, turnkey approach that really pays attention to the individual needs of the spa client. More and more hoteliers are recognising that this is a specialised industry, and they want to hand the spa over to a professional company that can offer them continuity, from design through to implementation and management. The traditional spa doesn't work any more, as spa clients have become more demanding; today's clients expect a state-of-the-art experience. As consultants, we create that vision then walk away. As managers, we can really see it through.

To maximise the benefits to our clients, we've developed our own brand, Limegrove Spa, which is a fast-track, economic, integrated service covering everything from concept and design through to implementation and management. However, for clients who want to maintain their own spa brand, we also offer bespoke design and management services. And, of course, we still offer consultancy without management, too.

What makes Limegrove Spa stand out from other branded concepts in the marketplace?

Chris: Limegrove is built on a number of aesthetic and operational values. For example, when it comes to design, our goal is always to create an oasis of tranquility in a beautiful, unique space. None of our spas are identical, but there are certain design elements that are recognisable – the abundant use of natural materials, such as wood and stone, and the use of signature colours and lighting. However, whenever we design a Limegrove Spa, we always draw inspiration from the local environment and culture, so every spa has its own character.

George: The programme is also highly individualised. We believe people want memorable and meaningful experiences when they travel; they want something they can take home. For this reason, we've created a wellness package that combines high-quality products and therapies from LI'TYA with highly personalised personal training and nutrition services. If a client opts to see one of our nutritionists, not only will they receive advice on how to improve their diet, but the nutritionist will also make sure that every chef in the hotel receives a list of that client's special requirements. Whichever restaurant they go to, they are guaranteed a healthy meal; all they have to do is let the hotel reception know an hour in advance where they plan to eat. So we're not just creating an amenity, but a reason for the client to visit the hotel again.

Chris: Something else that makes Limegrove special, from the point of view of the investor, is that we offer a highly cost-effective formula. We do this in a number of ways – through our efficient training and management systems; by integrating non-labour-intensive treatments, such as thermal experiences, into our model to maximise yield; and by our choice of LI'TYA products, which allows us to keep costs low while still offering a high level of quality.

How do you go about finding the right staff?

Chris: Some of our spa managers come from within the spa industry, some have been developed from therapists and some come from a business background. We promote talent from within and we also draw on our extensive network as a company and as individuals. Our

 ©Cybertrek 2011

The Retreat Spa at Aphrodite Hills (above); LI'TYA products (both pictures, right)

talented head-office team has a very broad range of skills and experience: we have people with backgrounds in spa management, hospitality, design, training and marketing.

George: For therapists and personal trainers, we recruit locally. We're not really concerned how much experience someone has as we can train them; if they love what they're doing, they're the people for us.

Why did you choose LI'TYA as your exclusive partner for Limegrove?

George: We've worked with LI'TYA at Aphrodite Hills for over two years, and not only do they offer great value, but their commitment to quality and their business ethos match our own. They also offer something unique: the LI'TYA range is inspired by ingredients and rituals used by the Aboriginal people for 40,000 years, and I don't think there's any other company in the industry that can claim to have that kind of history and philosophy behind them.

Chris: But what really makes LI'TYA unique is the way they combine these ancient traditions with the latest technology – they've even developed a distilling method that preserves the life-force of the plant, ensuring their products contain only highly active ingredients. They also practise a 'tread-lightly' philosophy, partnering with organic farmers whose methods have a minimal impact on the environment, and using only recyclable or biodegradable packaging.

How did you become a distributor for the company?

Chris: We saw an opportunity, because although LI'TYA is a luxury brand, it hasn't yet reached the luxury spa market in many parts of the world – and as a distributor, we really felt our voice could be heard with the product. We're one of eight distributors worldwide, and we have exclusive rights in more than 40 countries across Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Russia.

George: The reason LI'TYA has chosen us is because they've seen how we value their product, and what we can do with it. As distributors, we don't just supply products, we also offer consulting services, from designing signature treatments to training on stock-taking and setting up the retail area. We show them how to make money.

When will the first Limegrove Spa open?

Chris: We have five Limegrove Spas in the pipeline, but the first will open this July in Cairo, in a private members' club offering more than 2,000sq m (21,528sq ft) of sport, leisure and restaurant facilities. The challenge there is that we've effectively had to build two spas – one ladies-only and one mixed – both of which offer treatment rooms, thermal areas and fitness centres. It's going to be a big, beautiful spa.

