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GUT HEALTH
The key to wellbeing

SPA FRANCHISING
Reshaping the industry in the US

ON THE COVER

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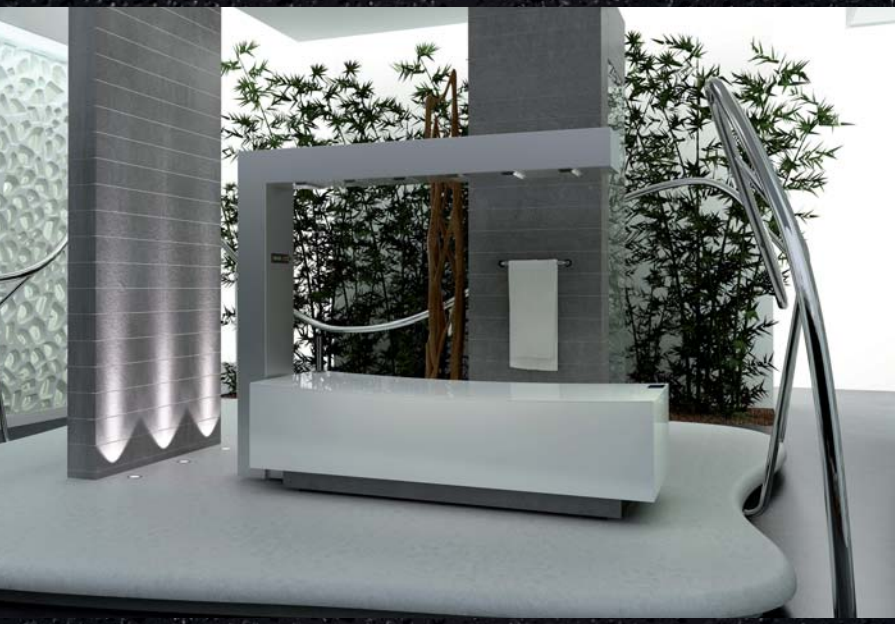

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Franchises are reshaping the market

Will massage franchises suck the life out of the full-service spa sector and what kind of shape will the industry be in once they've scaled?

Massage franchise businesses in the US have permanently changed the spa industry, drawing new types of consumers to the wellness lifestyle and accelerating the growth of the sector.

The model has scaled incredibly quickly to the point where market leader Massage Envy topped the US$1bn turnover mark last year and will have more than 1,000 spas by the end of 2014, making it a substantial business by any measure.

No-one has yet estimated the value or volume of the crossover business, ie, people who are introduced to the industry via a franchise and go on to become customers of full-service spas and vice versa. There's a need for these numbers to be established now and more importantly, to be tracked given the rapid growth being experienced.

The franchise industry is a highly entrepreneurial one and investors have been quick to see the potential of the sector. New entrants in the US such as Massage Green Spa, Hand and Stone, Massage Luxe and others are growing quickly and investors right across the international markets starting to see the potential too.

Massage is a neighbourhood purchase, with people typically prepared to travel a 20-30 minutes for a treatment. This makes it very like the health club model in scale, while the pricing being adopted by massage and facial franchises is also similar to that deployed by volume health club operators. As a result, it seems likely the spa franchise market will turn out to be a similar shape to the health club sector by the time it reaches maturity.

On page 34, our experts examine the impact that franchises are having on the wider spa market. The debate centres around quality control, market fatigue and staffing – are there enough customers to support this many sites and enough therapists to deliver the volume?

But the biggest question is whether these businesses can be sustained without impacting full-service spas. Will they suck the life out of the full-service sector and what kind of shape will the industry be in once they've scaled?

In the health club industry, where budget offers have proliferated, they're starting to bed down to co-exist in a sustainable way with the high end operations, but have knocked the stuffing out of the mid-market. Time will tell whether the same thing happens with spas.

Whatever the outcome, spa operators worldwide need to prepare for this change with eyes wide open.

Liz Terry, editor twitter: @elizterry

What are your views on franchises?

Comment on our blog at **blog.spabusiness.com**

CONTACT US: Spa Business magazine, Leisure Media, Portmill House, Portmill Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1DJ, UK
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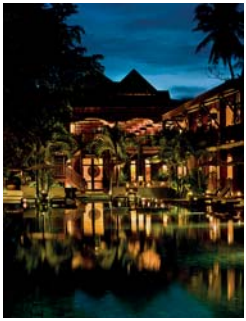

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READER SERVICES

SUBSCRIPTIONS
DENISE ADAMS +44 (0)1462 471930

CIRCULATION
MICHAEL EMMERSON +44 (0)1462 471932

EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITOR
LIZ TERRY +44 (0)1462 431385

MANAGING EDITOR
KATIE BARNES +44 (0)1462 471925

PRODUCT EDITOR
KATE CORNEY +44 (0)1462 471927

NEWSDESK
HELEN ANDREWS +44 (0)1462 471902
TOM ANSTEY +44 (0)1462 471916
JAK PHILLIPS +44 (0)1462 471938

ADVERTISING TEAM

PUBLISHER/ADVERTISING SALES
ASTRID ROS +44 (0)1462 471911

ADVERTISING SALES
JULIE BADRICK +44 (0)1462 471919
CHRIS BARNARD +44 (0)1462 471907
JOHN CHALLINOR +44 (0)1202 742968
JAN WILLIAMS +44 (0)1462 471909

ADVERTISING – WWW.SPA-KIT.NET
ASTRID ROS +44 (0)1462 471911

SPA RECRUITMENT & TRAINING SALES
SARAH GIBBS +44 (0)1462 471908

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION
ED GALLAGHER +44 (0)1905 20198

WEB TEAM

WWW.SPA-KIT.NET
PRODUCT SEARCH ENGINE
KATE CORNEY +44 (0)1462 471927

SPABUSINESS.COM
MICHAEL PARAMORE +44 (0)1462 471926
TIM NASH +44 (0)1462 471917
DEAN FOX +44 (0)1462 471900
EMMA HARRIS +44 (0)1462 471921

DESIGN
ANDY BUNDY +44 (0)1462 471924

FINANCE
DENISE ADAMS +44 (0)1462 471930

CREDIT CONTROL
REBEKAH SCOTT +44 (0)1462 733477

CONTRIBUTORS

Sophie Benge

Sophie Benge is a journalist and author. Her latest book *Healing Sources – Spas and Wellbeing from the Baltic to the Black Sea* will be published in September. She regularly writes and blogs about her wellbeing and travel experiences on her website www.beingsophie.com.
Email: sophie@sophiebenge.com
Phone: +44 7951 056609

Jennifer Harbottle

Jennifer Harbottle has been a regular contributor to *Spa Business* magazine for the last seven years and has established herself as a leading commentator in the industry. Currently based in China, she focuses on writing about the Asia-Pacific leisure sector.
Email: jennifer@harkcommunications.com.au
Phone: +86 1888 9846196

Vera Kiss

Vera Kiss, an analyst at The Futures Company, has a strong interest in how people engage with their health and wellbeing in diverse markets. She's a member of The Futures Company's Health and Wellness knowledge venturing team that publishes thought leadership pieces on global health, wellness and nutrition trends.
Email: vera.kiss@thefuturescompany.com

On the cover: Sheila C Johnson, owner, Salamander Resort & Spa (p74)

Julie Cramer

Julie Cramer worked as news editor for BBC News Online for more than 10 years. She now has a successful freelance career writing articles focused on health, fitness, travel, hospitality and design. She is a former deputy editor of the international industry magazine *Leisure Management*.
Email: juliecramer@me.com

Rhianon Howells

Rhianon Howells was the launch editor of *Spa Business* and established it as a journal of note. As consulting editor, she is closely involved with its continuing development, while also writing about health, fitness, travel and leisure as a freelance journalist in major national titles such as *The Guardian* newspaper.
Email: rhowells@spabusiness.com

Catherine Larner

Catherine Larner is a freelance journalist who writes lifestyle articles for various magazines. She reports on everything from rowing to running and edits a wide range of non-fiction books for leading publishers. She was the launch editor of *Health Club Management* magazine.
Email: catherine@catherinelarner.com
Twitter: @CatherineLarner

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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

How can we get spas to sign up to benchmarking?

Anne McCall Wilson,
owner, McCall & Wilson

The profit and loss allocation in hotel spas will always raise an abundance of opinion, as highlighted in the recent article in *Spa Business* (see SB13/4 p42), but I continue to be perplexed at the lack of participation in benchmarking programmes – something which can have an even bigger impact on spa balance sheets.

At the first Global Spa & Wellness Summit in 2007, a benchmarking session was standing room only, which prompted Smith Travel Research (STR) to set up a standard reporting system for spas (see SB08/2 p21). After several years, participation still remains very low. Everyone agrees it's needed, but how do we get businesses to actually participate? Maybe we need owners, lenders and asset companies to ask that question.

STR collects stats on spa revenue, utilisation and space. We can lament unfair cost allocations but this is often just a left pocket/right pocket financial transfer or budget discussion and doesn't put the focus on what drives real value. We need to focus on building the spa top line. This means not only building revenue management skill sets and tools for our leaders, but also developing a revenue culture in our businesses.

SHUTTERSTOCK/GOODLUIZ

Benchmarking provides valuable data on spa customers, usage, revenue and space

Focusing on the top line forces critical thinking about the customer. Knowing who the customer is drives everything – space, design and programming. A spa in an urban business hotel with a 65 per cent male audience might be completely different to another urban hotel positioning itself as a neighbourhood meeting place. I wish more projects developed a strategy in the concept phase and determined the main role of the spa: whether to increase asset value, enhance positioning, drive weekend room nights, be a key profit centre, or simply provide an amenity. We would have many more profitable projects if we identified the customer and the right revenue plan and space allocation at an early stage. Interestingly, these are almost the exact statistics that the STR benchmarking system collects.

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SHUTTERSTOCK/ARIWASABI

Skincare could be enhanced if lifestyle advice was given too

Skincare needs to be more than just pot of cream

Filippo Ongaro, anti-ageing medicine expert

I'd like to see less 'dream selling' and more reality in the skincare industry. Beauty should be more than a short-term fix, it should be a long-term approach combined with a healthy lifestyle – if you're healthy on the inside, it reflects on the outside.

I come at this from a slightly different perspective. I used to be a physician for the European Space Agency – six months in space is like 10 years on Earth and one of my tasks was to counteract the effect of ageing, so anti-ageing medicine was a natural next step. I have my own clinic in Italy and am involved with various anti-ageing associations globally. Most recently, I was one of a group of experts, including a cardiologist, nutri-dermatologist and pharmacologist, who worked on Comfort Zone's Skin Regimen line. To complement the skincare products, the company has also detailed nutrition and exercise programmes which help with preventative ageing.

I think more consumers should consider this approach. The science behind it can be very complex, but if delivered in a step by step way – along with education – it would be far more effective than just using a pot of cream!

Hoshino Resorts is modernising the traditional thermal spa model in Japan

Spa resurgence in Japan

Tomonori Maruyama, chief researcher/manager, Mitsui Knowledge Industry

It was great to read about how Hoshino Resorts is updating the traditional bathing/thermal spa model in Japan (see SB14/1 p68) as my company collaborated on some of the new approaches it's incorporating.

Although thermal bathing in onsen is a centuries-old tradition in our country there's been a resurrected interest in them recently. Last October saw the launch of the Global Hot Spring Initiative which sees representatives of hot spring facilities joining forces to help drive the sector forward. It only started with six members but this has steadily grown to 11 people worldwide who are in contact on a monthly basis with ideas of how to help this part of the industry grow.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics is also going to have a big impact on the spa industry in Japan and one of the most interesting developments is Senkyaku Banari, which is being built close to one of the stadiums and which will include a large hot spring facility (see p18). The project, which will sit next to Tokyo's relocated fish market, will include 140 sushi-related shops and restaurants for tourists and residents. It's scheduled to open within the next two years and is expected to attract around 4 million visitors annually.

Elsewhere in Japan, some traditional Zen temples are providing their ascetic training (traditional spiritual exercise practice) for beginners. I really think this could grow rapidly as consumers increasingly seek solace from the stresses of every day life and as destination spas move away from pampering and further embrace exercise.

In short, there are some interesting innovations and developments to watch out for in the years ahead in Japan.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=I9I0B

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Waeyaert joins Deep Nature Development

Ghislain Waeyaert has been appointed as the managing director of Deep Nature Development.

The move comes after his departure from Clarins where he was international boutique and spa director for five years. In total, he's been in the cosmetics industry for 20 years.

Deep Nature Development has been created to support the fast expansion of Deep Nature, a French spa operating company which runs 35 spas worldwide for brands such as InterContinental.

This July, it will open The Brando – an eco-resort in Tetiaroa, French Polynesia (see p20).

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=8N0B9

SHUTTERSTOCK/NATALIA PUSHCHINA

Rotorua's hot springs are largely unused

Rotorua mayor calling for focus on hot springs

Steve Chadwick, the mayor of Rotorua in New Zealand, is calling for a focus on hot spring and spa development in the region.

Rotorua is famed for its natural thermal pools, but they're relatively unused. Chadwick saw potential for development following a recent visit to Beppu in Japan which was celebrating its 100th hot springs festival.

Beppu, the sister city to Rotorua, is a world-leading destination for geothermal attractions and hot springs. It generates significant tourism revenue through its wellness offerings.

Chadwick wants to emulate Beppu and establish Rotorua as the South Pacific's spa and hot springs capital.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=Q4s4s

The US$145m resort will include outdoor decking and an underwater 'observation bulb'

Solar-powered floating island resort set for Maldives

Italian designer Michele Puzzolante of MPD Designs has unveiled a new concept resort called the Solar Floating Island (SFI). It will be energy self-sufficient and will use the sun as its sole source of power.

The resort, constructed of floating pontoons, is set to feature a five-star, 54-bed hotel comprising a 410sq m (4,413sq ft) spa and wellness centre which will offer a range of massages, manicures, pedicures, facials, body wraps and exfoliations, in addition to a 150sq m (1,614sq ft) boutique area.

Puzzolante estimates the entire development could be built for US$145m (€104m, £87m) and the concept has received full support from Maldives' president Abdulla Yameen. The first SFI construction is planned to take place in the next few months, with parts constructed in a factory before later being assembled on-site.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=H2h3s

US physician outlines US$3m ayurveda retreat plan

An ambitious US$3m (€2.22, £1.84m) wellness retreat in the foothills of the Himalayas is being planned by Dr Robert Schneider, a leading US physician and researcher (see SB14/1 p36).

Schneider, who's a professor at the Maharishi University of Management in Iowa, specialises in integrative preventative healthcare. He's also the author of *Total Heart Health* – a book promoting the potential of ayurveda to prevent and reverse heart disease.

The aim of the retreat is to tackle chronic disorders such as heart disease by combining ayurvedic therapies and integrative medicine with modern healthcare. "We want to offer the best of all worlds," says Schneider, who's already using this approach successfully as medical director at The Raj Ayurveda Health Spa in Iowa.

Designs drawn up by vedic architects Raja Builders feature a 100,000sq ft (9,290sq m) spa and integrative health centre comprised of luxury private rooms and villas. The development, which has the working title of Total Health Centre, will focus on detox, panchakarma, mind-body medicine, five senses therapies and lifestyle education.

The centre, based in the Himalayan foothills, will tackle chronic disorders like heart disease

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=m3A5Y

French hospital to be converted into a three-storey thermal bath spa

The €6.5m spa is due to open by 2017 and will be master planned by Francisco Mangado architects

Spanish architectural firm Francisco Mangado has been appointed as the master-planner of a French thermal spa project following a global design competition.

Francisco Mangado, along with five other architects, will transform an old military thermal hospital in the municipality of Amélie-les-Bains in southern France into a spa covering 3,143sq m (33,830sq ft).

Due to open by 2017, the €6.5m (US$9m, £5.3m) spa will be set over three floors and feature extensive thermal and bathing facilities – using water from the town's natural resources – as well as a spa with over 10 wet and dry treatment rooms.

A hot zone will comprise three saunas and three Turkish baths in addition to a Roman-style caldarium steam-room. Meanwhile a cold zone will boast experience showers, a tepidarium and a frigidarium. On top of this, there will be a large interior bathing area leading to an outdoor relaxation courtyard, plus a sun terrace and bar.

The proposed renovation will see glass surfaces superimposed on the hospital's solid stone walls to give it a more modern look, while retaining the original architecture.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=9G8N5

Hotel development to soar in Dubai for 2020 Expo

Dubai has relaxed hotel development regulations in preparation for an expected influx of 25 million visitors over the course of the six-month World Expo in 2020.

The pre-approval stage in hotel development has been shortened from six months to two months. Fees for 'change of use of land' for hotel operations have also been scrapped and more incentives will follow.

Dubai needs to double its hotel inventory, adding over 80,000 bedrooms, in the next seven years to meet the tourist demand.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=j5W4Q

SHUTTERSTOCK/ALEXANDER TOLSTYKH

New hotels are likely to have spa facilities

Striking design revealed for Norwegian spa hotel

The hotel is designed to blend into the landscape

Plans have been unveiled for the coil-shaped Lofoten Opera Hotel, which is to be built in Norway's Lofoten archipelago.

The curvaceous design by Snøhetta Architects will help the 95-room hotel blend into the surrounding seascape. It will feature a spa and amphitheatre as well as hiking resources – Lofoten is a very popular walking and nature destination in Norway.

Construction started in December 2013 and the estimated cost is NOK300m (US$49.6m, €35.9m, £30m).

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=F5f5u

SHUTTERSTOCK/ANDY KALNINN

The Seychelles spa industry is growing

New tourism academy with spa for Seychelles

A full-service spa training facility is to be included in a purpose-built tourism academy in the Seychelles.

The government is funding the new site for The Seychelles Tourism Academy – the islands' only tourism college. The first 15 classrooms are to open in July, with the main admin block and restaurant/demonstration kitchen to follow. Work on a hotel and spa training facility will start in January. 2015

The academy already offers a two-year spa certificate qualification in partnership with the Constance Hospitality Academy in Mauritius.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=F9k5l

Sea change for spa travel in 2013, says report

Seventy-three per cent of US travel agents reported a growth in spa property bookings last year, according to the latest *State of Spa Travel* report by Spafinder Wellness 365.

The growth, which marks a turnaround for the industry, was partly due to resorts' increasingly aggressive price packages.

Women travelling together were the biggest group, highlighting how female bonding is critical to the spa sector. Agents also predicted that generation X will soon usurp baby boomers as the main spa travelling demographic.

The survey was based more than 300 North American travel agents and was completed in Q4 of 2013.
Read more: http://lei.sr?a=8Y6u2

The spa is in a stand-alone building

Blackberry Farm set to launch Wellhouse spa

Blackberry Farm, a 62-bed chateau in the Great Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee, US will unveil a new wellness centre on 1 June.

The 12,663sq ft (1,176sq m) Wellhouse, situated in a stand-alone building, has been designed by the Farm's founder and director of design Kreis Beall, along with Johnson Architecture. The purpose-built facility took 12 months to construct and boasts nine treatment rooms. Product houses include Naturopathica and Lucrece.

Spa director Amanda Anderson has previously worked for Red Door Spas, Ritz-Carlton and Golden Door.
Read more: http://lei.sr?a=k3r6m

The opening of the spa hotel has been pushed back from early 2014 to 2017

€70m spa hotel in Finland stalled by legal dispute

Construction has yet to begin on a €70m (US$96m, £58m) spa hotel in Lappeenranta, eastern Finland, due to a string of legal disputes. The development was initially planned to open in early 2014.

