

spa business

Kathy Van Ness

Restoring the sparkle at Golden Door

MYSTERY SHOPPER

Undercover at Aire Ancient Baths, New York

Cover photo:
Fashion designer
Donna Karan

Global Wellness Day
Embraced by the industry

Global Mentorship Pilot Program
Welcomes its first set of participants

LONELINESS
Twice as unhealthy as obesity

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"I am hugely honored to be at the helm of such an incredible business - it comes from such profound heritage and I look forward to developing the potential even further, continuing to share Geraldine's vision and passion with the world. We have an exciting pipeline of product innovation to share over the coming months, as well as lots of news within both spa and retail. The future is set to be very exciting!"

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Active and wellness design

The spa industry is growing more quickly than ever before, with roll-outs globally in all sectors. There's never been a better time both to create wellness environments and to adopt green building methods to improve the health of both customers and the planet

In January, the company behind *Spa Business* and *Spa Opportunities* magazines, and the *Spa Business Handbook* – Leisure Media – launched a new division called CLAD, the Community of Leisure Architects & Designers. The initiative is already revealing exciting possibilities for the spa and wellness industries.

The purpose of CLAD is to build a community of architects, designers, investors and developers. The scope is global and CLAD will cover all aspects of leisure, from spa and wellness to hospitality, retail, mixed use, health and fitness, sport, entertainment and everything in between.

CLAD will run a raft of magazines, websites and media feeds with the portfolio coming on stream throughout 2015. The website – CLADglobal.com – the social media feeds and the first publication – the glossy quarterly, *CLADmag* (CLADglobal.com/CLADmag) – hit the market in Q1, with a weekly magazine and an annual handbook to follow.

We see CLAD as bridging the gap between architecture and design and spa and wellness. Excitingly, there are clear indications that active and wellness design is one of the hottest topics for this audience – there's both an appetite for knowledge and a lack of awareness of the role our sector has been playing in advancing thinking in these areas.

Looking at the bigger picture, with the obesity crisis in developed countries at the top of the political agenda and spa and wellness growing fast, it's not surprising architects and designers are keen to contribute to the solution.

Added to this is a growing awareness that wellness design is a USP that puts a building ahead in terms of its commercial value to the owner as an investment and



Thought leaders in the world of architecture and design see active and wellness design and healthy environments as a trend with huge potential

the amount consumers are willing to pay to use it. This is evidently an exciting proposition for architects, designers, investors and developers in the CLAD community.

We're keen to see more powerful connections between active and wellness design, architects and designers and the spa and wellness industries for the benefit of all and it's important the spa and wellness industry is at the forefront of this best practice and not following along behind.

Some industry specialists are already moving on this. We recently reported that WTS International is putting its designers through WELL Building Standard accreditation – validated by the Green Building Certification Institute – so it can offer clients this option at the design stage, for example.

In addition to upskilling spa specialists, we must also respond to interested mainstream architects and designers and partner with them wherever possible.

The aim must be to ensure all buildings and environments are sustainable and healthy to spend time in for both staff and customers and that they promote healthy behaviours. With spas often sharing real estate with hotels and other developments, the need for this has never been greater.

Liz Terry, editor @elizterry

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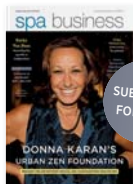
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The Spa Business website features daily news and jobs in the global spa and wellness industry. It also provides access to digital editions of Spa Business and links to other Leisure Media magazines and websites. Visit the website: www.spabusiness.com



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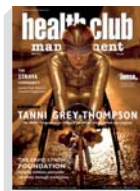
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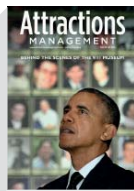


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Julie Cramer

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PHOTOS: MARK WOODHEAD (PAIN MANAGEMENT); PHOTOFEST (PAIN MANAGEMENT)



On the cover: Donna Karan's Urban Zen Foundation (p46)

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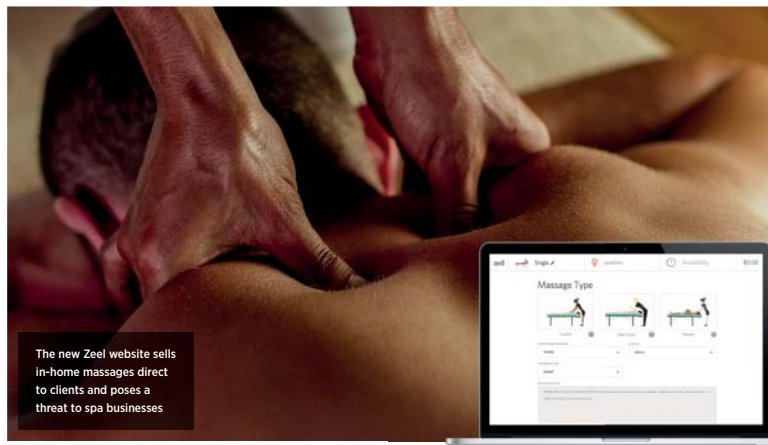


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Letters

KATIE BARNES, MANAGING EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

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



The new Zeel website sells in-home massages direct to clients and poses a threat to spa businesses

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ARE SPAS PREPARED FOR BUSINESS DISRUPTORS?

Matthew Brennan, director, Horwath HTL Health & Wellness

The global spa industry is growing, both in terms of consumer awareness and industry size. With growth comes opportunity which is attracting more entrepreneurs, innovators and investors who would otherwise not be interested in our sector.

New market entrants bring with them disruptive business models and the hospitality, spa and wellness arena is an easy target. Why? Because its traditional businesses require high levels of investment and fixed overheads.

Early disruptors include Airbnb and the less popular but growing Zeel. Zeel offers a digital platform that sells in-home massages which are delivered by licensed and vetted massage therapists. It's currently operating in New York City, Long

Island, North Jersey, Miami and San Francisco.

If spa owners and operators are to combat new market entrants, appropriate steps must be taken. To remain relevant, they must understand why these concepts are growing and adapt their businesses.

At their core, these business-disruption concepts create community, they create acceptance, they create camaraderie and they're convenient.

Operators should divert more focus and attention to service delivery: create small human moments in your businesses, which in total, add up to something special, something that is much deeper.



Immerse yourself and your business in the internet and the various platforms of communication. Develop a community, develop original content and develop programmes and services that target the current and long-term consumer base.

Deliver an experience to your guests, which is hard to replicate. In the end, if you do this, your business will improve. Businesses such as Zeel will turn into a catalyst for growth rather than a contributor to failure.

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TRUE WELLNESS IS ABOUT LIFESTYLE CHANGES AND VISIBLE RESULTS

Michael Tompkins, CEO & general manager, Hilton Head Health

Right now, I'm focused on bringing 'true wellness' back to spas in the USA by concentrating on weight loss and weight management efforts.



Over the years, a lot of spas capitalised on the growing wellness vacation trend by offering treatments, stress reduction and relaxation. What they've neglected to provide, however, is a healthy getaway which was the original intent for spa vacations.

Adult obesity is a growing epidemic in America and many don't know where to begin to reverse the problem. When they are ready to make a change to their lifestyle, they're turning to spas that are proven to deliver results in a supportive, safe environment. In 2014 alone, our



weight loss spa showed double digit growth and this is projected again for 2015.

These vacationers want motivational programmes and to be held accountable for their individual progress. They want delicious cuisine that doesn't leave them starving and they want to see results. Weight-loss spa-goers are looking to find a place where they won't be judged – where they can find other people who are in the same position as them – whether they're looking to lose 15lbs (7kg) or 115lbs (52kg).

It's inspiring to be around people who are looking to better themselves and I'm currently on my own weight loss journey. Since starting at Hilton Head Health last summer, I've lost 43lbs (19kg) and hope to lose a further 30lbs (14kg). It's a lifestyle change and one that I have to work on every single day. Being physically healthy is just as important as mental health.

Contact Michael Tompkins
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ARE SPAS ONLY FOR THE 1 PER CENT? I THINK NOT!

Mark McKenney, founder, McKenney Spa & Wellness Consulting

There are many types of spas. Resort and destination spas in exotic locations with highly styled consumers looking ever so chic. Day spas offering maintenance services. Medi-spas with their clinical, doctor-like approach. And mineral spring spas focused on group bathing.

Each model will appeal to different people, but what separates them for most is cost. I'd argue that ever since the Romans and Greeks have been 'taking the waters', spas have been run as businesses. The wealthy in society even had pools and spas in their homes. But where did others go to heal, relax and rejuvenate?

I like to visit spas, but I'm not the one 1 per cent of people who can afford them regularly. However, this is changing in the

USA with the 'massification' of massage with chains such as Massage Envy which bring prices down to under US\$50. I like this trend because it brings massage to the forefront of every day people, even if the locations are standardised and not quite so exotic.

I like to combine spas services, so I'm wondering if there's a gap in the market to also offer affordable spa packages to the everyday person?

Could fitness centres incorporate mini-massage franchises or pop-up spas so that members can warm up or relax their muscles before or after a workout? Or could existing spas suggest a DIY package



for customers after they leave their facility? Steps could combine outside yoga in the park before heading home for a relaxing spa bath – perhaps using products purchased at the facility with meditation instructions. The spa could also offer advice between visits.

DIY packages would remind customers about the spa between treatments, encouraging them to return, and would provide them with a more-rounded (yet still affordable) experience.

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Von Teese will lead classes in sensuality

Dita Von Teese partners with Canyon Ranch

Canyon Ranch has teamed up with queen of burlesque Dita Von Teese to offer guests a programme which will explore sensuality, seduction and female empowerment – including classes in the art of modern burlesque where they'll learn a striptease routine.

The Sensuality & Art of the Teese with Dita Von Teese package, which will run from 8 to 15 June, encompasses beauty workshops with glamour tips from Von Teese and physician-led discussions on the health benefits of sexuality.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=a7P2h_5



A new thermal bathing pool will be connected to the lagoon and a 60-bed hotel will be added

Exclusive: Blue Lagoon to undergo €40m expansion

The world-famous Blue Lagoon geothermal destination spa in Iceland has revealed to *Spa Business* that it's investing €40m in an expansion and redesign project.

A new thermal bathing pool, built into the surrounding lava field, will connect to the existing lagoon and enlarge it by half. A luxury 60-bed hotel will also be included in the changes, as well as a refresh/upgrade of other facilities.

Sigríður Sigthórsdóttir of Basalt Architects will lead the project which is due for completion in 2017. She's been

the architect at Blue Lagoon for almost 20 years and her work in harmonising the man-made and natural environment has been noticed internationally.

The Blue Lagoon, which holds six million litres of geothermal seawater, is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Iceland and last year it welcomed 766,000 visitors.

The purpose of the expansion is to enhance the experience for each guest, rather than to increase numbers.

Read more: www.bluelagoon.com

Destination and healing spa for lifestyle-focused development in Mexico

Construction of Yamani Healing, a new eco-design hotel, destination spa and healing centre in Mexico's Riviera Maya, will start later this year as part of the US\$32m (€29m, £21m) Los Árboles Cobá lifestyle-focused development.

The US\$12.3m (€11.3m, £8.3m) Yamani Healing will focus on holistic detoxification and feature a 48-bed hotel, three large yoga halls, 14 detox and alternative healing rooms, plus a temazcal sweat lodge and other heat experiences.

The spa is the centrepiece of the Los Árboles Cobá development, which includes 420 residential lots, a community centre and more than 1,000 acres (405 hectares) of conservation areas including a jungle.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=X4D3v_5



Up to US\$12.3m will be invested in the Yamani Healing eco project



PHOTO: SHARON LAMM DESIGN

The 'Restorative Island' will feature 68 villas, 48 homes and a Deepak Chopra centre

DiCaprio teams up with Delos for Belize eco resort

Actor Leonardo DiCaprio is to open one of the world's greenest resorts on his private island in Belize in partnership with wellness real estate firm Delos – the firm behind the Well Building Standard® (see SB14/1 p28).

Dubbed Blackadore Caye: a Restorative Island, the site will offer 68 villas and 48 homes when it opens in 2018. A spa and wellness centre, as well as the Deepak Chopra Center for Renewal and Anti-Aging, will also be included in a number of luxury amenities located within The Blackadore Village centre.

Delos owner Paul Scialla set up Restorative Islands LLC to build the resort and Restorative Hospitality – a Delos subsidiary – to operate the facilities and also manage the wellness programming.

Architects McLennan Design will focus on sustainable building techniques. Meanwhile, the buildings themselves will promote the wellbeing of guests by incorporating features such as circadian lighting for better sleep and advance air filtration systems which minimise allergens.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=k9z3q>

Japanese onsen operator bought by USA equity firm

Japanese hotel and spa operator Ooedo Onsen Holdings has been acquired by USA private equity firm Bain Capital Partners in a bid to capitalise on tourism ahead of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Ooedo Onsen runs the Ooedo Onsen Monogatari chain which comprises 23 onsen (hot spring) inns and six onsen theme parks across Japan visited by 50 million customers a year. Turnover of business has been growing at 30 per cent year on year since 2007 and is expected to reach JPY35bn (US\$294m, €258m, £190m) by the end of the current financial year. It has around 3,000 employees.

Yuji Sugimoto, MD of Bain Capital in Japan says Ooedo Onsen has an innovative model that "provides a quality service



PHOTO: OOOEDO ONSEN MONOGATARI

Ooedo Onsen runs six onsen (hot spring) theme parks and 23 onsen inns across Japan

at a standard price... The aim is to speed up the opening of new Ooedo Onsen hotels in Asia and overseas."

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=f3Q2J_S



Kiefer is a member of the new body

Committee to champion benchmarking in the UAE

Resistance to spa benchmarking in the UAE is set to change, thanks to a committee of undisclosed industry leaders who are dedicated to improving business in the region.

Christian Kiefer, general manager for Dreamworks Spas & Zen Yoga Studios, who's involved in the new body told *Spa Business* that the overall aim is to change the region's competitive mindset and to encourage data sharing for the greater good. "We can only perform better in the industry if we all begin to communicate our great results," he says.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=n4q9v>



It's a strategic move says GSN's Schmidt

Green Spa Network shares resources for free

The Green Spa Network (GSN) is to offer its 'spa greening' resources, information and tools to members of other regional spa associations across the USA for no extra cost.

GSN's executive director Paul Schmidt says the move is all part of the organisation's 2015 strategy to extend its impact and to bring about positive change in sustainability through spas. The open membership will help more spas to focus on eco-friendly practices.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=T6d4J_S



Dahorstand will host yoga retreats

Spas turn to monks for spirituality

A number of spas around the world are enhancing their treatments and programmes by working with monks.

At the Chedi Andermatt in Switzerland, Tibetan spiritual advisor and monk Loten Dahorstand will lead a series of yoga retreats incorporating daily meditation and Lu Jong Tibetan yoga sessions.

Elsewhere, Buddhist monks from the Zencare organisation are advisors to Donna Karan's Urban Zen Foundation (see p44). And a monk from India is helping the Borgo Egnazia resort in Italy to elevate its spa experiences for guests (see p70).

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=k4J6t>

Yoga's Bikram Choudhury faces sexual assault suits

The 69-year-old yoga entrepreneur Bikram Choudhury, the creator of the hot yoga training programme that bears his name, is facing six civil lawsuits from women accusing him of rape or assault – the first of which was filed two years ago and the latest in February, 2015.

Bikram studio franchises across the world have already dropped the Bikram brand from their names in response to the lawsuits. He denies the allegations and has never been criminally charged.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=k256U_S



PHOTO: JUSTIN ROEL

Industry pioneers have been recognised for their contributions to the spa sector

Spa Hall of Fame launched by Washington Spa Alliance

Deborah Szekely, Sheila Cluff, Mary Tabbachi and Clodagh have been honoured in the USA's first Spa Hall of Fame.

The inaugural Class of 2015 represents nine industry pioneers who were recognised for their achievement during the Washington Spa Alliance's (WSA) 5th Annual Symposium in March.

The virtual hall of fame features photos and bios of the luminaries as a way for the public to recognise their contributions to the development and advancement of the modern spa experience.

Future inductees will be announced at WSPA's symposium each spring.

For the first time, the symposium also gathered together eight regional spa associations from across the country.

WSA co-founder Mary Bemis told *Spa Business*: "This grassroots approach to community building has been a deeply held dream... We spoke about the benefits of sharing solutions and how we could all work together to raise spa awareness. It was a powerful and inspirational day."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=w5X0K>

Evian to launch flagship spa in the Middle East

An evianSpa is to open in 2016 as part of the 3.8-hectare (9-acre) Katara Plaza development – the commercial centre for the Katara Cultural Village in Doha.

The plaza will be operated by Qatar's Ali Bin Ali Group (ABA), which has distributed evian® mineral water for many years. ABA also holds the licence for evianSpa in the state and plans to introduce a flagship 2,400sq m (25,833sq ft) women's-only facility which will use multisensory experiences to "tell the story of the miraculous evian water journey in the Alps".

This will be the third evianSpa, following the launch of the concept in Tokyo in 2012 (see SB12/4 p30). And it's a first for the brand in the Middle East. Laurent Houel, the global brand director for evian, says the



This will be the third evianSpa facility; the first opened in Tokyo in 2012 (above)

"development is a new step for us in our exclusive approach to bringing a new spa experience to some key cities worldwide."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=j0a9w>



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A £29m campus will open in 2016

Trainee therapists to run university spa in the UK

A new £29m (US\$43m, €40m) campus being built at Sunderland College in the UK is set to feature a luxury spa, which will be operated by a spa manager who will supervise students working towards a national vocational qualification.

The spa is scheduled to open by mid 2016 and is being built in collaboration with heat experience company DaleSauna which is supplying four thermal rooms, a reflexology walk and spa pool.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=j4T4c>



Diaz is Thalgo's international director

Thalgo spa unveiled at Abu Dhabi Country Club

Abu Dhabi Country Club, UAE, has unveiled a 2,000sq m (21,528sq ft) Thalgo Spa in line with the emirate's strategy to achieve tangible levels of economic diversification by 2030.

The spa, which has 23 treatment rooms and a thermal zone, is separated into three sections for men, women and VIP guests.