George: We're also working on a spa for a new agrotourism development in Cyprus, where guests stay in traditional cottages in a working village in the mountains. We've already created a small, non-branded spa there, in a 19th-century house, and we're now working on a brand new 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) Limegrove Spa, which will combine the Limegrove formula with a number of unique elements, such as signature treatments using the area's natural thermal waters and hiking in the forest. Everything, from the design to the therapies, will reflect the environment. There are a lot of construction challenges and planning restrictions, but it's a very exciting project.

What challenges is the spa industry facing right now?

Chris: The biggest challenge is delivering consistent quality and keeping up with lifestyle trends, while also making the spa business profitable. This has always been difficult, but it's going to get even more difficult as clients become ever more demanding, while costs are not going down, they're going up. Balancing high standards with profitability is the challenge, and that's where we come in. ●

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www.resortsuite.com

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Spa software suppliers are developing their products to meet the growing opportunities presented by mobile devices

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/@YURI ARCURS

SPECIALIST SOFTWARE

The market for spa management software has gone global, with suppliers using Skype, VOIP and 24 hour helpdesks to support installations, meaning you have more choice than ever before

LIZ TERRY » EDITOR » SPA BUSINESS

Shortcuts booking software has been developed specifically for beauty and spa businesses. It supports multi-site operations and works across a range of different currencies.

The system's main features are an appointment book, point of sale, stock control, marketing and management reporting.

The appointment book allows two-way SMS confirmations. The reminder is sent to the client and when they reply the appointment book is automatically updated to reflect the status of the appointment.

The system's BookME online booking comes with a free Facebook app that allows clients to book straight from a Facebook page. As soon as the appointment is booked customers get an email confirming it.

The stock management section allows salons and spas to manage and track retail sales, as well as analysing profitability, tracking orders and having access to delivery details. The system also gives real-time updates on the value of remaining stock.

Stocktakes can be carried out for individual products, suppliers and categories or sub-categories of products. Stock orders can be automatically generated with one click by print, fax, or email and the system can also print barcode labels for retailing.

Shortcuts

USA, UK, AUSTRALIA

Shortcuts' stock reports identify how much profit individual lines make.

The system has centralised, real-time remote reporting which enables managers to control their operation from any browser via the system's ConnectMETM remote access. Remote connections don't interrupt the operation of the system, meaning managers can analyse financial reports while the front desk is checking out clients.

Prices can be updated for all sites simultaneously from any browser.

Shortcuts has a 24/7 manned helpdesk, ensuring calls are always answered. Systems can be set up with remote access for maintenance and there are three levels of support, meaning the issue can be escalated to more specialist personnel if needed.

A Shortcuts certified educator installs the system and completes a day's training with the team which covers all the basics. The client is then left for six to eight weeks to get used to the system before a second training day is held, covering more advanced features.

Specific training sessions are available for any aspect of the Shortcuts system and these can be booked at any time after the initial training is completed.

Shortcuts software is available in a number of languages, including Australian, English and US English, French, Greek, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese.

● Shortcuts has launched an online directory of hair and beauty services in the UK called mylocalsalon.co.uk which enables customers to search and book appointments in real-time. www.mylocalsalon.co.uk

www.shortcuts.net
Tel: +44 161 972 4900

Software with built-in booking functionality can get spas business 24/7

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/© YURI ARCURS

The ClarityLive spa booking system from Clarity has been designed to cover all the elements of spa management and treatment bookings.

The system automatically determines the suitability of each room and therapist, based on the treatment required. It runs a cross-reference check to avoid double bookings and also allows spa managers to auto-schedule treatments and packages for individuals or groups and to book treatments that require more than one therapist.

ClarityLive stores comprehensive customer records within its CRM system and is equipped with the tools to produce management reports to analyse and exploit that data for marketing purposes to maximise the spa's potential business.

Clarity

USA, FRANCE, UK,
NEW ZEALAND, DENMARK
THE NETHERLANDS

The system also has an interface manager which enables integration with property management, accounts, credit card authorisation and direct debit systems.

ClarityLive supports sales and inventory management, is compatible with remote stocktaking devices and can be used to print bar code labels. It also has bar code scanning.

The module enables the management of stock levels and provides management and accounting data and a range of reports.

The system's POS is fully integrated with the company's golf, leisure and spa applications and is designed with the requirements of pro-shops and spa outlets in mind.