The scheme is a joint venture between two Finnish property investment companies – Ultivista and Conte Invest. The CEO of Ultivista, Sami Alatalo, told *Spa Business* the legal proceedings mean the project will open by 2017 at the earliest if the court rules in its favour.

Two complaints were made by members of the public about the building plans and the price the land was sold at, according to Finnish media, but both were rejected by the Hallinto-oikeus administrative court. Another complaint was submitted to the Korkein Hallinto-oikeus supreme administrative court in late. Final rulings are expected by mid 2014.

The Huhtiniemi development consists of three interconnected parts. These include a 14-storey hotel, a 4,000sq m (43,056sq ft) spa and a 7,000sq m (75,347sq ft) space for spa villas.

The project will have a total of 500 bedrooms: 350 will be in the hotel, while the other 150 will be in the spa villas.
Read more: http://lei.sr?a=V7s8Q

Italian job for Moscow's Golden Mile wellness centre

Italy's Happy Sauna Group managed the project

'Made in Italy' is the theme a 4,500sq m (48,438sq ft) spa that's just opened in Moscow's Park Palace luxury estate.

The Golden Mile wellness centre was project managed by Italy's Happy Sauna Group, which enlisted compatriot architects Studio D73 for the design.

The spa has 15 treatment rooms, a beauty studio and a 900sq m (9,688sq ft) fitness area. A wet zone includes a large pool, two whirlpools, a sauna, a steam-room, a Kneipp path and a snow cabin.
Read more: http://lei.sr?a=v4t5P

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Greece not capitalising on thermal spa potential

Greece's hot springs remain a largely untapped tourism resource, according to the secretary general of the Union of Greek Spa Towns, Markos Danas.

"We have an exceptional product but it's poorly used," he told the *International Business Times* in April. "Hot springs are mostly run by local communities, and this has limited the scope of development."

The country has 850 hot springs with known curative properties, but just 100 of those are easily accessible and fewer are commercially operated. Many are still free to the public, out in the countryside and have minimal supporting facilities.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=j2b6z

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/LEAHANNE THOMPSON

Celebrity Cruises has 10 spas

Canyon Ranch to operate *Celebrity Cruises'* spas

Arizona-based spa operator Canyon Ranch took over the running of wellness facilities on board the fleet of *Celebrity Cruises* ships in April.

The 10 spas, which were previously operated by Steiner Leisure, have been rebranded as Canyon Ranch SpaClub at Sea. Canyon Ranch has created some exclusive face and body treatments for *Celebrity Cruises* and will also run the beauty salons and fitness areas on the ships.

Canyon Ranch also operates the spa on board Cunnard's *Queen Mary 2*, as well as eight at-sea spas for Prestige's *Oceania* and *Regent Seven Seas* liners.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=m3h7H

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/LEINGCHOPAN

The Senkyaku Banrai complex is close to Tokyo's 2020 Olympic venues

Thermal spa facility for Tokyo mega complex

Senkyaku Banrai, a 1.7-hectare shopping and entertainment complex within walking distance of Tokyo's 2020 Olympic venues, will feature one of Japan's largest thermal spa facilities, according to national newspaper *The Asahi Shimbun*.

It's reported that the complex, which is being planned by the Tokyo metropolitan government, will include a seven-storey tower with thermal bathing and spa facilities plus accommodation. At the top of the tower will be an open air bath.

When it opens in March 2016, Senkyaku Banrai is expected to attract up to 4.2 million visitors a year.

Other facilities include a multilingual tourist information centre, 140 food stores, a food court big enough for 1,000 customers and cooking schools.

Operators announced so far include Kiyomura, which runs the Sushi-Zanmai food chain; and Daiwa House Industry Company.

The complex will sit next to Toyko's relocated fish market which is scheduled to open about the same time.

The original site for the for the iconic Tsukiji wholesale fish market is only 4km away, but the new location will be up to 40 per cent bigger and more modern.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=E8Q8d

Brando resort aiming for LEED Platinum status

The resort aims to be fully self-sustaining

The Brando eco-resort, opening this July in French Polynesia, is planning to become the first resort in the world to obtain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification.

Previously owned by actor Marlon Brando, the island of Tetiaroa will have a Deep Nature spa called the Varua Polynesian Spa, built overlooking a freshwater lake.

Designed by Lonsdale Western Design, the spa will feature its own range of Varua-branded skincare products.

Read more: http://lei.sr?a=H9k3G

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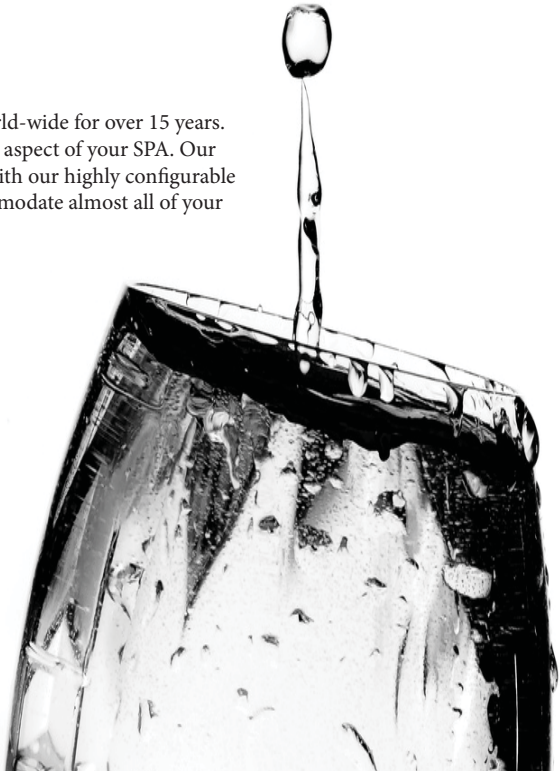

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Les Nouvelles Esthetiques magazine's annual conference and award ceremony for the South African spa industry.
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www.lesnouvelles.co.za

The Aqua Sana will feature 25 multi-sensory and hydrothermal experiences

Spa design revealed for Center Parcs in Woburn, UK

Center Parcs has unveiled details of its Aqua Sana spa at the Woburn Forest holiday village that's to open in the UK in mid 2014.

A standout part of the design is the World of Spa facility which comprises six smaller spas with 25 multi-sensory, hydrothermal experiences. Each of these mini spas combine different wellness approaches from Europe and have been inspired by nature.

In the Mineral & Gemstone Spa, for example, mineral salts and rose quartz are used in steamrooms, sensory showers and a relaxation lounge to soothe the skin, detox the pores and destress. It also has the world's first Mineral Room, where amethyst and crushed rose quartz, along with a refreshing lemongrass scent, infuse the air to energise the senses and calm the nerves.

Other spas include Fire & Ice, Blossom, Herbal, Salt and Sensory.

The Aqua Sana will also feature an outdoor infinity pool with forest views, a serail mud room, 22 treatment rooms and will be connected to six spa accommodation suites (with potential for six more in the future).

The concept was designed and developed by Schletterer and Sparcstudio.

The spa product suppliers include Elemis, Bliss and Decléor.

Read more: **http://lei.sr?a=R4A6g**

Multiple pay models in US spas are perplexing, says survey

SHUTTERSTOCK/MINERVA STUDIO

Commission and salary packages vary greatly

Multiple and varied payment and compensation structures in spas across the US are leading to salary confusion, according to a report by the US Day Spa Association.

The *2014 Day Spa Association Spa & Wellness Compensation Trends Survey* highlights that there's no one, standard way to pay therapists in the country. Rates of commissions vary greatly – from less than 20 per cent and up to 50 per cent – and definitions of an employee versus an independent contractor remain "fuzzy".

Read more: **http://lei.sr?a=d5Q6l**

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ANDREW GIBSON

The new vice president of spa and wellness at FRHI talks to Katie Barnes about the strategic development of spas in its three international hotel chains – Fairmont, Raffles and Swissôtel

Andrew Gibson is a respected figure in the global spa industry. Next year, he'll celebrate 30 years in the sector, having worked with some of its most successful businesses – such as eco-focused operator Six Senses, leading spa consultancy Raison d'Etre and, most recently, the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group.

So when a man of his pedigree takes on a new venture, people sit up and pay attention. "That's probably the biggest question everyone's asking me: why leave Mandarin Oriental [as group director of spa]," he says. He's referring to the new job he started on 14 January as vice president of spa and wellness at Fairmont Raffles Hotels International (FRHI).

The private company, which is part-owned by Doha-based Qatari Investment Authority and Saudi-based Kingdom Holding Company (see p28), includes the Fairmont, Raffles and Swissôtel hotel brands – amounting to 130 hotels in 27 countries with more than 45 spas.

"I knew the position was going to become available, but I didn't seek out the role," says Gibson. He took over the post from good friend Anne McCall Wilson who's gone on to set up her own independent spa consultancy. "I was very happy at Mandarin Oriental, it's an outstanding company that looks after its employees very well and, of course, it has fantastic spas. However, when I was approached by the senior leaders of FRHI, I thought 'wow: here's an interesting challenge'. From a scale perspective, it's not only three brands compared to one, but more than 100 hotels and an ambitious expansion programme, compared to 28 Mandarin Oriental hotels and perhaps eight new openings in the pipeline. That and the fact that FRHI is in a period of reorganisation and I'll be given more latitude to play with some ideas that Mandarin might not have been so receptive to because it already had a very good tried and tested formula."

> I didn't seek out the role...However, when I was approached by the senior leaders of FRHI, I though 'wow: here's an interesting challenge'

So what will Gibson's role entail and what new strategies is he planning to implement?

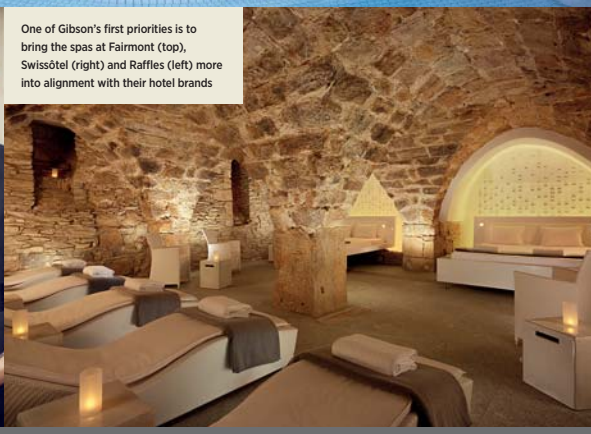
DEFINING SPA BRANDS

Gibson has joined FRHI at a time of change as it regionalises its business. Instead of the group running the brands as separate entities, it now has regional vice presidents who are responsible for all three brands. It's a move that will help to streamline the corporation and give it a solid foundation for growth. "There was a lot of duplication of costs and people," he explains. "Regionalisation reduces those overheads and also adds accountability. Plus, there's an understanding of cultural nuances. Our head of the Middle East was born in the region, speaks Arabic and can go to Mecca. Imagine trying to have that kind of insight being based in Toronto [the headquarters of Fairmont]."

The brand vice-presidents are Jane Mackie at Fairmont; Diana Banks at Raffles and Lillian Roten at Swissôtel and Gibson will be working closely with them as a matter or priority. "There's a pressing need to work with the brand managers to create a very clear understanding of what spa and wellness is for our [hotel] brands," he says. The company already has two in-house spa brands: Willow Stream for Fairmont and Pürovel for Swissôtel, but Gibson feels they need to be brought more into alignment. "It's very important that the definition of spas is seamless and aligned to hotel brand values which are clearly outlined," he says. "If you have any ambiguity, the questions will come."

In this case, he concedes that spa is almost secondary to hotel values. He cites Raffles, with its colonial heritage – the first hotel was name after Britain's Stamford Raffles who founded Singapore – as an example. "Raffles is about bespoke, boutique luxury and its goal is to provide ▸

One of Gibson's first priorities is to bring the spas at Fairmont (top), Swissôtel (right) and Raffles (left) more into alignment with their hotel brands



▲ Fairmont Monte Carlo is one of the flagship properties Gibson will be working closely with

We're discussing the possibility of not even having a spa in the hotel... all the usual spa components will be there, just not in a dedicated facility

'an oasis for the well-travelled'," he says. "Translate all of those standards into spa and that means each facility will be custom-built for a particular location and will offer everything that affluent, well-travelled guests demand, such as seamless service, space and privacy. But it's the defining of the finer points that's going to take a lot of work. If people want privacy, do we get rid of banks of treadmills in the fitness centre so others can't see what you're doing? If people want luxury, do we choose the best products in that particular market instead of having a set product house?"

As Fairmont is a Canadian brand, the philosophy centres around hospitality and humbleness. "Canadians have a way of welcoming you into their homes," says Gibson. "So, where it's culturally acceptable, we'll look to include communal lounges in spas as part of this social aspect."

Meanwhile, with Swissôtel it's all about sticking to Swiss-style standards such as efficiency, unobtrusive service, vibrancy and energy. "The founders are Swissair and Nestlé: you couldn't get more Swiss if you cut a Toblerone in half!" Its spa brand, Pürovel, launched in 2011 (see SB11/3 p20) and already incorporates many of these elements. Gibson says it's likely that these spas will stay the same worldwide, but he might do some tweaking.

That said, he's also open to trying out new things in any of the hotel spas should the market demand it. "Mandarin had it's Oriental heritage brand that worked well and they didn't want to experiment with it – why would they?" he says. "But here, there's a bit more flexibility. There's an opportunity to perhaps go more into beauty or fitness, or to introduce some edgy treatments. We're discussing the possibility of not even having a spa, but instead having wellness facilities in the hotels that guests want – all the usual spa components will be there, but just not in a dedicated facility. But I can't reveal any more about that yet.

"Trying any new concept will be challenging and it will have to be done in a style that matches hotel standards and locale. But I always enjoy a new test and it's important not to get set in your ways."

GETTING STRATEGIC

Three months in and Gibson admits he doesn't have the luxury of dedicating his time to just branding, however. "There's no 'first thing' to work on as I've jumped feet first into the deep end of the pool," he says. As people jostle for a sense of place in the FRHI reorg, he's been busy meeting senior management teams globally – when we speak, he's just attended a general managers' meeting in the Middle East and has others planned in Europe, America and Asia. "I'm explaining my background to them and what my principles are. At

Fairmont Hotels Raffles International

History and ownership

- Kingdom Holding Company (KHC) is a publicly listed investment company based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Its involvement in FRHI dates back to a 1994 investment in what was then Fairmont Hotels Management.
- Twelve years later, in January 2006, KHC chair Prince Alwaleed led a US$5.5bn (€4bn, £3.3bn) deal to privatise Fairmont and, at the same time, combine it with the Raffles and Swissôtel hotel brands which were owned by US equity firm Colony Capital. The newly formed company was Fairmont Raffles Hotels International (FRHI).
- Subsequently, in April 2010, FRHI sold a 40 per cent stake of its business to Voyager Partners – an affiliate of Qatar's sovereign wealth fund Qatari Investment Authority (QIA) – for a reported US$847m (€610m, £505m) to help fund expansion plans.
- Last May, Colony Capital reportedly sold its interest in FRHI to QIA. According to a recent article Canada's newspaper *The Globe and Mail*, QIA now has a controlling 63 per cent stake in FRHI, while KHC has a 35 per cent share.
- Other QIA investment companies range from Credit Suisse to Volkswagen and BlackBerry. It's one of the biggest buyers of hotels, but didn't have a management arm until the FRHI deal.
- Investments of KHC's Alwaleed amount to more than US$20bn (€14.4bn, £11.9bn) and include interests in varied businesses such as Apple, Citibank and News Corp.
- In 2007, Alwaleed bought a 95 per cent share in Four Seasons with Microsoft founder Bill Gates. Mövenpick is another upscale hotel brand owned by KHC. In total, KHC's hospitality platform is valued at US$13bn (€9.4bn, £7.7bn) and the portfolio is handled by Kingdom Hotel Investments.
- FRHI has around 47,000 employees and is projecting 50 per cent growth over the next five years. Most of the development will be international.

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Notable hotels in the FRHI portfolio

RAFFLES
- Raffles Dubai, UAE
- Raffles Singapore
- Le Royal Monceau, Raffles Paris

FAIRMONT
- The Plaza, New York, USA
- The Savoy, London, UK
- Fairmont Peace Hotel, Shanghai, China
- Fairmont Monte Carlo, France
- Fairmont Le Montreux Palace, Switzerland
- Fairmont Banff Springs, Canada

SWISSÔTEL
- Swissôtel The Bosphorus, Istanbul
- Swissôtel Krasnye Holmy Moscow, Russia
- Swissôtel Tallinn, Estonia

this stage I'm not presenting on future plans as I'm still working my way through those myself," he says.

With 52 hotels in the pipeline over the next three to five years, spa development is another obvious priority. Gibson's already been pulled onto 12 new projects to offer his advice on the design and layout of spas. "The FRHI openings and integration team has a very efficient system where people from every department, including design and construction, purchasing and myself, can read notes [about upcoming projects] and add comments. I'm a creative person so I love seeing things evolve, grow and take shape."

The work at FRHI isn't hugely different to his job at Mandarin Oriental where he split his time between guiding the development team, which was led by Sean O'Connor and overseeing operations, which was headed up by Andrea Lomas. At FRHI though, Gibson feels everything's "much more strategic and focused on motivating teams to perform".

Due to the large number of spas already open, he'll be taking the 80/20 approach by focusing primarily on the group's 12 flagship properties plus some other key accounts (see above). One of his favourite aspects of the job comes in at this macro level. "I'm driven by motivating people and it's amazing to visit a property and talk not only to the general manager and management team, but also to the spa therapists. I tell them what's happening in the industry, what the trends are and how it affects them all. Quite often, having someone from the senior team come to see the spa means a lot. Sometimes it's just a simple gesture, like explaining how valuable the team is, that can make the biggest difference to performance."

▲ Part of Gibson's new role is motivating the spa teams

Having someone from the senior team come to see the spa means and lot. Sometimes a simple gesture, like explaining how valuable the team is, can make the biggest difference

When time won't allow him to get so involved with facilities, he'll work with regional group operators and general managers in a supporting capacity. "I won't get involved with recruitment unless it's a spa director, for example," he says. "Or I'll step in when there's a problem. One hotel at the moment has some particular issues with setting KPIs so I'm helping them with that. Spa KPIs are a whole new thing for some general managers, but I've told them they're going to have to learn. It's not about me saying 'this is the action plan you need to implement', I'll just be providing them with the tools and pointing out areas that they need to focus on."

OUTSOURCING AND MERGERS

It's clear when talking to Gibson that in order to keep up with developments, he'll need to set up his own supporting team quickly because at the moment it's just him. He's looking for someone to handle facilities in America – which has 14 spas – and possibly someone else to help with training:

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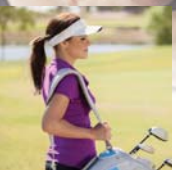

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Andrew Gibson Favourites

Book: Anything by Tom Stoppard. I've recently read *The Opium War* by Julia Lovell which was fascinating
Film: *Ronin*
Food: Japanese, Thai or Lebanese
Season: Summer in Sweden
Leisure activity: Running
Spa: Any spa where a therapist really connects with you and delivers a tailored treatment
Treatments: I love massage. Scrubs are OK too but I'm not keen on wraps
Best advice: Don't take things personally
Who you admire: Margaret Thatcher. Whether you agree or disagree with her policies, she was a strong leader
Quote: 'Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it' Dwight D Eisenhower

▲ The Peace Hotel is a notable Fairmont property and just one of many to open in China

"I'm not sure how I'm going to tackle that element yet," he admits. But the main post to fill will be a director of openings and operations based in Dubai. "They'll work closely with me and develop into a global director," says Gibson.

