

# spa opportunities

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## Sri Panwa resort opens Cool Spa

TOM WALKER

Sri Panwa in Phuket, Thailand, has announced the launch of the new Cool Spa resort spa and wellness concept.

Cool Spa – secluded amid lush tropical rainforest and set within its own private tropical water gardens – offers locally-sourced treatments and tailored holistic experiences.

The new spa is designed to resemble a traditional Chino-Portuguese residence and incorporates six private treatment rooms – each including its own spa pool, in addition to two outdoor pavilions.

Other facilities include hot and cold plunge pools, vitality pools, experience rain showers and steam baths. Guests can also enjoy stretching and yoga sessions at a secluded outdoor spa terrace with ocean views.

A Sri Panwa-branded product line has been created especially for the spa, using local,



The new concept is designed according to Chino-Portuguese tradition

natural and seasonal indigenous ingredients including mango; papaya; rambutan; coconut; and tamarind sourced from the local market or from Sri Panwa's own garden.

The treatment menu also includes bespoke scrubs and soothing lotions created from blended fruits; yoghurt; honey; teas; and oils – all which are fit for human consumption.



The luxury hotel overlooks the Yas Marina Circuit

## Viceroy to operate Abu Dhabi's Yas Hotel

PETE HAYMAN

Viceroy Hotel Group (VHG) has announced that it has been appointed to operate the iconic Yas Hotel in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates – owned by Aldar Properties.

Located at the heart of the emirate's Yas Marina Circuit, the 499-room property is to be managed by VHG with immediate effect and comprises ESPA at The Yas Hotel.

The spa offers eight treatment rooms and segregated male and female areas, as well as the Yas Presidential treatment suite.

## Corbu Spa and Salon to open in Cambridge, US

PETE HAYMAN

A new spa – the name of which will pay homage to iconic Swiss-born architect and designer Le Corbusier – is to open at The Charles Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, US.

Due to open in August, the 4,000sq ft (372sq m) Corbu Spa and Salon will boast a total of seven treatment rooms – one of which will be a 'Room for Two' with Swiss shower.

Bill Rooney Studio and architects Cambridge 7 and Associates have worked on the new spa, with the design influenced by Le Corbusier.

## Ritz-Carlton to run Al Bustan Palace

PETE HAYMAN

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company (RCHC) has signed an agreement with Oman's Ministry of Tourism to run Al Bustan Palace in Muscat.

All existing employees are to be retained by RCHC to ensure a "smooth transition" for the management of the hotel, which includes an ongoing spa project to be completed in 2012.

Facilities at Al Bustan Palace include a fitness centre with cv and weight equipment; a sauna; a steamroom; relaxation areas; four restaurants; and a 1km (0.6-mile) private beach.

His Excellency Sheikh Abdul Malik bin Abdullah Al Khalili, Oman's minister of tourism, said: "The new management aims to



Al Bustan Palace boasts relaxation areas and a sauna

introduce the concept of luxury and hospitality philosophy in our present time while maintaining the prestigious stature of the hotel."

RCHC president and CEO Herve Humler said: "The Omani capital has long been a key aspiration for The Ritz-Carlton."

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## CONTACT US

The Leisure Media Company  
Portmill House, Portmill Lane,  
Hitchin, Herts SG5 1DJ, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1462 431385  
Fax: +44 (0)1462 433909  
e-mail: please use contacts'  
fullname@leisuremedia.com

## Subscriptions

Denise Gildea +44(0)1462 471930  
subs@leisuremedia.com

## Editor

Liz Terry +44(0)1462 431385

## Managing Editor

Tom Walker +44(0)1462 471934

## Assistant Editor

Pete Hayman +44(0)1462 471938

## Design

Ed Gallagher +44(0)1905 20198

## Internet

Dean Fox +44(0)1462 471900

Emma Harris +44(0)1462 471921

Tim Nash +44(0)1462 471917

## Associate Publisher

Annie Lovell +44(0)1462 471907

## Recruitment, training and tenders

Paul Thorman +44(0)1462 471904

Simon Hinksman +44(0)1462 471905

Sarah Gibbs +44(0)1462 471908

## Property advertising sales

Simon Hinksman +44(0)1462 471905

## Financial Controller

Sue Davis +44(0)1395 519398

## Financial Administrator

Denise Gildea +44(0)1462 471930

## Circulation Manager

Michael Emmerson +44(0)1462 471932

## Subscribe to Spa Opportunities:

Online: [www.leisuremedia.com](http://www.leisuremedia.com)

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## SpaBooker unveils Facebook service

PETE HAYMAN

SpaBooker, the software and business management solution owned by GramercyOne, has launched a new application on the social networking website Facebook.