ClarityLive gives the option to set aside orders while serving other customers.

The company's 24/7 service desk is monitored by IT professionals who have golf, spa and resort experience, are multilingual and have the ability to relate to clients who have little or no knowledge of IT.

www.claritycommerce.com
Tel: +44 1256 365 150

Nymphea has a customisable configuration so can work as a management solution for any type of spa, from hotel and urban spas to hydrotherapy and thalasso and wellness centres.

The system can manage the whole sales process from appointment scheduling, billing and retailing to CRM and membership tracking. It can also generate SMS reminders and emails to support sales and marketing.

Nymphea can optimise the scheduling and allocation of resources based on staff, room and equipment availability in real-time. The system offers online reservations with secure payments and membership sales records, as well as individual customer accounts.

Nymphea

FRANCE

It has an inventory system for stock control and ordering, an access control feature and a reporting module that provides a global overview of activity within the business.

Nymphea interfaces with hotel PMS, accounts and access control systems to enable interactivity between these tools.

ADN-informatique, the company behind Nymphea, has been supplying software for thermal spas and thalassotherapy for 30 years and clients include Cinq Mondes Spas, Nuxe Spas, Deep Nature, The Barrière Group, Kempinski Geneva, Thalazur Group, Royal Elyssa Monastir, the Réserve of Geneva and Spa Monastir

Software users can choose from a range of languages so they feel more comfortable with the software environment. ADN-informatique provides training as well as software maintenance and support.

www.adn-informatique.com
Tel: +33 4 79 72 96 26

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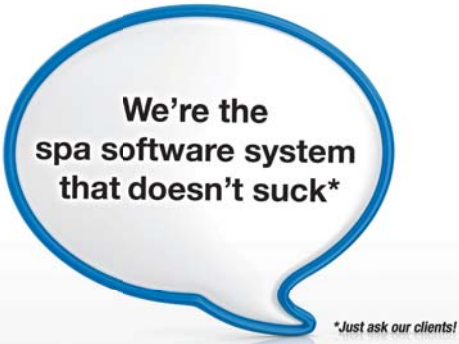

Let's face it, spa software is boring. Most spa managers we talk to are not happy with what they have. Forced to use whatever system was put in place many years ago. They all wish they had a reliable, fast, user-friendly system. Many have not yet started powering online reservations.

Book4time has built the leading web-based spa system. Created to meet the complex needs of the world's largest spa brands, yet affordable enough for an independent spa or salon owner.

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► IN BRIEF

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/©YURI ARCURS

SpaBooker wins Six Senses contract

Six Senses Resorts & Spas will install SpaBooker cloud-based management software in all its properties, following the signing of a partnership agreement with SpaBooker's owner, New York-based GramercyOne.

The inital installation will roll out across four sites, with the rest to follow. The company operates 27 spas and recently launched the Six Senses Destination Spa brand.

Josh McCarter, CEO of GramercyOne, said: "SpaBooker's multi-language, multi-currency functionality, combined with its innovative technology, will help Six Senses to scale its brand globally."

TAC launches mobile loyalty card for spas

TAC has developed a mobile loyalty card for spas, hotels and fitness centres to replace plastic and paper cards.

Guests download an app to their phone and can automatically register for the customer retention program which enables them to make reservations and answer surveys via their phone.

Each guest gets an individual bar code they can use to check-in when they visit the spa and the card allows the spa to contact guests via their mobile phones.

TAC says the money-saving app avoids lost cards and enables mobile bookings as well as allowing SMS reminders and post-treatment surveys.

Gumnut

AUSTRALIA + WORLDWIDE

Gumnut provides business management systems for the spa, leisure, salon, medical, wellness and hospitality industries with a focus on single- and multi-location and multi-lingual platforms that interface with hotel and accounting systems.

The system enables web bookings, can create gift vouchers and also runs retail sales for client's websites. The CRM and marketing elements of the system can generate SMS and email messages direct from the software. Gumnut also enables the creation and analysis of online customer questionnaires.

The latest release links the system to smart phones like iPhones, Blackberries and Androids for mobile booking. This functionality also enables therapists and practitioners to see their schedules and the management team to see management reports remotely. The company is also able to create own-branded mobile apps for customers.

Gumnut works on the iPad, so bookings and retail and gift voucher sales can be made while other staff are using the system.

The company provides 24/7 client support from a dedicated call centre and clients can be accessed via VOIP and remote access in order to solve any issues quickly.