"As with most hotel groups, Asia – and predominantly China – is a big market for openings. But we're also seeing good growth in eastern Europe, excellent growth in the Middle East and potential in India and Africa. America is quiet but not dormant and activity is starting to pick up."

He hints that in the future, FRHI will be more likely to keep spas in-house rather than bringing in a third party operator. "I won't give a definitive answer," he says, "but what I will say is: why would you want to outsource a spa if you have the expertise in-house?"

If the international press is to be believed, there's also much bigger news in the pipeline that could have an impact on the future direction of the company.

Last November, Prince Alwaleed, the owner of FRHI investment company Kingdom Holding, announced in a *Bloomberg* report that he's looking for ways to monetise both FRHI and Four Seasons which – along with Microsoft founder Bill Gates – his company has a stake in (see p28). Analysts say that an FRHI/Four Seasons merger or an initial public offering are two possible scenarios.

Speculation aside, Gibson remains focused on the task ahead. One of the biggest challenges he foresees is convincing hoteliers about the benefits of spas.

"The competition for me isn't the hotel or day spa across the road, it's our own internal food and beverage, meeting or banquet departments that could be bringing in more revenue per 100sq m," he points out. "I try to explain that it's not just having a spa that adds value, it's having a spa that's well designed and well run. But it only adds value if you include it in your sales and marketing strategy and in the overall business plan of the hotel. So, it's my job to educate everyone about this – the owners, the general managers, the development team and the designers. The penny hasn't dropped yet, but when it does, it will have a big impact on hotel spas in the future."

Knowing Gibson, it's not a challenge he's likely to shy away from. For now, he's enjoying the buzz of a changing company and thinking out his strategies. "There's an absolute air of excitement and energy throughout the company – a desire to get the new structural changes in place and to really start making a difference. I was very happy at Mandarin Oriental, it's a brilliant company and I wish it the very best. But having been at FRHI for only a short while, I know I've made the right move." ●

Katie Barnes is the managing editor of *Spa Business* magazine
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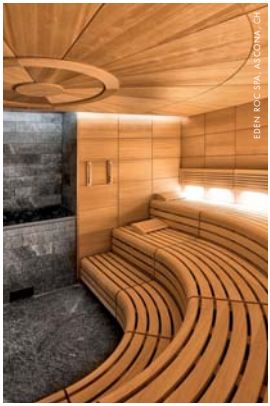
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MY SAUNA AND SPA

What's happening in the US could be an indication of what to expect in other countries

Everyone's talking about

The impact of franchising

Spa franchises are growing worldwide but have rapidly expanded in the US. We take a look how they're shaping the nation's market – from drawing in new customers to exacerbating staff shortages

Getting a massage used to be a luxury. But with a recent *USA Today* article citing that seven out of 10 Americans suffer physical symptoms of stress overload, it's clear there's a huge need and a vast market if the price is right.

"Massage therapy is important for healthy living, but needs to be much more affordable," says Allie T Mallad, founder of the Massage Green Spa franchise. "I believed that if I could lower the price point without lowering the quality, more people would incorporate it into their daily lives."

The first Massage Green Spa opened in 2008. Today there are 45 locations in six states, with more than 500 units under development. They offer a one-hour full-body massage at the introductory rate of US$29.95 and a no-strings-attached membership at US$39.95 a month.

Mallad and other franchisors have turned the complex spa model into a much simpler offer, concentrating on fewer elements and making it much more accessible in terms of location, price and image. Other brands include Hand and Stone, Woodhouse Day Spa, Massage Luxe and Massage and Facial Spa. But with 960 day spas operating in 49 states – and another 100 on the way – Massage Envy Spa is the sector leader by miles.

"When Massage Envy Spa launched [in 2002], we created a completely new category by designing an innovative pathway to professional, convenient and affordable spa services," says COO Joe Luongo, adding that the company provides around 1.5 million treatments a month and reached US$1bn in sales last year.

However, with these numbers come other demands. The Massage Envy Spa network alone employs an estimated 21,000 therapists and 3,000 aestheticians. With recruitment in spas becoming an increasing issue, particularly in management posts, should the expansion of franchises be cause for concern in finding adequate numbers of experienced personnel?

It's worth noting here that what's happening in the US – by far the biggest market for spa franchising globally so far – could be an indication of what to expect in other countries around the world. Some US massage chains are now considering international growth, while there are already spa franchise brands growing their portfolios in Brazil (Buddha Spa), Malaysia (Skin Essentials Spas), India (Four Fountains Spas), China (Dragonfly Therapeutic Retreats) and Australia (Endota).

In the US, the sheer scale of the franchises means the quality of provision reflects on the industry as a whole. Commentators of other businesses highlight problems when franchisees cut corners to make savings and when brand standards slip. Franchisors obviously want to maintain quality because, if done well, this complex and complicated business reaps great financial rewards. But just what are they doing to monitor and protect their brand values in order to retain the integrity of their business?

Catherine Larner is a leisure sector writer and editor
Email: catherine@catherinelarner.com
Twitter: @CatherineLarner

> I don't think there's any more risk of customers having a bad experience in these types of spas than in any other facility

Susie Hammer

VP operations, WTS International

Franchises shouldn't be seen as a threat to our industry when they're growing the market and encouraging the development of best practice through heightened competition.

Their lower price point attracts more consumers and these are people who see massage or skincare as a necessary part of their lifestyle rather than a luxury splurge. In other words, they will get a massage on a weekly basis and have a facial every month.

So as long as franchisees follow the brand's established standards and are inspected at regular intervals, I don't think there's any more risk of customers having a bad experience in these types of spas than in any other facility.

Staffing will become an issue as more spas open and need more qualified therapists and managers. Franchises tend to pull service providers straight out of school and not pay at the top of the wage scale. This means that operators will have to develop better training programmes. Advanced education is necessary to ensure a quality guest experience in both the franchise setting as well as a resort setting.

Smaller day spas and those who set up their own shop are threatened by the rapid growth of this sector. But for others, the response should be to focus on creating that 'wow' experience for guests, making them feel special and convincing them that they don't want to go to a franchise.

For nearly 40 years, WTS has worked with both large (more than 30,000sq ft) and small (3,000-8,000sq ft) spas, in hotels and resorts, golf courses, luxury residential properties and day spas throughout the US and abroad. We think that, in theory, franchises should lead service delivery consistency and raise standards across the whole of our industry.

Hammer has worked at WTS, a leading leisure consulting, design and management firm, since 1996. Details: www.wtsinternational.com

> One benefit of the franchise model is that the companies can serve as a staffing 'farm system' for more upmarket spas

Peggy Wynne Borgman

President, Wynne Business

The spa industry is entering its mature phase. Attendance is up and more people self-identify as spa-goers, but they're dispersed over a larger number – and greater variety – of facilities. Just like restaurants, it's now possible to experience a fast casual spa as well as a fine dining one and everything in between.

Franchises have led the charge into the middle market, pioneering a business model that's now commonplace: discounted membership.

Instead of using the typical industry terms such as 'luxury' and 'indulgence', franchises like Massage Envy offer 'pain relief' and 'healthy skin'. These terms are gender-neutral and the facilities are accessible and unpretentious. Franchises have enabled more consumers to make massage a part of their lives, a democratisation of a once exclusive industry.

The explosion of spa facilities, though, has exacerbated an already-severe shortage of qualified labour. Despite the fact that schools are pumping out new graduates at record rates, many of these individuals are ill-prepared to work in the industry. I hear over and over again that good employees are difficult to find and that most spa directors hire less-experienced workers in hopes of developing them.

The other crucial shortage – not helped by the growing number of franchises – is that of qualified spa directors: those who are able to interpret a profit and loss statement and run a business. It's not a well-known career option and both degree and certificate programmes for aspiring spa directors are in short supply.

Having said that, it's not all bad news. One benefit of the franchise model is that the companies can serve as a staffing 'farm system' for more upmarket spas. We frequently advise under-qualified candidates to spend a year in a franchise spa position, where they will get comfortable with the tempo of a busy schedule and develop some fundamental skills.

In fact, franchises themselves may hold the key to easing the talent shortage. As these companies mature and their need for talent becomes acute, they'll build educational programmes of their own, providing a valuable resource for the entire spa industry.

As well as heading up spa consultancy Wynne Business, Wynne Borgman is the founder of the Preston Wynne day spa in Saratoga, California. Details: www.wynnebusiness.com

> Millions of Americans are now experiencing massage and spa who might otherwise not have done so because of the lower price points offered by franchises

Allan Share

President, Day Spa Association (USA)

The franchise spa is a win for our industry with very little downside. Millions of Americans are now experiencing massage and spa who might otherwise not have done so because of the lower price points offered by these franchises. As the brands continue to grow, they're raising awareness of going to a facility for better health. The franchise model has allowed the public to sample, and to test, our industry.

A result of this rapid growth, as with any industry, is the risk that customers may have a bad experience which will reflect on the sector as a whole. But I'm a veteran of going to spas across the globe and I still have bad experiences. It's for each facility to monitor their staff, survey their clientele and make changes to ensure the outcome is a world-class experience every time.

When I entered the industry 23 years ago, the mantra was 'training, training, training'. I don't think that's changed. A facility that delivers the best treatments, backed up with strong operational management, will be successful and grow.

Yes these new businesses need staff, but this isn't a problem yet. Therapy schools in the US are busy putting many people out into the industry. The bigger problem is paying therapists enough to keep them in our sector. We need to provide great benefits and show them what wonderful opportunities there are for their own personal development in our business.

While some spa operators feel threatened by the rise of franchises – there can be a 'Chicken Little, the sky is falling' feeling, if you let it – many others embrace a new facility moving into their neighbourhood because it enables them to differentiate themselves.

We may lose some independent operators who've been in business for years and have been involved in their communities and local events. However, franchise organisations have the ability to bring a larger presence to the communities they operate in. All in all, it's a great trend and one that's here to stay!

Share has been president of the US Day Spa Association since 2010, having worked as a supplier to the industry for more than 23 years. Details: www.dayspaassociation.com

> There shouldn't be a concern about expanding through franchising because the massage therapy educational sector is stepping up to support this growth

Allie T Mallad

Founder, president and CEO, Massage Green Spa

Social media reviews provide consumers with a powerful forum to write both positive and negative comments. Positive reviews – whether for a franchise spa or independently owned spa – far outweigh the negative ones and are fuelling growth in the industry as a whole.

Based on my 30 years as both a franchisee and a franchisor, I'd say the biggest mistake we can make is choosing the wrong franchisees and employees to represent our company and our brand.

At Massage Green Spa all of our training programmes, policies and procedures ensure an exceptional client experience. This is based on driving customer loyalty and creating word of mouth referrals.

In addition, we seek to recruit people who have a strong talent for leading, exceptional customer service skills, a great attitude and a passion for our vision and our business. The five members of our human resources and development team and our 51 managers are always on the lookout for great talent and we have a model that ensures a constant stream of qualified candidates. We also look to partner with educational facilities in communities where we're located.

There shouldn't be a concern about the spa industry expanding through franchising because the massage therapy educational sector is stepping up to support this growth. More people are studying to become therapists because there's now a much larger need for them. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of massage therapists is projected to grow by 23 per cent from 2012 to 2022. Schools and therapists' programmes are responding in direct correlation to the spa industry's rapid growth.

Massage Green Spa is committed to supporting the ongoing training and education of our 1,000 massage therapists and strive to create career paths that provide them with opportunities to move up our management chain. We're also attractive to those therapists who would like to embrace the American Dream of owning their own business.

Mallad founded Massage Green Spa in 2008 and plans to expand to 1,000 spas within five years. Details: www.massagegreenspa.com

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UNMASKING MILLENNIALS

Vera Kiss of The Futures Company explains what businesses need to know to be relevant to the millennials generation

Much has been said about millennials, a 2.2 billion strong cohort which spans people who are in their late teens today to those in their early 30s. They've been described as an open, socially-conscious, optimistic and technologically-connected generation. What could not have been predicted is the profound effect of recent economic trends on their outlook and behaviours. In today's stagnant developed markets, many young people have had to recalibrate their horizons as the affluence of their parents and grandparents may no longer be in their reach. Meanwhile, in emerging markets many millennials now enjoy unprecedented incomes and opportunities for new experiences.

Despite these differences there are three key trends shaping the lives of millennials, which spa, wellness and fitness facilities can tap into to connect with them.

Firstly, millennials across the world are facing new types of pressures, whether from the bleak job market and sluggish career ladders of the developed world, or from the rapid urbanisation and social transformation of emerging markets. This places a premium on experiences that help them switch off and relax, even if it's a small treat or affordable luxury.

Secondly, millennials have come of age alongside growing concern about alarming obesity rates and the rise of healthcare costs. This means that health and wellness, and the personal responsibility for these, are much more at the forefront of their awareness. This opens up many opportunities to connect with them through holistic health and wellness propositions.

Finally, many millennials want to be collectors of experiences rather than simply accumulating possessions. They increasingly define themselves with what they do rather than what they have. Social networks give them ample chances to gain validation and status through sharing these experiences, whether it's a special journey or an exquisite meal. Material status markers may still remain important for many millennials, especially in the developing world, however, even in these markets a post-materialist mindset is on the rise. A generation that increasingly seeks validation through experiences presents a unique opportunity for operators who are able move their imagination.

Millennial tribes

Millennial lifestyles and perspectives are as diverse as those of any other generation. To unpack some of the nuances of

Millennials want to collect experiences rather than accumulate material possessions

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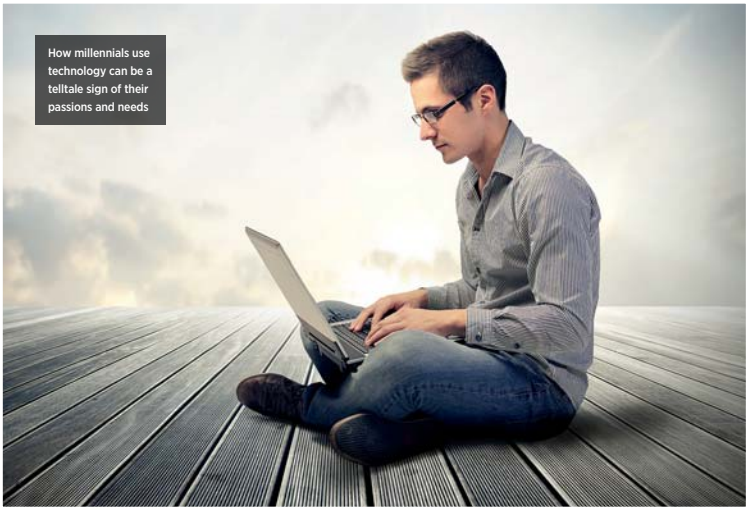

How millennials use technology can be a telltale sign of their passions and needs

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this group, understanding how to engage with their passions and needs, The Futures Company created a global segmentation based on two unifying millennial traits.

The first is the way they use technology in their lives. Technology is essential for the way millennials engage with the world. What sets them apart is whether they value its functional aspects or the creative connections digital technology allows.

The second dimension is the way they express their identity and the extent to which they prioritise meaning and experiences over material pursuits. Looking at millennials through these paradigms highlights four distinct tribes:

Striders

These individuals maintain their confidence and enthusiasm and are still riding the wave of materialism. They've been relatively unscathed by the recent economic downturn and are keen for success and all the material status markers that come along with it. Predictably, this segment is more likely to be found in fast-growing emerging markets, such as China and India.

Millennials have come of age alongside growing concerns about obesity and healthcare costs. Health and wellness, and personal responsibility of these, are at the forefront of their awareness

Steppers

Consumers in this group are cautious. The economic downturn affected them strongly, leaving them price-conscious and less optimistic about their future. They're taking things step-by-step, considering each purchase decision with care and trying to choose wisely. This tribe is much more likely to be found in recessionary markets, such as Spain and France, where many young people have seen their opportunities narrow in recent years.

Satellites

Millennials in this tribe are all about number one. They're tech-mad and always keen to have the latest gadgets and shiniest software. Their world-view is narrow and performance-focused. Green issues simply don't float their boat – they're flying solo and have few responsibilities. Our segmentation shows that the Satellite tribe is important in the UK and is also well represented in China.

In China, we can explain this with the high pressure on young people to perform and strive for prosperity. This also drives a more-single minded pursuit of technologies that both facilitate and express the achievement of these priorities.

In the UK, the story behind Satellites is different. UK millennials face tough economic times in a previously flourishing economy. With a squeeze on jobs and a rising cost of living just as they're coming of age, 'looking out for myself' becomes important to a greater number of people, as well as their need for getting things done faster and safer.

Spirits

Spirits are poster children of the millennial generation. They're open, connected and socially-conscious, directing their ▸

Gathering data

Details for this millennials segmentation are based on data from Global MONITOR, The Futures Company's annual global tracking survey. It drew insights from the responses of more than 8,500 16- to 31-year-olds in 20 countries.

The Striders millennials tribe will seek out luxury and premium experiences

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attention and purchasing power towards the things they're interested in. They move through different spheres comfortably and are more likely to seek out lifestyles that enable them to succeed in life while also exposing them to a variety of experiences and personal passions. This tribe is important in the Americas – in the US and Brazil in particular. It's also significant in Europe, where the recent rise in a tempered economic optimism is likely to help the Spirit mindset come to the forefront.

A generation that increasingly seeks validation through experiences presents a unique opportunity for operators who are able to move their imagination

How to connect

The four tribes have different needs and aspirations, highlighting that a 'one size fits all' approach will not be enough. There are opportunities to appeal to all four tribes and successful millennial brands have the ability to combine marketing modes that resonate with each segment in different ways.

Satellites get excited over technology and performance and will seek out services that do just that. In the fitness space, Nike has been very successful with reaching this group through its diverse performance tracking innovations from Nike+ to the Fuel Band. Operators can engage with this segment if they're able to spark enthusiasm over new and shiny technological solutions.

On the other hand, Striders will be looking for services and experiences that enable them to express their achievements and status. Premium and luxury propositions are most likely to resonate with them, as much as experiences with a show-off factor. Nike has also connected with this segment by designing iconic and must-have items, such as some trainers in its Air Max range, and by launching these through savvy social media strategies that pique the curiosity of this exclusivity- and appearance-conscious tribe.

Just because Steppers are financially constrained, it doesn't mean they're out of range. Nike has been able to connect with this group in the recession by marketing some if its ranges as more durable and giving longer guarantees to reassure value-conscious Stepper shoppers. They're unlikely to indulge in luxurious splurges but they will look for ways to disconnect from their daily pressures and anxieties and seek out much-needed boosts. Small beauty treatments such as an express manicure or day passes to spa facilities are some concrete treats they would be willing to give to themselves. Operators that show solidarity with this group, by guaranteeing value for money and access to much-appreciated small luxuries, will find a grateful audience among Steppers.

