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# contributors

## READER SERVICES

### Subscriptions

Julie Albone +44 (0)1462 471915

### Circulation

Michael Emmerson +44 (0)1462 471932

## EDITORIAL TEAM

### Editor

Liz Terry +44 (0)1462 431385

### Managing editor

Katie Barnes +44 (0)1462 471925

### Newsdesk

Sarah Todd +44 (0)1462 471927

Tom Walker +44 (0)1462 471934

Peter Hayman +44 (0)1462 471938

Caroline Wilkinson +44 (0)1462 471911

### North America editor

Peter Sargent +1 239 948 5811

## ADVERTISING TEAM

### Publisher/advertising sales

Nuzhat Hayat +44 (0)121 7421370

### Advertising sales

Tessa Alexander +44 (0)1462 471903

John Challinor +44 (0)1582 607970

Jan Williams +44 (0)1462 471909

### Advertising production

Ed Gallagher +44 (0)1905 20198

## WEB TEAM

### spa-kit.net/product search engine

Sarah Todd +44 (0)1462 471927

### spabusiness.com

Michael Paramore +44 (0)1462 471926

Dean Fox +44 (0)1462 471900

## DESIGN

Andy Bundy +44 (0)1462 471924

## FINANCE

Sue Davis +44 (0)1395 519398

Denise Gildea +44 (0)1462 471930

## CREDIT CONTROL

Rebekah Scott +44 (0)1462 733477



## RHIANON HOWELLS

Rhianon Howells was 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 widely on health, fitness, travel and leisure as a freelance journalist.



## CHRIS MCBEATH

Chris McBeath has more than 20 years' experience in the tourism industry, working with hotels, resorts, cruise ships and tourist organisations and as a professional journalist. She writes for a variety of international consumer and business-to-business titles.



## JAMES OSCHMAN

A biophysicist and biologist from the University of Pittsburgh, US, James Oschman has had 30 research papers published on complementary medicine. He has also written two books on energy medicine and is the founder of Nature's Own Research, an association which explores modalities of natural medicine.



## LEONOR STANTON

Leonor Stanton is the founder of LLS Consulting, specialising in market and commercial assessments and financial planning in the hospitality and spa sectors. She was previously with Deloitte Consulting and Deloitte Corporate Finance.



## JENNIFER TODD

Jennifer Todd has been a regular contributor to *Spa Business* magazine for the last six years and has established herself as a leading commentator in the industry. Currently living in Melbourne, she specialises in writing about the Asia Pacific leisure sector.



## JONATHAN WHITTLE

Jonathan Whittle has worked in the magazine industry for more than 20 years with IPC, EMAP and Nexus. His career as a publisher has embraced consumer and business-to-business titles such as *Travel Trade Gazette* and *The World Travel Guide*, allowing him to develop valuable insight into the global travel market.

## THE LEISURE MEDIA COMPANY PUBLISHES



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# a new model

**M**any operators have been knocked sideways by the recession as customers have stopped turning up, leaving staff standing and bills mounting.

Research indicates that even though people still have cash in their pockets, a spirit of austerity rules and they're more likely to bank it than spend it. This behaviour is driven by fear, so until consumers feel more confident, things are unlikely to change.

Most operators report that the period leading up to the downturn was the most buoyant they'd traded through, meaning the industry was at full tilt when the recession hit. The speed of onset and extent of the fall-off in business caught most by surprise and plans have been hurriedly changed – often with serious consequences for the businesses involved.

We've seen casualties, but also a stabilising of business as costs are cut and plans put on hold to bring the operation in-line with the new reality. Many operators are licking their wounds and the question now is, what next?

There's no doubt the 'pay and play' business model adopted by most spas has left them highly vulnerable to recession and in this issue, we look at the concept of spa memberships and suggest that this may be one of the solutions which could be adopted by the industry.



**The Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group researched the market for spa memberships and found 70 per cent of consumers who responded would be interested in signing up**

*Spa Business's* publisher, The Leisure Media Company, has six other publications – among them, a magazine called *Health Club Management*. Although this is effectively the first recession for spas, it's the third for health and fitness and from our work in this sector, we're aware of the power of memberships to create stable and profitable businesses. We're also finding that in this recession, our health and fitness readers are faring better than our spa readers. As a result, our starting point for analysing the concept of spa membership has been to talk to key health and fitness contacts who've launched spas, to find out how memberships work for them (page 20).

We would argue that spa operators need to adopt new business models such as those based on membership, to survive and thrive: increased customer loyalty, greater perception of value and predictable income streams are among the benefits associated with this model.

There seems to be great enthusiasm for this idea among consumers and Mandarin Oriental found 70 per cent of a strong consumer sample taken over two years would be interested in signing up. Other operators report that they can start the month with over half their financial target achieved through membership payments – a very exciting prospect in today's market.

We've been told by some that spa membership is an old fashioned and outmoded idea which has no place in the modern spa industry, but we would urge operators to revisit the idea and to examine ways in which it can be applied successfully. With spa operators of the experience and calibre of Red Door and Mandarin Oriental extolling the virtues of memberships, we think it may be just what the industry needs right now.