Gumnut works for a range of clients worldwide, include Esporta, UK; Ananda; Marriott; Ritz-Carlton; InterContinental; Sofitel; Renaissance; Three on the Bund, Shanghai; Dragonfly, Dubai; and Kami Spa, Italy and distributes to more than 700 spas in over 30 countries worldwide.

www.gumnuts.com
Tel: +61 2 8011 4780

Software can handle all aspects of a spa's operation, from online booking to retail, CRM and reporting. Each system has different strengths and weaknesses, so finding a fit is vital

MICROS-Fidelio

WORLDWIDE

The Opera Activity Scheduler from MICROS-Fidelio is a suite of applications designed to meet the requirements of the spa industry.

The system's Spa & Activities module manages activities at hotels, spas and leisure venues and enables reservations to be made for a range of activities, from spa treatments to tennis court rental and pre-scheduled activities such as fitness classes.

Opera can provide integration to a spa's homepage, enabling customers to make bookings, sign up to activities and view their member account online. In addition, the system provides business intelligence tools for managers such as yield analysis, revenue reporting and forecasting with full iPad and iPhone integration.

Micros has a dedicated support centre with over 100 engineers which runs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. New Micros customers receive a full assessment to establish a suitable support programme. This can include pre-workshops to fully understand the business requirements, a detailed training plan and continued account management.

The system can be fully integrated with property management and activity booking to create a seamless experience, ensure maximum upsell is achieved at the point of booking and to create enhanced reporting.

Opera is available as a multi-lingual environment and can accommodate a diverse range of fiscal requirements and tax regimes. MICROS-Fidelio can support the application across a number of sites either through locally hosted data centres or through hosted infrastructure as a service.

www.micros.com
Tel: +1 866 287 4736

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LIZ TERRY » EDITOR » SPA BUSINESS

Natural Ingredients

We take a look at some of the suppliers whose products harness the power of natural ingredients

The seaweed used in Voya's products is harvested sustainably by hand from Irish Coastal wildernesses

Voya {seaweed}

A family-owned, Irish business, Voya has created the world's first certified organic seaweed-based spa product line.

The range includes skin, hair and body products and a complete range of spa-therapies. All contain organic-certified, wild, hand-harvested seaweed.

Seaweed absorbs its nourishment from the sea, so contains high concentrations of minerals, and vitamins with anti-ageing and anti-cellulite properties. Voya says it can improve the suppleness and elasticity of the skin, stimulate cell renewal, detoxify, cleanse, tone and moisturise.

Seaweed has been also been used as an effective treatment for conditions like psoriasis, eczema, dermatitis and acne.

Voya's products are organic-certified by The Soil Association, USDA, OCIA, ECO-CERT and ECOPACT.

The seaweed used in Voya products is harvested under a special licence from conservation areas of coastal wilderness recognised for their natural beauty.

The Walton family, owners of Voya, hand-harvest the seaweed, so only a proportion is removed to ensure there's no impact on the environment. The nutritional content of seaweed varies, so in addition to being sustainable, hand-selection means the best is harvested. The seaweed grows back again within eight months.

Voya's client list includes Cunard's *Queen Elizabeth*, Virgin and the Assawan spa at the Burj al Arab in Dubai.

www.voya.ie

ÓGRA {PEAT}

In 2003, a 3,000-year-old body was recovered from a peat bog in Ireland near the home of Bill Kenny, founder of Ógra. The body had been preserved by the peat.

Kenny discovered a book *Peat in Balneology and Therapy* and began to explore how he could use it for healing. His investigations led to the creation of Ógra, which launched in November 2009.

The peat from Irish bogs has preserving properties that contribute to its ability to combat ageing and enhance health.

Ógra's Peat Face and Body Mask is made from organic Irish peat which is approved by the Irish Medicine Board. In addition to the Peat Face and Body Mask, the company offers a full skincare range with moisturisers, toners, cleansers, and scrubs.

High concentrations of minerals such as zinc, manganese, copper, iron, magnesium and molybdenum mean peat has moisture-retaining qualities which improve skin elasticity and re-establish the skin's natural Ph. It's also detoxifying, purifying and astringent, with anti-inflammatory and bactericidal properties. Ógra peat can assist poor circulation and relieve muscle tension. They've also been shown to improve all skin conditions – notably acne, eczema, dermatitis, psoriasis and acne rosacea.