Thalgo's international director Arnaud Diaz says the country club is a leading leisure destination, making it "the best foothold for our positioning in the GCC market".

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=r4t8n_S



Spa director Theresa Martirena told *Spa Business* "meetings don't have to be boring"

Dolder Grand Spa launches business packages

The Dolder Grand Spa in Zurich, Switzerland, is offering tailored spa programmes to corporate groups who want to carry out business meetings in a relaxed environment.

Small corporate groups of up to seven people will be able to pick from four themed spa programmes – as part of a package called 'Meet in Balance' – to help attendees leave at the end of the day feeling energised rather than drained. The four programmes are named Relax, Beauty, Vitality and Detox.

Attendees will be taken on a tour of the facility before meeting for two hours in the site's spa library for business discussions. This will be followed by a tailored bootcamp session in the hill-side forests surrounding the resort.

Themed spa treatments will be provided for these business guests along with lunch in the spa café.

Dolder Grand Spa director Theresa Martirena says: "We're offering guests a new way to experience the spa."

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=C9u7b_S

Masters course in thermal spa management unveiled

The School of Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality of BKF University of Applied Sciences in Budapest, Hungary, is offering a new masters programme for those interested in health tourism and spa management based on natural resources.

The one-year, full-time Thermal Spa and Resort Management course aims to teach students how to work in spas, hotels and resorts that use hot springs. It will draw on best practice examples of the thermal water management and the thermal bathing culture of Hungary.

Other subjects will cover international marketing techniques, experiential service design, wellbeing and quality of life and sustainable development. Industry bodies which collaborated on the syllabus include the



The course draws on examples of thermal spas in Budapest, such as those by Danubius

Hungarian Bath Association; The Tourism Observatory for Health, Wellness and Spa; and the Budapest Baths Corporation.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=a4V7h_S



Enhancing the spa experience

The little touches make all the difference – hence why luxury five star resort The Grove, in Hertfordshire, turned to BC Software to help give guests the ultimate relaxation in the hotel's Sequoia Spa.

Enhancing the spa experience has become a vital consideration in creating or refurbishing a spa. There is, however, one element of the experience

that is often overlooked, but is the first touch point for your client: the bathrobe that they put on before the treatment and the towel that touches their skin.

One particular spa that understands the importance of this experience is Sequoia Spa at The Grove. Sequoia is a haven of wellbeing and is fresh from an extensive nine month renovation. The team at The Grove, who were keen to enhance their new treatment rooms with a totally new towelling colour scheme, approached BC Software. BC Software is the UK's leading supplier of luxury towels and bathrobes to the hotel and spa industry and can advise on the appropriate weight, weave and absorbency of a towel based on its expected use and performance.



Sequoia chose a collection of luxurious towels that are appropriately named the Gold Treatment Bed Makeover Collection, with performance in a high turnover environment paramount to the selection process. The choice of dark colour towels represents a move away from the pale cream traditional spa look.

"Colour is the new white in the spa world," said BC Software MD Barbara Cooke. "In the past coloured towelling was subject to fading and there were variances

in batches of colours but with new developments in the dyeing processes, we can now produce a towel to match any pantone or colour swatch, which are colourfast and designed to last."

The Treatment Bed Makeover Kit uses just three towels, a towelling couch cover, a super-sized towelling jumbo sheet and a bath sheet. Laura Johnson, creative director, commented: "The treatment bed looks immaculate, the therapists are delighted that their treatment turnaround times are reduced, and the laundry costs are reduced. It's a winning formulation!"

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Rachael McCrory of Hyatt shared data

Hyatt reveals KPI spa benchmarking figures

The average treatment spend per guest at a Hyatt spa in Asia last year was €107 (US\$122, £78) and revenue per treatment hour was €35 (US\$40, £26), it was recently revealed at a London conference.

Rachael McCrory, director of spa at the Andaz Tokyo & Grand Hyatt Tokyo, was one of five operators who shared their KPIs. She also said average therapist utilisation was 42 per cent and that capture rate is 3 per cent for hotel guests, but much higher for local users (24 per cent).
Read more: http://lei.sr?a=v3U6Z_S



The resort will be built on Moucha Island

Ethiopian spa resort firm expands into east Africa

Ethiopia's Kuriftu resorts, is to construct a 128-key hotel – with a spa and two pools – on Moucha Island near Djibouti in an attempt to establish the brand in east Africa.

Boston Partners, the owning company, was founded by Tadiwos Belete who ran two upmarket hair salons in Boston, USA. After 23 years, he returned to Africa to set up a successful day spa in Addis Ababa before going into the resort business. There are six Kuriftu resorts in Ethiopia and other sites may follow in Tanzania and Kenya after the one near Djibouti.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=j7b3S_S



AINSORTH HOT SPRINGS

The hot springs enter the resort's systems at about 47°C and are cooled to 42°C

Native tribe buys Canadian hot spring resort

Family-owned Ainsworth Hot Springs Resort in British Columbia, Canada, has been sold to the Lower Kootenay Indian Band (LKB) – a tribe that has a history with the site dating back hundreds of years.

Ownership changed hands in April and while there are no immediate changes planned for the wellness resort, LKB will be investing in capital improvements in the near future, according to the band's chief Jason Louie. One of the goals for the new owners is to work

closely with Ainsworth area residents and continue to build relationships to strengthen the area's tourist economy.

Located 22km south of Kaslo on the west shore of Kootenay Lake, the 41-key resort has been family-owned since 1962.

The new owner, LKB, is one of four Canadian and two USA communities that comprise the Ktunaxa Nation. Lower Kootenay, also known as Yaqaan Nukuiy, is located in Creston Valley, British Columbia, and has a population of about 250.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=F2j3V_S

Irish Galgorm Resort investing €5.5m in spa village

Work is underway on a new spa village at Northern Ireland's Galgorm Resort.

Up to €5.5m (US\$6m, £4m) will be spent on doubling the size of the existing spa to 75,000sq ft and adding extra facilities such as a healthy eatery, a hydro pool, and a snow room and sanarium by Klags. These will connect to an outside area with a riverside sauna, hot tubs and a relaxation orangery.

Meandering pathways, secluded time-out spots and gardens complete the communal village setting. Paul Smyth, MD of Galgorm says it: "will become an awe-inspiring space, where staying overnight or just visiting for the day will be a relaxed, informal and friendly experience to savour."


The owners have worked with spa consultant Jennifer Gorman on the project.



The existing spa will double and merge indoor and outdoor areas to create the village

The spa village is part of a wider €21m (US\$22m, £15m) expansion which includes 48 new bedrooms. Work is scheduled for completion by September 2015.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=X4r5Q_S



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www.forumhotelspa.com

3-6 JUNE 2015

Spatec Europe

Meliá Villaitana, Costa Blanca, Spain

Set meetings between operators of top European spas and leading domestic and international suppliers take place over the two days.

www.spateceu.com

13 JUNE 2015

Global Wellness Day

Worldwide campaign

A day to raise awareness of wellness and to encourage people to lead healthier lives (see p30).

www.globalwellnessday.org

15-18 JUNE 2015

40th Annual National Wellness Conference

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

Experts in wellness coaching, corporate wellness, integrative health and fitness meet up to share examples of best practice and research.

www.nationalwellness.org

12-16 JULY 2015

Caribbean Spa Association Summit

La Concha Renaissance Resort, San Juan, Puerto Rico

The inaugural summit for CSPA will host meetings between managers/owners and suppliers to help forge relationships and ultimately develop the region's spa sector.

www.caribbeanpspa.com

27-28 JULY 2015

Les Nouvelles Esthétiques Spa Conference

The Maslow Hotel, Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa

Up to 250 spa delegates attend this event, which also includes the South Africa spa awards ceremony.

www.lesnouvelles.co.za



The hotel now has a Spa de La Mer facility in collaboration with marine skincare line La Mer

New owners of Baccarat New York rebrand spa

The Baccarat New York Hotel & Residences – which Beijing's Sunshine Insurance bought from Starwood Capital for US\$230m (€210m, £154m) earlier this year – has reopened with a new branded spa.

The property is the first hospitality venture for the luxury crystal glassware maker, which has now partnered with skincare line La Mer to create Spa de La Mer – its first branded spa in the USA.

La Mer (previously Crème de la Mer) is owned by Estée Lauder and is famous for its expensive kelp-based moisturiser.

The spa has four treatment rooms and a 50ft (15m) black and white marble-tiled pool, which is surrounded by day beds in alcoves. Swedish-based spa consultancy Raison d'Etre is in charge of the Baccarat spa concept (see SB14/3 p46).

The 50-storey, 114-key Baccarat New York is located in Manhattan, opposite the Museum of Modern Art. The hotel features 15,000 pieces of Baccarat crystal – from the luxurious chandeliers in the lobby to the glasswear in the restaurant. Read more: http://lei.sr?a=U7V9n_S

Indian police clamp down on unregistered spas in Goa

Goa's police force is drawing up a list of registered spas, massage parlours and therapy centres in the Indian state as it looks to identify other illegal operations in the wellness sector in the area.

Spas and massage parlours in the region have received a bad reputation recently for allegedly facilitating prostitution and trafficking of women in India, according to the police.

Goa police held a meeting with the health department, Goa state pollution control board and Goa Salon and Spa Association (GSSA) to discuss the illegal operation of spas in the state.

There are 80 spas, massage parlours and therapy centres registered in Goa, most of which operate along the coast.



While there are 80 registered spas in Goa, police think there are many more illegal sites

The authorities believe, however, that there are more than 200 illegal spas in the state, according to *The Times of India*. Read more: http://lei.sr?a=H4u4A_S



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GLOBAL WELLNESS DAY

As the third Global Wellness Day approaches, founder Belgin Aksoy tells *Spa Business* about the movement that's been embraced by the spa sector the world over

Three years ago, Belgin Aksoy, creative director of hotel management company Richmond International in Turkey, came up with an idea to combat depression and unhappiness by promoting the importance of living well. "According to many studies, depression is the most common health problem around the world," she says. "It often manifests itself in sleep deprivation, stress, poor nutrition, inactivity, obesity, heart disease and more. To overcome this problem and lead a healthy, happier life we need an inspiring beginning. The name of that beginning is Global Wellness Day."

Aksoy reasons: "We've honoured almost everything which is valuable to us with a special day, so why not have one that's dedicated to the universally accepted importance of wellness?"

Make a change

Held on the second Saturday of June each year, Global Wellness Day (GWD) is based on a simple premise – to increase our consciousness of living a better life, even if it's just for one day, to draw our attention to healthier lifestyles.

It's campaigning for people to change one aspect of their lives for that day and outlines seven possible manifests:

- Drink more water
- Walk for an hour
- Shop locally & eat organically
- Stop using plastic bottles
- Do a good deed
- Eat a family dinner
- Go to bed at 10pm

Aksoy hopes that it will motivate people to keep up the good habits to "impact their wellbeing on the other 364 days of the year".

Striking a chord

What started as a vision is quickly becoming a reality with both celebrities and a growing number of spa professionals showing their support for the not-for-profit campaign.

Last year, Aksoy went back stage at the Emmy Awards where stars from TV shows such as *Mad Men* and *Scandal* visited the GWD stand and praised the venture.

The initiative is also striking a chord in the spa arena. There are now 39 spa industry leaders, from 30 countries, who've been appointed GWD



Industry support: Global Wellness Day ambassadors include Marianne Brepohl, Nicolas Ronco, Noel Asmar and Sammy Gharieni



On 13 June, the campaign will encourage people to change just one aspect of their lives for the better

“

There are now 39 spa industry leaders, from 30 countries, who've been appointed Global Wellness Day ambassadors

”

ambassadors. From Noel Asmar (Noel Asmar Group) and Nicolas Ronco (Yelo Spa) in North America to Marianne Brepohl (Lapinha Spa) in Brazil and Sammy Gharieni (Gharieni Group) in Germany – all ambassadors have made a commitment to invite their community to become a part of GWD.

Asmar says: “Wellness is a necessity, not an option, and I felt I must be involved.”

Gharieni adds: “I’m excited about finally having one day when everyone thinks about wellness. It’s a sober claim that ‘GWD or one day can change your whole life.’”

In fact, many initiatives, partnerships and events are already underway or being planned behind the scenes in the run up to the third GWD on Saturday 13 June. Highlights include the possibility of a seal of approval from the Dalai Lama when he talks at the Happiness and its Causes conference in Australia on 11-12 June; while in Thailand, GWD has been included as an official event in the Tourist Authority’s calendar for 2015 and 2016.

In the USA, UK, Austria and Germany, word is being spread to spa and

wellness-related organisations. And in Turkey the aim is to set up an official GWD association and to distribute GWD apples with in-flight meals to 80,000 Turkish Airline passengers on the day.

Wellness is the answer

From its first tentative steps in Turkey, the GWD campaign has gathered momentum and moved across borders – five continents to be precise. So far, it’s collected signatures from over 5,000 people who support the campaign.

Aksoy concludes: “Ten years ago, wellness was considered a luxury. Today most of us know that we all need to adopt a better lifestyle and approach to wellbeing. Ten years from now, people will know that ‘wellness’ is the answer – we’ll go back to basics and learn to appreciate the silence within our minds, as well as how to transfer positive vibes to others. We’ll take actions to learn the simplicity of happiness. At least this is my dream for the future and Global Wellness Day will be a very important instrument to achieve this dream.” ●

GET INVOLVED

Aksoy would love to hear from anyone who wants to become a GWD ambassador for their country. She’s looking for volunteers – especially influential industry leaders – who have “motivation and dedication”.

Tel: +90 2165714900

Email: belgin.aksay@globalwellnessday.org

Web: www.globalwellnessday.org

Scandal star Joe Morton shows his support at the 2014 Emmys



With a background in fashion, Van Ness brings a new perspective to the spa business



KATHY VAN NESS

The new owner of Golden Door appointed a fashion expert to oversee the destination spa's aesthetic and ethical makeover. Katie Barnes asks the COO about her plans to outshine the competition once more

The world-renowned Golden Door destination spa in Escondido, California, reopened in October following a two-year overhaul of both its property and business.

The luxury retreat, which lost its sparkle under 13 years of corporate ownership, was acquired in late 2012 by frequent visitor Joanne Conway – the wife of Carlyle Group co-founder, billionaire and philanthropist Bill Conway – for US\$25m (£23m, £17m). “She was a guest for 22 years and knew that it needed a really special owner, she really felt passionate about saving it,” says Kathy Van Ness, the COO who Conway brought in to oversee its transformation. With new, extensive funds, the goal was to bring the

57-year-old Golden Door back in line with founder Deborah Szekely's original vision – a spa experience that can empower guests ‘to reposition themselves at the centre of their own lives by tending to their bodies, their minds and their spirits’.

A diluted brand

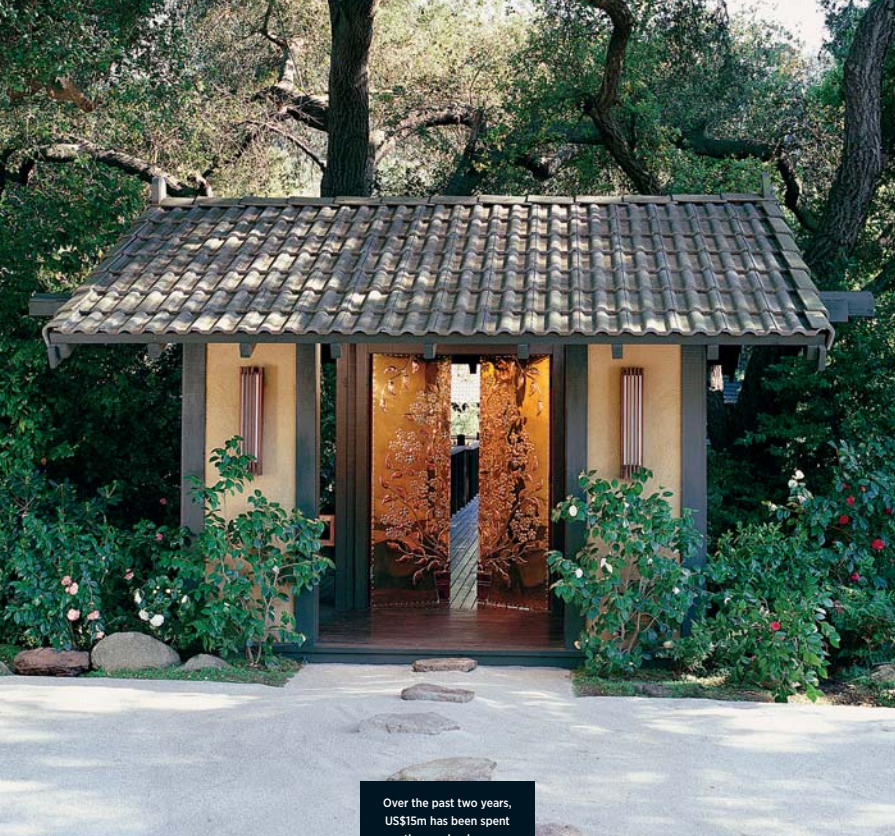
Golden Door Spa as it was then called opened in 1958 as the upscale sister property to Rancho La Puerta – a health farm just over the Mexican border which Szekely set up with her husband in 1940. The ranch was one of the first destination spas in North America and Szekely, now in her 90s, is fondly referred to as the nation's spa godmother (see SB13/1 p32).

While the rustic ranch was a place where people ate around a camp fire, slept in tents (in the very early days) and hiked

the hills surrounding Tecate, Golden Door Spa was a destination for preening and pampering with an alluring Oriental twist. The property, themed around a traditional Japanese honjin (inn), attracted an exclusive clientele including stars such as Elizabeth Taylor who went there between films to get screen-ready.

In 1998 the Szekelys sold Golden Door Spa to Patriot American Hospitality (later renamed Wyndham International) which was bought by private equity giant Blackstone in 2005 (see SB08/1 p58). Under corporate ownership the gilded name was used strategically to brand four other hotel spas across the USA and the concept dwindled in popularity as its Asian authenticity became diluted.