The application is designed to allow spas to combine online booking services with viral marketing, with guests able to share appointments with friends on the network.

SpaBooker's application will be included in a spa's regular subscription and is designed to bring "tangible social commerce to the industry".

GramercyOne chief executive officer Josh McCarter said: "We see tremendous excitement in the industry for the SpaBooker Facebook scheduling app and eager anticipation of the new business that will be driven to our clients through this social marketing channel."



The application will allow guests to share appointments with friends

Kristen Haines, owner of Euphoria Spa in New York, US, said: "To us, [SpaBooker's new Facebook app] means great service and more business. We love communicating through Facebook and now customers can book right then and there."

## August launch for new Deeside facilities

PETE HAYMAN

An 80-station fitness suite is among the new facilities to be unveiled this month (August) at Deeside Leisure Centre, Queensferry.

A day spa also forms part of the second stage and is due to be launched in January 2012. It

will feature a herb sauna; a crystal steamroom; a salt grotto; and treatment rooms.

A third phase is also being undertaken, which will transform the old ice rink into an extreme sports facility boasting a 1,452sq m (15,629sq ft) wooden skate park.

## Ritz-Carlton to open Puerto Rico property

PETE HAYMAN

Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company is to open its first Reserve property in the Americas region with a new resort at Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico, in December 2012.

Dorado Beach, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve will be at the centre of the revamped Dorado Beach Resort and will comprise a 115-key oceanfront hotel and residences.

Facilities will include the 5-acre (2-hectare) Spa Botánico, which aims to provide a holistic approach to beauty and wellness inspired by traditional local remedies.

The botanical spa will offer men's and women's private relaxation rooms; glass-walled spa treatment pavilions; two "treehouse" treatment



The Ritz-Carlton Reserve will be at the heart of Dorado Beach Resort

platforms; and purification gardens. Organic spa products made from native plants grown on-site will be used, while a beauty salon will offer manicures and pedicures.



# Marriott to open first Iraq hotels

PETE HAYMAN

Marriott International has revealed plans to expand into Iraq with the launch of a 200-room Marriott Hotels and Resorts-branded property in Erbil, Kurdistan.

It is one of two new hotels set to be opened by Marriott in the Middle Eastern country, with a 75-unit Marriott Executive Apartments complex also confirmed for Erbil. The two properties are scheduled to open simultaneously in 2014 as part of the new mixed-use Empire World development and follows an agreement with Empire Iraq.

Erbil Marriott will feature an on-site spa and an outdoor swimming pool, in addition to four restaurants and lounges and 11,400sq ft (1,059sq m) of meeting space.

The Marriott Executive Apartments property is set to include its own leisure facilities and a



Both hotels are to open as part of the mixed-use Empire World scheme

residents' lounge, while also enabling the use of the services at Erbil Marriott.

Marriott International president and managing director of international lodging Ed Fuller said: "We are confident that this significant development will help the people of Erbil and Kurdistan achieve their positive visions of the future."

## Palace Merano to launch new skincare line

PETE HAYMAN

Espace Henri Chenot, Palace Merano – the Italian destination spa founded by health expert Henri Chenot – is to launch a new range of skincare products in September.

Derived from vegetative sources to help prevent the ageing process, the products have been produced in Chenot's Biontology Laboratory at the spa and wellness centre.

It follows the completion of a four-year renovation at Espace Henri Chenot, Palace Merano, which has resulted in the complete refurbishment of guest rooms and suites and outdoor pool.

Owned since late 2005 by surveyor Hon. Pietro Tosolini, the spa and wellness centre boasts the Henri Chenot treatment centre



Espace Henri Chenot, Palace Merano recently underwent a renovation

founded on the principles of Biontology – a term that has been attributed to Chenot.