Ógra Peat is hypoallergenic and bactericidal, making it suitable for for treating burns, scars, stretch marks and cellulite.

www.ogireland.com

Ógra's product range contains organic Irish peat to combat ageing

 ©Cybertrek 2011

Antioxidants give protection against UV and free radical damage

Live Native {mud}

Live Native's deep-cleansing Botanic Earth Mud Mask contains an antioxidant-rich blend of natural ingredients, including sun-dried rhassoul clay, acai, raw cacao, 23K gold leaf and high-potency spirulina and has been designed to nourish, repair and restore balance to the skin.

It can be used for neck and décolleté cleansing, for manicures and pedicures and also for back cleansing, body-polishing and anti-cellulite toning and firming. The product has been designed to restore skin tone using minerals, phytochemicals, antioxidants and active enzymes. It can be used on all skin types and is especially suitable for use on distressed, acne-prone, mature and sensitive skin.

The company's Botanic Earth Mud Mask has hydrating, plumping, tightening/anti-wrinkle and collagen-building properties, as well as being anti-bacterial, anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory. It can promote the healing of scar tissue and calming of inflammatory conditions such as acne, eczema, psoriasis, dermatitis and cold sores. Its antioxidants protect against UV and free-radical damage.

Live Native makes moisturisers, balms, deodorants, cleaners, toners, beauty serums, scrubs, masks and soaks. All products use vegan, organic, cold-pressed, unpasteurised ingredients.

www.livenative.co.uk

The active ingredients in Omorovicza's products are sourced from Hungary

Omorovicza {minerals}

A number of Omorovicza's products, such as its Thermal Cleansing Balm and Deep Cleansing Mask, are made using Hungarian Moor mud that's sourced from Europe's largest thermal lake.

The warm-water lake is a geological curiosity, because it sits on a peat-bed and is fed with such fast-flowing springs that the water is replaced every 24 hours. The mineral content of the water is so concentrated that bathers are advised to spend no more than 20 minutes at a time soaking in it.

The mud is 'medical grade' and is rich in calcium and magnesium carbonates that detoxify, deeply cleanse and nourish the skin. Mindful that some cleansers and masks can be drying, Omorovicza has focused on ensuring its products remove impurities but also leave skin healthy and hydrated.

www.omorovicza.com

THALGO {SEAWEED}

Thalgo offers a range of skincare for face and body, as well as a range of marine algae nutritional supplements. The primary active ingredient in the skincare products is seaweed – a natural source of benefits from hydrating to anti-ageing, detox and slimming.

Seaweed appears in its purest form in Thalgo's 100 per cent natural Micronized Marine Algae – the pulverised powder of three types of seaweed which is used in the company's classic seaweed wrap. It has a medical patent, which demonstrates its effectiveness.

Marine ingredients are effective because of the body's affinity with the sea. Life began there and single-cell blue algae is believed to have been the first living cells. This explains why blood plasma has such a similar structure to seawater and why marine ingredients are bioavailable, easily absorbed and effective.

Thalassotherapy – body treatments using seawater and seaweed wraps – is prescribed by doctors in France as a medical cure and is the inspiration for the Thalgo range.

Seaweed has hydrating, anti-ageing, detox and slimming benefits

The seaweed used by Thalgo is harvested sustainably. Macro-algaes are mostly gathered in Brittany, the Mediterranean, Chile and Tunisia and micro-algae in Europe and Hawaii.

www.thalgo.com

The company makes three face and body ranges using botanical, mineral and marine ingredients

Elemental Herbology

Elemental Herbology uses more than 100 botanical, mineral and marine actives ingredients and pure flower oils in its products, which are designed to reflect the needs of the skin at different times of the year, as well as during times of hormonal, lifestyle and environmental changes.

For summer, two key ingredients used in the preparations are apple serum, a hydroxy-acid complex which evens pigmentation, combats skin eruptions, unclogs and refines pores and reduces the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles and kombucha, a 'black tea ferment' that can make the skin smoother, even pigmentation and help increase subcutaneous fat beneath the skin to minimise fine lines.

For winter, sacha inchi oil is an example of an active ingredient. It's comprised of 84.41 per cent essential fatty acids (olive and soya only have 8 per cent) making it effective for dry, inflamed and sensitive skin. It's also rich in anti-oxidants such as vitamin C, vitamin E and cartenoids.