As part of the Conway deal, the licence agreements with the other hotels expired ▶



Over the past two years, US\$15m has been spent on the overhaul - even the famous golden doors (above) had a makeover





Branded yoga mats and yukatas are all part of the plan to leverage the Golden Door name and boost business

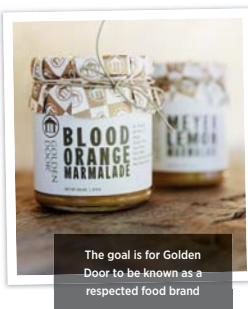
**It's not a spa, it's not a wellness centre, nor a retreat, nor hotel.
It's the Golden Door with its own iconic place in the universe**

► at the time of acquisition. A one-property brand once more, the Golden Door Spa was ready for its makeover.

Different perspective

To restore the business, Conway turned not to a wellness aficionado, but to fashionista Kathy Van Ness who she'd been introduced to at the World Presidents' Organization peer network. Having worked for names such as Diane von Furstenberg and Speedo, Van Ness was a specialist in brand DNA/development. She recalls "I initially helped Joanne with branding challenges at the time of acquisition because my background is in the high luxury status market. I worked on everything that had to do with the look and feel – from getting the perfect colour of gold and brush for the iconic pagoda [doors] to the paper collateral and uniforms."

Shortly after, Conway asked Van Ness stay on to oversee the full refurbishment and operations. "A lot of people said 'oh my god, she's not from hospitality', but fashion – like spas – is all about luxury and



The goal is for Golden Door to be known as a respected food brand

lifestyle. It's just that I approach it with a slightly different perspective."

A simple yet significant first change was to drop the 'spa' moniker from the title to solidify its repositioning as a lifestyle brand. "It's not a spa, it's not a wellness centre, nor a retreat, nor hotel," says Van Ness. "It's the Golden Door with its own iconic place in the universe."

It's a change which dovetails neatly with her future plans to leverage the Golden Door name in other ways. "Just like Ferragamo has gone into cars, cutlery and sheets and towels: the hospitality industry doesn't really do that," she says.

The aim is to create Golden Door jewellery and clothes (think stylish Japanese yukatas), while produce such as preserves, teas and spices are already sourced, made and sold on-site and online. "People go crazy about our gluten free ginger cookies, I'm not kidding!" says Van Ness. Golden Door has also teamed up with a local company to create a branded skin, body, bath and haircare line and this sits alongside products supplied by Éminence and Coola (suncare).

Another crossover from the fashion world Van Ness quickly implemented was a strict, no-discounting policy. "What I saw in the hospitality industry when I first came on board was a number of promotions or gimmicks to convince customers to choose your room over a neighbour's room – much like the retail world," says Van Ness. "But one of the

A black and white photograph of two female models wearing sleek, black, long-sleeved zip-up jumpsuits. They are posed against a plain, light-colored background. The model on the left is in profile, looking down, with her hair in a high bun. The model on the right is facing slightly towards the camera, also looking down, with her hair in a high bun and one hand near her face.

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spa business uniting the world of wellness



The new look Golden Door has attracted a younger clientele – busy executives who want to take care of themselves

Making money isn't the only top concern... Conway has made a profound pledge to give 100 per cent of Golden Door's profits to charity

► things you also learn in retailing is that you don't see the upstage luxury brands doing that. Even in the painful times and the worst crashes financially Prada and Louis Vuitton do not go on sale. You don't denigrate your brand and I immediately took 'discounting' out of our vocabulary."

Fair share

Of course, with a billionaire owner who has an interest in philanthropy, making money isn't the only top concern. To this end, Conway has made a profound pledge to see 100 per cent of Golden Door's profits given to charities. "It's not a charitable trust where you save money on taxes" Van Ness is quick to point out. "It's a business and we pay our taxes, we want to be involved with our community and pay our fair share."

Instead, she says that she and Joanne wanted to follow in the footsteps of Newman's Own, the organic food company owned by actor Paul Newman which was one of the first businesses in the USA to donate all of its earnings to charity.

The Golden Door Foundation has already funded a trip for its land expert Jeff Dawson to set up sustainable gardening practices for the Global Health Committee's Zahara Center in Ethiopia. The centre, backed by Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, helps children with HIV/AIDS and TB. The foundation has also contributed US\$75,000 (€68,970, £50,600) to keep a local centre which helps victims of child abuse and sex assault open. These charities, and others, have been chosen because they share Golden Door's mission to transform peoples lives Van Ness says.

A lot of fab

Over the past two years, US\$15m (€14m, £10m) has been spent on completely renovating the Golden Door property.

The 40 bungalow villas, as well as the bathhouse spa and lounge, exercise studios, lobby and dining room have been modernised while retaining the peaceful, Oriental feel that Golden Door is famous for. "It's Zen, quiet, simplistic, chic and a lot of fab," says Van Ness who had a ►

Favourites

BOOK: *Thrive* by Adrienne Huffington

SEASON: Winter. I love the fluffy flakes

SPA (NOT GOLDEN DOOR): Impossible to say, I'm completely biased to this magical place

TREATMENT: I love scalp massages and scrubs. Relaxation and brand new skin – hmmm nice!

ADVICE: Stay focused and do things you love and life will evolve

WHO YOU ADMIRE: Today it's [TV journalist] Diane Sawyer, her style of interviewing inspires me as I build out our Friday evening speaker sessions at Golden Door. She's a fascinating talent. Tomorrow, who knows?



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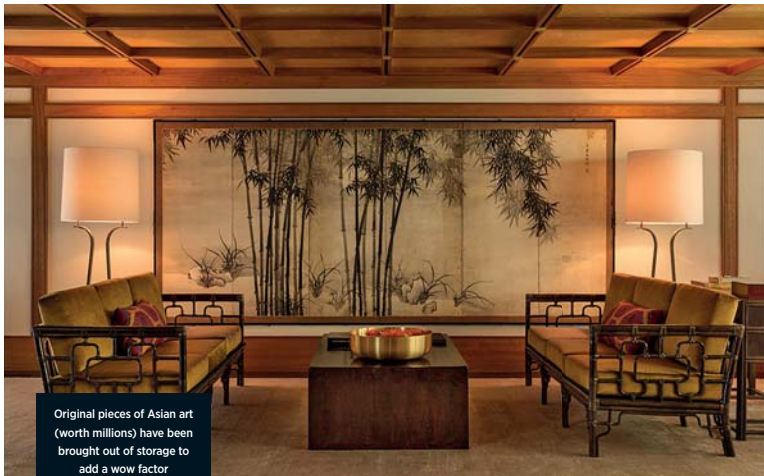


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Original pieces of Asian art (worth millions) have been brought out of storage to add a wow factor



An extra 200 acres have been added to the property for hiking and biodynamic farming



► hand in the design alongside Conway and New York-based interior designer Victoria Hagan. Hagan is known for her sophisticated, refined style and a key part of the new look was to redistribute original pieces of art hidden away in storage – Golden Door has an extensive Asian art collection worth millions – to the villas. “Every single room has these screens, some as big as 12 panels, that are gold and carved: they’re just rich, gorgeous pieces that are hundreds of years old,” enthuses Van Ness. “It’s like sleeping with art and this spills into the grounds from the statues and lanterns to the waterfalls that hold little buckets of dripping water.”

Elsewhere on the property, the sparkling pagoda, Zen garden, koi carp ponds and courtyard are as beautiful as ever says Van Ness. In addition, more than 200-acres (81 hectares) have been purchased for hiking trials and biodynamic farming – there are plans for an olive grove and vineyard alongside an existing citrus orchard. Maintained by Dawson, a previous gardener for Apple’s Steve Jobs, the grounds supply fresh, wholesome produce for healthy meals (literally farm to table) and its artisan food products – there are hopes for Golden Door olive oil and wine in the future. Ingredients such as lavender and lemon are also used in its skincare.

Programme tweaks

Golden Door offers two all-inclusive spa programmes – a four-day minimum stay costing US\$6,000 (€5,520, £4,030) and a seven-day package priced at US\$8,850 (€8,180, £5,970). The seven-day stays, which make up an massive 95 per cent of business, include all meals; daily in-room massages, five skincare sessions and one body treatment, two wraps, a hair treatment and a manicure/pedicure; plus four personal training sessions, access to 40 fitness classes and hiking trials and a personalised take-home fitness plan.

A few tweaks were made to the programmes, with the biggest change ►

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Have you ever had chemical peels, laser or microdermabrasion? ☐ No ☐ Yes, when?

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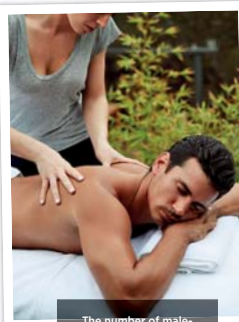
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The number of male-only weeks has doubled since the acquisition

► being the omission of educational seminars. Instead, Golden Door now offers a series of 'inspirational' Friday night speakers including Verdine White, the bassist of *Earth, Wind & Fire* and filmmaker Louie Schwartzberg.

"Our guests are bombarded with self-help articles and when I look at the competition, everything is about diet, pilates, how to be a better partner etc," reasons Van Ness.

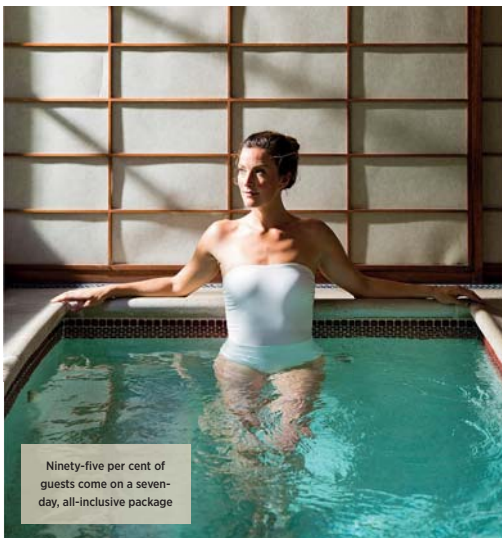
"We felt there was a bigger conversation to be had by focusing on powerful people who've done something special."

Different demographics

Although Golden Door has only been reopen six months, Van Ness is already noticing a difference in clientele. Guests are younger – more people are in their 40s and are more discerning. "I think the renovation really inspired them," she says, adding that they're all up on the latest trends and just have to have an iPhone.

Today's guests aren't so hung up on pampering or weightloss either. "They're executives, they run companies, travel all over the world and want to be able to take care of themselves," she explains. "The whole topic of 'go away for a week and lose weight' is controversial anyway and that's exactly what we don't do. You get a dessert at every meal – and oh my gosh the chocolate ganache, that's made with avocados, is to die for.

"Guests want a whole body experience. To lose a bit of weight so their pants aren't so tight. To feel a bit stronger and more toned. To have a clearer head and for their



Ninety-five per cent of guests come on a seven-day, all-inclusive package

Golden Door facilities

- Nine treatment rooms
- A bathhouse with a whirlpool, steamroom and sauna
- A watsu water therapy pool
- Two swimming pools
- Seven exercise studios
- A tennis court
- 20 miles of hiking trails
- Two labyrinths

skin to be a little softer. And that's the Golden Door message: mind, body, spirit."

In addition, this traditional ladies-only retreat has seen an increased demand from men and is offering even more packages for them. There are now six male-only weeks a year, double the number before the acquisition and another co-ed week has been added, bringing the total to four. "Everybody was afraid that they'd be too boisterous, but I said 'I think it's brilliant'," says Van Ness. "Men have nowhere to go to just be a boy again, but they're just as stressed as women. Yes we would have been busy with only female

guests, but I think it's good for business to be speaking to both genders."

Beam of light

On the subject of business, it's reported that occupancy is around 70 per cent, but Van Ness won't say how this compares to before and won't be drawn into numbers. "Has there been an uptake? Absolutely. It's busier, it's good busy – really good busy."

What she does say is that, more importantly, the Golden Door has got its spark back. "It's more than a spark, it's a flame. Imagine our globe spinning in the universe and there's a golden light that comes out of a place that's really true. A place where people go to get that light back into their eyes, their heart and their soul and to leave feeling healthy. That little beam of light that comes off California's lower coast comes out of the Golden Door." ●



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Donna Karan meditates: the fashion designer has long been an advocate of complementary therapies

In sickness & health

Conceived by fashion designer Donna Karan, the Urban Zen Integrative Therapy programme merges medical and complementary therapies and trains professionals in its own effective style of sickness and preventative care. Julie Cramer reports

When renowned fashion designer Donna Karan launched her Urban Zen Integrative Therapy (UZIT) programme – aimed at helping acutely-ill patients in health and social care settings – she'd already faced the trauma of losing friends, colleagues and family members as a result of terminal illness.

As a rookie designer in the 70s, Karan went to work for Anne Klein in New York and was promptly asked to finish her new boss's collection, because Klein had terminal breast cancer. That tragedy was the catalyst that helped launch Karan's career, but it was also the beginning of

many personal losses, including her best friend who died of breast and brain cancer and her second husband, Stephen Weiss, who died of lung cancer in 2001.

Karan had always been a proponent of the healing powers of complementary therapies like reiki and acupuncture and her own homes are known to be spa-like sanctuaries. She used what her husband called 'woo woo' therapies to help him in the final years of his life. After his death, she went on a quest to fill the gap missing between medical treatment of diseases and sympathetic care of the individual.

Her search culminated in the creation of a 10-day Wellbeing Forum in 2007, to stimulate an exchange of ideas between

patients, doctors, nurses and yoga and alternative healthcare practitioners.

Two years later, the first UZIT training programme was born and since then almost 500 UZIT practitioners from both medical and wellness worlds have been trained, with another 100 or so in the system.

The programme has been put together with the help of Karan's high profile associates, including yoga gurus Rodney Yee and Colleen Saidman-Yee

EAST MEETS WEST

UZIT's mission is to integrate ancient healing techniques into western medical practices, as well as spread this work further through yoga, spa and wellness ▶

There are 500 UZIT practitioners and the long-term goal is to open standalone centres in spas and alongside hospitals



Karan's high-profile associates such as yoga gurus Rodney Yee and Colleen Saidman-Yee have had a hand in creating the UZIT programme



"We could see how his quality of life improved and he was able to stay well enough to check off many things on his bucket list"

► centres. Its core modalities are yoga therapy, reiki, essential oil therapy, nutrition and contemplative end-of-life care and self-care (this last one being for the therapists' personal development). It's designed to treat the common symptoms of illness: pain, anxiety, nausea, insomnia and constipation (UZIT uses the acronym PANIC™) and exhaustion.

To date, its practitioners have carried out more than 25,000 documented sessions in hospitals, outpatient centres, support groups, private practices, corporate environments, nursing homes and medical schools.

One of the inaugural 2009 trainee therapists was Gillian Cilibrasi, who is now the UZIT programme director, charged with standardising the training and expansion in the USA and beyond.

Cilibrasi brings a perfect combination of wellness knowledge and business background to her role – having been a massage therapist for 15 years, a yoga teacher for a decade, in addition to having worked on all commercial aspects of a medical device start-up company. She owned the River Rock Health Spa



▲ Gillian Cilibrasi, one of the first UZIT trainees, now heads up the whole initiative

in Hudson Valley and still maintains a private clientele. And like Karan, she's had her own experience of seeing a loved one become ill and die.

Cilibrasi says: "Several years ago, my stepfather was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the May and he died

in the December. He'd come home from chemotherapy and not want to eat. My sister, mother and I, who are all therapists, would give him acupuncture, prop him into a supported restorative pose and do energy work with him. He'd fall into a deep sleep and then wake up famished.

"We could see how his quality of life improved and he was able to stay well enough to check off many things on his bucket list. When he died, we were at peace with his passing."

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

It's exactly this kind of practice and result that forms the basis of the UZIT programme. Cilibrasi admits that it wasn't always easy in the early days as some medical institutions remained staunchly sceptical, yet there were an equal number that "welcomed us with open arms".

UZIT has very strong partnerships with major treatment centres such as the Beth Israel Center in New York, the UCLA Health System in California, as well as smaller community facilities such as Southampton Hospital in the Hamptons, which is now one of the strongest





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"Therapies can be performed hands-on or hands-off with the same effect, as you may not be able to physically touch patients"

► employers of UZIT practitioners.

"If you want to work with the medical profession you have to be prepared to speak their language," says Cilibrasi, "so we are meticulous in collecting outcome data and have several studies ready to go. You have to create evidence-based work to show how the therapies are working and how they can be used to best effect.

"For example, one of our studies looked at a 24-bed floor at Beth Israel Hospital where UZIT was active. It showed a US\$496 saving per patient on pain, nausea and anxiety medications alone. Over a year, that meant a saving of US\$1m for the hospital, so you can see how it quickly adds up.

"A lot of our studies contain qualitative data, such as how patients' pain scores have been affected or their perceived reduction in stress levels, but we also realise the importance of qualitative data and we have a large study pending from UCLA which will contain such markers."

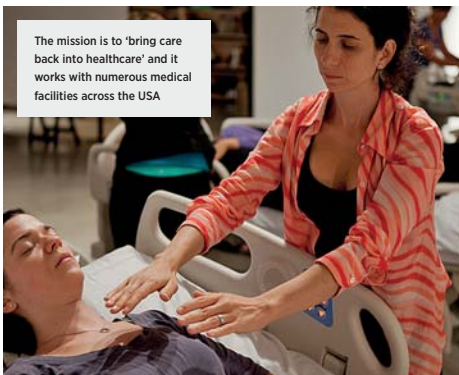
UZIT works both by training medical practitioners in complementary therapies, and putting experienced wellness practitioners into a medical setting.

WELLNESS ARMY

Cilibrasi says that UCLA is a great example of a top-down initiative, where UZIT has worked entirely with existing medical staff. Around 140 of them have been trained to date – spread across a variety of departments, such as oncology, nursing, rehab services, respiratory therapy and radiology. A further 50 staff will have been UZIT-trained by mid 2015.



The mission is to 'bring care back into healthcare' and it works with numerous medical facilities across the USA



Wellness practitioners, such as those working in spa facilities and yoga studios, need to show a minimum of five years' practice in their field, before joining UZIT on an intensive training programme (which includes clinical rotation hours) at studios such as Yoga Shanti in New York, Piedmont Yoga in California and Yoga on High in Columbus. Alternatively, longer, part-time training is currently delivered at yoga centres such as YogaWorks studios across the US west coast.