Biontology is used to describe a health concept, which is linked to the "progressive evolution over time of the idea of ageing".

## ESPA to open Sentosa Resort World spa

TOM WALKER

ESPA is preparing to launch a large luxury spa at the Resorts World Sentosa in Singapore.

Due to open later this year, the spa is being developed at the western tip of the resort with the treatment villas and therapy rooms offering

guests a tranquil sea view in the middle of an otherwise vibrant development.

The spa has been designed by DP Architects and facilities include vitality and plunge pools; saunas; hammams; experience showers and ice fountains – all supplied by Barr + Way.



Facilities include a VIP couples' treatment suite

## Jumeirah Group to manage luxury Dubai Palm hotel

TOM WALKER

Dubai-based Jumeirah Group has been appointed by Zabeel Properties to manage Jumeirah Zabeel Saray – a new hotel located on the west crescent of Palm Jumeirah.

The property is Zabeel's first hotel in the country and will be fully operational later this year. In addition to its 405 bedrooms, the hotel offers 38 villas situated on the beach and around a lagoon pool; and a Talise Ottoman Spa.

Covering 8,000sq m (86,111sq ft), the spa will provide 50 individual spa rooms and suites, an indoor pool and three authentic Turkish hammams. Facilities also include a hydrotherapy pool.

Other hotel amenities include 10 restaurants; bars; a night club; boutiques; gardens; tennis courts; a fitness centre; and the Meheran Theatre and Event Centre.

## Council approves Holland Park leisure and spa plans

PETE HAYMAN

A private leisure and spa facility is to be developed as part of a residential-led scheme to be developed in Holland Park, London, after the plans were approved.

GC Campden Hill – a joint venture comprising property group Grosvenor and Native Land – received the green light to proceed with the plans from Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea councillors.

The 2-acre (0.8-hectare), John McAslan and Partners-designed residential-led scheme will also feature nearly 70 luxury apartments, private landscaped and a fully-concerted entrance lobby.

The Campden Hill site was sold to the joint venture by the local authority for £100m in February 2010. Work is expected to start on the scheme in autumn 2013, with completion earmarked for spring 2016.

## The Chedi Muscat to unveil new-look spa for residents

PETE HAYMAN

Newly-expanded spa and wellness facilities – including a new 103m Long Pool – are to be unveiled at The Chedi Muscat resort in Oman at the beginning of August.

The resort's spa comprises 13 treatment rooms and a health club, with the facilities – in addition to the pool – covering a 12,000sq m (129,167sq ft) area.

Designed for resort guests but with limited memberships available for Muscat residents, the spa will offer aromatherapy and Ayurveda-inspired treatments.

Products at the newly-expanded spa will be supplied by REN; Naturelle D'Orient; ILA; VOYA; Sparitual; and Abahna, with the new facility combining Omani architecture and an Asian Zen-style.



The new app forms part of IHG's mobile strategy

## IHG launches Windows Phone application

PETE HAYMAN

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) has announced that it has rolled-out the Priority Club Rewards application for Windows Phone users, which follows the successful launch of its iPhone booking applications.

The new application will allow Windows Phone users to find and book hotel rooms; check prices; and view or cancel reservations across the seven IHG brands.

It forms part of the operator's mobile strategy, with IHG having reported nearly 1,000 per cent growth in room bookings from mobile devices and has already seen mobile-based booking numbers for 2011 surpass the total number for 2010.

Matt Luscombe, IHG senior vice president for sales and marketing, EMEA, said: "Creating a booking app for Windows Phone is an essential part of our mobile strategy, as we continue to develop our mobile booking options for our 58 million Priority Club members."

## Rezidor unveils two UAE hotels

PETE HAYMAN

Rezidor Hotel Group (RHG) has unveiled two properties in the United Arab Emirates – the Radisson Royal Hotel, Dubai, and the Radisson Blu Resort, Fujairah Dibba.

Both properties were previously run by JAL and have been taken over by RHG with immediate effect. ACICO Industries owns the hotels.