Elemental Herbology offers a full range of skincare products across three ranges for both face and body: purifying essentials/summer skincare; hydrating essentials/winter skincare and essential skin therapy/SOS boosters.

www.elementalherbology.com

SPA FIND {SALT & MUD}

Spa Find, from Finders International is a range of salt-based mineral products formulated to restore skin health.

The company offers 52 treatments designed for their smoothing, toning, oxygenating, nourishing and revitalising properties, from natural muds and exfoliators such as the Sea Sand Scrub, Salt Brushing and Conditioning Scalp Mud to body hydration and cellulite and bust-firming products.

Each is a blend of de-ionised water, organic plant extracts and Dead Sea minerals in pure form – as mineral salt and mineral mud. All contain an allergen-free fragrance but not parabens or genetically modified or animal ingredients.

Almost every skin condition is partly caused by a mineral or vitamin imbalance and Spa Find says its treatments normalise mineral levels within the body and bring them back into balance.

Spa Find sources its mineral mud and salt from the Dead Sea

Clinical trials into Dead Sea salts include one on 50 psoriasis patients that found maximum improvement when they bathed in two pounds of dissolved salt, three times a week for six weeks.

This and other studies indicate that Dead Sea minerals can be an effective line of defence against the dermal breakdown that causes ageing.

www.spafindskincare.com

All products contain effective marine concentrates such as Oligomer (bottom)

Phytomer {Oligomer®}

Oligomer®, a sodium-reduced seawater concentrate with all the remineralising properties of seawater, is the main active ingredient in all Phytomer products and has been a protected manufacturing secret for 40 years. The company says it strengthens the skin by transmitting the remineralising properties of seawater.

Phytomer's Oligomer Pure Lyophilized Sea Water Bath is the purest form of the concentrate and is obtained by freeze-drying liquid Oligomer – a process that preserves the essential and effective properties of seawater – so it can be reactivated by the addition of water.

Oligomer Pure is scientifically proven to act effectively on pain and fatigue and to improve wellbeing and skin quality. An independent clinical study conducted on 51 volunteers for four weeks found Oligomer delivered tension and pain relief, softer skin and wellbeing to the volunteers, it also significantly outperformed the control group.

New active ingredients are regularly identified, sourced and developed by Phytomer's 20 scientists who have developed expertise in areas like the culture of micro-algae in the laboratory and the cultivation of large seaweeds on ropes. The advantages are control of the quality of the natural active ingredients for maximum product efficacy and protection of fragile marine ecosystems.

www.phytomer.com

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Clarins' customised beauty

Clarins has unveiled CLARINSPRO, a new generation of professional products formulated especially for beauty therapists. The collection includes two exfoliating products – Peeling Lotion and Gentle Exfoliating Cream; a draining product – New Shaping Facial Lift; seven facial supplements – Soothing, Hydrating, Age-fighting, Anti-stress, Whitening, Radiance and Purifying; and six masks.

spa-kit.net keyword **clarins**

Pevonia's new Mystique

Pevonia has launched Mystique Escape Bath Salts, "a mineralising breakthrough in skincare" featuring a new technology called Silk Salt, which causes the salt to develop a silky texture. The company has also relaunched its Ligne Tropicale De-Ageing Body Palm Papaya-Pineapple, Ligne Tropicale Saltmousse Papaya-Pineapple and Phyto-Gel Cleanser products in easy to use, eco friendly packaging.

spa-kit.net keyword **pevonia**

Every day an Elemis spa day

This May, Elemis has unveiled sp@home, its new concept in body therapy. It features five body categories – anti-ageing, performance, awaken, exotics and soothing – each one targeting specific skin needs, whilst delighting the senses. In contemporary jewel coloured packaging and comprising 11 new products combined with existing best-sellers, it's a range created to make every day an Elemis spa day.

spa-kit.net keyword **elemis**

Finnish wellbeing

The Lady Grace range of wellness products from Aromatica has been designed to enhance the physical and psychological wellbeing of the modern woman. Each targets a specific area with the synergistic working of carefully selected essential oils. The range consists of eight roll-on emulsions for stress reduction, energy boosting and for balancing the hormonal system. A luxury face cream is also available

spa-kit.net keywords **lady grace**

Chillout Design goes green

Chillout Design, creators of massage tables and furniture for spas and wellness centres, has added Epure to its portfolio. Epure is a range of eco-friendly massage tables, built from FSC- and PEFC-certified timber and using water glues and 'green' oils in its manufacture. Similarly organic, the foam mattress is made from 100 per cent natural latex and the mattress cover from 100 per cent natural cotton fibres.