**Liz Terry** editor [lizterry@spabusiness.com](mailto:lizterry@spabusiness.com)

## ON THE COVER:

CHI, the Spa at Shangri-La

## THE LEISURE MEDIA COMPANY

### Head Office/Europe Office

Portmill House, Portmill Lane,  
Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1DJ, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1462 431385  
Fax: +44 (0)1462 433909

### US Office

3446 Wildwood Lake Circle,  
Bonita Springs, Florida 34134, USA  
Tel: +1 239 948 5811  
Fax: +1 239 948 4930

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# write to reply

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](mailto:theteam@spabusiness.com)

## A call for spas to treat anxiety

Emma Fletcher and Martha Langley, co-authors, *Free Yourself From Anxiety*

**A**nxiety disorders are one of the most common mental health illnesses. Most of us will feel anxious at times, but if this becomes permanent and focused on a phobia or obsession, then an anxiety disorder has developed. Such disorders include panic attacks, phobias (like agoraphobia), obsessive compulsive disorder and generalised anxiety disorder and sufferers often become housebound and isolated. In the current economic climate, these disorders seem likely to increase.

Most sufferers also experience deeply uncomfortable physical symptoms, such as shakiness, raised heart rate, dizziness, needing to go to the toilet and feeling faint. For those with mild to moderate anxiety, self-help is a viable option.

There are many aspects of behaviour and thought processes that need to be examined, but among the most important are regular relaxation, aerobic exercise and calm steady breathing. Clearly the spa environment is ideal for promoting and supporting these goals.

It is quite likely, therefore, that staff will meet clients with anxiety who are hoping to benefit from the therapies on

**Regular relaxation and calm steady breathing can help to alleviate anxiety**

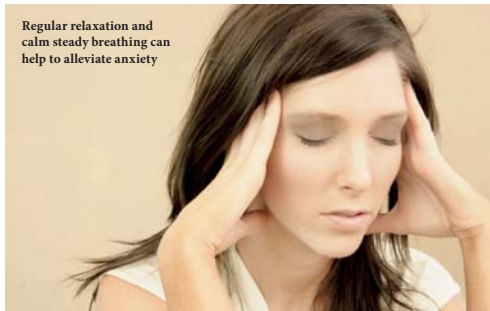


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offer. The simplest advice is to accept the client's requests without judging them. For instance, a person with claustrophobia may ask to have the treatment room door left ajar, or someone with a social phobia may wish to avoid the waiting room. As long as there are no health and safety issues, it should be possible to meet their needs and requests.

Taking it further, spas could offer programmes specifically tailored to anxiety. Advice on exercise, relaxation and breathing could be combined with sessions with a trained counsellor. Yet this would need to be individually tailored as there is no one-size-fits-all approach for anxiety. Fletcher and Langley wrote the self-help book *Free Yourself from Anxiety*

## What can spas bring to the Gross National Happiness Index?

Motti Essakow, founder, OmWard Bound, Canada

**I**n 1972 the King of Bhutan first expressed the term Gross National Happiness (GNH). In Buddhism, inner happiness is the purpose of life and since Bhutan is a Buddhist country, the king felt responsible for defining its development in terms of the happiness of the people, rather than traditional economic measurements such as GDP.

Almost 40 years on Bhutan is still following this unique GNH development model: taking into account ecological and wellbeing metrics such as pollution and

controlled incoming tourism, over material consumption. This is beginning to form a basis for conventional Western development which integrates non-material elements such as cultural, social, wellbeing and nature-based values.

But the biggest challenge is in implementing local 'happiness' initiatives for individuals and communities. This fits in well with spas, wellness centres and even hospitals where personal and planetary wellness is the next big thing. Operators could introduce programmes to increase

inner and outer happiness – laughter yoga, for instance, is already practised in UK and US spas, or they could encourage guests to 'discover the art of doing nothing', where doing nothing, is doing something. Another possibility for spas is ecopsychology – therapy through nature and our surrounding architecture.

The old, mainstream model for Western development, especially in the context of wellbeing, is being seriously challenged. While the alternative is far from clear the GNH way is one way forward.

## Why doesn't spa design stimulate *all* of the senses?

Sonia Alexis, graduate, BSc (Hons) International Spa Management, University of Buxton, UK

I appreciate visual elements of the spa environment, but I feel the spa journey often ends with feelings of incomplete sensory satisfaction.

As a spa management student, this led to my study investigating whether designers and developers consider the sensory impact of spa architecture.

Spas are typically visually stunning, engaging the sense of sight, but what of the other senses? What thought, for example, is given to acoustics – the qualities of sound and how sound reverberates within a space, how it travels between spaces or how it interacts with the other senses? The way that sound is used could add to the ambience and atmosphere of a spa, thus affecting mood and ultimately the quality of the spa experience.