Facilities at the Radisson Royal Hotel, Dubai, include a Zen Spa with eight treatment rooms and male/female areas, as well as a couples' treatment room. A relaxation lounge; a sauna; steam-rooms; an outdoor pool; and a whirlpool; are also on offer at the 1,062sq m (11,431sq ft) Zen Spa, which uses Anne Semonin products.

Radisson Royal Hotel, Dubai, also boasts three speciality restaurants and an all-day dining option and a fitness suite.



Both of the Emirate properties taken over by Rezidor include Zen Spas

Meanwhile, the 257-room Radisson Blu Resort, Fujairah Dibba offers a 432.5sq m (4,655sq ft) Zen Spa featuring five treatment rooms and using Pevonia products.

The resort also boasts five restaurants; two bars; and a beach lounge, as well as four terrace pools; a fitness centre; and a dive centre.

## Tropicana hotel spa opening pushed back

TOM WALKER

Tropicana Las Vegas Hotel and Casino, US, has confirmed that the opening of its new spa – part of a US\$180m (£111.6m) revamp – has been pushed back to September.

Glow, A Mandara Spa will be approximately 9,500sq ft (882.6sq m) in size and is expected to feature a beauty salon; retail facilities; a relaxation lounge; steam showers; and treatment rooms.

A fitness centre is also earmarked as part of the Tropicana's new spa area, which is to be operated by Steiner Leisure as part of a 10-year agreement between the company and the Las Vegas hotel and casino.

Earlier this year, a Steiner spokesperson told *Spa Opportunities* that the Tropicana spa would be the first facility that would be launched



Tropicana Las Vegas Hotel and Casino is benefiting from a major revamp

under a new spa brand that the company had "developed for this project".

"The [Tropicana] spa will not be a current Steiner brand, but a new one developed for this project. It will be hip, with a South Beach, Miami flavour," the spokesperson told *Spa Opportunities* in March.

## Raison d'Etre to launch four-star brand this year

TOM WALKER

Anna Bjurstam, who took over the sole ownership of spa consultancy Raison d'Etre in April, has announced that the company will launch a new four star brand this year. Bjurstam said exact details are yet to be confirmed but added

that she was looking to at a number of models for a roll out – including a partnership with a four star hotel chain.

"The concept will be geared towards the younger market," she said. "The aim is to introduce socialising into the spa journey."



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## Book4Time appoints new mobile partner

PETE HAYMAN

Book4Time has appointed US-based TripCraft as its mobile development partner, which comes ahead of the launch of its new solutions for consumers and spa operators due later this year.

The partnership is to provide customers with world-class mobile capabilities on TripCraft's platform for smartphones, which will integrate with Book4Time cloud-based spa solutions.

Book4Time currently operates in 16 countries, with its web-based spa management system already having completed more than 20 million real-time appointments.

"We're excited to launch both consumer and business mobile solutions for our clients, extending our industry leading cloud-based spa software offering into mobile commerce," said Book4Time chief executive officer Roger Sholanki.



The name change is part of a strategic plan

## Sol Meliá adopts new corporate name

PETE HAYMAN

Spain-based operator Sol Meliá has adopted a new corporate name – Meliá Hotel International – to coincide with the launch of a new Strategic Plan for 2012-14.

The group underlined its bid to pursue globalisation; the development of its hotel management capacity; and its sustainability positioning over the next three years.

A new internal structure has also been implemented at Meliá Hotels International, with the creation of two new business areas – Asia Pacific and Real Estate.

Meliá Hotels International executive vice president of marketing Luis del Olmo said: "The renewal of the corporate name will give the final impetus to the new era which is about to start for us, helping us develop our growth plans and achieve greater international recognition."

## £500k grant for Buxton spa hotel

PETE HAYMAN

English Heritage has awarded £500,000 to the UK's Buxton Crescent and Thermal Spa scheme – one of the UK's first genuine spa hotels to be built for more than 100 years.

The grant will go towards the £35m revamp of the Grade I-listed Crescent and the Grade II-listed Natural Baths and Pump Room. When complete, the development will feature a 79-room hotel incorporating the Natural Baths; a thermal, natural mineral water spa; eight specialist shops; and a visitor centre. Repairs to the Pump Room are expected to take place later this year.