spa-kit.net keywords **chillout design**

Absolute Pearl enhanced

Comfort Zone has restyled and reformulated its radiant boosting Absolute Pearl line. The range has been enhanced to offer clients an even more complete system with the addition of new products, while introducing new advanced ingredients. The company has also added Skin Defender Hand Cream, a delicately fragranced, easily absorbed product containing karite butter, to its retail offering.

spa-kit.net keywords **comfort zone**

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, visit www.spa-kit.net

Keeping up the heat

Created to provide state-of-the-art appliances to spas and salons, SPAPLIANCE has launched The Orb. This portable, continuous heat chamber for warming skincare products, has been designed to reach a perfect delivery temperature in under 15 minutes. It will retain this for up to an hour, with an indicator light showing the need for reheating. The Orb is comes in soft white or chocolate brown.

spa-kit.net keyword **spapliance**

An oasis of relaxation

KLAFS has revealed the TALO garden sauna, ideal for both commercial and private use. Built from Siberian larch, the new system consists of single modules, which can be arranged individually by the client. Capable of acting as an outdoor sauna, wellness area, pool house, garden house or simply as an oasis of relaxation, TALO's width and depth can be enlarged where required in the framework system.

spa-kit.net keyword **klafs**

GO! Man with Skin Authority

Skin Authority has introduced the GO! Man kit, which it says is the first in an age-defying skincare range for men. Ideal for a carry-on or gym bag, the kit comprises three scientifically-balanced products for one simple daily routine – Daily Cleanser, Night Revitalizer and Sunscreen Moisturizer (SPF 30). Also included is free professional skin coaching from Skin Authority's licensed aestheticians.

spa-kit.net keywords **skin authority**

Prestigious water recycling

The new Vichy Prestige from Unbescheiden combines the features of the Vichy shower and the Balance wet massage table, allowing the treatment range to expand to include ayurvedic and hot-stone treatments, body wraps and wet massages. Capable of being operated with fresh, thermal or salt water, the Vichy Prestige will also be available later this year with a complementary water recycling system.

spa-kit.net keyword **unbescheiden**

Programmed skincare

Decléor has unveiled a specialist anti-ageing skincare range, a complete programme designed to regenerate, prolong and preserve the skin's youthfulness. Included are Excellence de L'Age dark spot corrector concentrate for face and hands; Experience de L'Age for smoothing and re-energising; and Expression de L'Age, a smoothing roll-on for relaxing wrinkles and ensuring long-term hydration.

spa-kit.net keyword **decleor**

Classical elegance in teak

Spa and massage treatment table supplier Living Earth Crafts has unveiled a new range of teak furniture. The Teak Wave Lounger, Teak Chaise Lounger and Teak Side Table are hand-crafted from premium-grade timber harvested from an FSC-certified, sustainable forest. With a design of classical elegance, they will sit effortlessly at the poolside, in wet treatment areas or even in guest waiting rooms.

spa-kit.net keywords **living earth**

LAUNCH PAD

UK-based spa management and skincare company ESPA is set for blast off with reformulated products, three new results-driven collections and a fresh image

Since the company's inception in 1993, ESPA has delivered professional and retail skincare products, treatments and high-end spa designs worldwide. Two years ago, the company created a state-of-the-art manufacturing plant, giving it sole control over all production aspects from development to quality and supply. And now it's ready to reveal a whole new rebrand.

ESPA has spent more than two years redeveloping its products to ensure that they're free of synthetic ingredients such as parabens, SLS, DEA, TEA, artificial colours and fragrances – it confirms that its formulations "now average over 99 per cent natural ingredients". According to founder and CEO Susan Harmsworth, however, the main focus of in-house chemists and bio-chemists has been to scrutinise and rigorously test products to ensure that they deliver visible results. "ESPA is a luxury, highly efficacious skincare brand that also happens to be natural," she says.

The entire product range has been reformulated including hero products such as the 24-Hour Moisturising Complex, the Pink Hair & Scalp Mud and Skin Radiance Mask.

The three new collections focus on men (above); energising the body (left); and lifting and firming (right)

The new formulations, created ultimately for professional use, have been designed to help improve product performance.