So is there a magic formula to UZIT's five chosen modalities? Cilibrasi simply says: "Those who work in spa or wellness settings know that a deep tissue massage is very healing, but if you then combine it with some energy work it becomes so much more powerful. So we layer the therapies as required, using some or all of them.

"We wouldn't normally use movement with someone during end-of-life care. We're always careful to meet patients at their stage of the journey and not to assume we know what's best for them.

◀ The organisation is meticulous about collecting outcome data which proves the efficacy of its programme

"A great thing about the UZIT therapies is that they're designed to be performed hands-on or hands-off with the same effect, as many wellness practitioners going into a medical setting may not be able to physically touch patients."

THERAPIST SELF-CARE

Another perhaps unique aspect of the UZIT programme is the prime emphasis it puts on the wellbeing of the practitioner and the self-care and nutrition modalities are targeted squarely at them. UZIT trainees are required to develop a daily yoga and meditation practice, to eat healthily and are also placed under the care of a personal mentor.

As someone who still also actively practices in a private spa setting with yoga and massage, Cilibrasi is only too aware of the dangers of burnout that lots of therapists and practitioners face.

"I've seen many massage therapists burn out in 10 years or less because they haven't set out with a strategy of self-care. I'm still going strong after 15 years because I'm able to employ the techniques that we teach our trainees. I've made my home a spa-like sanctuary where I can ►

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"I've seen many massage therapists burn out in 10 years or less because they haven't set out with a strategy of self-care"



The foundation has an outreach programme in Haiti and Karan's vision is to create a holistic community there focused on mind, body and spirit



- take care of myself – otherwise how will I ever be able to take care of others?

"Compassion fatigue is a real danger. UZIT practitioners especially will be going into very challenging settings where they may be required to spend long periods of time with patients who are very ill. They need to be able to deal with all situations as they show up, how to be with the living and the dying and not impose their teachings on a patient or relative."

Currently the UZIT programme, which is funded mostly by donations and board participation, is only available at selected USA centres. Cilibrasi says the past five years have been spent consolidating the training and refining it, while the next five to 10 years will focus more on growth.

"We're in talks with organisations in Europe, Japan and India about how we can expand the UZIT programme. Several pilot projects that could be scaleable and exportable are in the early stages here in the USA. We've also been taking outreach work to places like Port-au-Prince in Haiti to further develop our programme."

UZIT EXPANSION

In addition, Cilibrasi says there's now a very popular public programme available at partner wellness facilities around the USA at various yoga studios where anyone can experience the UZIT modalities in public Urban Zen classes.

"We've actually been quite overwhelmed by how popular these programmes have

been, often becoming the most attended classes at a facility – we're talking about 40 people turning up to a class on a Saturday night in New York's Soho!

So many people are looking for balance and healing in their lives. The guy next to you at work – you may have no idea what he's going through or what kind of healing journey he may be on," she says.

While it's not likely to happen in the immediate future, Cilibrasi nevertheless foresees a time when there will be standalone UZIT centres that run alongside hospitals as well as in wellness settings such as spas.

"Our programme is a natural fit in both acute and preventative wellness settings

and our future growth will be fuelled by attracting more spa and wellness professionals to come and take our training and send this work further out into the world," says Cilibrasi.

"As Donna always says, 'everyone will be a patient one day', but I truly believe that using UZIT in both sickness and wellness care can make the journey better." ●



Julie Cramer is a health, hospitality and travel journalist and a former BBC online news editor.
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spa business uniting the world of wellness

SENSE OF ARRIVAL

Making travel news worldwide, Ritz-Carlton and Aman have each introduced standout urban resorts with a spa to Japan's hospitality scene. Neena Dhillon pays them a visit, speaking to the designers and directors involved in their development

Anticipation reached fever pitch in Japan last year as two urban resorts opened their doors, raising the bar for luxury hospitality in the country's premier tourist destinations.

In October, a new 84-bed hotel occupying the top six floors of the 38-storey Otemachi Tower in Tokyo signalled the arrival of Amanresorts in the country. A brand associated with scenic natural locations, Aman's first city hotel

constructed as part of an existing building does not compromise on its spa offering despite the urban setting, incorporating a 2,500sq m (26,910sq ft) wellbeing facility.

Ten months before, Ritz-Carlton unveiled its fourth Japanese property, a new build in Kyoto infused with an extraordinary sense of place. Drawing on arts, craftsmanship and detailing to convey the venerable city's character, the 134-bed, low-rise resort features a sensual basement spa.

So how do the designers and directors of the spas think the two measure up?



Left to right: Aman spa manager Yuki Kiyono; the hotel and spa occupy the top six floors of the Otemachi Tower, Tokyo; architect Kerry Hill



AMAN TOKYO

Although the sixth Aman to be designed by Singapore-based Kerry Hill Architects, Aman Tokyo called for a very distinctive treatment. “Commencing eight or nine years ago, we were engaged to carry out the project’s space planning and interior design,” confirms award-winning director Kerry Hill, an architect with a 40-year-plus track record. “Together, with the vision of [Aman founder] Adrian Zecha, and my long-held respect for Japanese culture, we approached the design in a way that refers to that culture. But since a big hotel at the top of a high-rise is not the traditional Japanese place to start, the project needed to be part of the modern, global world. So perhaps the design is in the details, our interpretation of Japanese materials and textures and the sense of quietness.”

Conceived as an urban sanctuary, Aman Tokyo references vernacular buildings

in Japan through a limited palette of materials translated in a contemporary manner. Landscaping at the tower’s entrance and an inner garden in the lobby, structured around Japanese rock sculptures and a seasonal ikebana display, reveal a reverence for nature. Above the ikebana, the hotel’s centrepiece is a 27m-high soaring ceiling feature created with layers of textured washi paper, which appears as a large lantern showcased by natural and ambient lighting. This interplay of light and shadow is fundamental to the hotel’s design, as is the Japanese concept of *engawa*. In traditional homes, *engawa* refers to the intermediate space between the garden and living areas in which families gather informally to socialise. Usually a wooden passageway, it has been embraced from the hotel’s lobby through to guestrooms and over to the spa, where a timber-washed corridor welcomes guests post-treatment to look out over Tokyo, sip tea and chat through lifestyle advice with their therapist.

▲ The hotel’s centrepiece is a huge lantern, made from textured Japanese washi paper, which lights the lobby

Harmonious transitions

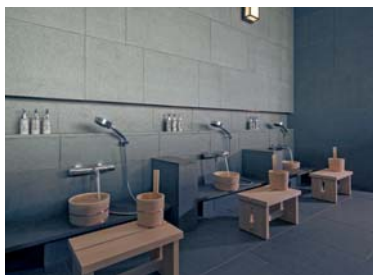
Since fluidity is another key principle, materials such as basalt, granite, ash and chestnut flow through the hotel’s spaces including the spa reception. Here Aman Tokyo’s sense of space is celebrated with a homely, open-plan layout and views to the city beyond. Greg Payne, Amanresorts group spa director, collaborated closely with Kerry Hill through the spa’s development and notes that the hotel’s overall aesthetic suits a wellbeing environment: “The use of wood and filtered light lends warmth and ▶



Aman’s group spa director Greg Payne



Chestnut flooring brings comfort to bare feet. Foot rituals remove excess oil to help eliminate staining



- softness while the tactile stone surfaces provide a contrast, letting us play with lighting to achieve a sensory ambience.”

Arranged across two floors, Aman Spa comprises a reception, yoga studio, pilates studio, plus eight treatment suites each featuring a dressing room, shower and bathroom, on the upper level. The serene indoor pool on the floor below is positioned to capture the winter sunlight and is complemented by a Japanese bath, steamrooms, changing rooms and fitness centre. In plotting the layout, one of the first things to be located was the entrance and back-of-house to ensure there was no movement of staff and linens across guest areas. “During the design process,

▲ The use of wood and filtered light lends warmth and softness while tactile stone surfaces provide a contrast

we actually removed some of the planned facilities so that we could get a better sense of flow,” reveals Payne.

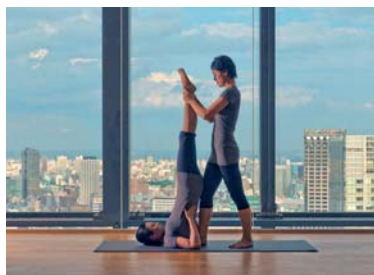
Grey volcanic basalt lines the spa’s walls, chosen by Hill for its calming effect. While a tougher yet tactile granite paves wet areas, its unpolished finish leaving guests less susceptible to slipping. In the treatment rooms, chestnut flooring brings comfort to bare feet and for this tactile consideration, Payne says the challenges of

dealing with oil stains on wood is worth it. Also, foot rituals pre- and post-treatment remove excess oil from the feet.

Evocative experiences

While there’s clear functionality, the selection of materials also add a unique Japanese feel says spa manager Yuki Kiyono. In the spa reception, an ancient camphor tree has been carved into a table and is symbolic of temple gardens. Japanese camphor is known for its calming and focusing effect; traditionally the wood was carved into knives used for samurai tea ceremonies. “This bridge to the Zen world is very evocative for our Japanese guests, who identify with

The sweet-smelling cypress buckets (this pic and below opposite) are used in traditional onsen



the aroma," says Kiyono, adding that signature treatments harness the power of indigenous, seasonal healing herbs (or kampo) such as pine, Japanese citrus, yuzu oil and ginger. "Our international travellers are interested in the Japanese way of life – perceived as long and healthy – so these seasonal and traditional elements engage all our guests equally."

Aroma again plays its part in the provision of sweet-smelling cypress buckets for the shower stations and hot bath, a feature that harks back to the tradition of onsen. Kiyono notes that this naturally creates social interaction too as Japanese guests show overseas counterparts how to tie a yukata and how

▲ Shuhei Hasado's famous artwork in the spa reception (left); natural light adds to guests' wellbeing (right)

to scrub themselves at the shower stations before relaxing in the hot water.

Organic touches

Kiyono says there's nothing about the spa she would change, explaining that she worked for a year in conjunction with Kerry Hill Architects on selecting accessories and art to harmonise with the concept. There are no bright colours and technology is hidden innovatively; a music

speaker, for example, is disguised as a wooden sculpture. Artwork is organic and sensitive to the natural theme – esteemed artist Shuhei Hasado installed his piece *Winter Flowers* as part of the spa entrance, forming a hotel triptych devised from his unique plastering technique.

Aman Spa's light-drenched facilities and spacious layout support Kiyono's team in delivering integrative treatments and movement therapies that contribute to their guests' sense of wellness. "So many city spas in Tokyo lack natural light, but our design benefits the positive energy of both guests and staff," she says. "Guests also feel they have had an authentic insight into the Japanese lifestyle."



The building's height was restricted, so two floors have been built underground. The spa is situated on the lower basement level

THE RITZ-CARLTON, KYOTO

Home to 17 World Heritage sites and acknowledged as Japan's cultural centre, Kyoto was an historical home to aristocrats and nobles who resided on the banks of the Kamogawa River, developing customs and crafts that remain cornerstones of national identity today. For this reason, the city's authorities guard against overdevelopment through stringent planning regulations. Against this backdrop, The Ritz-Carlton and property developer Sekisui House were granted permission to open Kyoto's first internationally branded, luxury urban

resort, on a site facing the Higashiyama mountain range. But for Remedios Studio, charged with designing the interiors (excluding restaurants), the location presented two big challenges. "Firstly, Kyoto has a height moratorium, which keeps ceiling heights restricted," says principal and managing director Peter Remedios. "While I've always loved Japanese culture, there was also the question of whether a foreigner could understand the concept of *miyabi* (delicate refinement) that defines this destination."

Of The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto's seven storeys, two have been constructed below



■ Peter Remedios (above) mastered the Japanese concept of *miyabi* (delicate refinement) in his spa design (left)



the river's levee, in effect opening up space by designing downwards. Turning to traditional *machiya* townhouses as inspiration, the building's architectural structure incorporates outer and inner landscaping that draw nature down to the two basement levels. Remedios, who has over 20 years' experience in hospitality design with offices in Hong Kong and California, has turned the architectural realities to his advantage in more ways than one. "With my team, which includes ►



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► Japanese-born designers, we spent three years re-educating ourselves about Japanese culture by researching this city's essence," he recalls. "There's a theatricality to Kyoto, a moodiness and mystery that pervades the streets and begs you to explore its spaces. So we've taken that mystique and conceived a modern hotel that is much darker than you would expect, where spaces don't reveal themselves in their entirety until you turn a corner or open a door."

Making an entrance

A passageway, designed to make visitors feel as though they're entering a local home's courtyard, leads directly from guestroom elevators to The Ritz-Carlton Spa, on the lower basement level. Since the same floor is home to events spaces and a wedding chapel, Remedios advised against shared access. "We couldn't have people in tuxedos and others in robes using the same corridor," he explains. "The answer was to divide the entryway in two by having a screen wall touch the floor but not the ceiling. There's a little bit of theatre too because you can sense others behind the washi paper-patterned screen although you can't see them."

From spa reception, the intent is to evoke an intimate rock garden. So, uplighters graze split-face dune granite walls while basalt and limestone combine to resemble stepping-stones on the floor. Mellow lighting throughout, provided



Spa manager Masako Kasahara says guests' reaction to the spa is 'wow'

either by low lanterns or uplighters, has been arranged with the movement of mist in mind. Still, the design team had to tread a fine line between references that were too naturalistic ("it's not a stage set," Remedios points out) while avoiding hard-edged materials. The hotel's operational team tempered some of the studio's initial ideas; it would have preferred coarser stone paving for the reception's floor but The Ritz-Carlton felt a smoother option was needed for safety reasons.

The garden theme continues through to the stunning pool, complete with

■ Granite, basalt and limestone have been used in the spa reception in homage to Japanese rock gardens

steamroom, sauna, showers and poolside loungers. Remedios felt strongly that a straightforward lap pool would not befit this high-end urban resort so he spent months convincing architects and engineers that a spacious area fit for relaxation was required. This meant campaigning for a Zen rock garden and three-storey waterfall that would cascade down to the hotel's lowest floor. Having secured this exterior feature, Remedios then asked the team to engineer a lifting system for the windows so they could retract upwards in temperate weather to remove the boundary between internal and external landscapes. "As the pool has an infinity edge, the water seems connected to the rocks outside, akin to a secret grotto," says Remedios. "In choosing the rough stone wall, we followed the wabi-sabi aesthetic, finding beauty in the imperfection of nature." Spa manager Masako Kasahara agrees the 20m pool is a big draw: "The first reaction of customers is 'wow.' You never feel as though you're in a basement when the sunlight streams in and you can watch the sunset. The pool itself is an art piece, its pattern designed by a local Kyoto artist and created in Bisazza mosaics."

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Remedios campaigned for a larger pool and views of a Zen rock garden (above); the relaxation room maintains a peaceful Japanese aesthetic (below)



► Lights down low

Much consideration has been given to the spa's layout, with active (fitness) and passive (treatment) areas divided. The pool, at the heart of the facility, can be accessed either through locker rooms, which also lead to the 24-hour fitness centre, or a hidden door by reception.

Seven treatment rooms are found along a quiet corridor adjoining reception – each has a shower and toilet so guests can avoid the lockers rooms completely. There's a sensual quality to the oak latticed woodwork and doors, sensitively underlit, while the absence of ceiling spotlights means that guests are not dazzled when they turn during their ESPA treatment.

The relaxation room maintains the peaceful Japanese aesthetic. Walls here are covered in metallic brush strokes layered over a local plastering technique and suspended ceiling dividers are made from a material reminiscent of reeds.

Peppered with columns required to cope with seismic activity, the locker rooms proved awkward to design. Remedios would have loved more space. Kasahara says making room for a hot spring would have added value too. Despite the spatial limitations, she confirms that back-of-house and storage facilities are efficient. Large hidden drawers help the spa team to maintain tidiness, although some of them are a little high for the petite therapists,

so stepladders are used to compensate. But what has pleased Kasahara, above all, is the reaction from both Japanese and overseas guests: "For locals, there's a comforting nostalgia associated with the landscaping and design while international visitors gain an expression of Japanese culture. The spa has a healing atmosphere for all." ●



Neena Dhillon writes about spa, hotel and travel trends around the world
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The background of the advertisement is a photograph of a modern gym interior. Two men are running on treadmills, viewed from behind, facing large windows that look out onto a tropical landscape with palm trees. In the foreground, there are several pieces of Matrix fitness equipment, including treadmills and rowing machines, arranged in rows. The lighting is bright and natural, coming from the windows.

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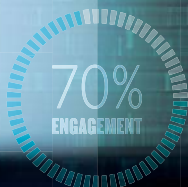
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Less intrusive and more affordable methods of neuromarketing opens up its possibilities to new audiences

Ask an expert

NEUROMARKETING

Could this neuroscience-inspired branch of market research hold the key to finding out what spa consumers really want? Rhianon Howells investigates

Understanding what customers want, think and feel is at the heart of great service – but in reality we all know that gauging exactly what this might be is not always as easy as it sounds. Increasingly, research shows that a large part of consumer decision-making takes place in the non-conscious part of the mind and is influenced by factors we're not even aware of.

In an attempt solve this conundrum and to unlock consumers' true feelings about everything from ad campaigns to products and experiences, businesses are turning to neuromarketing – the application of neuroscience technologies to the field of market research.

In its infancy neuromarketing focused primarily on expensive methods that

monitored brain activity, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), which focuses on blood flow, and electroencephalography (EEG), which detects electrical activity. But over time the toolkit has widened to include eye-tracking technology, which records where customers direct their visual attention, and facial coding technology, which captures and identifies the emotions behind fleeting facial expressions.

Most recently, there's been a move towards online methods, including web-based versions of eye-tracking and facial coding, as well as psychology-based implicit-association tests. The latter assesses the strength of our unconscious associations between concepts (eg fat/thin people) and evaluations (eg good/bad) or stereotypes (eg athletic/clumsy).