Trevor Osborne Property Group, CP Holdings and Danubius Hotels are working on the scheme in partnership with High Peak Borough Council (HPBC). Derbyshire County Council is also involved and is providing



The historic Grade I property will be transformed into a luxury spa hotel

funding – along with HPBC. Five years ago, the Heritage Lottery Fund contributed £12.5m.

HPBC leader Caitlin Bisknell said: "The funding takes us another important step towards the realisation of a nationally-important development that will strengthen the growing reputation of our spa town."

## Bodhi Dharma spa for new Annanya resort in Alibaug

PETE HAYMAN

Annanya Resorts and Residences Private has secured an agreement with Spatality to launch a new Bodhi Dharma spa in Alibaug, India.

The spa will form part of the 32,000sq ft (2,973sq m) Annanya Resort and Township

resort, offering Ayurvedic and Chinese Medicine practices and hydrotherapies.

Designed with a contemporary theme but also to focus on the area's surroundings, the new facility will also offer facilities such as yoga and meditation classes.

## Benchmark acquires MTM Luxury Lodging

PETE HAYMAN

MTM Luxury Lodging, an asset management company which specialises in full service hotels, has been bought by Benchmark Hospitality International (BHI).

The deal has added five hotels to the BHI portfolio – four existing and one to be built – and will see the sites form part of the new Personal Luxury Collection (PLC).

PLC – combining the five new additions with eight other BHI-run properties – aims to offer products that reflect the preferences of each individual and provide a personalised experience.

BHI founder, chair and CEO Burt Cabañas said: "Luxury is what makes each guest feel expected and genuinely welcomed over and



Sorrento Hotel in Seattle, one of the properties acquired by Benchmark

over again. MTM has demonstrated excellence in delivering this extraordinary level of service, and more importantly, they've refined the ability to make each person feel they are a guest in MTM's home."

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# DIARY DATES

## 13-14 AUGUST

### Sydney International Spa & Beauty Expo Conference

Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, Australia

One of Australia's largest spa and beauty trade events.

Tel: +61 2 9422 2535

[www.internationalbeautyexpo.com.au](http://www.internationalbeautyexpo.com.au)

## 17-18 AUGUST

### SPLASH! New Zealand Pool and Spa Trade Expo

Wellington Town Hall, Wellington New Zealand

The exhibition provides the opportunity to launch new products, network, come face to face with spa professionals, meet the press and build brand awareness.

Tel: +61 2 9660 2113

[www.splashnzexpo.co.nz](http://www.splashnzexpo.co.nz)

## 28-30 AUGUST

### Brazilian Spa Congress

Sheraton Hotel Sao Paulo, Brazil

The largest spa event in the country aims to attract both local and international professionals and will be held jointly with the Medical Travel Meeting Brazil.

Tel: +55 11 2307-5595

[www.congressodspas.com.br](http://www.congressodspas.com.br)

## 7-10 SEPTEMBER

### SPATEC North America Fall

Ritz Carlton Laguna Niguel, California, USA

A four-day forum featuring one-to-one 20-minute meetings between corporate spa owners, directors and design/management companies and suppliers.

Tel: +1 603 529 0077

[www.mcleaneventsinternational.com](http://www.mcleaneventsinternational.com)

## 8-10 SEPTEMBER

### SpaChina Summit

Brilliant Resort & Spa, Kuming, China

The event will include keynote speeches and panel discussions in both Chinese and English. Additionally, each day of the summit, around six hours of meeting time will be organized for networking, leaving attendees plenty of time in the schedule each day to relax, take time off, and enjoy the wonderful resort facilities of the event location.

Tel: +86 21 5385 8951

[www.spachina.com](http://www.spachina.com)



## 12-14 SEPTEMBER

### European Spa Exhibition & Summit

Porte de Versailles, Paris, France

Founded in 2007, this benchmark event mostly targets hotel professionals and covers the challenges in setting up and managing a spa. It is held in parallel with the Beyond Beauty trade show.

Tel: +33 1 44 69 95 69

[www.beyondbeautyparis.com](http://www.beyondbeautyparis.com)

## 18-19 SEPTEMBER

### Olympia Beauty

Olympia, London, UK

The latest styles, products and collections from beauty suppliers around the UK.