Spirits, the most connected and socially aware tribe, are the most likely to give a strong priority to seeking experiences and exploring the world around them. Operators have an opportunity to connect with them through novel and meaningful offers, including more holistic wellness treatments. They're also the most engaged with social and environmental issues, hence sustainability-driven propositions will resonate well with them, as also seen with Nike's numerous corporate social responsibility initiatives that build credibility among the Spirits tribe.

Mix and match

Each tribe has distinct characteristics that require different approaches to marketing and service design. Businesses that are able to mix and match their strengths to appeal to the millennial tribes will be more successful in connecting with the next generation of spa and health club audiences. ●

The Futures Company is an award-winning, global strategic insight and innovation consultancy with global expertise in foresight and futures. Its teams in Europe, North America, Latin America and Asia work to unlock new sources of growth for clients through consultancy, global insight and a range of subscription solutions. To discuss how to better connect with millennials, get in touch with The Futures Company by contacting: Tel: +44 20 7955 1800 Twitter: @FuturesCo Email: unlockingfutures@thefuturescompany.com www.thefuturescompany.com

Vera Kiss is an analyst at The Futures Company's London office Email: vera.kiss@thefuturescompany.com

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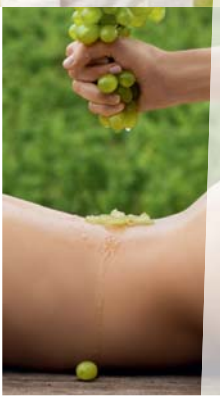

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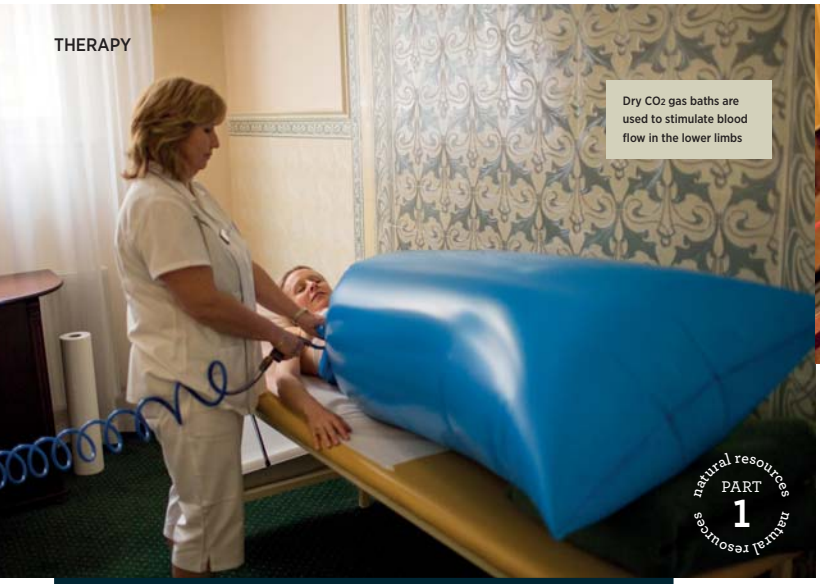

Dry CO_2 gas baths are used to stimulate blood flow in the lower limbs

natural resources PART 1 natural resources

AIR APPARENT

From gas injections to cryotherapy and smoke saunas – treatments based on natural resources underpin wellness tourism in central and eastern Europe. As interest in this region gathers pace, Sophie Benge begins a series looking at how different elements are used

Central and eastern Europe, from Estonia in the north to Ukraine in the south, is blessed with a rich well of natural resources. Mineral water, mud, salt, herbs, heat and gases have been an integral part of cultural tradition as much as they've been the mainstay of healthcare for more than three centuries.

At the same time, wellness tourism is gaining traction and Europe is leading the way. In March, the Global Wellness Tourism Congress (GWTC) announced that Europe ranks number one in the world for wellness tourism with its 203 million annual trips and number two for expenditures, accounting for US$158.4bn (€114.3, £95.2) annually. "Europeans are the most sophisticated, experienced wellness- and prevention-focused travellers on the planet," says GWTC chair and CEO Susie Ellis. "They not only take frequent trips in their own countries and across Europe, they're also pegged as the largest source market for international wellness travel."

It's a good time, therefore, to focus more specifically on the natural resource lexicon in this part of Europe, starting with, perhaps the most idiosyncratic – gases. Broadly, gas in this context refers to naturally-occurring carbon dioxide (CO_2) that's generally administered to ease pain and boost blood circulation. It can also refer to nitrogen gas, which is used in cryotherapy, or simply the movement of intensely hot air, which is at the heart of traditional sauna experiences.

It's important to remember that while some of these gas therapies may sound unusual, they came about only after meticulous study by scientists and chemists during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Carbon dioxide

Naturally-occurring carbon dioxide gas features prominently in the traditional spa treatments of the Czech Republic and Transylvania in Romania. In the spa town of Mariánské Lázně (formerly known as Marienbad) in the Czech Republic, gas of volcanic origin, containing 99.7 per cent CO_2, seeps out of the ground. It's prevalent in the local mineral spring water and is harnessed for use in a number of therapies that boost blood circulation for an anti-inflammatory effect.

CO_2 is also used in 'dry gas bath' treatments, where concentrated amounts of it are pumped into plastic bags around the body (see above) working directly on skin receptors to affect vasodilation. The improved blood flow accelerates wound healing and stimulates kidney activity. A very particular benefit is the stimulation

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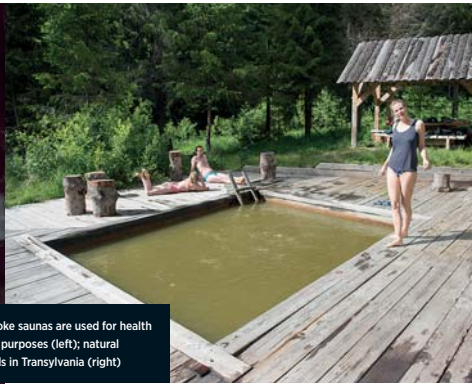
Heart patients are exposed to CO_2 in the mofetta in Transylvania (right); a flame goes out if there's not enough oxygen (left)



Estonian smoke saunas are used for health and spiritual purposes (left); natural mofetta pools in Transylvania (right)

in the production of sex hormones: testosterone and oestradiol, a type of oestrogen produced in the ovaries. Thus it's successfully used to reverse gynaecological problems and sexual dysfunction and to relieve menopause symptoms.

CO_2 is also prescribed to be delivered by hypodermic injection into the muscles of the back (see p46). The principle effect is pain reduction, because when CO_2 is received through the skin, it causes the blood vessels to relax and allows blood to flow more quickly around the body.

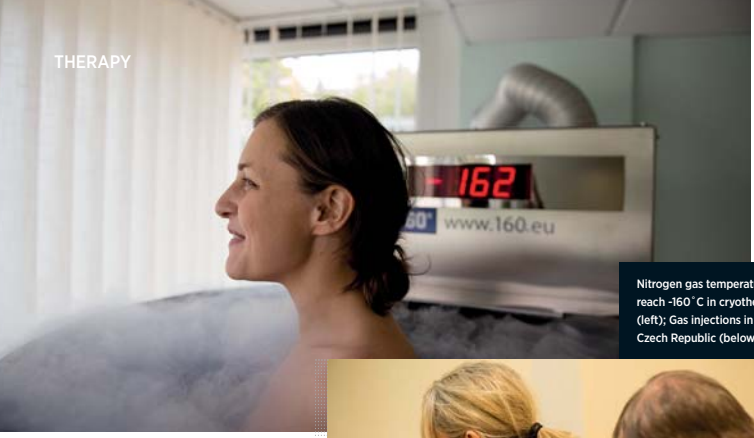
In Transylvania, CO_2 is administered in another form to treat patients with hypertension and related heart disorders. At the Dr Benedek Ge'za Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Hospital in Covasna, the state pays for the treatment of 14,000 people a year. Here patients stand, fully clothed and en masse in a wooden amphitheatre in which air with a 96 per cent concentration of CO_2 escapes from the underlying fissures in the rock. This sort of exposure also causes the blood vessels to relax and encourages a greater flow of oxygen around the body, as well as increasing blood flow to the heart.

Carbon dioxide is denser than air, which means it doesn't rise above a certain height. However, to be sure, conditions in the pit are still carefully monitored – with a lit flame that goes out if there's not enough oxygen – to ensure that CO_2 is not the main gas that's inhaled.

These particular treatments in Transylvania are officially known as mofetta. The sessions are restricted to 20 minutes, after which mild breathlessness sets in. For heart healthy patients in the region, mofetta is colloquially known as natural viagra because of how CO_2 ▸

Extreme hot and cold temperatures are used to improve circulation in smoke saunas

spa business uniting the world of wellness



Nitrogen gas temperatures can reach -160˚C in cryotherapy (left); Gas injections in the Czech Republic (below)

stimulates the sex hormones. Increased blood flow is also felt most strongly in the pelvic region where there are a large number of smaller blood vessels.

Mofetta is also a term used to describe the many natural pools, bubbling with carbon dioxide, that are free for use in the Transylvanian countryside. Families and friends spend summer days picnicking around them and swimming in them.

Cryotherapy

Cryotherapy is the medical use of nitrogen gas at very low temperatures – selected because it has the ability to reach -160˚C.

There are several types of cryotherapy. Whole body cryotherapy is known for treating a range of ailments – professional tennis players have cryotherapy on-site at grand slams to help muscle function, for example, while in central and eastern Europe, it's used for general health purposes.

The other method of using cryotherapy is to treat benign and malignant tumours.

Whole body cryotherapy involves standing in a chamber filled with nitrogen gas for up to three minutes. Cooling the body to such an extreme for short periods of time subsequently boosts blood circulation, which speeds up metabolic processes. This, in turn, helps with the elimination of toxins.

As a reaction to the cold, the body also starts to produce more endorphins and corticosteroids which have an analgesic and regenerative effect, easing pain and inflammation and boosting both the immune system and mood. As a result, whole body cryotherapy has beneficial effects on many conditions: rheumatic, neurological, inflammatory, metabolic and degenerative.

FIRST PERSON EXPERIENCE: **SOPHIE BENGE**

After many years in the spa arena my 'gas experiences' have certainly been the most unusual.

In the Czech spa down of Mariánské Lázně, naturally-occurring carbon dioxide is captured for therapeutic use.

At the luxury Hotel Nové Lázně, I was treated for stiff upper back pain with two injections, each pumping 20ml of CO_2 into the muscle tissue beneath the shoulder blades. The syringe was connected to a machine that monitored gas levels and pressure. It looked more scary than it felt and the immediate warming sensation that melted the tension in my upper back easily outweighed the initial prick. My back instantly felt more mobile.

Gas injections are confined to the back area and can be administered daily over a seven-day stay to treat degenerative joint and spine disorders.

My second gas experience at the hotel was the 'dry gas bath'. Lying on a table in my underwear I wriggled into a thick blue plastic sack which was tightly bound to my chest and pumped full of carbon dioxide. Slowly I felt a warm tingling sensation in my pelvis, as blood flowed more freely in that area of the body.

This treatment is used to treat disorders caused by insufficient blood flow to the lower limbs, including gynaecological, urinary and sexual disfunction. It should be given every day for two weeks for optimum effect, but even in my one-off 15-minute session, I felt relaxed in my head and tingly in my pelvis.

Gas therapies are always prescribed by doctors. In my case, Dr Pavel Knarra has been a specialist in kidney, respiratory, gastro-intestinal and metabolic disorders for 36 years. This gives you some idea of the levels of experience to be found in this field throughout the region. Such profound expertise is a prime reason for having the treatments and I certainly felt I was in very capable hands.

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In Latvian pirts, intense heat is circulated around the body using fans made from tree branches

Smoke saunas and pirts

As well as playing a central role in living well, natural resources in central and eastern Europe are a primary motivation for social recreation. This is particularly the case with the smoke sauna culture in Estonia and the pirts in Lativa – two national variations of the Russian sauna or banya (see p50).

Both the smoke sauna and pirts are best described as a marriage between health and spirituality. They involve a three-hour procedure in intense heat, which is puffed around the body with veniks (a generic Russian term for natural fans made from tree branches), cold water plunging and intervals of relaxation with friends and family. These rituals ease physical tensions and clean the skin but it's believed that they also nourish the soul – think of them as a full-service mind-body-spirit treatment.

Pirts customs focus on top-to-toe tapping with birch branches (or linden or oak) to stimulate the lymphatic system and accelerate the excretion of toxins. This ritualistic fanning, flicking and steady thwack of birch on skin is also designed to clear the aura and release bad omens.

In Estonia, standalone smoke saunas are regarded as a hallowed place for prayer. The facilities became a secret place of worship in a Soviet era that curbed religious practice.

Contrary to suggestion, the smoke element is precisely what makes the air in the smoke sauna so clean. The buildings are built without chimneys and seven hours of stoking an open fire with pine or elder wood kills all bacteria. The smoke is then released through a briefly opened door and the sauna is ready for use.

A focus on the natural resources of central and eastern Europe forms part of an upcoming book, *Healing Sources, Spas and Wellbeing from the Baltic to the Black Sea*, which is due to be published in September by Prestel. Details: www.thehealingsources.com

For a first-person account of a traditional Russian banya experience, turn to page 50

Climate therapy

Climate therapy – the formal use of fresh air for therapeutic purposes – is a bona fide wellness modality in this region. The topography from the Baltic to the Black Sea – particularly on the coasts – provides a mild climate, scientifically acknowledged to be ideal for human health in terms of improving metabolism, appetite, sleep and general frame of mind.

The theory of climate therapy is that air which has the optimal levels of atmospheric pressure, temperature and humidity, wind strength and sun intensity, has a positive influence on the health of all living organisms.

These elements are studied at the Institute of Climate Therapy and Pulmonology, in Yalta, Crimea. The particular geography of sea, pine forest and mountain has brought wellness tourists to this coast for centuries, including many of Russia's elite, such as playwright Anton Chekhov and composer Sergei Rachmaninoff, for doctor-led treatment protocols which are based on walking in the outdoors.

Wellness facilities

- Danubius Hotels, Marienbad www.marienbad.cz
- Dr Benedek Ge'za Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Hospital, Transylvania www.cardiologie-covasna.ro
- Lauvaskalni, a traditional wellness guesthouse, in Latvia www.lauvaskalni.lv
- Mooska Farm, a smoke sauna facility in Estonia www.mooska.eu/en
- Inbalans, a banya consultancy www.inbalansgroup.com

Health and custom

By looking at just one very narrow field of natural resource – namely gases and air – we get some understanding of the importance of nature for both health and local custom in this part of the world. As the relief of physical pain and the stimulation of emotional wellbeing are two very real objectives for tourists and health visitors, it's likely that wellness tourism in the region will only continue to grow. ●

Sophie Benge is the writer of *Healing Sources*
Email: sophie@sophiebenge.com
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CHRISTINA
It just works

Aleksey's been a banya specialist for eight years and came second in the 2013 Russian Banya Champaionships

BRAVING THE BANYA

Jak Phillips finds out that 'no pain, no gain' is par for the course in a traditional Russian sauna experience

As I lie on a bed of pine leaves, sweating profusely in an 80°C sauna while a burly Russian smacks my bare buttocks with a scolding bundle of twigs, I begin to understand that a banya experience is a little more extreme than your typical spa session.

I'm at Fox Lodge, a 2,000sq m (21,527sq ft) lakeside spa 45km north of Moscow, where wealthy Russians – there's a helipad on-site for anyone with an aversion to traffic – venture for a relaxing weekend away from the city. Treatments range from the standard massage/facial set-up through to a mineral-based salt cave where vaporised salt, with antibacterial properties, is used to tackle infections. The main emphasis is on results over relaxation, a common trait in Russian spas.

BRANCHING OUT

After a brief tour, I'm introduced to banya specialist Aleksey – the man who's about to guide me through the most painful two hours of my life. We begin with tea and I'm given the choice of rosemary, lemon balm or sage. Opting for the rosemary scent, I'm told this indicates I'm lacking energy and that Aleksey – who's now changing into his special homemade apron and felt hat to guard against the impending heat – will tailor my session accordingly.

A banya is an age-old Russian spa tradition. The basic premise is to encourage healing and circulatory wellness by alternating between hot and cold temperature. The steam, which is generated from eucalyptus-infused water poured over scorching stones, heats the sauna to between 60-90°C, with its menthol vapour soothing the lungs and respiratory system.

The small sauna is built from cedar and pine – revered in Russian culture for their healing virtues. I'm instructed, through grunting and gesturing, to lie face-down on a bench.

Once prone, pine branches soaked in iced water are placed beneath and on top of my head, while Aleksey scuttles off to fetch his fenik – the bundle of birch twigs he will use to spank me with. I'd like to say it's a painless, pleasant experience, but I'd be lying.

The fenik is intermittently dipped in piping hot water, before the searing droplets are shaken over my pink skin. The branches are then brushed against my body, lightly at first, but soon noticeably harder, until I can feel the breath rush out of my lungs with each thwack.

I learn later on that birch is a symbol of beauty in Russian folklore, "so to become beautiful, you have to be beaten with it". Interesting logic.

Banya truly is a case of no pain, no gain. Every inch of my body – front, back and sides – is given a good going over in a bid to stimulate my lymphatic system and excrete the industrial strength vodka

Freezing cold water is a stark contrast to the 80˚C sauna (top left); Fox Lodge (top right); the annual Russian banya competition judges practitioners on client care and technique (below)

Fox Lodge
Tel: + 7 495 995 13 83
Web: eng.foxlodge.ru

Thalion
Tel: +7 495 792 58 95
Web: www.thalion.com

To find out more about other traditional spa experiences in Europe, see page 44

and other toxins coursing my veins. The branches do part of the work, but they're ably assisted by the leaves, which fan the extreme heat of the sauna around my body, intensifying the effect.

EXPERT TRAINING

To the casual outsider, it would look like one barely-clothed man is simply whacking another totally-unclothed man with a stick, but this is unfair to Aleksey.

To become a banya specialist, which he has been for eight years, one must attend a special banya steam school – ideally in Moscow or Siberia – for roughly six months. Prior to this, the apprentice must have undergone at least two to three years of medical training (to the level required to become a nurse). Aleksey tells me later that the thorough training is vital because in the intense heat of the sauna, it's crucial to monitor the body's responses, blood pressure and breathing patterns to ensure the conditions are safe.

He hones his skills by regularly competing against fellow banya specialists and recently came second at the annual Russian Banya Championships. The event, which is held each year in the small town of Sudzal, judges practitioners on client care, attentiveness and therapy technique – including how they use the branches on the body and to circulate the air.

FREEZING PLUNGE

Back to the boiling banya, and as a small river of sweat makes its way from my body, Aleksey decides its time for a break.

Given the intense heat, breaks are essential and come in a variety of forms. Sometimes he'll throw a bucket of chilled water over me and we'll quite literally crack on, while for others I'm led to the sanctity of the relaxation lounge overlooking the gleaming frozen lake.

On this occasion, my legs are coated in a soothing Thalion vein-toning cream to offset any adverse reactions to the heat. Other times, I'm treated to a vitamin cocktail or coated in a honey and sand body scrub. In Russia, honey is used as a healing agent and also serves as a natural moisturiser, while its antibacterial qualities help protect my skin from the toxins in my sweat.

Finally, when I can take no more of the banya and birch-bashing, I'm led outside to a plunge pool next to the lake. I'm dunked repeatedly in the freezing cold water until my lungs near implosion.