Less intrusive and more affordable methods of neuromarketing opens up its possibilities to a new audience, including the spa industry. *Spa Business* identified it as a trend to watch in its 2014 *Spa Foresight™* (see SB14/4 p30). However, not everyone believes it's worth the investment, with detractors arguing that the science behind it is tenuous at best.

We ask four experts if neuromarketing lives up to the claims and how the spa industry might benefit from it.



Rhianon Howells is a business journalist and the consulting editor of *Spa Business* magazine
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Neuromarketing methods include the use of brain scans (typically fMRI), EEG, biometrics, facial coding, eye-tracking and reaction-time testing. These offer an alternative to interviews or online questionnaires, which many market researchers now realise are problematic – not only because those answering have no real motivation, but also because people may not know exactly how they feel about a specific product or service, or may find it difficult to put into words. People are not rational when it comes to making a purchase, relying instead on emotions, feelings and intuition.

Different neuromarketing methods provide specific bits of information. If someone was asked to watch an advert, biometric measures could indicate how emotional they were; a brain scan could show the strength of their response; eye-tracking could reveal what got the most visual attention and facial coding could indicate what feelings they had.

These technologies have been validated by thousands of academic studies, but



Dr Eamon Fulcher

Head of research and development, Neurosense

each has strengths and weaknesses. Brain scanning was once considered the purest neuromarketing method, but in terms of the insights it can yield there are less expensive methods that are equally efficient. One of these is the implicit reaction-time test (IRT), which has its origins in cognitive psychology. It's a relatively simple technique, but one that is very difficult to fake, and a powerful measure of gut reactions.

Neuromarketing has a remarkably broad reach in terms of the research questions it can address. Within the spa industry, these might include: What do 'wellness', 'health' and 'spa' mean to consumers? What do consumers expect from a spa? How can a spa's brand image be improved? What are the emotional and psychological benefits of a spa

experience? How can you market your business most effectively? Most of these questions can be answered using IRTs.

Typically, neuromarketing is more expensive than traditional forms of market research, but the availability of online tests has dramatically reduced costs. And companies not using neuromarketing may be missing out on valuable insights: our clients tell us that our techniques provide them with a much deeper understanding of their brands than traditional methods.

Eamon Fulcher has more than 15 years experience in developing online testing and e-learning tools. Established in 1999, Neurosense is a worldwide neuromarketing research agency whose clients include the BBC, American Express and Coca-Cola. Details: www.neurosense.com



If a guest was uncomfortable during a spa treatment, they might not reveal that in a written survey, but a neuromarketing test might pick up on those feelings



Simply asking people questions in a survey doesn't yield accurate results. This is particularly true for 'why?' and 'will you?' questions. Neuromarketing includes a wide variety of techniques designed to help us understand what customers are really thinking. While there hasn't been a lot of academic research validating these techniques, this is starting to emerge. Temple University in Philadelphia just published a study showing that fMRI predicted the success of ad campaigns better than traditional methods.

Neuromarketing can be used to evaluate consumers' subconscious reactions to everything from television commercials to print ads, packaging and even products themselves. In terms of how this might add value to the spa industry, deciding to go to a spa is based mostly on emotion – it's not a necessity, like food or transportation, and there are luxury connotations. All this suggests that appealing to a customer's



Roger Dooley

Author, *Brainfluence: 100 Ways to Persuade and Convince Consumers with Neuromarketing*

rational side by advertising features and benefits will be less effective than an emotional appeal. Neuromarketing can be used to uncover the emotional drivers that are most effective.

To my knowledge, neuromarketing has not yet been used to measure customer responses to experiences, such as a hotel or spa visit. Most hospitality firms use a guest survey for this, but it would be interesting to add a neuromarketing study to compare results. Less expensive techniques such as facial coding or implicit-association testing might work well here. For example, if a guest was uncomfortable during a spa treatment, they might not reveal that in a written

survey, but a neuromarketing test might pick up on those feelings.

With more providers and new techniques now available, the cost of neuromarketing studies could be in the lower thousands depending on the technologies used. Return on investment is impossible to predict, as like any other market research project it's totally dependent on the value of the insights obtained. But as costs come down I think more industries will add neuromarketing alternatives to simple consumer surveys.

Brainfluence author Roger Dooley is also the founder of marketing consultancy Dooley Direct. Details: www.rogerdooley.com

Much of our decision-making is based on associations we're not consciously aware of. People are not as rational as they think they are and asking them to explain their behaviour and how they might act in the future is only going to tell part of the story. Neuromarketing can be used to bridge this gap and shed light on why we behave the way we do.

While there's no guarantee that a person's emotional response will accurately predict their behaviour, it's infinitely more reliable than just asking them. Relying on surveys and focus groups alone is limiting because people are so heavily influenced by factors outside their conscious awareness. Neuromarketing can give insight into the real drivers of consumer behaviour, including our subconscious associations and emotions – something which is essential throughout the marketing process, from testing initial design ideas to finding out why a brand is not performing well.

Just as with traditional market research, neuromarketing companies are moving away from lab methods towards online



Duncan Smith

Managing director, Mindlab International

tests. Some use online eye-tracking and facial coding, while others, including Mindlab, use established psychological measures such as implicit-association testing. This allows tests to be run faster on more participants at a lower price.

Most neuromarketing applications come from academia, are backed up by peer-reviewed studies and based on sound scientific principles. But many applications have in the past been oversold, and when over-excited marketers with little scientific training get hold of the technology, it can be misused.

To get the best results a combination of measures is often what's needed. For example, while EEG can pinpoint where people are paying attention, it's not good at distinguishing between positive and negative responses. If you want to identify

specific emotions, facial coding may be a more sensible approach, though to understand people's subconscious feelings, implicit-association testing is more reliable.

Neuromarketing is easier to apply in business-to-consumer environments, making it ideally suited to the hospitality and spa industries. One low-cost application might be to incorporate implicit-association tests into online customer satisfaction surveys; Mindlab is currently speaking to a five-star hotel in London about doing just this.

Smith is a biological sciences graduate and worked in private education and corporate research before heading up Mindlab. Clients of the neuromarketing firm include Innocent Drinks and Lloyds Bank. Details: www.themindlab.co.uk



Many applications have in the past been oversold, and when over-excited marketers with little scientific training get hold of the technology, it can be misused



I'm sceptical about the claims made for neuromarketing because I've never seen any proper evidence that it works. My first issue is that the term 'neuromarketing' is applied to a number of technologies that are not neuro-measures at all. While fMRI and EEG do look at brain activity, techniques such as facial coding, eye-tracking, skin conductance and biometrics do not.

My second issue is that it's based on the unproven premise that monitoring people's brain activity will give you unique insight into how they're likely to behave. But in this situation, surely the most logical course of action is to look not at people's brain patterns, but at how they behave?

For example, in one neuromarketing experiment, supermarket shoppers wore EEG headsets to see if the data collected correlated with their purchasing decisions. But if you want to understand someone's purchasing decisions, why not just look in their trolley? I fail to see how monitoring



Mike Page

Cognitive psychology lecturer,
University of Hertfordshire, UK

a small number of people's brains – and the technology is so expensive it can only be a small number – can predict how a much larger number of people might behave, more accurately than getting a middle-sized number of people to actually demonstrate the behaviour. Rather than putting 30 people in a brain-scanner to monitor their response to a set of adverts, why not let 300 people watch those adverts, then set them loose in a controlled environment and see what they buy?

My final point is that while fMRI and EEG can show when someone is having an emotional response, it's impossible to be sure what the mental content of that response is. A few years ago there

was a claim that people were literally in love with their iPhones because, in fMRI testing, the sound of their phone ringing made the part of their brain called the insula light up, just as it did when they saw their girlfriend or boyfriend. The trouble is, the insula lights up for loads of things! Its activation is simply not specific enough for it to be a useful diagnostic tool – unless good evidence shows otherwise, of course. I'm still waiting.

Mike Page is a cognitive psychologist. As well as research and teaching, he's involved with several innovative projects, including The Cube Project. Details: www.cubeproject.org.uk



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Top and bottom left: Jessica Biel and Justin Timberlake chose the Italian resort as their wedding venue in 2012
Bottom right: The underground spa ticks all the right boxes on the luxury front, but its unconventional concept is what makes it stand out

DEEP IN THOUGHT

“Many people are still not ready to accept that what’s in our mind totally affects our body and visa versa. It’s a big change for a spa to use this knowledge as a core philosophy,” says Patrizia Bortolin, the creator and director of the Vair spa at the Borgo Egnazia resort in Puglia, south Italy.

Her approach to treatments is rooted in psychosomatics. She believes our wellbeing is related to the subconscious interplay between our emotional and physical states, which is enhanced by working with the body and the mind in a variety of ways – often subtle and playful but always with a real connection between therapist and client.

The result is a holistic, reflective and personal spa experience that differs



Patrizia Bortolin

An ‘experimental spa’ in Italy offers a new style of wellbeing destination where psychosomatic techniques are used to gently dissolve physical and emotional tension. Sophie Bengé talks to the creator Patrizia Bortolin

radically from the cookie-cutter concepts of so many hotel spas. Guests at Vair (meaning ‘true’ in Apulian) can, of course, have a body massage or manicure, but can also explore the sound of their voice with a musician or have a facial that’s more of a psychological journey than a pore-cleansing sensation.

It’s a daring move given that spa-goers rarely try new things. So how did Bortolin convince the owner to fully embrace such a different spa concept and how well does it perform from a business point of view?

Variation on a spa theme

Borgo Egnazia, a Pompeii-style mapping of villas, piazzas and pools, is a privately-owned, sprawling resort that’s earned its stripes in high-end hospitality. It’s been applauded by *Conde Nast Traveller* and has hosted Justin Timberlake’s wedding in



Top right: The idea is to position Borgo Egnazia as a wellbeing destination in its own right rather than as a resort with a spa
Left and bottom right: The privately-owned resort in Puglia, south Italy, has been built using local stone to give it a sense of place

THE RESULT IS A HOLISTIC, REFLECTIVE AND PERSONAL SPA EXPERIENCE THAT DIFFERS RADICALLY FROM THE COOKIE-CUTTER CONCEPTS OF SO MANY HOTEL SPAS

the five years since it opened among the olive groves between Bari and Brindisi.

The 1,800sq m (19,375sq ft) underground Vair spa ticks the luxury list of flickering candlelight, trickling water, natural textures and cocooning silence, beautifully. There's even a suite of Roman bathing facilities with a tepidarium, caldarium, Kneipp bath, plunge pools and marble scrub room that can be booked exclusively for couples. It's highly indulgent by any standards. Yet this self-named 'experimental spa' also hints at a new concept for hotels – an unusual offering which may not have come to life if it wasn't for the trust and bravery of hotel owner, Aldo Melpignano, who gave his director free reign with her creativity.

When Bortolin first met Melpignano through personal contacts, she was

expecting to develop 'a standard spa', as she had done in her previous spa director roles across Italy – most recently at Bagni di Pisa in Tuscany. But Melpignano wanted something that embraced 'natural' and 'Puglia', something that gave his guests a sense of place and offered them genuine sincerity.

So when Bortolin came on board a year prior to opening, she took his wishes to heart and tapped into the energy of the surrounding landscape: an earthy, ancient terrain of olive and lemon groves, hot sun and sea breezes. "Egnazia is like a dream. My ideas changed when I came here. I had to follow my inspiration," says Bortolin, who exudes honesty and passion in everything she does in relation to Vair.

On a prosaic level, this led to the development of products formulated

around olive oil and prickly pear, an antioxidant-rich oil from the prickly pear cactus that grows prolifically in Puglia, as well as lavender and lemon.

On a more profound level, Bortolin delved into Apulian culture and wove local folklore with healing therapies and psychosomatics, which are her personal areas of interest and study.

In the three-day Tarant 'tarantula therapy' programme, for example, women rediscover their feminine side and are empowered with music and movement, yoga, psycho-emotional sessions with intuitive healers and holistic treatments. The programme is based on the Apulian tarant ritual for releasing the 'sting' that, according to myth, is metaphorically injected into women by the men in their lives!



Music therapy is combined with psycho-emotional sessions to help women rediscover their femininity



Stefano Battaglia is a shaman and integrative healer



► Psychosomatic approach

While Vair has all the trappings of an opulent spa on an aesthetic level, the real luxury is the intense personal connection which can only be offered to guests when therapists have a deep understanding and love of their craft. They have an intuitive awareness which allows them to work with their clients as individuals based on their own particular life histories.

It's for this reason that Bortolin has chosen colleagues who share her psychosomatic approach – both in terms of expert practitioners, who count for a significant proportion of her team, as well as massage and facial therapists.

Gianni Rotondo, a psychologist and folk musician, uses sound and rhythm in his 90-minute Nu Suun Vair, 'real sound' treatment, which can be experienced privately or in a group. In this activity-based music therapy, guests play instruments and make harmonies to encourage imagination and communication as well as to release physical and psychological tensions.

With a similar objective for release, Stefano Battaglia, an Italian shaman and integrative healer, combines talk

BORGO EGNAZIA & VAIR BY NUMBERS

- Messages start at €90 (US\$101, £65) for 50 minutes
- Nu Suun Vair: private class for two people €220 (US\$246, £160) per couple for 90 minutes; group classes €50 (US\$56, £36) per person
- Avenmari: starts at €120 (US\$134, £87) for 50 minutes
- Three-day Tarant programme (including full board) starts at €1,000
- Rooms at Borgo Egnazia start at €220 (US\$246, £160) per night

therapy with gentle handling of the body to treat joint and muscle pain. He does this in a way that simultaneously stimulates the body's reflexes and self-healing mechanisms which in turn aid relief of psycho-emotional as well as physical stress. His 50- or 80-minute treatment, called Avenmari 'sunset', is the spa's signature treatment.

It's a mark of Bortolin's commitment that many of Vair's treatments were a year

in research and practice before launching to guests. She says, "I think our treatments are so beautiful and very unique already. We can stay like this or we can take everything to a different level." She and her team spend time tweaking treatment protocols during January when the tourist onslaught on southern Italy relaxes a little.

This year she invited a monk from India to spend time in daily meditation and discussion in her belief that ongoing personal nurture of what she calls the 'community' can only upgrade the spa experience for guests too.

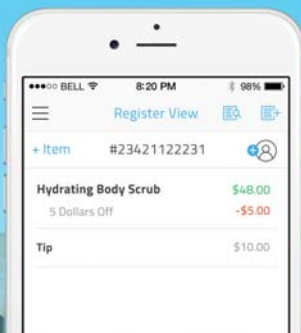
Matching wellbeing with revenue

With programmes such as Tarant, plus a psychophysical detox package and one based in outdoor fitness, all ranging between three and seven days, Melpignano believes Vair is ahead of its time. "Everyone's speaking this holistic language now but it's not always being delivered in luxury hotel spas. My belief has always been to develop a spa that puts special attention on the soul of our guests, rather than just offering nice massages," he says. The programmes can even be ►



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Many treatments start in the Roman bathing suite with its plunge pools, Kneipp bath and heat experiences

- adapted to suit individual needs. In fact the entire Vair experience feels more like tailor-made than off-the-peg.

Having said this, both Bortolin and Melpignano admit that their concept doesn't appeal to all guests. "Some people don't engage on the level we offer, they come to the spa for a massage because that's what they want or they don't expect anything else, so we offer these too," says Melpignano. They also confess that the spa needs to contribute more than its current 5 per cent of hotel revenue, even though Vair already turns over more than €1m (US\$1.1m, £0.7m) a year.

Melpignano believes revenues will increase by positioning Vair as a wellbeing destination in its own right rather than marketing Borgo Egnazia as 'a resort with a spa'. This shift in perception will also help to forge an upswing in winter business for the hotel, he says.

"We offer wellness in the broadest sense: good food, outdoor activities, culture, sea and spa," says Melpignano. Together with Bortolin, he wants to see Vair's deep and daring spa become a unique destination in the current surge in wellness tourism. ●



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Bespoke couple's package at Vair spa

First-person experience: Sophie Bengé

I'm visiting Vair spa on a couple's package that includes a bespoke mix of therapies. Side-by-side treatment tables in a double suite this is not. In fact it's just as much about being apart as being together, in line with the Vair philosophy that "moments of separation make time together more passionate".

It started with a 90-minute ritual in the Roman bathing suite, a boudoir of flickering candles, plunge pools and saunas... in other words breathtakingly romantic (pictured above).

Yet my lover was whisked away for a salt scrub while I went through the saunas, pools and ice shower alone with my therapist. We switched around and then we snatched a few together-moments in the pool before our head-to-head (rather than side-by-side) very oily massage. I felt the full force of togetherness when our therapists linked our arms over our heads and massaged them as one, a frisson that returns as I write, weeks later.

This marked the end of a day which included other dynamic ways of exploring our relationship. We entered a room with a lone Bohemian figure (Giuseppe Ciciello, a local psychologist and musician) sitting on a stool, covering his face with a hat.



Music therapist Giuseppe Ciciello

It was up to us how we reacted – the silence was meant to enhance the energy between the three of us.

What followed was 90 minutes of animistic ritual: of dance, music and song. We swung and twirled each other and prodded and parried in a fencing sequence. We played tambourines, then sung an Apulian folk song which made my blood run cold (because I can't sing) rather than the other way around! Yet I even asked to sing some more. The psycho-emotional release that the spa espouses clearly worked for me.

The whole experience was about learning when to create space between us and when to come together, exploring how we feel in a relationship through movement rather than words. Who knows what all this really means. The idea is not to analyse too deeply.

Despite an argument on the flight home, we both agreed our experience at Vair really did bring us closer together.

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Guests can upload photos of themselves to create their own AmorePacific beauty campaign

THAT'S AMORE

Korean skincare company AmorePacific has won an award for transforming its factory tour into an attraction in its own right. Jason Holland finds out how the Story Garden visitor centre creates a lasting connection with visitors

It all began in a quiet street in Amsterdam with an unusually excited group of young people. Curious, AmorePacific CEO Suh Kyung-Bae decided to follow them. From the way they were behaving he thought they must be on their way to see something really special. The group eventually turned toward what looked like a factory and Suh found himself outside the Heineken Experience, the Dutch brewing company's visitor centre. He decided to see what all the fuss was about.