Tel: +44 1959 569867

[www.olympiabeauty.co.uk](http://www.olympiabeauty.co.uk)

## 25-27 SEPTEMBER

### Wellness Asia Exhibition

NSIC Exhibition Grounds, Okhla, New Delhi, India

This show combines wellness industry products, services and technologies.

It is aimed at Indian and international professionals in the spa, beauty and healthcare industries.

Tel: +91 11 450 555 00

[www.wellnessasiaexpo.com](http://www.wellnessasiaexpo.com)

## 6-7 OCTOBER

### Natural Beauty Summit America

Sheraton New York Hotel, New York, USA

An event which promises to bring together some of the leading and most influential executives in the natural beauty sector to debate and discuss major industry issues.

Tel: +33 1 44 69 95 65

[www.naturalbeautysummit.com](http://www.naturalbeautysummit.com)

## 6-9 OCTOBER

### Inner IDEA

Hilton La Jolla Torrey Pines, San Diego, California, USA

In its sixth year, this US-based conference highlights mind-body-spirit programmes. It is aimed at pilates instructors, yoga teachers, group exercise instructors, owners/managers, personal trainers, lifestyle coaches, wellness professionals, holistic health professionals, students and enthusiasts.

Tel: +1 800 462 1876

[www.inneridea.com](http://www.inneridea.com)

## 12-14 OCTOBER

### Wellness Summit

Singapore

The annual summit is an important platform for practitioners, professionals, academics, manufacturers, resort owners and small-to medium-sized operators interested in the spa and wellness arena, to meet and seek solutions concerning the growth and sustainability of the industry in the region. The event now features sessions called Ask the Experts and Ideas Worth Exploring to enhance interaction.

Tel: +60 16 21 53 90 8

[www.wellnesssummit.com](http://www.wellnesssummit.com)

## 16-17 OCTOBER

### International Esthetics, Cosmetics & Spa Conference

Broward County Convention Center, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA

Around 7,000 professionals attend this exhibition for skincare, wellness and equipment suppliers.

Tel: +1 203 736 1699

[www.iecsc.com](http://www.iecsc.com)





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## The rise of the machines

Investing in new equipment can be daunting with the plethora of new products available – but it needn't be, according to Marisa Dimitriadis

Consumers visiting our spas are becoming more demanding and expect better results due to an increase in knowledge and education about their skins, health, ageing and nutrition. Let's face it – everyone would like to live young forever and we are looking at ways to preserve our youth.

While electrical appliances can never replace human touch and personal knowledge, they can be used to improve skin care, resulting in a satisfied client who will return to maintain that perfect skin. Machines can make therapists work smarter as they can be used to deliver the results clients want. Operationally, technology should be able to increase revenues while lessening the workload.

The world of technology is constantly evolving, with new and exciting pieces of equipment constantly being launched into the market that deliver exceptional results. When used



**Marisa Dimitriadis**

Marisa is the managing director of South Africa-based The Spa Consultants. The company has launched its own spa brand and recently opened a post graduate beauty business school

**“The success of the equipment depends on the operator – if they are excited and believe in it, the treatments will fly”**

effectively and by choosing the right piece of equipment suited to your clients and salons needs, these electrical appliances give the therapists the edge professionally while providing consumers with amazing results.

There are now many products that work on the skin and are highly effective at offering anti-ageing solutions – for example by stimulating collagen and elastin production while helping to reverse environmental skin damage, increase lymphatic flow in the system and much more.

The reality is that the need for machines in your spa is now more evident than ever before, the daunting task is deciding which one is right for your business. But how do you choose the right piece of technology?

A good start will be keeping adequate client record cards and having an understanding of your client base. After all, it will be your existing clients who will be the first to try out and pay for the mechanical treatments. Eventually, your new equipment could open up doors to a whole new world of clients if marketed and promoted correctly.

When choosing your machines, it is crucial ensure that your supplier is reputable; get references from other operators and ensure the supplier has a reliable back up service.

It is also important to ensure that your treatment prices are affordable – but profitable. Do your costings carefully. Start marketing and promoting the new service before the equipment arrives as this will create excitement and hype. You could even run a competition that gives out free treatments using the new service.