PARTING GIFT

After a warm shower and incongruously tender head massage from Aleksey, I sit rejuvenated in the lounge and realise that just because a spa treatment doesn't come with candles and an Enya backing track, that doesn't make it any less beneficial. While the west favours relaxation and a more gentle approach, Russia favours results and, like a maverick TV cop, it isn't afraid to get a little rough in the process.

As a parting gift, Aleksey meets me clutching an iPhone and bashes a message into Google Translate: "Without experiencing extremities, we can never truly appreciate the extent of our capabilities." ●

Jak Phillips is the head of news at Leisure Media
Email: jakphillips@leisuremedia.com
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GREEN HOUSE

When the owners of the Dormy House Hotel in the Cotwolds, deep in the English countryside, decided to try to turn it into one of the top leisure hotels in the country, they knew the addition of a spa was a must.

Dormy House was bought in 1977 by the late Danish entrepreneur Jørgen Philip-Sørensen. It's part of a group of companies that includes green cleaning products brand Ecover, which are all controlled by the Philip-Sørensen family today. Dormy House was already a popular hotel, but was in need of an update, according to Andrew Grahame, CEO of Dormy's umbrella company Farncombe Estates.

"It was a very trusted hotel in the area and people adored it," he says, "but, it wasn't ready for the demands of people travelling now, particularly leisure guests."

The family behind Ecover cleaning products has spent £10.5m refurbishing a country house hotel in the heart of England. Magali Robathan finds out how it all came together

Grahame, who was previously managing director of Goodwood Estate, UK – which includes a hotel, golf club and country house attraction – was brought in to oversee a £10.5m (US$17.6m, €12.7m) refurbishment project. Of that budget, £5m (US$8.4m, €6m) was spent on updating the 17th century farmhouse, and a further £5.5m (US$9.2m, €6.6m) spent on creating a new spa to transform it from a four- to a five-star hotel. The House Spa, which was the final part of the redevelopment project, was unveiled in February.

GREEN INFLUENCE

When planning the redesign, environmental credentials were always going to be important. "Sustainability is utterly key to the Philip-Sørensen family," says Grahame. "They own Ecover and it's written into their product statement. It's personally

More than half of the entire hotel budget was spent on creating a standout spa

The warm yet contemporary interiors of the House Spa reflect the welcoming feel of the country hotel and its Scandinavian owners

important to me too and always has been. I'm conscious of the world I leave behind for my daughter and her own family."

The 40-bedroom hotel has already reached silver status in the Green Tourism accreditation scheme. It was judged on a range of criteria, including management and marketing, social involvement and communication, energy, water, purchasing, waste, travel and innovation.

All of the bedroom wings are carbon neutral, rainwater harvesting is used, a new system minimises energy use in the buildings and there's a woodland management scheme in place across the estate.

In the spa, the pools have eco LED lights, while electronically-controlled water systems ensure they don't use more water than necessary. The filtration systems, which use eco glass, also minimise waste water through backwashing, while UV pool cleaning systems help to cut down on the use of chemicals. The thermal suite has extracts that transfer the heat it generates back into an air handling unit to recover it, with other heat recovery ventilation systems used throughout the spa. Additional green measures include planting a tree for every new order of paper cups.

CEO Andrew Grahame has a passion for sustainability

PERSONAL DESIGN

The House Spa is a calming, welcoming space featuring six treatment rooms, including a double treatment suite and rasul mud room. At the centre is the Greenhouse spa lounge, which looks out onto a terrace and the Cotwolds views beyond. Downstairs is a 16m infinity pool and a thermal suite, supplied by Edge Leisure and Helo, which features a salt infusion steamroom, lavender sauna, juniper Finnish sauna, drench showers and ice chute. There's also a terrace and garden hydropool, plus a personal training studio and a separate cardio gym, as well as a champagne nail bar partnered by Veuve Clicquot. Six of the hotel's bedrooms are positioned directly above the spa, giving direct access to the facilities.

London-based spa designers and architects Sparcstudio were responsible for the interiors and, according to director Beverly Bayes, there were several influencing factors. "We wanted to create a spa that reflected the personality of the hotel, which is very warm and welcoming," she says.

The location and history of the building were also important and have been showcased using natural elements from the surrounding area, including Cotswold stone and local lavender. These contrast with a light, contemporary design, with subtle Danish elements introduced to reflect the origins of the hotel's owners.

Another big driver was the guest journey, says Bayes: "We wanted to create a journey with lots of wow factors along the way. We hate corridors, so where we have to have them, we always like to punctuate them – with the Veuve Clicquot nail bar and with little glimpses into areas you might like to explore.

Sparcstudio say the pool is one of the best it's designed – the shimmering glass wall and candlelight give it a theatrical yet elegant feel

ECOVER
POWERED BY NATURE

Dormy House is overseen by the Philip-Sørensen family, which also controls green cleaning product brand Ecover

Spa manager Zoe Douglas feels the spa is tempting customers from London who want something new

"It's important for us to design the layout so it doesn't have a disappointing dead end. The final part of the guests' journey ends in the pool area, which is a really lovely space," says Bayes, who's particularly proud of this area. "The pool area is probably one of the best we've ever designed, even though it's a small space. It has a real sense of theatre, with the shimmering glass wall at one end, the candlelight and the elegant, raised infinity-edge pool."

EMPOWERED THERAPISTS

The treatments at House Spa include massages, facials, muds, scrubs and infusions by natural skincare company Temple Spa. "Because the Cotswolds are very English, the owners wanted to go with an English brand," says spa manager Zoe Douglas. "Also, we wanted something that wasn't too well known and was a bit different. Temple Spa is a fun brand, with quirky names for the treatments and products."

The signature treatment is the £195 (US$142, €118) 150-minute Silent Night Lavender Sleep Treatment, which involves a foot ritual with lavender infusion, a body scrub, a head massage and an hour-long back massage. At the end, guests are given a gift of Drift Away massage oil and a lavender sleep pillow to aid a good night's sleep. Cotswold Lavender – a grower and distiller business – is just a mile away and the locally-grown plants are used in other treatments as well as in the steamroom.

The spa has six therapists who were given two weeks of training by Temple Spa. On top of that, they received 10 days of intensive massage treatment training from therapist Beata Aleksandrowicz of London-based Pure Massage to ensure consistent high quality.

Spa consultants Neil Howard and Beverley Caseley-Hayford of Howard Spa Consulting developed the operational side of the offer alongside Sparcstudio. Their role included input on the layouts and facilities, feasibility studies and overseeing the training. Howard also introduced the concept of the thermal suite (which Sparcstudio designed) and brought in Aleksandrowicz. "We wanted all the therapists to have the same techniques and [to deliver] the same amazing results," he says. "They can't stop talking about their training; they feel empowered by it and they really get it. It's an advanced massage technique which allows the therapist to read the body and focuses on breathing, body weight and concentration to offer a deeper immediate relief and relaxation response where needed."

Another idea of Howard's was to introduce a spa membership (capped at 200) and give every member 50 personal training sessions a year as part of the deal.

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We're control freaks when it comes to the detailing of spas... they're really tricky environments to maintain if you don't detail properly

"What we're saying is, when you join this club, we'll guarantee you one on one attention. All you have to do is book the trainer and you'll get your own area," he says, explaining that a fitness studio is reserved for personal training sessions, while the gym can be used by hotel guests. "People normally leave gyms because they're not being motivated; this way we're committing to a personalised service and hopefully giving people a reason not to leave."

Therapists have been given extra massage training so they can tailor treatments

MAINTAINING QUALITY

From a business point of view, there were a number of reasons for introducing a spa says Douglas. One of the main aims was to strengthen the hotel's position as a leisure destination, another was to help with midweek business. Bringing in new guests was also on the agenda.

"It was a leisure hotel anyway and [the owners] wanted to improve on that," says Douglas. "We're already seeing a new clientele – people are coming for the spa and staying on in the hotel." According to her, the facility is attracting a very spa savvy clientele. "We're seeing a lot of London-based people who are very into spas and who really want to experience a new one," she says. It's still early days, but she estimates that so far members make up around 30 per cent of customers at the spa, with hotel guests making up the rest.

In the coming year, the focuses for House Spa will be on growing the membership and maintaining the quality of the environment. "I'm a perfectionist and I want to ensure that this place looks the same as it does now in a year's time," says Douglas. "If things stay as busy as they are at the moment, we'll probably hire more therapists and we'd like to focus on the nail bar and get it really busy and buzzy."

Most of all, she wants to ensure that the spa retains its welcoming feel. "The idea of this spa is that it's like a home away from home. As soon as you walk into the place, everyone should be warm and friendly. It's almost like having a big hug." ●

Magali Robathan is the managing editor of *Leisure Management*, a sister publication to *Spa Business*
Email: magali@leisuremedia.com
Phone: +44 177 9723101

SPARCSTUDIO

Interior design and architectural practice Sparcstudio was established in 2009 by directors Beverley Bayes, Neil Fairplay and Tom Howell. The designers focus on creating four and five star spas, plus wellness and hotel facilities, with UK clients including Calcot Manor Spa, So SPA at Sofitel London St James, Pennyhill Park Spa and Center Parcs Woburn (exclusive spa accommodation and Aqua Sana spa).

"It's not just about aesthetics, although of course we always look to create something beautiful and unique; it's all about ensuring it actually works in practice," says Bayes. "We are control freaks when it comes to the detailing of spas. We've all seen spas that look fantastic in the brochures, but you go to visit just a few months afterwards and they already look tatty – the damp is creeping in, the water isn't draining away properly. Spas are really tricky environments to maintain if you don't detail properly. Paying really close attention to detail is what we're about and is essential to delivering a great spa experience for guests."

Corridors have been designed to give glimpses of areas to explore

Bayes, Fairplay and Howell formed the specialist spa and wellness team at Corporate Edge before being acquired by the Irish design studio Douglas Wallace. They launched Sparcstudio after the company went into receivership. "We should have done it sooner," says Bayes. "It was the best thing that ever happened to us."

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FOCUS ON

GUT RESTORATION

With more scientific research revealing how our digestion can have a powerful effect on anything from immunity to mood, is now the right time for spas to be offering guests specialised digestion programmes?

THE THEORY

While a gastroenterologist treats a range of acute complaints related to the digestive tract, such as peptic ulcer disease and colitis, there's a growing number of experts who believe that the gut holds the key to wider health benefits. There's no official term to describe this therapy – it's known by various monikers including gut restoration or digestive rejuvenation. The theory is that establishing a healthy and functioning digestive tract will lead to the improvement of other ailments, even mental health issues like depression.

Nutritional therapist Stephanie Moore, of Grayshott Spa in the UK, says: "A healthy digestive system is the route to overall health. The immune system, the manufacture of nutrients, the absorption of nutrients, the protection from toxins – all depend on a healthy GI [gastrointestinal] tract. Good digestion is the starting point for many if not all health issues."

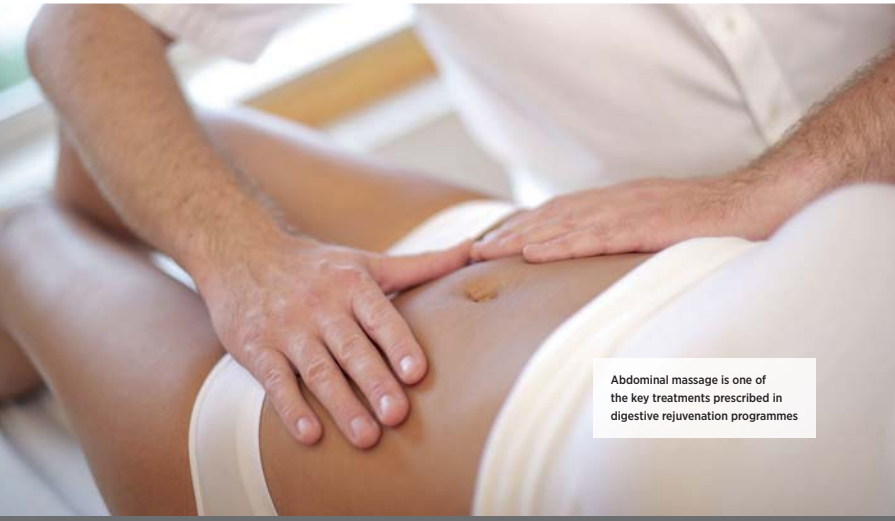
Dr Domenig oversees gut health at Mayr & More which follows the FX Mayr cure that was devised in 1901

Dr Stephan Domenig, the medical director of Austria's newly refurbished Mayr & More clinic, says: "We all eat too much, too fast, too late at night and gradually wear down our digestive systems, leading to a backlog of undigested food and toxins.

"Once your digestive system is cleansed, rested and you begin to eat the right things properly – that means chewing each mouthful at least 30 times – you can absorb nutrients and the liver can do its job, kick-starting better overall health."

THE BACKGROUND

Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician who's considered the forefather of modern medicine, is recorded as saying: "disease begins in the gut". In more recent centuries, two pioneers leading research



Abdominal massage is one of the key treatments prescribed in digestive rejuvenation programmes

Austria's Mayr & More clinic is famous for its gut restoration therapy. It reopened in April after a complete overhaul

into the complex nature of our digestion and its links with body and mind were the American doctor Byron Robinson, who wrote *The Abdominal and Pelvic Brain* in 1907 and British medic Johannis Langley, who invented the term the enteric nervous system (ENS) around the same period.

The ENS, otherwise known as 'the second brain', is so called because our gut contains around half a billion nerve endings, which is more than in the spinal cord. It also manufactures around 50 per cent of the feel-good hormones serotonin and dopamine in our bodies.

The ENS is 9m long and runs from the oesophagus to the anal canal, not only controlling digestion but exerting a powerful effect on hunger and appetite hormones like ghrelin and CCK, as well as our immunity and mood.

HOW IT WORKS

As there's no official definition for gut therapy, treatment protocols are open to interpretation. The FX Mayr cure, devised in 1901 by Dr Franz Xaver Mayr is a renowned protocol in Austria focusing on digestion (see SB07/3 p92). Guests follow a restricted calorie, low starch regime (in some cases, drinking only tea or water), chew each food morsel dozens of times, take Epsom salts as a bowel cleanse and receive regular abdominal massages and a range of other prescribed therapies.

> The more light scientists shed on how essential gut health is to overall mental and physical wellbeing, the more the public start to take notice

Launched more recently, the gut restoration regime at Grayshott Spa in south England, also offers a restricted calorie protocol (no sugar, grains or dairy) with two semi-fast days per week. The regime is based on the 5:2 intermittent fasting rule where you consume 500 calories on two days a week and eat what you want for the other five (although Grayshott still likes to keep calories in check). Guests also take probiotics and cultured foods and have abdominal massages and other treatments to further aid their digestive systems.

TRAINING

In Austria, the Mayr cure can only be delivered by doctors who've trained for at least three postgraduate years in the FX Mayr technique.

The regime at Grayshott has been devised and is delivered by a team of qualified resident nutritional therapists.

However, just as there's no official definition for gut therapy, there's no, one designated training programme for practitioners and facilities wishing to offer this type of treatment.

WHY OFFER IT?

The more light scientists are shedding on how essential gut health is to overall physical and mental wellbeing, the more the general public is starting to take notice. Recent documentaries such as the BBC's *Guts: The Strange and Mysterious World of the Human Stomach in the UK*, presented by qualified doctor and author of *The Fast Diet*, Michael Mosley, have served to popularise this knowledge in the public domain.

If the theory is sound, and improving digestion can help clear up other ailments, then such a programme could potentially attract a wide range of clients. ▸

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The gut health package at Grayshott Spa starts at £1,500 a week

The operator's view

The Grayshott Health regime launched in January 2013 in response to a growing demand from visitors to experience more than just pampering. They wanted take-home health benefits.

The seven-day programme is offered every week of the year and typically has eight to 16 participants at a time – some come from as far afield as Kuwait and the US. A basic package starts at £1,500 (US$2,500, €1,800) per week.

Jackie Phelan, Grayshott Spa's marketing director, says: "We often get compared to the Mayr clinic but only because so few places look at digestion. Our programme is unique to us."

The health protocol was devised by the spa's director of natural therapies, Elaine Williams and resident clinical nutritionist Stephanie Moore. "We have all kinds of people on the regime from type 2 diabetics to those who want to lose weight and many others who have digestive issues like IBS, diverticulitis, inflammatory bowel disease, acid reflux and bloating," says Moore. "It's also really great for people who are highly stressed, as digestion often suffers when stressed.

"I call everyone from the regime two weeks after their stay and I get such really encouraging feedback including statements like 'it changed my life' and 'it's the best money I've ever spent'.

"We teach people how to eat well for life and how to support their bodies rather than exhaust them. This was never designed as a weight loss programme but 95 per cent of people lose impressive amounts of weight too – typically 5-6 pounds in a week."

Stephanie Moore

> "If participants truly act on all the advice they absorb over seven days, I believe it can be a life-changing regime"

Grayshott Health Regime

First person experience:

Julie Cramer

We were a mixed bunch gathered at Grayshott Spa to experience the gut health regime – 16 of us, ages ranging from 30s to 80s, all female apart from one man with his wife. One lady, a type 2 diabetic, was trying to avoid more medication, while another wanted to take some care of herself after nursing her elderly mother. Two ladies were returnees, delighted with the results they'd experienced on the regime last year.

Food, and the removal of certain food groups, is a major part of the programme. So complex carbohydrates such as grains, dairy and starchy vegetables are out, as they require a lot of digestive energy. As is sugar, which we're told feeds undesirable pathogens in the gut and must be avoided.

We were all surprised to find that the food – served in a sunny conservatory – was mouth-wateringly delicious. Each meal started with some digestive aperitifs of sauerkraut and herbal bitters to get the stomach juices flowing, while lunch ended with the taking of probiotics to improve gut flora. In between, who could complain about piquillo pepper and spinach omelette for breakfast, carrot and coconut soup with Thai spiced chicken breast and salad for lunch, and Barbary duck with salsify and hazelnut crumble for dinner?

Portions were small and controlled, so in the first few days I felt the edge of hunger before each meal, but at least this made the semi-fasting days less of a shock. On Mondays and Fridays, breakfast is skipped, the group have lunch together and a bowl of broth is served in rooms in the evening.

The regime also includes a personal health consultation with blood and body composition analyses, a nutritional therapy session, therapeutic abdominal massage, a hydrotherapy bath and castor oil compresses to aid detoxification. However, the stand-out element for me was the very comprehensive range of daily talks delivered by resident nutritionists and visiting lecturers, who were always available after the sessions and during lunch to answer further questions.

They covered topics like stress management, which fats and carbohydrates to eat and which to avoid, and the healing nature of deep breathing. None of the talks were dumbed down, but instead delivered the latest scientific thinking on diet and health combined with loads of practical tips to try out at home. If participants truly act on all the advice they absorb over seven days, I believe it can be a life-altering regime.

I personally arrived home feeling very rested, armed with fresh knowledge and new healthy eating resolutions, my skin was glowing and I'd dropped three pounds. ●

Julie Cramer is a health, hospitality and travel journalist
Email: juliecramer@me.com

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Using the powerful effects of oxygen combined with advanced skin serums, Intraceuticals has built a global brand favoured by A-list celebrities and leading make-up artists. Company founder Anthony McMahon talks about the growth of the company and why his products are a perfect fit for spas

What's the background to the creation of Intraceuticals?