Walking around the attraction and observing the reactions of that group as well as other visitors, he noticed that he was connecting with the Heineken story in a powerful way. And so an idea was born.

Established in 1945 with a clear aim to present its unique perception of beauty – Asian beauty – to the world, AmorePacific had an engaging story to tell. Suh knew it now needed its own visitor centre to connect with people in the same way that he'd experienced in Amsterdam.

The result is Story Garden by AmorePacific, a 10,000sq ft (929sq m) attraction that charts the company's



AmorePacific CEO Suh wants visitors to connect with the skincare brand

70-year attempt to "find true beauty" and which has also now found wider acclaim by winning an attractions industry award.

In bestowing an Outstanding Achievement accolade at its annual awards, the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) said that Story Garden "elevates the experience of a brand visitor centre to the highest artistic and emotional standard – a stunning new standard for Asia and the world".

Story-driven connection

As soon as Suh had completed his unexpected education on beer, he took the first step in bringing his idea to fruition by asking the front desk who had created such an immersive experience. Soon after, a call was made to design firm BRC Imagination Arts and the brief to create a story-driven visitor centre and tour in South Korea was handed over.

It was the first time BRC had ever worked with a skincare company. "We had to understand the brand particulars: the deep thought that goes into every design decision, every choice of material, the packaging and the quality of the natural ingredients that are pure botanicals found only in specific locations across Asia," explains Christian Lachel, executive creative director & vice president at BRC.

Suh wanted Story Garden visitors to come away with a sense of the heritage, story and values of AmorePacific, and to feel connected to the brand. This would be achieved through a series of sensory experiences, including exhibits, immersive media, interpretive art installations and contemplative spaces that engage the senses, according to Lachel. ▶



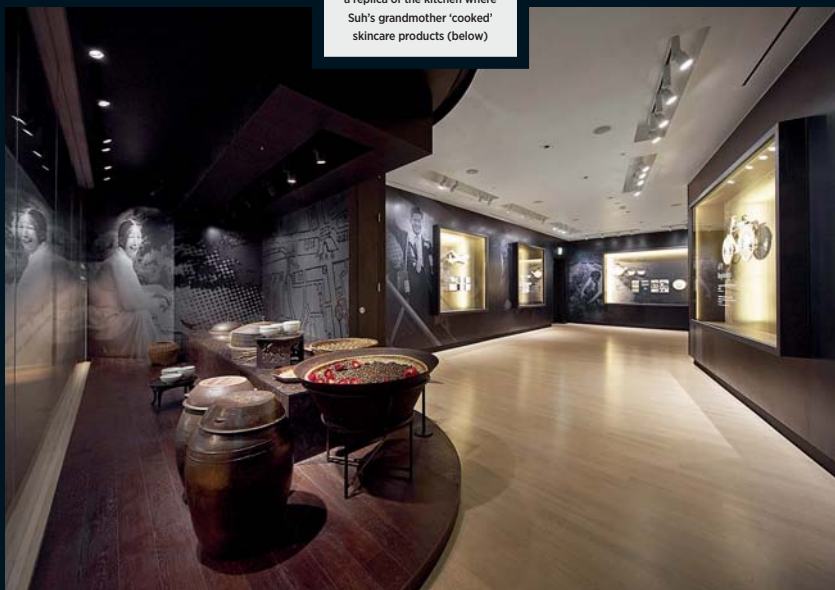
Science, research and nature are highlighted in a stylised Korean greenhouse (above); an elegant gallery tells the story of the founder (below)



SPA ATTRACTION



Immersive media is just one method used to tell the AmorePacific story (above); a replica of the kitchen where Suh's grandmother 'cooked' skincare products (below)





In the Stylised Forest installation, trees emit sounds when visitors get close to them. The factory tour feels more like a high-end art gallery

Every detail has been carefully crafted, right up to the custom musical score, which includes a new company anthem and a Korean pop song

► The visitor centre and tour would tell the story of the founding of the company by Suh's father and highlight the qualities that make the company unique. Lachel says: "We really wanted it to be a walk through the core values – such as striving for improvement, being open to new ideas and contributing to society as a whole – to give guests an emotional sense of AmorePacific's foundation and mission."

A unifying theme for the attraction soon became clear – summed up as 'Beauty is a gift that can transform our world'.

Inspirational scenes

Story Garden opened in late 2013 and is located at AmorePacific's Beauty Campus, the company's largest integrated production and logistics centre that brings together skincare manufacturing lines, distribution warehouses, as well as



BRC's Christian Lachel, who worked on Story Garden, says the theme is: 'Beauty is a gift that can transform our world'

a botanic garden and art museum. The campus itself was established in Osan, South Korea, in May 2012.

The attraction ended up being organised around three central elements – story, special design and on-site experiences. Every detail has been carefully crafted, right up to a custom musical score, which includes a new company anthem and a Korean pop song.

After guests take a tour of the garden and nature-inspired art installations, representing the company's roots in Asian beauty and nature's wisdom, they proceed through 10 sequential 'scenes' that form the core of the Story Garden experience.

The first sequence is designed to create the sensation of being in a modern art gallery, with paintings projected on the wall. "As the story unfolds, the gallery transforms into a 200-degree,



A customised, engraved lipstick and photo of the visitor in a company ad are given as souvenirs



This is more than just a story about a skincare company. This is a story about Korea, a story about empowerment of women and their ability to have jobs

► multi-projector blended immersive media experience that surrounds the audience on three sides," enthuses Lachel. "Finally, the front wall lifts, revealing the humble country kitchen of the company's founder where nearly 70 years ago he watched his mother 'cook' skincare products on the home stove, providing the inspiration behind AmorePacific."

Another sequence, The Gift of Nature, highlights the main Asian ingredients of AmorePacific products: camellia seeds, green tea, red ginseng and bamboo. "Guests look out over the factory floor and learn about the beauty products being produced that day," explains Lachel.

The tour ends with Beauty Transforms Our World, a large-scale immersive multimedia experience that integrates elements of projection mapping and aims to let visitors become part of the story. "Photographs they uploaded earlier in their journey appear among the final images, creating an additional grace note to a colourful, engaging and emotional experience that connects the heart of every guest with the heart of AmorePacific," says Lachel.

Brand benefits

It's this emotional impact that Lachel is most proud of. "A testament of great design is that people come away feeling inspired and enlightened, feeling that they can make a difference in the world. Story Garden does that," he says.



Ingredients used in the skincare are on display

The AmorePacific story encompasses themes such as love, the importance of making people smile, giving those in rough conditions a sense of beauty and the impact of war. "This is more than just a story about a skincare company. This is a story about Korea, a story about the empowerment of women and their ability to have jobs," says Lachel. "Founder Suh was a pioneer. His son has now grown his father's vision into an amazing company that's taking those same values worldwide."

At the end of the experience, visitors receive a personalised gift bag with a custom lipstick as a souvenir of the brand connection they have hopefully made.

"We wanted to create a personalised piece for each visitor in a way that feels organic and worthy of AmorePacific," says Lachel. "When visitors first come in, they enter their personal responses on a hand-held device. This allows them to have a custom experience throughout their journey, culminating in their appearance in the film at the end."

As well as winning the TEA award, success has been measured by the tangible impact Story Garden has had on people who have taken the tour.

"Visitors – especially our international visitors – are amazed by the 70-year history," AmorePacific states. "They appreciate the interactive experiences, where they can touch, feel, smell, see and create the Asian beauty vision."

As the number of luxury brands continues to grow around the world, Lachel believes there is an opportunity for other skincare companies to create an experience similar to Story Garden. "There's a lot of ritual, mythology and storytelling that goes into building luxury brands. There's an all-new market, especially in Asia, for these types of experiences," he says. "People care more when they understand the story, when they can participate in it."

Perhaps someday in the future another curious CEO will stumble across excited faces in South Korea and decide to see where they are going and a new storytelling journey might begin. ●



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GLOBAL MENTORSHIP PILOT PROGRAM

Participants in the inaugural session of the spa industry's very first international mentorship programme tell us what they learned from the experience

This January saw the launch of the first mentorship programme for the worldwide spa industry spearheaded by a team of international spa figures. Seventeen seasoned spa directors were paired with experienced managers who were looking to advance in their career. With participants from Abu Dhabi and Australia to Costa Rica and Cyprus, it really was a global affair.

Over the three months, each couple caught up every two weeks via video conference or phone to hash out career challenges identified by the mentee. The most popular topics included finance, strategic business planning, leadership and marketing. The framework for the discussions is based on ISPA's list of core competencies for the development of spa management professionals.

The overall consensus from those involved is that it's been an invaluable experience and one that benefits both mentor and mentee and – indeed – the industry as a whole.

SPONSORED BY BIOLOGIQUE RECHERCHE

French skincare brand Biologique Recherche is the exclusive sponsor of the Global Mentorship Pilot Program. Dr Philippe Allouche, CEO of Biologique Recherche USA says: "With training being a fundamental part of our brand, we're proud to support this new initiative that offers guidance to up-and-coming spa leaders."

GET INVOLVED

Spa managers with at least two years of experience are eligible to apply for the Global Mentorship Pilot Program. The second session, which began in April, is already full but applications for 2016 are being accepted in May. The programme is free for all participants. Email: jean-guy@tiptouch.com Web: [Facebook.com/GlobalWellnessMentorship](https://www.facebook.com/GlobalWellnessMentorship)

The aim is to "transform spa managers into spa leaders" says Jean-Guy de Gabriac who's heading up the pilot programme

First of its kind

"Motivation is like a door that can only be opened from the inside, so to encourage staff to give their best to consistently wow clients, we have to lead not merely manage them," says Jean-Guy de Gabriac, CEO of training and consultancy firm Tip Touch. De Gabriac who's heading up the Global Mentorship Pilot Program alongside Deborah Smith, principal of Smith Club & Spa Specialists, adds: "Our ambitions are to help transform spa managers into spa leaders."

The programme, which is the only formal mentorship initiative serving the global spa industry, follows the 2013 *Spa Career Path Survey* conducted by the Spa Management Education Committee of



the Global Wellness Summit. The survey, which we reported on in *Spa Business* (see SB14/1 p26) found that an overwhelming 94 per cent of spa managers feel a good mentor is important to a successful career. It also revealed that mentoring was the top contributing factor to becoming a strong leader and understanding HR issues.

"The concepts of spa, wellness and complementary healing principles date



Seventeen seasoned spa directors were paired with experienced managers who were looking to advance their career

back to ancient times, with many practices handed down from one generation to the next," says de Gabriac. "Consider this a modern version of that practice, with mentors giving freely of their time and talent to spa professionals who are in the early stages of their career."

He went on to say that the exponential growth of the global spa industry has meant that it's often necessary to supplement what's being taught in the classroom with real-life expertise. "This is one way to reduce the learning curve for these junior spa managers who show great potential yet need and want sage guidance to master the profession."

So far, the response from the industry has been positive – the second session in the programme, which began in April and runs through to June, is already full. In July, the pilot programme will then be analysed and a committee will make recommendations for the number and length of the sessions in 2016. It's hoped that there will continue to be at least two sessions a year and that the number of participants will grow to up to 75 manager and mentor pairings. ▶

MENTEE

Franziska Haala

Director of spa operations, Carmel Valley Ranch, California, USA

From the outset, the team placed an importance on understanding my goals and where I was in my career. My focus was to refine my knowledge in financials and strategic development. From the meetings with my mentor Jim Croghan, director of spa & reception at The Grand Del Mar, I was able to come up with a blueprint of how to tackle both of these. I received consistent and insightful feedback and guidance and left having accomplished everything I wished for and more.

To have the chance to be mentored by an inspiring industry peer has been phenomenal. It's expanded my knowledge and set me up for further growth in my career. I cannot recommend it enough to industry peers – it's a way for them to give back and to strengthen our community.

It's expanded my knowledge and set me up for further growth in my career





MENTOR

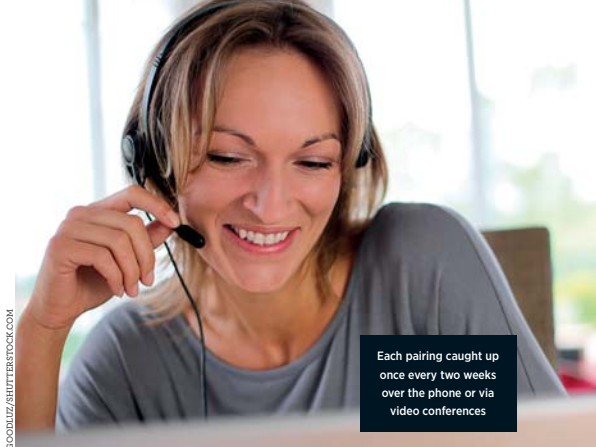
Paris Kounoudis

Director of spa, Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi

The main topics my mentee and I decided to work on were the financial aspects of the spa business, particularly profit and loss accounts, as well as essential leadership skills such as daily actions that a spa manager can implement to drive and motivate the team to achieve their goals and targets. There was a mutual understanding between us and because we had clear goals, good communication and commitment, the plan ran smoothly.

I'd definitely be a mentor again – sharing experiences and best practice examples benefits both parties and the feedback you receive is essential for professional development.

On a wider level, as the spa industry continues to grow at such a fast pace, there's an increasing shortage of experienced spa managers. I strongly believe that education and sharing knowledge with young spa managers through this programme will only benefit the industry in the long-run.



Each pairing caught up once every two weeks over the phone or via video conferences

MENTEE

Elodie Dailland

Spa manager, Domaine de Cice-Blossac, France

I wanted guidance in how to improve my overall management skills



The programme gave me an extraordinary opportunity to exchange ideas with and to receive professional advice from Morgan Lefrançois, the corporate spa business development manager at Clarins.

It came at the right time for me – I've been a spa manager for five years and an international trainer



Dailland was mentored by Morgan Lefrançois

for 10, but I wanted guidance in how to improve my overall management skills. I also wanted help in developing the wellness aspect of the spa – to address both physical and mental wellbeing – to create a niche.

Even half way through the programme, I started to notice a difference in the way I worked. Of course, participants need to put in the time and effort to get the most out of this, but I'd recommend it to anyone who wants to make an improvement.

MENTOR

Karin Cofino

Director spa & retail,
Ritz-Carlton Aruba

I've been in the spa business for a long time and always struggled to find information about how to run a facility and about revenue management, because a spa is always seen as an amenity rather than a

profit centre in its own right. I joined the programme to assist spa managers or directors with the questions they might face.

It's not designed to hand mentees an answer, but rather guide them in their journey in finding their own solution while keeping them focused on the business and company guidelines. What worked best was being able to focus on just one mentee, building

trust with them, getting to understand their problems and coming up with suggestions.

Although I was a mentor, this was a learning process for me too – the experience goes both ways – and I feel it will help me towards the next level in my career. I'd certainly do this again because I really enjoy connecting with people who share my interest of 'being the best at what they do'.





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LONELY PLANET

Loneliness is twice as unhealthy as obesity and the number of people affected by it is escalating. Katie Barnes investigates and asks what, if anything, spas can do to help

The number of people living alone has increased by a staggering 80 per cent in the last 17 years, rising to 341 million globally in 2013 according to Euromonitor International. Of course, living alone and feeling lonely are not mutually exclusive. But the statistics give some indication of the growing number of people who may be battling loneliness – a disease which has dramatic ramifications for our health.

BAD FOR HEALTH

Just as there are many factors that are involved in causing loneliness – from psychological issues such as low self-esteem and mental health problems to material circumstances and life events – there are many ways in which it can be damaging. Studies show that loneliness can interfere with sleep, raise blood pressure, decrease immunity, increase depression, lower overall wellbeing and stimulate the production of the stress hormone cortisol. And last year, researchers in the USA calculated that loneliness is a big killer and more dangerous for health than obesity.

Professor John Cacioppo and his team at the University of Chicago followed more

Affecting all ages

Loneliness is often associated with the elderly, but it can impact on younger people too. *The Lonely Society*, a 2010 report by the UK's Mental Health Foundation, found that 18- to 34-year-olds are more likely to worry about feeling alone and to feel depressed because of loneliness than people aged over 55. Meanwhile, the *Loneliness in New Zealand* study and another survey by AARP, a USA membership organisation for the over 50s, both found that feelings of loneliness decrease with age.

than 2,000 people aged 50 and over for a period of six years. They found that those who felt the most isolated were nearly twice as likely to die than those who were the least lonely. When compared to the average person, the loneliest were 14 per cent more likely to die young – nearly as great a risk of early death as caused by poverty (19 per cent). A 2010 meta-analysis showed that loneliness has twice the impact on an early death as obesity, says Cacioppo.

Those who felt the most isolated were nearly twice as likely to die than those who were the least lonely

"The prevalence of loneliness is relatively constant across the lifespan, so everyone could benefit from interventions to combat it," he told *Spa Business*.

TOUCHING ON IT

So is loneliness something spas can address? It's a possibility given the therapeutic power of touch, says Dr Tiffany Field, founder of the Touch Research Institute – a centre in Miami, USA, which is devoted to the study of touch (see SB07/1 p70). "We haven't specifically studied loneliness, but massage would certainly help people overcome the side effects – we know it alleviates sleep, depression and immune function problems. Spas are not only



Experts say that given the therapeutic power of massage and touch, spas are ideally placed to tackle loneliness

A worldwide problem

It's difficult to pinpoint the number of people who are suffering from loneliness as comparable global data doesn't exist. In 2010, the *Loneliness in New Zealand* survey found that one in every three adults in the country (just over 1 million people) had some degree of loneliness in a four-week period.

In the USA research organisation Barna has found that the number of people who identify themselves as lonely has risen from 12 per cent

in the early 2000s to 20 per cent in 2013: equalling 63 million people.

Meanwhile, *Measuring National Well-being: European Comparisons*, a 2014 survey, found that only 66.6 per cent of people on the continent feel close to the people in the area where they live on average. In addition, 7 per cent of people on average say they don't have any support from their family, friends, neighbours or anyone else when they need advice about a serious personal or family matter.