At the forefront of the rebrand are three new collections. The first collection, Super Active™ Lift & Firm, has been designed to challenge the signs of ageing and comprises a mask, intensive face serum, face moisturiser, intensive eye serum and eye moisturiser. Ingredients include larch – a powerful active that tightens, lifts and firms the skin – and golden root which is said to brighten the delicate eye area and reduce puffiness.

Secondly, the Body Collection features an Energising Shower Gel and an Energising Body Lotion to cleanse, nourish and soften the skin; and an Invigorating Body Reviver – a cooling, smoothing cleanser. All of the products have a zesty aroma to stimulate the body and awaken the mind.

Finally, the Men's Collection for the face and body has been created to keep the skin in optimum condition – so that it's moisturised, supple and smooth – for a healthy look. It includes an Age-Rebel Moisturiser and Eye Hydrator, an Energising Shower Gel and an Invigorating Body Reviver that cools, exfoliates and cleanses. ●

NEW LOOK

Aligned with the updated product formulations comes a fresh image and feel to the ESPA brand. A new monogram and logo will adorn all packaging and product ranges have been sub-divided by colour for easy consumer navigation. The products also have new solution-focused names, clearly defined categories and contemporary pack imagery.

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THE FINISHING TOUCH

Spas offering weight-loss programmes should consider include advice on sleep health

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DREAM DIET

People can lose fat and stave on hunger pangs by getting a good night's sleep, a new study shows

Sleep health is no new phenomenon and with 40 per cent of adults lying awake at night – according to the 2010 *America in Stress* survey – a large proportion of people could still benefit from specialist sleep programmes offered in spas. New research also suggests that sleep health could be used in weight-loss packages.

The study by the University of Chicago* in the US found that adequate sleep doesn't only help those on a diet to increase their fat loss, but can also help to suppress feelings of hunger. It was based on 10 slightly overweight, non-smoking people aged 35 to 49. Their BMI ranged from 25, which is considered to be just overweight, up to 32, which is considered to be obese.

Each person was put on a diet, where calories were restricted to 90 per cent of what they each required to maintain their weight without exercise. Participants were then observed over two 14-day periods in a laboratory. For the first fortnight, 8.5 hours was allocated to sleep and in the second two weeks only 5.5 hours was set aside for sleep. In the day they carried on with their typical home/work life routine.

THE RESULTS

In the first fortnight, participants slept for an average of seven hours and 25 minutes. In the short-sleep programme, participants got around five hours 14 minutes' sleep – more than two hours fewer than in the first phase.

The dieters in the study lost the same amount of weight – 6.6lbs on average – during each two-week session. So there was no difference in the amount of weight lost.

However, those who got more sleep did lose more fat: they lost 3.1lbs of actual fat and 3.3lbs of fat-free body mass (such as protein). In comparison, those who had less sleep only lost 1.3lbs of fat but 5.3lbs of fat-free body mass.

Those who got less sleep also felt hungrier, it was found. When the amount of sleep was reduced, the dieters produced more ghrelin – a hormone that stimulates hunger and food intake and that reduces energy expenditure.

Dr Plamen Penev, the study director and assistant professor of medicine at the University of Chicago, says: "Cutting back on sleep, a behaviour that is ubiquitous in modern society, appears to compromise efforts to lose fat through dieting. In our study, it reduced fat loss by 55 per cent."

He adds: "For the first time, we have evidence that the amount of sleep makes a big difference to the results of dietary interventions. People should not ignore the way they sleep when going on a diet. Obtaining adequate sleep may enhance the beneficial effects of a diet. Not getting enough sleep could defeat the desired effects."

It was acknowledged that the study was limited due to its small sample size. ●

**Penev, Plamen D et al. Insufficient Sleep Undermines Dietary Efforts to Reduce Adiposity.* Annals of Internal Medicine *(October 2010)*

LIGHT AT NIGHT LINKED TO DEPRESSION

In another study related to sleep, it has been found for the first time that dim light at night is enough to cause physical change in the brain of hamsters and may even be associated with depression.

Researchers from Ohio State University, US, found that female hamsters exposed to dim light every night for eight weeks showed significant changes in the hippocampus – the part of the brain linked to memory and emotion.

"Even dim light at night is sufficient to provoke depressive-like behaviours," says study co-author Tracy Bedrosian.

The results are significant because the night-time light used was not bright. It was five lux – the equivalent of having a TV on in a darkened room.

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