The company was formed in 2002 after I had the idea to create a professional skincare range using the powerful effects of oxygen. Oxygen bar concepts were around at that time, and some spa and beauty operators were using oxygen for facials, but in my opinion these topical treatments were just fluff and not at all effective.

I did my own research into oxygen, working with a consulting chemist on formulations that also incorporated hyaluronic acid. We developed a serum that could be applied under hyperbaric oxygen pressure to deliver effective ingredients and hydration to the skin. It gave instantly visible results and yet was still a pampering treatment with long lasting effects.

Intraceuticals launched in Australia in 2002 and was unlike anything available on the market.

How did you grow the business?

Two years after launch, I opened an office in the US and walked the streets to promote the brand. I met some people with contacts in the entertainment industry and they introduced our products to Madonna. Having a superstar suddenly using and liking our products was a fantastic advantage and since then the roll call of A-list celebrities, models and make-up artists supporting Intraceuticals with their testimonials has grown massively.

What's so special about your use of oxygen and hyaluronic acid?

Oxygen has many healing properties and is anti-bacterial. It's a very sterile ingredient and offers the perfect delivery system for skin serums.

Anthony McMahon

"Oxygen has many healing properties and offers the perfect delivery system for skin serums"

Conventional skincare only works on the very surface of the skin. The term 'moisturiser' is really misleading, as many of these products contain heavy oils that can't be effectively absorbed by the skin. Think of the skin as a sponge – how could you hydrate that sponge using oils?

Both the instant and long-lasting results of our treatment are down to what we call 3 Step Hyaluronic Layering – using products with different sized molecules on the skin. The first step, called Revive, is delivered by oxygen and serum application which rehydrates by delivering low molecular hyaluronic rapidly to the skin. This is followed by step two, called Replenish, using a higher weight hyaluronic formulation that creates a reservoir of hydration for the skin to draw upon. Step three is Protect, the application of a hyaluronic polymer we call a moisture binder. To give an idea of effectiveness, one molecule of hyaluronic acid binds 1,000 molecules of water, as well as other skin essential ingredients like vitamins A, C and E and various peptides.

How long is the treatment and how long do the effects last?

Our core treatment, the Rejuvenate facial, takes around an hour to complete. As well as the products, it's also down to the skills of the therapist, who are able to sculpt the features using the oxygen applicator, lifting the brows and accentuating the jawline.

These non-surgical effects can last for four to seven days and there's an increasingly visible improvement with each subsequent treatment for up to six treatments to obtain optimum results. Results are maximised and maintained with daily use of three Step Essentials take-home products.

What are your most successful product lines?

Our Rejuvenate product is our most popular, suitable for all skin types. We also have a brightening product (Opulence), effective for skin pigmentation and a blemish treatment (Clarity) which is extremely helpful for problem skin.

One of our products is an injectable alternative called Atoxelene, effective on expression and lip lines. Boosters allow therapists to tailor in-clinic and at-home products to address their clients' specific skincare concerns.

spa business uniting the world of wellness

The new Intraceuticals clinic model in Bangkok (above) will be rolled out to major cities. In-clinic and take-home products (left) ensure the prolonged effectiveness of a treatment

We're working on our first range of body treatments to be revealed later this year. We'll also launch a range of natural enzyme exfoliants with ingredients such as papain, carnauba wax beads and other fruit acids.

Who uses your products?

Around 30 per cent of our business is in the medical world – dermatologists and plastic surgeons; 30 per cent is in the day spa / high-end beauty salon market; and 30 per cent is in the international destination spa and resorts market.

We're rapidly expanding our mobile units in the major US film studios, working on TV and film sets with leading make up artists. Using our treatments before make-up will result in a much smoother finish and makes the actors look great in HD! We are also expanding our Fashion Week support team having worked with major designers in Milan, Paris, London and New York.

Why should spas work with you?

The spa industry is increasingly results-driven. People like to have a relaxing and pampering holiday and be made to feel good, but they also want to continue looking good after they return home Intraceuticals products and treatments can deliver this, and as we use oxygen, it's something pure that fits well with the spa philosophy of natural ingredients, freshness and invigoration.

How big is your distribution network?

We've invested heavily in our distribution network with main hubs in all the major cities like Hong Kong, London and Los Angeles, and now supply to 60 countries worldwide. There aren't many professional beauty companies that can meet the demands of the big global hotel brands with five-star spas all over the world.

What training do you offer your clients?

When an operator makes a commitment to our range, we offer comprehensive onsite training, as well as follow-up sessions and online modules. It's a 360-degree service. Each contract is an ongoing business partnership, where we help operators with their plans, promotions and future growth.

What's your approach to retail?

Our number one concern is providing the best possible outcome for the client. The first step is establishing what the client is worried about and then recommending a solution they're comfortable with. We start with the products they need to use at home twice a day, 730 times a year and then recommend an appropriate course of treatments between 12 and 24 times per year to accelerate and boost results.

There's no point selling a US$300 treatment to a client and then letting them go to the supermarket for the products they use daily – that's just poor customer service and a huge business opportunity lost. Our approach delivers great results for clients, boosts therapists' confidence and makes business operators smile too.

What's next for Intraceuticals?

We've just opened our first standalone facility, in Bangkok, and we're using it as a development lab for our products and services. In future, we'll have branded clinics in all the major global cities.

intraceuticals
it's in the skin

Phone: +61 3 9822 2011 (International)
Sonia Norman: +44 7813 609998 (UK)
Debbie Picken: +44 7500 837088 (UK)
To discuss your options today
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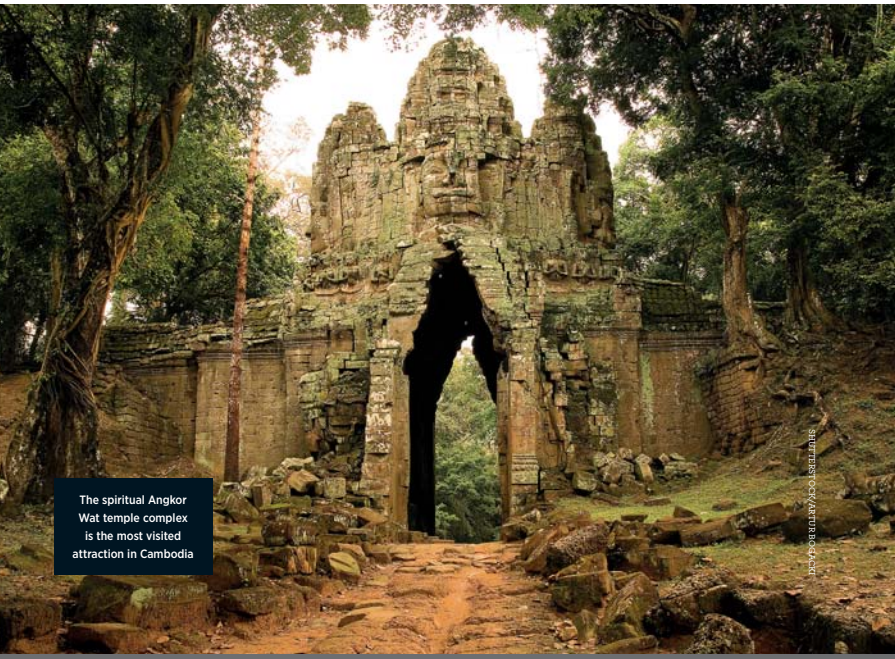
CITY FOCUS: SIEM REAP

REAPING THE BENEFITS

Cambodia may have had a tumultuous past but it's fast emerging as a popular destination to find inner peace. Jennifer Harbottle visits Siem Reap to see how this is affecting the growing spa industry



The spiritual Angkor Wat temple complex is the most visited attraction in Cambodia

BLUEMTNSTOCK/ARTURBOCHOR

Amanresorts is one of a number of big name operators with a presence in Siem Reap

Welcome to Siem Reap, home to one of the world's most spiritual sites and Cambodia's most visited tourist attraction – the Angkor Wat temple complex. This charming and cosy city in the north-west is simple to navigate and visitors can easily fit in a trip to the temples, some market shopping plus a spa treatment in a day and still have time for a relaxing dinner. Surely this makes it an ideal spa destination?

Change of image

According to Cambodia's Ministry of Tourism, international tourist arrivals were up nearly 25 per cent in 2012 and Siem Reap is its most popular destination. Visitors from Vietnam, China and Korea make up the largest percentage of travellers, with people from France, Russia, the USA, Australia and the UK dominating western arrivals. Siem Reap has also just been named one of the top 10 fastest growing cities in a 2014 Euromonitor tourism report.

Like Thailand, which is fighting to shrug off its travellers-on-a-budget image, Cambodia is opening itself up to a different kind of visitor: one who has more than dreadlocks and a few coins for spending money. Five star resorts are a large feature in Siem Reap's accommodation offerings and one look at the upmarket cafés and restaurants in the city's entertainment district confirm hospitality operators are not after the gap-year tourism market.

The Prime Minister, Hun Sen, says that tourism is a priority for the sustainable growth of the country's cultural and natural heritage sites. The tourism ministry recently declared that it was looking to encourage high-end hotel development to attract more affluent visitors.

> The tourism ministry recently declared that it was looking to encourage high-end hotel development to attract more affluent visitors

Despite this positive news, Cambodia still has a way to go to shake off its tag as a backpacker's destination and, more pressingly, rid itself of its damaging reputation for underage prostitution before the serious money-spending spa-goers will come. While the Ministry of Tourism's official website lists hundreds of 'spas' under its activities section, first up is a listing for a 7 Girls Massage at a parlour in the centre of Siem Reap.

Big name operators

Encouragingly, hotel occupancy was at a healthy 68.49 per cent in 2012 according to the tourism ministry. Bookings were slightly lower, however, in five star resorts which reported an annual occupancy of 40-60 per cent. But this hasn't stopped some of the big name international spa resort operators from staking their claim in this growing market.

Despite Siem Reap already being flooded with day spas, the city is home to a number of branded hotel operators including Raffles, Sofitel and Le Méridien. The luxury Navutu Dreams Resort and Spa opened in 2012 and last year The Park Hyatt Siem Reap opened for business.

It's going to take a few years for Siem Reap to follow in the footsteps of other south-east Asian countries such Bali, which has shrugged off its budget image and reincarnated itself as a serious destination for spa retreats. Operators talk of the challenges of having to compete with almost criminally cheap massages in local day 'spas'. And the government needs to do much more to help promote tourism in the region and reposition Siem Reap as a destination, rather than part of a journey on the way to neighbouring Laos or Vietnam.

On the bright side, the city has a natural beauty and great charm and, as Cambodia is a Buddhist country, it's genuinely very spiritual. Infrastructure in and around Siem Reap is good and its international airport is undergoing a US$100m (€73m, £60m) upgrade which will increase its capacity to five million passengers annually.

When talking to spa operators already in the region, it's evident that they want to support each other. Their willingness to share knowledge and expertise in order to grow the industry as a whole (and not just their individual business) is encouraging.

In the following pages, we take a look at four different spa business models in Siem Reap with unique selling points. ▸

spa business uniting the world of wellness

Frangipani has built up a successful business over 14 years by providing a cosy retreat for local clients

Frangipani Spa

Two Thai sisters own Frangipani Spa, a well-respected day spa in Siem Reap. Romyakorn and Siraphat Enyod started as spa therapists in Hua Hin, Thailand before moving to Siem Reap to work as assistant spa managers at Sofitel. In 2000, they opened Frangipani Spa. Fourteen years on, it's one of the locally-owned day spa success stories. "We created Frangipani Spa because we felt that good spa facilities were only available in costly five star hotels," explains Siraphat who is the spa manager.

Their spa has six cosy double treatment rooms – "our place will always stay small, we don't want to become a factory" and a relaxation room. Set in a quiet street off the central hub, it has a homely, welcoming design and therapists greet you with a long-lost-friend kind of warmth. Some have been with Frangipani since the day it opened and have built up a rapport with regular customers – expats from the UK, France and Australia make up the bulk of business. They're encouraged to spend time with guests outside of treatments, which adds a competitive edge. "We prefer a dedicated customer base of loyal clients than a cookie cutter approach aimed at tour groups," Siraphat explains.

Treatment room occupancy at the day spa is a healthy 80 per cent

Annual treatment room occupancy is a healthy 80 per cent and the expat locals help to boost numbers in low season. There are a variety of body and face treatments, alongside waxing and nailcare, with the most popular being the 60-minute aromatherapy massage priced at US$35 (€26, £21). The products are supplied by Algotherm but where possible, treatments are given a Cambodian spin by adding local ingredients such as jasmine rice and pepper kampot. What Frangipani offers that hotel spas don't, is a more relaxed approach to its menu – traditional therapies, although not listed, can be performed if clients request them. One such modality is coining or gua sha which has been used by Cambodian families for centuries. It involves rubbing the skin with wood until it reddens which is said to improve circulation.

Siraphat admits there's been a decline in bookings since more five star hotels have moved into Siem Reap. But it's not been all bad, she says: "As spas gain a better reputation among locals, it's been easier to find girls to work in our day spa."

Details: www.frangipanisiemreap.com

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Some hotel spas in Siem Reap can struggle with capture rates as there's so much to do in the city itself

La Résidence D'Angkor

La Résidence D'Angkor is part of Belmond (the brand new name for Orient-Express), which operates 45 hotel, cruise and luxury rail businesses worldwide. Belmond bought its Siem Reap property from the Pansea hotel group in 2007 and added a stand-alone spa in 2008. Not all Belmond hotels have spas and this is one of its biggest in South-East Asia.

The Kong Kea Spa has two double and four single treatment rooms, plus a mani-pedi room. Kong kea means 'water for the god' in the native Khmer language and the spa features an indoor dipping pool and illuminated water walls. Product houses include Jurlique for facials and Bodia for body treatments.

Spa manager Dewa Sunarya, who hails from India and previously worked for Accor and Six Senses, says La Résidence rates highly as an employer. Turnover of therapists is under 5 per cent, thanks mainly to a competitive salary and a 7 per cent service charge which compares favourably with the 5 per cent at most other hotels. They're passionate about their jobs and work hard but, says Sunarya, it's difficult to find therapists who aspire to become managers.

General manager Carla Petzold-Beck says although guests are prepared to pay upper-bracket prices – US$365 (€266, £219) a night – to stay at the hotel, they're very budget-conscious when choosing a massage. "There's this impression – particularly from Europeans – that everything in Cambodia is cheap," she says, admitting it can be difficult to get secondary spend when they charge US$68 (€49, £41) for a 60-minute massage. "We're walking distance to town where you can buy a meal, drinks and a massage for under US$20 (€15, £12), so they expect our massages to be cheap too."

Water is a key element in the design of the six-treatment room Kong Kea Spa

Additionally, while the spa is a key factor for holidaymakers booking the hotel, that doesn't always translate into the take-up of treatments once they get there as there are so many other activities on offer. "The magnet for people coming to Siem Reap is Angkor Wat," Petzold-Beck explains, adding that hiking, kayaking, biking and local artisan visits are also arranged by the hotel.

With the large number of temples and monks in Siem Reap, Petzold-Beck feels it has a spiritual nature which creates an instant sense of calm and peace. It's the perfect setting for wellness facilities, but she thinks that it will take up to five years before visitors view Siem Reap as a spa destination. "As hoteliers, we need to work out how to tap into that [natural spiritual culture] and integrate it into our spa retreats," she says. "The government also needs to support our efforts to show that Siem Reap has more than just temples. At the moment, Cambodia is an add-on destination for travellers on their way to Thailand or Vietnam. We need to encourage them to stay here as their ultimate destination and to fit in some days of relaxation as well as to allow for some days of temple sightseeing."
Details: www.residencedangkor.com

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Amansara

When you consider this is where Angelina Jolie and her family stayed in Siem Reap, the US$1,250 (€912, £751) per night fee at Amansara makes more sense. Originally the King of Cambodia's guesthouse, the 600-year-old property was bought by the Aman Group in 2002 and its 12 bedrooms were converted into suites. In 2005, a spa and 12 spacious pool suites were added.

The resort's exquisite minimalist and masculine design carries through to the 461sq m (4,962sq ft) spa, which features lots of dark wood and black furnishings. There four treatment suites (all with relaxation areas), plus a room for yoga.

Annual resort occupancy is between 40 and 50 per cent and the spa has a capture rate of 30 per cent. The US$95 (€69, £57) 60-minute oil massage is the most popular but there are a number of treatments by Sodashi and alternative therapies, delivered by visiting international healers.

Unique experiences themed around the spa give Amansara an edge over other resorts

There's also a blind therapist on call for massages.

What guests get for the high-end price are experiences that can't be bought elsewhere. It offers a water cleansing ceremony by monks, yoga in the temples of Angkor Wat or a night in a Khmer village house which includes a traditional meal and spa treatment that would be hard to find without local know-how. It's these unique experiences themed around the spa that gives this resort its edge.

Facilities have been kept to a minimum on purpose – aside from the spa, there's a pool and a dining area. General manager Sally Baughen explains that most guests visit the temples in the day then relax at the spa afterwards. She feels Siem Reap has all the right ingredients to become a leading spa destination: "The temples of Angkor already add a spiritual and energetic dimension, and combining this with [equally mindful] spa treatments such as meditation and yoga will be its USP." Details: www.amanresorts.com

Flame for you

Ex spa manager, Beck Scougall is an Australian based in Siem Reap whose company Saarti makes all-natural soy candles and body products for Cambodia's spa industry. Saarti uses soy wax and sustainably-harvested beeswax in its candle and essential oils to scent body products. The company works with local artisans to create unique, biodegradable and reusable packaging. Clients include Sojourn Boutique Hotel, Amansara and Shinta Mani Hotel in Siem Reap as well as Song Saa Resort in Sihanouk Ville. Details: www.saarticambodia.com

WAT ELSE?

Other day spa operators in Siem Reap include:

- **Bodia Spa** Runs two day spas in Siem Reap plus one in Phnom Penh. Bodia also makes its own spa products for consumer and commercial use. www.bodia-spa.com
- **Sokkhak Spa** Offers treatments as well as training and consultancy for spas. www.sokkhakspa.com
- **Body Tune** The first Cambodian day spa for this well-established Thai spa operator. www.bodytune.co.th

Sokha Angkor Resort

Sokha Hotels & Resorts is the biggest hotel operator in Cambodia and is owned by petroleum group Sokimex. In total, it owns and operates four hotels, with a fifth due to open this year. Each site includes a Jasmine Spa, which Sokha owns and manages in-house.

Sokha Angkor in Siem Reap is the company's second resort and has 275 rooms. It's about the same price point as La Résidence (see p70) but attracts a predominantly Asian market – most guests come from Japan and China – rather than a western one. At 60 per cent, annual occupancy is higher than other resorts in the city.

The Jasmine Spa has 18 treatment rooms and employs 16 therapists to work under Cambodian-born spa manager Mok Reksmey. As one of the biggest spa employers in the city, it prioritises training which is provided by both in-house trainers and product house Pevonia.

Throughout the resort, marketing collateral sells the spa and you get the feeling this is an operator that wants its spa to make money, not simply be an hotel adjunct. The price point of US$40 (€29, £24) for a 60-minute massage is lower than other hotel spas and take-up of treatments among guests is 'good', according to Reksmey. It places a particular emphasis on professional facial products as this is something Chinese spa-goers value.