Kamalaya's Karina Stewart says spas are in a position to address loneliness from a variety of perspectives

► known for their wonderful massages, but they're also great places to meet people."

There's certainly a need for people in society to be touched she adds, highlighting the success of a 'cuddling shop' which opened in Portland, USA last November. The shop offered an hour of platonic cuddling for US\$60 (£49, £38) with the business receiving 10,000 emails in the first week of opening. It had to hire extra staff to meet demand.

Bevis Nathan, a trauma therapist and bodywork specialist based in the UK agrees that massage might help. He says: "Human beings are hard-wired to connect with one another and to be able to connect with themselves. We only truly thrive when we're in a relationship. Massage, as we know, induces a relaxation response and is a form of relationship. When the brain experiences itself being soothed by another using touch, it can go some way to remind our unconscious selves of the importance of connection and the simple gift of touching."

He does, however, suggest that the bond between the therapist and guest and creating a comfortable setting is paramount. "Massage, or being at a spa, are not themselves cures for loneliness, of course. But a nurturing and safe environment with a safe physical relationship conveyed through touch – by someone who you trust and have a good rapport with – can relieve the nervous system of some of the existential burden of feeling alone."

Rancho La Puerta offers group activities to make individuals feel welcome

Treatments focused on emotional imbalances might help says Stewart, whose spa has launched a programme to explore such problems



A FRIENDLY APPROACH

Creating a welcoming environment for people who visit on their own would be a simple first step for spas. This is something that Deborah Szekely, founder of Mexican destination spa Rancho La Puerta, feels strongly about. "We have a docent whose sole task is to take care of first time guests who come alone," she says. "She has lunch with them shortly after they arrive, finds out their interests and introduces them into a circle of like-minded guests." In addition, the spa is engineered around communal group activities where all guests eat together, join in hiking sessions and take part in cookery classes. Other facilities such as Miraval in the USA take this approach too.

For Karina Stewart, founding partner of Kamalaya destination spa in Thailand, it's "clear that spas are in a position to address loneliness from a variety of perspectives". She says: "The setting is conducive to having a personalised experience, while at the same time meeting other people in a contained and yet enriching environment.

Human beings are
hard-wired to connect
with one another and
to be able to connect
with themselves

Additionally, destination spas are places where services and therapies may address some of the underlying issues of loneliness."

Treatments focused on emotional imbalances could help, she says. Recently, Kamalaya launched Embracing Change, its first wellness programme to explore emotional challenges or habits that hinder optimal wellbeing and fulfilment.

In Italy, the Vair spa at Borgo Egnazia (see p70) has a psychosomatic approach to wellbeing and it has even created a Broken Hearts retreat to help people who have split from a loved one.

Other spas which don't have such experts on staff could bring in guest speakers and put on seminars offering advice on combatting loneliness, including how different therapies can help. Perhaps these could be packaged with a massage session. If held on a regular basis, these could even help to connect people. After all, that's what it's all about concludes Szekely. "Certainly one of the draws of Rancho La Puerta is the ease in which one makes friends... and which causes the majority of our guests to say 'same time, next year', because they've arranged to meet up with their new-found friends again. When I lecture on Monday, without fail, I bring up the importance and the power of friendship." ●



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Aire Ancient Baths

Our three mystery shoppers compare notes on a Roman

bathhouse-style spa, built by a Spanish company, in New York City

Aire Ancient Baths opened in New York City in 2012, offering a modern take on the ancient bathhouses of the Roman, Greek and Ottoman empires and a concept which stands out from the ubiquitous USA urban day spa.

A subterranean oasis in the stylish Tribeca district, the 16,000sq ft (1,486sq m) spa is built in the basement of a former textile factory and features a circuit of pools which, like the traditional public baths of centuries ago, enable people to 'take the waters' to unwind and soothe the body. Visitors can choose from a warm tepidarium pool, which at 36°C is just below body temperature, float in salt water and listen to underwater music,

VITAL STATISTICS

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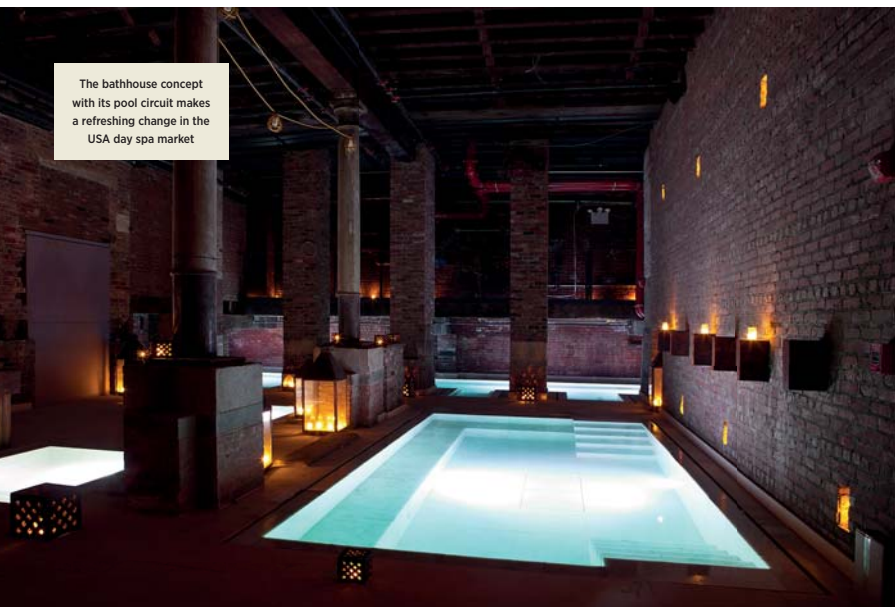
relax in a 350-jet whirlpool or large pool of a similar temperature and sweat it out in a eucalyptus-scented steamroom before moving onto a 39°C hot caldarium bath and quickly dipping into one of two cold plunges. There's also a relaxation room with heated marble beds. The idea is create a circuit and repeat it three to four times to

relax the muscles, improve circulation, aid digestion and enhance overall wellbeing.

Numbers are limited to 20 people at a time, who book the spa in two-hour slots. A basic two-hour bathing experience in the week starts at US\$75 (there's a supplement at the weekend). Massages can be added on top of that in 15, 30, 45 or 60-minute increments (US\$99-US\$174). Four-handed massages and rituals are also offered – the most expensive of which is a US\$500 Red Wine Ritual where guests soak in a red-wine infused bath before a 90-minute four-hand massage and another 90 minutes soaking in the pools.

Spa Business sent three mystery shoppers along to experience and compare notes and perspectives...

The bathhouse concept with its pool circuit makes a refreshing change in the USA day spa market





The trendy Tribeca bathhouse is the first international property for Spain's Aire Group

“ A WELCOME RESPITE ”

JAK PHILLIPS, HEAD OF NEWS, LEISURE MEDIA

Despite New York City's stunning skyline, it's fair to say that after navigating its famously feeble infrastructure and traipsing around the shabby sidewalks that characterise parts of the city, there's an urge to seek solace – even in trendy Tribeca. Thankfully, Aire Ancient Baths is on hand to offer a welcome respite.

On entering the candle-lit welcome area, you're met with walls that feature Greco-Roman pillars sandwiched by panels of dark wood, while flashes of exposed brickwork lend a pleasantly modern Williamsburg finish. Down in the communal bathing area, the salubrious surroundings of marble and more stone columns evoke an



air of Alexandrian opulence, complemented by the soft sounds of Hellenic strings.

First port of call is the spacious steamroom in the centre. Fabulously fashioned – with the glass panels offering panoramic views of the surrounding baths – the room is somewhat lacking in terms of function. The steam vents

are inexplicably aimed straight into the air, meaning occupants need to stand upright on the bench and waft the hot air back down with their arms if they want to work up a sweat.

After a baptism of lukewarm steam, it's on to the floatation pool for the first of six bathing experiences. The high salinity makes buoyancy easy and though males should take care if they've recently shaved – the salt leaves a slight sting on a shorn face – it's altogether an enjoyable experience.

Guests are then free to meander through a jet bath, caldarium, two plunge pools and finally an extended chillout pool – offering neatly chiselled alcoves in which to retreat. As well as offering diversity to the user,

the array of pools provide plenty of sparsely-populated sections in which to bask, even though our bathing session was fully booked.

For those who want more than just a soak, the spa offers a number of upsell treatments and I enjoyed a reassuringly assertive 45-minute full-body massage and exfoliation. The only drawback was that the unisex (and not just couples') treatment room leads to a few awkward moments as you change from your swimsuit into a towel – behind a hastily drawn curtain in my case – but this doesn't distract from the overall experience. For me at least, Aire Ancient Baths provides a much needed slice of serenity in the core of the Big Apple. ▶

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“ IN EVERY SENSE A SPA NEWBIE ”

TOM ANSTEY, JOURNALIST, LEISURE MEDIA

I should start by saying I am, in every sense of the word, a spa newbie. If I want to relax, I'd opt to sit on the sofa and play *Call of Duty*. So for my first spa experience to be the Aire Ancient Baths was taking a plunge into the deep end.

I had no idea of what was to come and hoped for an explanation of how to 'take the waters'. As it was, I received a brief orientation and knew I'd been booked for a massage, but beyond that I was left to fend for myself.

Unfortunately, the first thing I noticed was the smell of chlorine – obviously there for hygiene purposes – but heightened in the warm



environment. Next was the steamroom. When you don't know what to expect, the hot vapours really hit you and breathing is hindered – not the most relaxing start for me.

I spent most of my time pre-massage in the warm

waters (chickening out on the cold plunge pools) and these were my favourite part of the experience. The long L-shaped pool was great for a gentle, casual swim and this also kept my mind stimulated: I have a hyperactive brain. And although the facility restricts the level of talking, it's not (thankfully) strictly enforced and I was able to speak with my friend without disturbing anyone.

After an hour, I went for my massage and I can't fault the quality of it. My brain, however, came into play 45 seconds in and said 'oh boy your nose is itchy'. As I wasn't in a position to scratch it, I

found it difficult to switch off. It didn't help that I was lying there with wet hair and trunks: not a pleasant feeling.

Did it relax me? Physically yes, I could feel it was doing my body good. Mentally, not really. Having an option to change the music to occupy my mind would have been a nice addition.

If I was to go again, I'd want someone to describe each experience to me beforehand and what I might expect as a beginner. Instead I felt unprepared and out of my comfort zone. While I can't fault the facility itself, I just don't think the spa world is really for me.



Having never been to a spa, Anstey would have liked more details about how to 'take the waters'



The people behind Aire

Aire Ancient Baths New York City is the first international property for the Spanish-based Aire Group. The company began 15 years ago when a number of investors and friends pooled together

resources to restore a 16th century palace in Seville which was built of the ruins of a Roman bathhouse.

Co-founder Armando Prados, who grew up in an area in southern Spain, which once boasted hundreds of public baths, wanted to revive the traditional ritual of relaxation and rejuvenation through water. The group's vision was

to create an "oasis of calm that drinks from history, the one that shows us how ancient civilisations made public baths an art for our senses".

Two more Aire bathhouses opened in Spain in Barcelona (2008) and Almería (2011) before the concept headed overseas. Each facility is located in "an old building full of history and personality".

Next on the list is Aire de Vallromanes just outside Barcelona, although there's no indication of when it will open yet. But it is confirmed that Spanish architects Alonso Balaguer – the studio behind two previous Aire bathhouses and which is also working on the Olympic Village for the Rio de Janeiro Games – will be designing the new facility. ►

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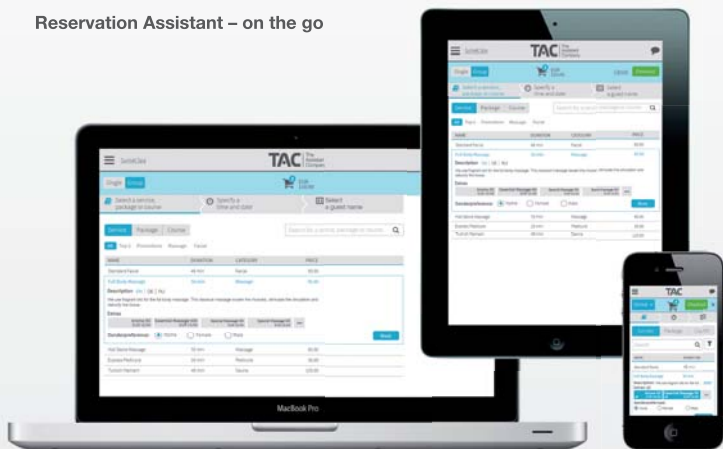
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A few weeks after visiting, Davis recognised the stylish facility in a film featuring Keanu Reeves

“ A NOTE OF URBAN COOL ”

ALICE DAVIS, MANAGING EDITOR, LEISURE MEDIA

We arrived in New York on the coat tails of snowstorms. Manhattan, despite its bright blue skies, was freezing. What better way then to spend a Sunday morning than to soak in Aire's thermal baths?

The reception area is stylish with comfortable seating and the beginning of the experience is well-managed with detailed instruction and orientation. You're given some strange-looking fabric socks to wear to prevent slipping, which isn't the nicest feeling on your feet, but it's understandable for safety reasons.

We were given a quick briefing on the different pools, but weren't told



anything about their benefits, which would have been interesting to know.

The staff said they'd find me when it was time for my massage. That was OK, but I would have rather been told a specific time.

Then you're left to your own devices – namely, soaking in the baths and enjoying the surroundings. The whole experience is quite sociable. You're not allowed to be too noisy, but you can chat quietly which adds to the enjoyment.

The baths hit a note of urban cool. The pools look bright and inviting against the dimly lit backdrop of subterranean brick chambers – it's moody and atmospheric. I thought it was the kind of place you'd shoot a movie or a music video.

I'm not one for a weak massage and my therapist was great. She explained she likes to start off quite firmly and

then ease off if you ask and she was happy to customise the treatment around my needs.

It was an invigorating massage. The only downside is that you have to put your wet swimwear and socks back on if you want to go back in the pools.

Aire Ancient Baths is a relaxing, social and pretty cool thing to do – especially on a winter's day or night when New York is biting cold.

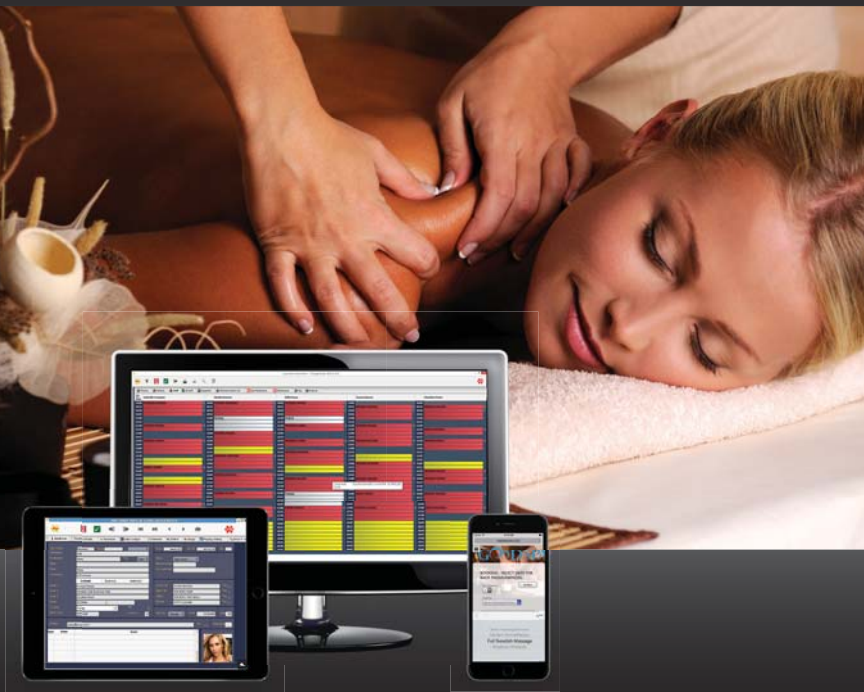
A few weeks later I watched a film. In one part, Russian gangsters partied with beautiful models until Keanu Reeves burst in and started shooting... Can you guess where they filmed that scene?



RIGHT TO REPLY: CO-FOUNDER, ARMANDO PRADOS

"We work very hard to create a unique experience in every sense and nothing makes me more happy than hearing that clients enjoy it. The entire setting is designed for people to let go and relax and part of that is having your massage happen at any moment rather than clock-watching. That's also why there's no set circuit: we give a tour explaining the different baths, but think it's important to allow each client to listen to their body and move freely – some want to spend 30 minutes floating in the salt pool, while others love the hot-cold alternation. We do have a brief explanation of the health benefits of our pools on the website, but we're working to add more details."

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FUNCTIONALITY FOCUS

Every spa software solution has its own traits, quirks and advantages. We asked a number of CEOs to pick out what they consider to be their system's top module

Damien Tamisier

Chief executive officer
Dimmbizz & xPlanOnline.com

What's your top module for spas?

Our new automatic yielding module is one of the most important aspects of xPlan and will set a new trend in the spa industry.

How does it make life easier for spas?

It will enable spas to emulate the complex fluctuating pricing structures in the flight and lodging industry – a sales technique which I think the spa industry will embrace to boost their revenues. Imagine that you can win a minimum of one dollar on average per treatment or activity, only by using an automatic yielding system. Multiply it with your number of activities and you have a profit.



“xPlan's automatic yielding module will enable spas to emulate complex, fluctuating pricing structures”

What are the key features?

Spas start by analysing their KPIs, then they can configure their business rules and xPlan will do the rest seamlessly. The rules will be applicable to any channel – walk-ins, online bookings, mobile users or even external distribution.

How do spas use it?

After using it a while, they'll notice a new trend in their business: guests switching from last-minute to early bookers, which brings three major improvements. First, by educating guests to book earlier, xPlan is able to optimise resource planning and spas are able to manage risks better. Second, by working on yield management, xPlan is able to increase average revenues. The third improvement is that even 'super-last-minutes' will be manageable.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Dimmbizz

Malcolm Rennie

Managing director
Concept Software

What is your top spa module?