The success of the machine in your spa depends exclusively on the operators of the machine. If they are excited, are continuously talking about it and believe in the machine, the treatments will “fly”.

So, what kind of new equipment is available out there for spa operators? The list is long. Among the recent innovations are treatments that use LED (light emitting diodes), IPL (intense pulsed light), ultrasound and dermo mobilisation as well as a range of different vibration therapies.

Others include ultrasonic peeling, electroporation, radiofrequency, galvanic, cavitation and pressure therapy.

I would like to leave you with one very important thought: consumers come to you for relaxation and pampering yet they are ALL looking for ways to stay younger and thinner. If you don't offer that solution they will go look for it somewhere else.

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Company: QHotels  
Location: Warrington, UK

### ■ Senior Beauty Therapist - (Live in)

Company: Renard Resources  
Location: Bristol, UK

### ■ Spa Treatment Manager

Company: Shire Hotels Ltd  
Location: Penrith, Cumbria, UK

### ■ Spa Manager

Company: Renard Resources  
Location: London, UK

### ■ Spa Therapist

Company: Virgin Active  
Location: Barbican / Edinburgh, UK

### ■ Spa Manager

Company: Virgin Active  
Location: Bank, UK

### ■ Spa Manager - Maternity Cover

Company: Virgin Active  
Location: Chelmsford, UK

### ■ Assistant Leisure Club Manager

Company: Shire Hotels Ltd  
Location: Almondsbury, Bristol, UK

### ■ Spa Manager

Company: Turnberry Resort  
Location: Turnberry, Scotland, UK

### ■ Spa Receptionist

Company: Virgin Active  
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Please contact James Gardiner  
**Leisure & Spa Consultant at Renard Resources**  
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# Taj to manage Marrakech resort

TOM WALKER

Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces will take over the management contract of a 161-key luxury resort in Marrakech, originally planned as a Mandarin Oriental resort.

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group (MOHG) pulled out of the contract it had with the property's owner, privately-owned Moroccan company JK Hotels. The resort, which is due to open in October 2011, will now be launched as Taj Palace, Marrakech.

Speaking to *Spa Opportunities*, Live Haugen – a spokesperson for MOHG's Middle Eastern operations – said the decision to pull out of the development didn't rule out the possibility of a future MOHG property in the region.

Haugen said: "MOHG has withdrawn the management contract for our Marrakech project, but Marrakech remains a suitable location



The resort is due to open in October 2011 and will include a large spa

for a Mandarin Oriental resort property, and the group is exploring further opportunities in the destination."

Raymond Bickson, managing director and CEO of Taj, said: "Taj Palace Marrakech, is our latest venture into the African continent and is in sync with our strategy to continue our vision of growth in key international destinations."

## Wolgan Valley nets carbon zero certificate

TOM WALKER

Wolgan Valley Resort and Spa, a conservation-based resort in New South Wales, Australia, has secured carbon neutral status with New Zealand-based carbonZero certification.

The resort, owned by Dubai-based owned by the Emirates Group, is the first hotel in the world to have achieved carbonZero certification by an internationally accredited greenhouse gas certification scheme. Wolgan Valley was given the accolade after a full year of operation.

The carbon neutral status has been made possible through a combination of initiatives, including large-scale environmental rehabilitation schemes, removal of cattle from the property, and protection of vegetation areas.



The resort is the first hotel anywhere to be certified by carbonZero

Joost Heymeijer, the resort's general manager, said: "Fortunately, sustainability is no longer just an optional concept in our industry; it has now become a basic expectation. Our status as carbon neutral is important and aligns with our philosophy and values."

## New aesthetic medical centre for Vancouver

PETE HAYMAN

US-based medical spa expert Acara Partners is to work on Balley Ventures' flagship aesthetic medical centre in Vancouver, Canada.

Peyman Ashkenani, president and chief executive officer of Balley Ventures – a division

of Balley Holdings, said the ambition was to provide a "unique" experience for customers.

Ashkenani said the group aims to develop the medical spa around an "unprecedented customer care management system" using the most advanced cosmetic technology.

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