"We have a clear focus on our market and we've tailored a spa that appeals to the majority of our client base," explains Reksmey. "We know that the Chinese market will grow even bigger over the next few years and we're perfectly placed to reach out to them." Details: www.sokhahotels.com

Jennifer Harbottle is a leisure industry writer based in Asia
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spa business uniting the world of wellness

Johnson is reportedly one of the first African-American billionaires in the US

Mane attraction

The US Salamander Resort & Spa, owned by *The Butler* film producer Sheila C Johnson, is fuelled by a combination of equestrian passion and business ambition, but it has wellness at its heart

Tucked away in a quiet corner of America's finest horse country, Salamander Resort & Spa near Middleburg, Virginia, has an illustrious history for a new resort. In the early 60s, the small historic town was the beloved retreat of president John F Kennedy and his First Lady, who would spend hours riding on the land where the property now stands.

So when Sheila C Johnson – co-founder of Black Entertainment Television (BET) and executive producer of recent Hollywood smash-hit *The Butler* – first moved to Middleburg in 1996, she became just one in a long list of powerful people to be drawn to the area. Attracted to the rolling countryside just an hour from Washington DC by her daughter Paige's love of horses, the renowned entrepreneur bought Salamander Farms, a sprawling estate just outside the town and transformed it into a family home-come-equestrian paradise.

Eighteen years later, the move has proved serendipitous. Paige, now an Olympic show-jumper, continues to train at the estate while Johnson uses it as a base of operations for her own personal passion: Salamander Hotels & Resorts. Salamander is a chain of luxury properties of which the Middleburg property, unveiled last August, is the fourth to open.

In 2001, the sale of BET reportedly made Johnson and her then husband Robert Johnson the country's first African-American billionaires. Since then, Johnson has divorced, remarried and invested her considerable funds and energy into a diverse range of ventures. As well as her interests in the film industry, she owns a private jet business and three professional sports teams, plus a café and high-end market shop in Middleburg. But it's the hospitality enterprise – and in particular, the Salamander Resort & Spa – that is the heart of Johnson's empire.

ICONIC RETREAT

One of the only luxury resorts to open in the US last year, the project has been a long time in the works. It was in 2003 that a 340-acre (138-hectare) tract of land came up for sale just a few miles from Salamander Farms, and Johnson immediately knew what she had to do. "From the moment I stepped foot on this serene land over 10 years ago, I fell in love with it and envisioned creating an iconic retreat," she said at the grand opening.

From the outset, the property was always going to incorporate a world-class equestrian facility. But unlike many resorts, where the '...and spa' adjunct

Johnson is a devoted spa-goer and her daughter is an Olympic show-jumper – these passions are evident throughout the US$130m property which was one of the only US luxury resorts to open last year

With its many outdoor spaces, the spa makes the most of the beautiful surrounding landscapes

Johnson was acutely aware that despite the abundance of wealth in the Washington DC area, there were no great spa destinations within a reasonable driving distance of the city

is exactly that, for Johnson it was the spa that was a driving force. A devoted spa-goer herself, she was acutely aware that despite the abundance of wealth in the Washington DC area, there were no great spa destinations within a reasonable driving distance of the city.

Bringing together a team of designers that included acclaimed interior designer Thomas Pheasant, WATG and Blu Spas, Johnson's vision was not simply to create a resort with a beautiful spa, but to integrate spa and wellness – a new concept at that time – into the fabric of the resort, with a strong emphasis on indoor-outdoor spaces, the natural setting and a programme of activities and events to pull it all together. "We all felt at the time that this was one of those rare projects," says Cary Collier, principal of Blu Spas. "It had the location, people and the resources behind it to do something extraordinary."

While Johnson's commitment to spa and wellness didn't change, the scale of the project did. It evolved from a much small inn-style development into a 168-bedroom resort. Inevitably, locals were worried about its impact on the community and the environment.

Then, in 2005, Johnson set up Salamander Hotels & Resorts – both to manage the Middleburg project and to seek out others – and recruited hospitality veteran Prem Devadas as president. Previously managing director of a hotel collection that included the world-renowned Sanctuary Hotel on Kiawah Island, Devadas brought to the table not only his expert knowledge of luxury resorts but also his diplomatic skills. Together, he and Johnson were able to convince community leaders that the development would be an asset to the town and wider area. Since then, 200 of the property's 340 acres have been placed in a conservation easement and the building has been registered for LEED certification.

The next major obstacle was the global recession, which delayed construction for at least 20 months. Prior to the slowdown, however, the company had already acquired and redeveloped Innisbrook Resort in Tampa Bay, Florida. Two years ago, it then took on management contracts for two more properties: Reunion Resort and Hammock Beach Resort, also in Florida. Finally, the long-awaited Virginian flagship – reported to represent upwards of US$130m (€93m, £78m) of investment, although the company won't confirm – opened its doors in mid 2013.

AMERICAN CLASSIC

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CLARINS

Blu Spas was inspired by *Seabiscuit*, the film of the 1930s-era racehorse, when designing the spa. Overall, it has a luxurious yet homely feel

Middleburg has the east coast's largest concentration of wineries. It is also just an hour's drive from DC and 35 minutes from Dulles International Airport, making it easily accessible to DC residents and foreign travellers. Thanks to a significant investment in conferencing and recreational facilities, the resort is also well set up to cater for both groups and leisure guests.

Despite its size and ambition, however, the property is neither grand nor imposing. Inspired by Johnson's renovated 19th-century home at Salamander Farms, the architecture is designed to complement the surrounding countryside, while the aged-looking interiors evoke the sense of being in somebody's home, albeit a very luxurious one. "While there's no doubt it's refined and beautiful, it's not stuffy, it's very warm and inviting," says Devadas. "That's something people are surprised by: how well it fits into this landscape and how comfortable it is."

Central to the resort's recreational offering is its full-service equestrian centre, with a 22-stall stable, riding arena and nine paddocks, plus miles of trails, riding instruction and clinics held by the area's world-class riders. The passion for all things horse does not stop there, however: it's a design accent throughout the resort, from the horse cut-outs in the ironwork of every balcony to the renovation of a 150-year-old stallion barn. In another quirky touch, the 17 suites are grouped into equestrian categories (Dressage, Blue Ribbon and Grand Prix) and individually named for Paige Johnson's favourite horses.

President Prem Devadas has worked in the US hospitality industry for 25 years

Given the collegiate approach to the resort's design, it's no surprise that the same principles are also in evidence in the spa, which consequently puts a strong emphasis on stone, wood and water. "We wanted it to be luxurious but not stuffy, not glitzy," says Devadas. "And we wanted something that would really sit within this equestrian vernacular."

Describing it as "the Ralph Lauren approach to spa", Collier cites the 2003 film *Seabiscuit* as an influence: "The movie showed these incredible olde-worlde horse barns from around the country and when I saw them, I just thought, this is it, this feels right."

One example of how this has been realised is the entrances to the male and female locker rooms: octagonal openings that immediately evoke a barn's frame. The other defining characteristic of the spa is its abundance of outdoor spaces. Half of the 14 treatment rooms have

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private stone terraces and all of them open onto a spa courtyard, with a 70ft (21m) infinity edge pool overlooking the woods, as well as a heated whirlpool, stone fire-pit, dining area and private cabanas. "We've tried to capture the special beauty of the surrounding landscape in the spa experience," explains Devadas.

According to spa director Penny Kriel: "The core objective for Blu Spas was to create the definitive American classic spa, reflecting the traditions and history of the Virginia area and we all think this goal was achieved. It captures the genteel elegance of southern hospitality, rife with romance and grace."

POLITICAL CURRENCY

In addition to a wide range of massage and beauty treatments – with skincare supplied by Alchimie Forever and Natura Bissé as well as homemade products using ingredients grown on-site – the spa boasts beautiful wet areas constructed by Bradford Products in locker rooms, comprising whirlpools with waterfall features, steamrooms and experience showers. Separately, there's a relaxation area and rasul beyond that, plus a well-equipped fitness centre, sauna and an indoor swimming pool.

But in line with Johnson's original vision, the wellness offering at the resort extends far beyond the walls of the spa. At its heart is the equestrian centre, which alongside traditional riding classes and clinics offers a range of wellness-oriented programmes. Such programmes include

Spa director Penny Kriel feels the spa has a genteel elegance

Wellness extends beyond the spa – even the world-class equestrian centre offers horseback yoga

The Equi-Spective Experience – which aims to help participants discover their authentic communication, leadership and relationship style by connecting with horses – and Yoga on Horseback. Non-riders, meanwhile, are well catered for with other outdoor programmes ranging from hiking to birdwatching, while golfers can take advantage of a one-day membership of nearby Creighton Farms golf club, which boasts a Jack Nicklaus signature course.

To all appearances (the company won't divulge occupancy rates) the resort is a great success. Press coverage has been extensive and business is currently equally split between groups and leisure guests/ The political community in DC is also proving to be a particularly important market – the resort has already hosted 20 fundraisers and welcomed numerous high-profile guests.

As for the spa, it has an impressive capture rate of 48 per cent and is equally popular with the local community, who account for 50 per cent of business. Independently profitable, it is a driver of room rate and length of stay (currently around two days and rising) and also appears to have currency among Washington's political elite. According to Devadas, not only do visiting politicians use the facility but one of last year's fundraisers, which has traditionally been a golf event, was for the first time centred around the spa.

Next on the agenda in terms of wellness is the opening of a treetop canopy walkway and an open-air treatment room, located in the Stallion Barn, both of which will launch in the next few months. But Johnson and Devadas have bigger plans. These include not only the introduction of medi-spa services and 'executive physicals' at the resort, but also a dedicated healthcare facility delivered in partnership with a leading medical provider – a second phase of development that's been on the cards since early on in the planning process and which aims to cement the resort's reputation as a wellness destination. Scheduled to open towards the end of the year, the purpose-built facility will be located at the resort and will offer a range of services targeting both business executives on corporate retreats and residents from the north Virginia and greater Washington DC areas.

Nor does it end here. With two brand new Salamander resorts soon to be announced – one in Florida and one in North Carolina – Johnson's spa and wellness ambitions are only just beginning. "As Salamander expands, our expertise in the spa industry will be a key part of the company's growth strategy," she says. "Never has it been more essential to marry health and wellness to a resort or hotel experience and we are perfectly positioned to help owners create that environment." ●

Rhianon Howells is the consulting editor of *Spa Business* magazine
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KATH HUDSON, JOURNALIST, SPA BUSINESS

Obesity as a disease

Is the American Medical Association's decision to classify obesity as a disease the right one? If so, will this see more credit given to, and investment in, spa, wellness and fitness facilities that offer treatment packages and services?

Last June, the American Medical Association (AMA) voted to classify obesity as a disease in its own right, rather than simply the precursor to other illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. This means nearly one in three Americans have a medical condition that requires treatment.

This new 'disease' classification means that people can seek help for obesity itself and also means that medical professionals will be remunerated for their time spent treating obesity.

According to a study by Duke University, treatment of obesity-related diseases costs US$150bn (€110bn, £90bn) a year in the US – a figure that's expected to rise to US$550bn (€400bn, £330bn) in the next 20 years. Although the financial impact of lifestyle diseases has long been acknowledged, recognition of obesity as a disease could result in greater investment by government and the private sector to both develop and reimburse obesity treatments offered by wellness and spa practitioners as well as fitness facilities.

But could it also lead to a rush of drugs to market, over-prescribing, more surgical procedures and people handing over responsibility for their lifestyles to the medical profession?

Will this new classification mean a rise in status for the spa, wellness and fitness industry, with healthcare providers seeking to work more closely with them to prescribe exercise? Or will it take it further away, confining treatment to the medical sector? Might people increasingly expect the solution to come from a pill from the doctor rather than having to get active?

Obesity is certainly a complicated subject and significantly more research is needed to help with its treatment. A study by Memorial University in Newfoundland, for example, found that 5 per cent of the population could be addicted to food.

The UK's National Institute for Healthcare and Excellence (NICE) declined to comment, but will other countries follow the AMA's lead? We ask some experts.

Ardis D Hoven

President, AMA

"Recognising obesity as a disease will help change the way the medical community tackles this issue. It also elevates the importance of developing new approaches to prevent and manage obesity.

The AMA's House of Delegates voted for this classification because we believe it will encourage parents and physicians to have candid conversations about their weight and other key health indicators like blood pressure and blood sugar.

Physicians previously had conversations with patients about treating obesity's health complications, but this designation will help physicians to talk about obesity itself, as well as help them to decide on an appropriate course of action. While healthy eating and physical activity are important for preventing obesity, for some people this is not enough and medication or surgery is needed.

The excess body fat indicative of obesity doesn't just take up space in the body – it's metabolically active, producing hormones and other substances that may impair a number of normal body functions, including fertility and the regulation of appetite and metabolism. We're hopeful this policy will emphasise the seriousness of obesity and its health implications. This classification may also encourage more investment to study and limit this disease."

Dr Arya Sharma

Chair in obesity research & management, University of Alberta

"Obesity needs to be medicalised in order to help the millions of people who live with excess weight and the illnesses related to it.

Obesity is viewed by governments, healthcare professionals, media and individuals as being caused by laziness and over-consumption: a stigmatising, over-simplification of a complex health problem. If obesity is viewed as a disease, we can perhaps create a world where health professionals are remunerated for providing treatment services, where people with obesity can seek medical assistance with confidence and where public and private funders will prioritise the provision of obesity prevention, treatment resources and related research.

In many countries, however, fitness and wellness professionals are not licensed or members of organisations that ensure service standards and competencies. Medical training and residency or internship programmes in the health system are generally not part of their training. So, while I support the importance of exercise in weight management, the current training, licensing, regulation and professional standards of wellness and fitness professionals is a long way off from that of other regulated health professionals."

Should obesity be treated as a medical disease or a lifestyle-related condition?

SHUTTERSTOCK/NADIC PRAGO

Dr Chris Beedie

Senior lecturer, Aberystwyth University, UK

"Classifying obesity as a disease could lead to more resources and push it up the agenda for policy makers.

However, the cons far outweigh the pros. This decision arguably reflects a trend towards the medicalisation of life. It's not a disease: many people diagnosed as obese are actually healthy.

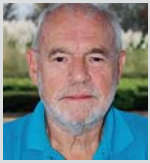
Worryingly, this reclassification throws the weight of responsibility onto the medical sector, potentially taking it away from individuals, parents, educators – including physical educators – and social policy makers. It puts the emphasis on treatment, not prevention, inevitably leading to expensive medical interventions to tackle what is a societal problem.

Humans are programmed to eat as much as we can and to move as little as possible. With technology and highly calorific food, current lifestyles are the perfect storm for obesity. This is what needs addressing.

I doubt this reclassification will mean a boost for the wellness, spa and fitness sector. It could mean the opposite, with treatment – not prevention – becoming the emphasis and medicine taking de facto responsibility for that treatment. The sectors have to better evidence their effectiveness in obesity prevention and management to compete with medicine in this context."

Tam Fry

Honorary chair, Child Growth Foundation



"Obesity should be classified as a disease – a condition to be treated and not simply dismissed by the medical profession as a problem for parents or individuals. Unrecognised, obesity may quickly trigger more serious conditions which are more costly to treat.

Should the UK follow the lead of the US and classify obesity as a disease, I would hope that more funds would be triggered for preventive measures, especially in primary care, which is currently woefully underfunded.

In my opinion, any further funding should not be directed into the wellness and fitness industry, which is a sophisticated business sector that can look after itself. The fitness industry, in particular, suggests to people that it will provide a quick fix to lose weight. Actually, all people need in order to exercise is a good pair of shoes to go walking. As for kids, they just need space to run around.

What's more, exercise isn't the only element that's needed to stop the development of obesity – eating good, nutritious food is key too and even before that it's about coaching people on how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. This is particularly important very early on in life as it's been found that the first 1,000 days of a child's life is crucial in preventing obesity later on."

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SPA SOFTWARE

OPERATOR CASE STUDIES PART TWO

Spas across the world tell us how they're using software to boost their business

Digital signs help to fill spare time slots

TAC software allows seamless integration between spa, leisure, F&B and hotel departments

TAC takes over at Grand Resort Bad Ragaz

Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, one of the most well known spa destination resorts in Switzerland, initially chose TAC's Reservation Assistant software in 2003 to manage its spa, fitness and beauty departments which include 65 treatment rooms in total. The company was impressed with the software, so deployed in more departments. Reservation Assistant now acts as a holistic solution for not only the spa, but also the public Tamina Therme thermal water complex, a medical centre with 36 doctors, six restaurants and two golf courses.

Ronny Schieler, the system manager at Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, says: "Our IT system landscape is very complex and has grown steadily over the past few years. Reservation Assistant is one of our most important IT solutions and it has grown with us."

Ronny Schieler

> **Using TAC's Digital Signage synched with Reservation Assistant, the resort can automatically display available appointments across the property**

To guarantee the seamless integration of Reservation Assistant into the resort, TAC implemented several interfaces, the most important being the one with the hotel's PR Hogatex Starlight system. "The ability to manage all our guests' activities with a single system significantly improves our ability to provide the exceptional service that's expected from us," says Schieler. "At the same time, we've lowered our administrative costs."

An example of how software enables seamless management can be found at the medical centre. Its appointment management allows Grand Resort Bad Ragaz to identify guests who've been referred by a doctor, as well as securely storing confidential information – such as medical notes – on guest's profiles.

New technologies by TAC have also helped Grand Resort Bad Ragaz to increase turnover. For example, using TAC's Digital Signage, synched with the Reservation Assistant software, the resort can automatically display available appointments on electronic posters across the property, so guests' attention is drawn to treatments they can book at short notice. It's also possible to send personalised birthday greetings via an SMS module, as well as individual offers direct to mobile phones to increase guest loyalty.

Meanwhile, TAC's implemented Web Shop enables the resort to generate online gift certificates with its own corporate design. Every certificate is assigned a unique barcode so the resort is protect against fraud and double redemption.

"So far, we have only had positive experiences with the Reservation Assistant system," concludes Schieler.

Spa-kit.net keyword: TAC

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Canyon Ranch and Concept first set sail on the *Queen Mary 2* ocean liner

Canyon Ranch is cruising with Concept

In 2011, Concept Software Systems took to the seas when it was installed in the Canyon Ranch SpaClub at Sea on the *Queen Mary 2* ocean liner. Now it's about to set sail once again as Canyon Ranch takes over the operation of 18 more spas on board Prestige and Royal Caribbean cruise ships.

Merrie Bird

Managing software systems at sea, where internet access is limited and unreliable, is something Concept has tackled head-on. It's used data replication tools by Oracle, so data can be stored locally and centrally. In addition, web bookings back-up to the Canyon Ranch land-based management team when internet access is available, to eradicate the threat of data loss.

Concept has worked with Canyon Ranch, the famous US spa resort operator, for eight years. "We see our long-term relationship with Concept as more of a partnership than a client-consultant arrangement," says Merrie Bird, the corporate IT direction of applications at Canyon Ranch. It picked Concept for its 'simple approach of developing client-focused, bespoke and robust software solutions that enable spa and leisure facilities to maximise their business potential'.

Today, the Concept system is used for all four of Canyon Ranch's spa-centric properties – the SpaClub at Las Vegas' Venetian hotel alone has 180 treatment rooms. The systems are all controlled via a centrally-hosted environment which gives instant access and up-to-date, accurate data to more than 1,000 users at a time.