Concept Business Intelligence (BI) is a dynamic analytical tool aimed at providing customers with a simple but effective method of extracting valuable information contained in the core Concept applications for business analysis.

How does it make life easier for spas?

It has functions to extract, transform and load data from one or several combined sources. Users quickly find the information they seek and have the ability to distribute it with colleagues via integrated reporting capabilities, printing, or full integration with Microsoft Office. Thanks to its



“It makes it easier to spot business trends or differences, and gain insights into patterns of use”

graphical and colour coded interface, Concept BI has simple operational procedures and is easy to learn.

What are the key features?

It's available on iOS or Android platforms and spas can create or design benchmarks or KPIs that fit their operational needs.

How do spas use it?

The Pickup Analysis KPI is increasingly important and enables forecasting and analysis of potential revenue. Also, comparative analysis means users can now easily compare and interact with multiple different views or selection states of the data. This makes it easier to spot business trends or differences, and gain insights into patterns of use, opportunities and threats and relative performance.

Spa-kit.net keywords: Concept Software



AJ Toor

Chief executive officer

Gappt

What is your top spa module?

Our SmartGaps technology uses a 'suggest' not 'search' ethos to fill white space at short notice. It scans a spa's booking system for empty space, matches this with the most popular services that can be performed in those slots and displays them on clients' websites and customers' phones so that they are immediately visible.

In addition to this, clients can 'tune in' to specific time slots or types of treatment and be automatically notified when something becomes available.



SPACITSTUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Customers will be automatically notified when slots they want are available

“SmartGaps technology brings an entirely new approach to filling last-minute slots”

How does it make life easier for spas?

It brings an entirely new approach to filling last-minute slots as it surfaces appointments that customers want right up to the shop window rather than having them hidden. As a result, it enables spas to automatically drive demand to specific availability in the diary, without having to discount or expose their full diary, and without spamming.

What are the key module features?

It's integrated with the existing booking system so there's no extra work for front of house, it just runs in the background. It's also delivered under the spa's brand via their website and customers' mobiles, enabling clients to build their own audience and not rely on third-party services.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Gappt

Thomas Roessler

Managing director

The Assistant Company (TAC)

What is your top spa module?

Reservation Assistant's new Promotion module, launched in January 2015, allows a spa director to manage different promotional tools. These tools promote services through various marketing channels and, in turn, result in a higher online booking rate. We see this as a simple yet efficient way of generating revenue and filling gaps in the spa diary.

How does it make life easier for spas?

Creating simple awareness is one of the largest challenges faced in spas. As software progresses, so does the demand for an easy solution to reach new and



existing customers. Different promotional items can be easily implemented in the module to create unique buying opportunities. Something as simple as an in-house marketing technique, such as digital signage, can dramatically increase last-minute reservations

What are the key features of the module and how do spas use it?

The spa can start channelling individual promotions to all new and frequent guests online, over Facebook via an app and/or IPTV. The newest promotional tool, Promo Codes, is normally used in combination with either a service or product and encourages previous guests to revisit the spa. Lastly, our Hot Deals promotional tool allows promotion of specified discounted services within a last-minute time frame.

Spa-kit.net keyword: TAC

“The new Promotion module is a simple yet efficient way of generating revenue and filling utilisation gaps”

Product update



Sphere sensation courtesy of Sha

The AlphaSphere Deluxe, created by Vienna-based artist Sha, is an enhanced version of the multi-sensory vibration and sound relaxation lounge. The new Deluxe model features proprietary 4D audio technology to intensify the spatial experience.

The luminous cocoon envelops the individual and offers different colour schemes for different effects. Special

light compositions utilise colour therapy techniques while special scent compositions are also included. A dedicated app can be used to control the AlphaSphere Deluxe.

Physical effects of using the lounge include harmonising breathing, relaxing muscle tension and stimulating circulation.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Sha



Flexible floor tiles by ABK

A highly flexible material and a glue-free installation system have been showcased by Italian ceramics manufacturer ABK Group. The Auto-Leveling floor covering panels display a small degree of convexity but automatically level under their own weight, ensuring flat results in all conditions.

The tiles can be installed using the company's new Insta-Tile dry system, which eliminates joints and glue and can be quickly and easily removed, according to the group.

Spa-kit.net keywords: ABK Group



For full company and contact details please visit spa-kit.net

Caudalie combats oxidation and dry skin

Offering anti-oxidant protection while treating dry skin, vinotherapy brand Caudalie has launched an indulgent cream. The Anti-Wrinkle Protect Cream Broad Spectrum SPF20 combines grape-seed polyphenols and stabilised vitamin C. The former is added to preserve the skin's stores of hyaluronic acid, collagen and elastin to combat wrinkles; the latter is included to boost natural collagen synthesis.

Meanwhile, part oil, part serum The Elixir has been added to Caudalie's Premier Cru line and is designed to correct dark spots, restore density and smooth wrinkles.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Caudalie

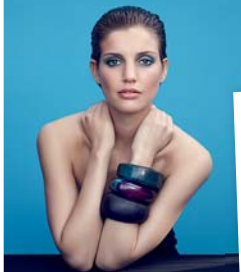


Gharieni's screen star

Gentle sea waves or a cosy fire can be brought to the spa table – helping to create a specific ambience for a treatment or treatment room – courtesy of the flatscreen integrated into the side of Gharieni's MLW F2. Any atmospheric film, slide show or picture can be displayed, on one or both sides, via USB connection.

Gharieni is also offering the option of an opal glass pane with an LED light behind, which provides pre-programmed atmospheric colour choreographies.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Gharieni



Aquatic inspiration from Clarins

Clarins has launched a water-themed make-up collection for summer 2015. Limited edition items – from iridescent eyeshadows to aquatic green mascara and nourishing wet-look lip balms – appear in the Aquatic Treasures line which uses “tones of rosy gold, pearlescent beige and lagoon green with iridescent glints” for a glowing effect.

Continuing the aquatic theme, Clarins has also just created a signature therapy for its spa at the Molitor – the famous, Parisian lido that reopened last year. Its Beyond the Water face and body treatment incorporates a subtle play of lights, music and touch which have been “choreographed like a ballet, with unique aquatic sensations”.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Clarins

Water has inspired Clarins latest make-up collection, and its new treatment at the Molitor Pool (above)



Kettal's Objects of desire and decoration

Kettal Design Studio has unveiled a selection of outdoor decoration products (right). The Kettal Objects range features a sideboard with aluminium or wood doors, a room divider, a floor lamp with Porotex or aluminium screen, a round auxiliary table with central foot and a tray. Each product is available in 27 colours.

Kettal supplies a number of high-end hotels including the Lanserhof destination spa in Tegernsee, Germany (above).

Spa-kit.net keywords: Kettal Design Studio



Shower with flowers says Elemis

Featuring naturally moisturising plant actives, the British Botanical Shower Cream was revealed by Elemis in April. Described as a “summer’s day amongst the wild flowers”, the shower cream combines purifying rosemary, fatty-acid rich echium, the anti-inflammatory properties of lavender, and soothing and restorative chamomile.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Elemis



Golden launch for Subtle Energies

A cream lined with gold is being relaunched with fresh packaging by Subtle Energies. According to the company, Mogra Rejuvenating Gold Cream offers restorative age-defying daily hydration.

Meanwhile, in April, Subtle Energies revealed a line of results-driven ayurvedic aromatherapy products and treatments that it's created exclusively for Peninsula Hotels. Unlike in classic ayurveda the oils in the Sattva by Simply Peninsula products are “sense-provoking and aromatic”.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Subtle Energies ▶



Thémaé looks up with Turndown range

Promoting wellbeing based on the benefits of tea, French company Thémaé has launched its new Turndown collection.

The unisex range features five products. These include Cérémonie Jeunesse, a multi-active cream to improve the freshness of the skin by protecting the collagen, and an exfoliating product inspired by Himalayan tea, Gommage Thé au Népal. A body mist, pillow mist and shimmering dry oil complete the Turndown range.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: Thémaé



SpaSoft unveils online booking engine

An integrated online booking engine has been launched by SpaSoft in an effort to streamline the web and mobile booking process.

The company aims to deliver a responsive and intuitive experience for guests, which leads to more bookings for spas. Using the service, spa guests can browse and book activities and appointments from desktops, tablets or phones. All available spa activities are shown along with detailed descriptions.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: SpaSoft



Linen-rich fabric from Fashionizer Spa

The new linen-rich fabric collection from Fashionizer Spa has made its first appearance in the tailor-made uniforms at Four Seasons Dubai – with reception staff in cream and therapists in black. The garment was chosen for its high-level performance properties in a hot resort setting. It's made in a smooth fabric with Lycra and is finished with Silverplus, an

antibacterial treatment to ensure uniforms stay fresh and odour-free.

It also supplied uniforms for pool and beach staff: loose cotton shirts in crisp pale blue and wheat for the seaside location.

In total, Fashionizer offers 90 garment styles including more than 60 original bespoke creations.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keywords: Fashionizer Spa



PHOTO: SOMMERHUBER GMBH

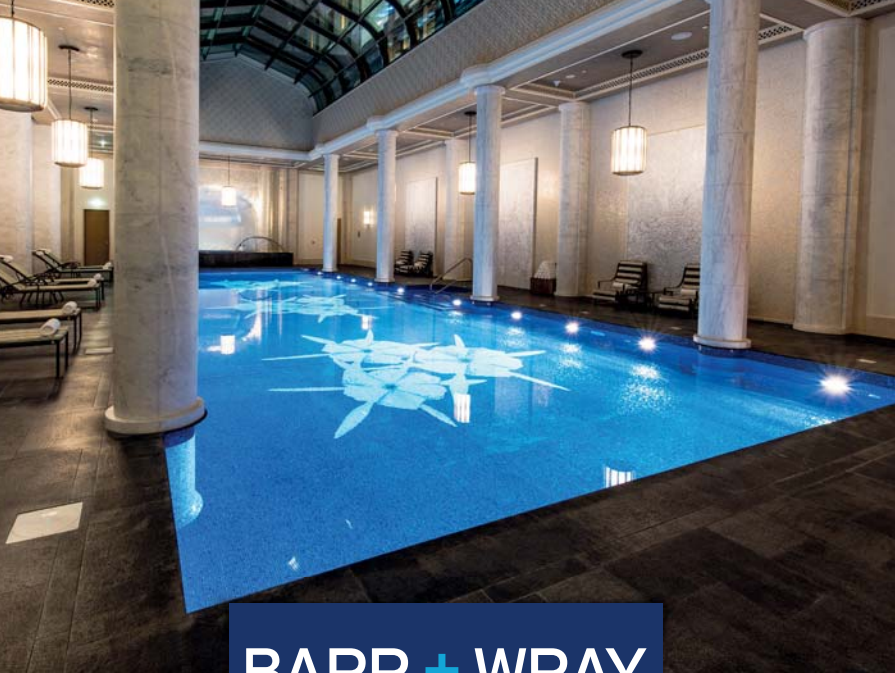
Added extras for Sommerhuber Lounger

An updated, improved version of Sommerhuber's Lounger Two has been unveiled, with the aim of providing additional comfort and wellbeing.

The new free-standing Lounger Two Plus offers a "clear and reduced design vocabulary" and "ergonomic, velvety-soft surfaces" to perfectly envelope the body,

according to the Austrian manufacturer. It utilises heat storing ceramics and long-wave infrared radiation to provide a sense of wellbeing and relaxation, boosting circulation, dissolving muscle tensions and offering a positive effect on the immune system.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: Sommerhuber



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PERFORMANCE DRIVEN

Skincare brand Gazelli partners with The Royal Ballet in Britain ahead of its flagship spa launch in September



Co-founders Dr Hamzayeva and daughter Askarova (above); an oil from Azerbaijan is key to the range (right)

In keeping with Gazelli's mantra to 'live beautifully', the skincare brand from Azerbaijan has partnered with Britain's Royal Ballet to work closely with six of its dancers. Following a diagnostic consultation – focusing on the impact of nutrition, lifestyle and emotional factors on the skin – the ballerinas take time out of their hectic schedules (they train up to 12 hours a day) for treatments once every two weeks and use a selection of recommended products in between.

"I'm on a very personal skin journey and feel I'm really benefiting from Gazelli's expertise," says Laura McCulloch, a soloist of The Royal Ballet.

GAZELLI PRICE POINT

- Retail prices range from £16 (US\$24, €22) for a duo discovery set featuring a 5ml cream and serum and go up to £75 (US\$112, €104) for its 30ml Ultimate Firming Serum
- A 60-minute Prescriptive Facial is priced at £145 (US\$217, €201)

Patented ingredient

It's this whole body diagnostic approach, coupled with high-grade skin products that makes Gazelli stand out, says co-founder Jamila Askarova who runs the business with her mother Dr Zarifa Hamzayeva.

Working for 40 years in gene science and phytotherapy, Dr Hamzayeva noticed the healing potential of an oil formed deep underground in her home country of Azerbaijan. She adapted the ingredient for cosmetic use and today the Gazelli White Oil™ underpins the range comprising eight retail products and 180 for professional use.

The patented ingredient is said to contain a high concentration of physiologically active components which work at a cellular level to help with skin rejuvenation.

International growth

This September, Gazelli will launch its European flagship spa in the affluent borough of Kensington in London. Askarova

promises that the three-story Gazelli House will be much more than a day spa. It will include art exhibitions and a 'living room' in which "we will hold inspiring seminars and interactive workshops on an eclectic range of topics," she says.

The first Gazelli House opened in Baku, Azerbaijan in 1999 and is currently being refurbished in celebration of its 15th anniversary. The brand has also partnered with a select number of high-end spas including The Spa at Four Seasons Baku, Harrod's Urban Retreat in London and most recently the Raffles Spa in Istanbul.

Askarova says the strategy is to continue building its presence in international destination spas which have "the right space to create an authentic Gazelli experience... spas which are innovative, dynamic and have strong core values."

Over the next five to 10 years, she says the plan is to also open Gazelli Houses in other major European cities, with France being a market of particular interest.

Askarova concludes: "Our dream is that each guest of ours will be inspired to continue their conversation with Gazelli, no matter where they are in the world." ●

Spa-kit.net keyword: **Gazelli**

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HEART WARMING

New research shows that having a sauna can aid cardiovascular health – and the more frequent and longer the sessions the better. Helen Andrews reports



Men who went for a sauna four to seven times a week were 63 per cent less likely to die from heart complications

ROBERT INNESCHIE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The therapeutic benefits of having a sauna have been proven in a new study* published in February.

Researchers from Finland, where there's a strong tradition for saunas, found that middle-aged men who have frequent sessions in the heat experience are significantly less likely to die from heart disease, than those who don't. In fact, the men who visited a sauna the most, even as much as once a day, experienced the greatest benefits.

Regular benefits

A total of 2,315 men aged 42-60 from eastern Finland were monitored over 21 years. During the follow-up period, the scientists recorded 190 sudden cardiac deaths, 281 fatal causes of coronary heart

disease, 407 deaths from cardiovascular disease and 929 deaths from all causes.

Those who used saunas regularly, however, seem to have been protected from heart complications. The risk of sudden cardiac death was found to be 22 per cent lower for men who went to a sauna two or three times per week and 63 per cent lower for those visiting four to seven times a week.

Coronary heart disease and cardiovascular disease death rates were similarly cut by spending time in saunas.

Time well spent

Participants benefited if they spent longer in the sauna. Those whose sessions lasted 11-19 minutes were 7 per cent less likely to suffer a sudden cardiac death compared to those who spent less than 11 minutes in the sauna. Men who spent longer than 19

minutes in the heat were associated with a 52 per cent reduced risk.

Dr Rita Redberg, editor of *JAMA Internal Medicine* and a scientist at the University of California commented: "Although we do not know why the men who went to saunas more frequently had greater longevity – whether it's the time spent in the hot room, the relaxation time, the leisure of a life that allows for more relaxation time, or the camaraderie of the sauna – clearly time spent in the sauna is time well spent." ●



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Twitter: HelenAndrewsSB

* Laakkonen, J et al. Association Between Sauna Bathing and Fatal Cardiovascular and All-Cause Mortality Events. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. February 2015

"ONE DAY CAN CHANGE YOUR ENTIRE LIFE!" GLOBAL WELLNESS DAY

We all want to be healthy, feel good and live under positive physical and mental conditions. Living well is practically the whole world's common dream... So if this is how we all feel, **why not have a special day dedicated to this common dream?**

WHAT IS GLOBAL WELLNESS DAY?

Global Wellness Day, which brings together exercise, healthy eating and inner health, is a social movement that raises awareness of living well throughout the world. **Global Wellness Day** was celebrated for the first time in Turkey in 2012, with the participation of wellness opinion leaders. Since then, **Global Wellness Day** continues to be celebrated as a not-for-profit event each year, and each year with greater international involvement. In 2015, Global Wellness Day will be celebrated in **45 different locations throughout the world.**

WHY A GLOBAL WELLNESS DAY?

According to many studies, depression is the most common health problem throughout the world. The problem often manifests itself in sleep problems, stress, poor nutrition, inactivity, obesity, heart disease and more... To overcome this problem and lead a healthier and happier life, we need an inspiring beginning. The name of that beginning is **Global Wellness Day**.

**Global Wellness Day's 7 Step Manifesto
for an increased awareness of living well:**

- 1) Walk one hour
- 2) Drink more water
- 3) Don't use plastic bottles
- 4) Eat organic, locally sourced produce
- 5) Do a good deed
- 6) Eat a family dinner
- 7) Go to bed at 10:00 PM

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DAY

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HOW TO TAKE PART IN GLOBAL WELLNESS DAY?

Global Wellness Day is celebrated every second Saturday of June. If you would like to join us and celebrate the next **Global Wellness Day** on June 13, 2015, by holding a health & wellness oriented event in your city that is free and open to the public, we invite you to contact our **Global Wellness Day** Committee. By fulfilling appropriate conditions, you too can become an ambassador to this very special and powerful day.

Or if you would like to participate on a personal level and become part of **Global Wellness Day** TODAY, we invite you to visit our Website and take place in our signature campaign.





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