"Operating across multiple facilities, each on such a large scale, it was essential that the system would be able to handle millions of transactions and customer interactions," says Bird. "It had to provide our guests with an unparalleled level of service; and provide the application users with an easy-to-use, time-saving program."

Spa-kit.net keywords: **Concept Software**

Diane Taylor invested in Mindbody in 2012

Mindbody helps Taylored Massage Therapy

Since installing Mindbody software in 2012, Diane Taylor, the owner of the Taylored Massage Therapy day spa in Ohia, US, says she's able to dedicate more time to looking after her customers.

Her goal is to improve their quality of life by relieving their pain with customised therapeutic massages and by teaching them about healthier lifestyles.

She says the Mindbody system manages the day to day running of the business, so she can focus on services: "Installing Mindbody one of the best decisions I've ever made – there are so many features that have made my life easier," she says.

The system's web and mobile business management solutions are something Taylor finds particularly helpful. "With this internet-based program, I can look at my schedule in just a few clicks and easily distinguish available appointment times without having to be at my office."

Taylor says Mindbody provides everything she needs to both grow and manage her practice, and that the system has helped make the business more profitable. For one thing, it makes booking easier. "Clients can request appointments online all day, every day and gift certificates are available via the online store 24/7," she says. Automated scheduling and appointment reminders via text and email also lessen the risk of no-shows.

The system enables Taylor to monitor the performance of her company easily. She says: "Mindbody tracks current sales and compares business progress to previous months and years in a way I could never do on my own."

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

Intelligenz software is used in the club's multiple facilities

Stejarii start-up chooses Intelligenz

"I particularly like Intelligenz's SMS and email features," says Helen Coulon, the spa consultant of the Shiseido Spa at the new Stejarii Country Club in Bucharest, Romania. "Today, it's all about client recognition, immediate connection and follow up. The system is also easy to use."

The €18m (US$24m, £15m) sports, business and entertainment complex is the latest installation for Intelligenz Solutions, which is also working on projects in Sweden, India and Taiwan. At Stejarii, it's been used to manage all aspects across the 22,000sq m (236,806 sq ft) site including spa, pool, fitness, golf, conference, tennis and squash and food and beverage facilities.

The 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) Shiseido spa has nine treatment rooms and a day suite alongside hydrothermal experiences and full-service beauty salon.

Helen Coulon

Coulon says the software has been crucial for tracking progress in the first three months of opening. "It's really helped us to monitor our marketing ROI," she says. "There's also the benefit of being able to run staff commission and bonus rewards schemes to motivate therapists. In addition, I've been able to see the monthly growth in the business via the reports it generates.

"Being able to collect and analyse all of this data efficiently adds up – it helps us to tailor our offer and deliver the right trends for our business today and tomorrow."

Intelligenz's Neil O'Connell says: "What's winning us business is the breadth of our solution. That and our contemporary architecture: because the software's been written in the last five years, it's been developed from the ground up with web, mobile phone and self-service interactions in mind."

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

Spa Sport Hotel Zuiver, Amsterdam picks xPlan

"xPlan's automated business processes have helped us reduce costs, while improving our guest service and increasing revenue," says Edwin Kempes, spa manager at the Spa Sport Hotel Zuiver in Amsterdam in The Netherlands.

The 10,000sq m (107,639sq ft) spa has six pools and baths, a thermal suite with eight heat experiences, a spa restaurant and 23 treatment rooms. The spa welcomes 550 customers every day, which is why Kempes says Dimmbizz's xPlan cashless payment system is particularly useful. Guests are given an RFID bracelet when checking in and this is scanned to register any service they have during their stay, from a spa meal to a tanning treatment. The services are automatically registered on a database so that people on packages can't redeem something twice.

Edwin Kempes

Turnstiles are currently being added to the reception so that the hotel's spa and fitness members will be able to automatically check-in using an issued RFID bracelet. This, says Kempes, will ease pressures on front of house staff.

With the xPlan system, bookings can be made via an Android or iOS app or online and the system sends a confirmation email. Packages and treatments can then be automatically scheduled according to room availability and therapist skills.

The xPlan system is also used to manage the hotel's tennis and squash centre (with 44 courts) and health/fitness department, which previously used two different systems. Now all three departments run off xPlan and also interface with the hotel's PMS.

The marketing, finance and operating systems are centralised and act on real-time information. "Time that used to be spent on assembling reports and gathering data can now be spent on optimising day to day operations," says Kempes. "This results in improved employee satisfaction, better guest service and increased revenue. It also gives us a better insight."

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

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Kate Corney, product editor, Spa Business

PRIVATE LABEL

We take a look at what private or white label spa products are available and why developing an own-brand range can be good for business

Clients include Jiva Spas, Gwinganna and Six Senses Spas

Subtle Energies specialises in ayurveda and aromatherapy oils

SUBTLE ENERGIES

Why have a private label range? "It further develops your branding and identity," says Nick Irani, director of operations and brand development for Subtle Energies, "and in some cases the brand can even develop a cult following."
The offer: Based in Australia, Subtle Energies has developed white label products for leading spas such as Jiva Spas at Taj Hotels and this month it will launch a signature range for Gwinganna. Its own Subtle Energies products are also used in some Six Senses Spas.

The company is well known for its oils and its knowledge of ayurveda aromatherapy. It offers signature massage blends as well as complementing mists, diffuser concentrates and bath salts. In recent years it's also expanded into skin, body and haircare ranges.
How much? Each project is quoted individually in terms of development fees.
How long does it take and what's involved? The formulation process includes the creation of various samples of aroma concentrates, then developing and testing the various product formats. The time frame depends on the scope of the brief and also response times from client, but generally can be turned around in one to three months.
Other services: Subtle Energies also offers training in product knowledge, ayurveda and aromatherapy. Most recently, it's started to make organic chocolates using its oils as ingredients within the chocolate.

Spa-kit keywords: **subtle energies**

Therapists are sometimes more passionate about selling own-brand products

The Natural Spa Factory is currently working on 40 white label projects

NATURAL SPA FACTORY

The offer: The Natural Spa Factory has supplied natural spa products (for treatments and retail) and toiletries to a number of top spas including the Titanic eco-spa, Thermae Bath Spa and Four Seasons spa, UK. It has three options for private label – entry level, which includes low-run stock items; premium level where bespoke ingredients are added to stock products; and formulating bespoke ranges of larger volumes, which requires more investment and longer lead times.

Co-founder Emma Webber says: "Developing a product range isn't an easy. Our aim is to simplify this very complicated and expensive process that's bound by EU legislation and requires formulations, safety testing, product information files and good manufacturing practices."

The cost: Entry level ranges cost between £4,000-£6,000 (US$6,650-US$9,950, €4,800-€7,200). Formulating a range from scratch with a particular ingredient and making specific claims can cost anything from £10,000-£20,000 (US$16,600-US$33,200, €11,950-€23,900).

Why do it? "It's an opportunity to promote your business instead of somebody else's, garner customer loyalty and be creative with your marketing," adds Webber. "If you have your name on a product you, and your team, are more passionate about using and selling it too."

Other services: The Natural Spa Factory, which is currently working on 40 private label projects, can also help with marketing, bespoke treatment design, shipping and logistics. In addition, it has a sister company Blue Spa & Leisure which offers spa concept, design and development consultancy services.

Spa-kit keywords: **natural spa factory**

SPA FACTORY BALI

The offer: Although it's based in Indonesia, Spa Factory Bali supplies spas in 40 countries. Its core offer is massage oils, bath gels, shampoo, body lotions and soaps, along with amenity lines, room scents, aroma diffusers and room sprays. All of its products are handmade and not tested on animals.

How much: The company says there's no set price, as costs depend on many components – type and size of container bottle/tube/cap, whether the scent is an essential oil or fragrance oil and, of course, the type of product.

Why do it? Having worked with spas such as those at Hyatt, Hilton and Bulgari Bali, Spa Factory Bali has found that private label products enable facilities to offer more retail items based on what's used in treatments. By taking the product home, clients can keep up the benefits of the treatments and will be continually be reminded of their experience.

How long does it take? The development process takes around one to two months, plus another two to three months for production.

Other services: In addition to white label products, Spa Factory Bali designs and manufactures attractive spa and hotel accessories such as foot ritual bowls, product dispensers and testers, tea ritual trays and tissues boxes.

Spa-kit keywords: **spa factory bali**

White label products help with branding

> It gives spas more control on margins as they don't need to pay a royalty fee to another brand

Ready-to-use products can made in eight weeks

ALBAN MULLER

The offer: Alban Muller offers sustainably-sourced, natural skincare formulations for the face and body including emulsions, masks, scrubs, oils and gels.
How much? There are no development fees for the ready-to-use products in its catalogue. Quotations for customised lines can be provided and the service includes the cost of product formulation, safety tests, stability and compatibility assessments and industrial scale-up.
How long does it take? Ready-to-use products can be delivered within eight weeks, with quality control and product testing included. Customised products take six months to a year to develop.
Why do it? Alban Muller, which has worked with spas such as Be By Monarque at the Grand Monarque resort in France, says white label products give spas a chance to create specific products and treatments that suit its brand and identity. Moreover, it gives spas more control on margins as they don't need to pay a royalty fee to another brand.
Other services: The company is headquartered in France (but distributes to 50 countries) and has a network of partners to help with marketing, treatment protocols, training, logistics and storage.

Spa-kit keywords: **alban muller**

Spa Technologies has been making private label spa products for 20 years

SPA TECHNOLOGIES

Why offer white label products? "Private label products enable spas to capitalise on the brand, build customer loyalty and avoid loss of retail opportunities to their vendor/competitors on the internet," says Dan Fryda, the president of Spa Technologies. The US company has been providing private label services – as well as its own botanical and seaweed-based skin and bodycare lines – for 20 years.
The offer: Spa Technologies offers branding and design services, along with laboratory formulations for an extensive variety of retail and professional products – from daily cleansers, exfoliants and DNA repair creams to body wraps, aromatherapy oils and travels kits. It's aim is to create truly unique brands which, says Fryda, "is especially important for certain clients who wish to expand their sales presence on the internet." For those companies that don't want totally unique creations, Spa Technologies provides standard formulas with a signature fragrance or design motif.
Clients: The Advanced Solutions products, offered at Montage resorts across the US, have been custom-made by Spa Technologies. It also makes Lymphoderm medical lotions that are distributed to rehab and medical centres and in the past has developed lines for Hyatt, Nordstrom and Radisson spas.
How much: Prices vary from US$2,500-US$25,000 (€1,800-€17,900, £1,500-£14,900). Minimum quantities range from 60 to 500 pieces depending on the product in question.
How long does it take? It typically takes around two months from concept to delivery.
Other services: A full range of services from design and branding to the creation of spa menu services are available, along with the development of treatment protocols and on-site training.
What's new? Spa Technologies is currently developing preservative-free products for naturopathic spas in Florida.

Spa-kit keywords: **spa technologies**

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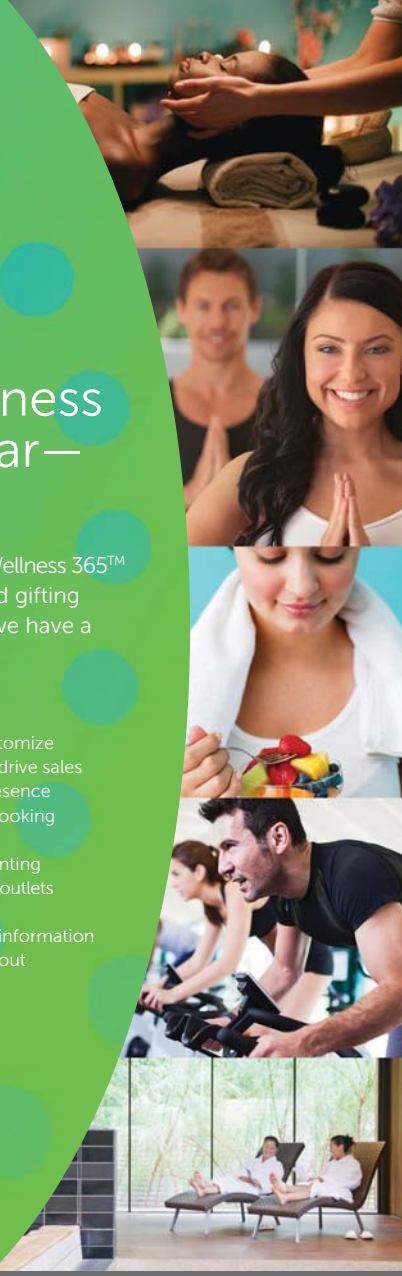

Spa products

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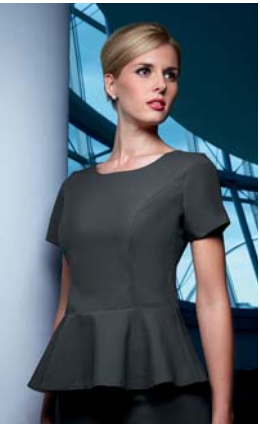


Dior-inspired uniform

The design of a new top by workwear brand Simon Jersey is based on Christian Dior's iconic peplum design from the 1940s. The top can be worn with skirts or trousers for a feminine look that – thanks to layering – is also designed to be comfortable.

The new colours for 2014 include plum (a dark purple) and graphite grey, as well as classic black.

Spa-kit.net keywords: Simon Jersey

Gharieni partners with Dornbracht

Gharieni – designer and manufacturer of high-end, luxury spa treatment tables – has joined forces with bathroom fittings specialist Dornbracht to create the Libra, a wet table which enables guests to shower lying down. The two companies have combined their expertise to create the innovative new product.

The heatable table is height- as well as front- and rear-adjustable and comes equipped with a horizontal shower module with six recessed water bars. Users can choose from a variety of pre-programmed 'aqua choreographies' which offer either a balancing, an energising or a de-stressing effect. There's also a range of settings for water temperature, intensity and quantity.

Sammy Gharieni, CEO of Gharieni, told *Spa Business*: "The Libra Horizontal Shower is not just a new wet table, it's a completely new concept in terms of its functionality. Time and again we find the high-end spa and wellness markets need extraordinary, luxury innovations."

Dornbracht's Bastian Hartwigsen said: "We're very excited to partner with Gharieni, and have merged our knowledge and capabilities to create a unique treatment experience for spa customers."

Spa-kit.net keyword: Gharieni

Klafs unveils sauna skincare

Sauna, pool and spa company Klafs has launched a Sauna Care range in partnership with product house Babor.

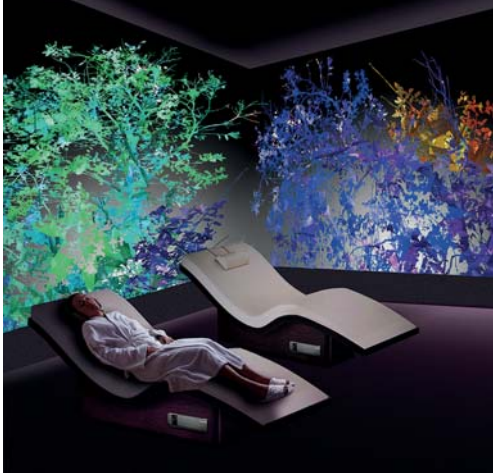
The cosmetics are designed specially for use with heat experiences to stimulate circulation and cleanse and invigorate the skin. They include a hair and body shower gel, a body peeling cream, a lifting body cream and ampules of algae-active fluid.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Klafs

La Biosthetique targets dry skin

The new Dermosthetique Hydro-Actif line by La Biosthetique contains ingredients from green algae and white lupin to bind moisture in the skin. The four products, which are said to intensively treat dry skin, include a cleansing mousse, moisturising tonic, a moisture booster and a cream.

Spa-kit.net keywords: **La Biosthetique**



Zen-sations artful surroundings for spas

Spanish-based Zen-sations Arboreum specialises in photographing elements of nature – especially trees – that are high in energy. The pieces, developed by environmental scientist Sergi Nogués and artist Albert Cuevas, form part of the company's latest creation – the Evolutive Wellness room.

Evolutive Wellness environments use the still art panels of natural tree imagery as a backdrop and match them with coloured lighting, sound and scent for a sensory experience. The aim is to help guests connect with nature in a new way as they relax. The designs can be customised to a range of spaces and are suitable for use in spas, hotels, museums, sports and leisure facilities.

Spa-kit keyword: **Zen-sations**

Natural, ethical skincare from Africa

Stephan Helary, a botanist from South Africa has used his extensive knowledge of the country's indigenous plants to set up natural and ethical skincare company Terres D'Afrique (lands of Africa).

The face and body products include sustainably-harvested, wild botanicals such as rooibos, baobab and marula which – because they grow in harsh environments – are a rich source of omega 3 oils and powerful antioxidants. The range has been formulated as a premium spa line and is complemented by Terres D'Afrique rituals which have been inspired by traditional African therapy techniques.

Helary, who's spent years researching the plants and developing the formulations, says: "African people have used powerful botanicals as traditional healing elixirs for centuries. The curative and restorative power of many African plants is legendary for a reason. We can say they work – in no uncertain terms."

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

Decléor reveals Aroma Lisse

In celebration of its 40th anniversary, Decléor has launched Aroma Lisse, a range of five anti-ageing products with light textures based on the essential oil of mandarin.
Spa-kit.net keyword: **Decleor**

Cogitech's Matrice design

French technical engineering practice Cogitech has unveiled The Matrice collection of benches and seats produced in two composite materials – lacquered fibreglass and carbon fibre. The manufacturing and contemporary design company has also produced table and ceiling lights, tables and mirrors in the same materials, combining technological innovation, design and clean lines.
Spa-kit keyword: **Cogitech**

Hot property from Dalesauna

Spa equipment supplier, Dalesauna, has developed the Rohol Sauna, which combines both infrared technology and traditional sauna heaters. The sauna – which has a modern look thanks to veneered panels – features wall heaters that produce heat via infrared light. The infrared rays penetrate the body to make people feel warm from the inside out. The physiological benefits are said to be akin to those felt after exercise such as detoxification through sweat production, pain relief and a strengthened immune system. It's also been designed to use 30 per cent less energy than conventional saunas.
Spa-kit.net keyword: **Dalesauna**

Aveda's Culture Clash makeup

The 2014 summer make-up collection by Aveda has been inspired by a combination of disparate styles such as tribal, folkloric, urban and futuristic. The new Culture Clash lip and eye colours include earthy copper tones and aquamarine mixed with delicate pastels, such as lilac for an unpredictable but sophisticated contrast.
Spa-kit.net keyword: **Aveda**

Ergolift gets a makeover

The updated Ergolift treatment head by LPG has been designed to be twice as effective in tightening sagging skin, improving fine lines and wrinkles as well as the radiance of the skin's complexion. The head, which uses micro-motor technology, is a key feature in LPG's new Endermolift anti-ageing facials. It has two settings, one for sensitive areas around the eyes, mouth and hands, and one for other face areas as well as the neck and décoletage.
Spa-kit.net keyword: **LPG**

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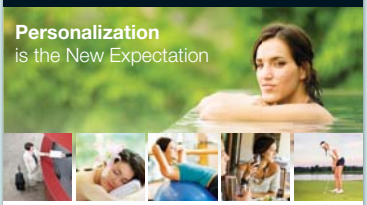

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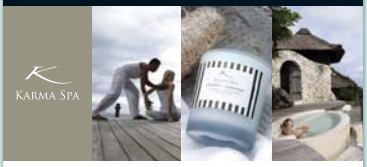

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