My study revealed that, in principle, there is an awareness of the influence of the environment on the senses. In practice, however, little consideration appears to be taken to strategically engage all of the senses through design.

It's suggested that this may be due to many factors such as design training, sight bias as well as project budgets. It could also be due to design trends: in the West, for example, a popular contemporary design theme is minimalism, which



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/INSPIRA DIAL PRINSETER

It's suggested that while visually stunning, minimalist designs can feel clinical

can feel clinical and consequently have minimal affect on the sensory experience.

It is fair to say not all spa users will be aware or even appreciate the effort made to improve their surroundings through sensory application, but cognition is not required to benefit from the experiences.

In order to enhance the experience for the spa user and for a true sense of wellbeing (emotional, sensual and intellectual) I propose that all of our five senses should be stimulated. After all, if we design out all sensory cues in an environment we are essentially left blind, deaf and numb.

## Tapping into emotions is key to spa operations and product success

Crispin Reed, managing director, Brandhouse

Emotion. The most important seven letters in business. But business doesn't like talking about emotion. Rarely discussed, it's locked away while rationality reigns supreme.

Yet in this age of oversupply, product parity and commoditisation, businesses are forced to forge deeper emotional connections with their consumers.

In our 2009 study, The Brandhouse Emotion 100<sup>®</sup>, we set out to measure the 'emotional competitive advantage' of 100 leading brands in the UK. We found that the stronger the emotional anticipation of a brand, the bigger its competitive advantage. Interestingly, service brands, such as hotels and resorts including Center Parcs and Four Seasons, performed less well than tangible product brands such as Kellogg's.

This could be because a consumer's expectations might be higher when it comes

to the service category, making it harder for brands to achieve a better score. Or it may be down to the fact that they simply don't deliver service levels of a high enough standard.

The key here for spa operators is to develop strong emotional connections with customers. It's important they deliver 'meaningful' customer care – by this I mean a truly personalised and individual approach where service shines through over a 'cookie-cutter', formulaic one.

Another tip is for spas to define their brand story – this could be highlighting the training staff undertake or relating to the inspiration of the founder, for example. The brand story will underpin the emotional competitive advantage.

The brand story is also relevant to spa product houses. In a very crowded marketplace full of claims from the straightforward to the bizarre, expressing

rational benefits in an emotionally engaging way is crucial – a good example of this is Dove and its Campaign for Real Beauty (see p24). Also key is deeply understanding your consumer base. This may sound obvious, but it's amazing how many brands and companies don't do this.

Companies may also want to take the lead from Kellogg's, which performed very well in our survey. Firstly, this is an everyday, trusted, well-liked brand, which always delivers what it promises (as evidenced by a strong score against the emotional territory of contentment).

Secondly, and this is something we're seeing across a number of brands, Kellogg's consistently delivers incremental innovations (in flavours, packaging etc). We believe that particularly in times of recession, those brands that deliver lots of incremental innovations rather than a couple of big ones will be successful.

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# news update



As the towers rise, they will turn outwards, offering panoramic views across the city

## Parisien spa tower project gets new look

A development for the La Défense business district in Paris has been revised, with a new architectural practice driving the scheme forward in the future.

Called Hermitage Plaza and designed by Foster + Partners, the twin tower buildings will take the form of interlocking triangles which face one another and enclose a large public piazza.

As the towers rise, they will turn outwards to offer residents sweeping views across the city from large feature windows.

Covering a total site area of 161,458sq ft (15,000sq m), the first tower will have

91 floors and the second will have 92. There will be 538 apartments, as well as a panoramic spa, a hotel and offices.

Design features will include glazed façade panels with different points catching the light throughout the day as the sun moves. The building will be braced by a diagrid structure and incorporates a number of sustainable features. These include angled façade panels, which will promote self-shading and vents which can be opened to draw fresh air inside.

Work is scheduled to begin in 2010 and be completed by the end of 2014.

## NorgeSpa set to open second site in Norway

Norwegian spa manufacturing group Olavsen has launched a new spa franchise concept called NorgeSpa.

The franchise package includes a range of options, such as spa design and management. It also offers franchisees a revenue share on all products and treatment equipment, which Olavsen manufactures.

The first NorgeSpa opened in December 2008 in Fenstad, Norway, with a second preparing to open in late 2009 at Magnor, on the border of Sweden and Norway.

It is hoped that the brand can eventually be extended to the US and UK.

## First foreign chapter of BISA is founded

The first international chapter of the British International Spa Association (BISA) has been founded in Japan.

BISA Japan launched at the British Embassy in Tokyo by the chair of the new chapter: Masatsuyo Matsumoto.

Matsumoto has established the goals of this chapter of the organisation, which strongly focus on setting standards for Japan's spa industry and emphasise the need for spa manager and therapist education.

In addition, BISA Japan will be committed to promoting Japan as a spa destination around the world.



Locally-sourced canvas will be used for the tents

## Raison d'Etre to create tent experience

Spa development and management consultancy Raison d'Etre is to work in partnership with Sujan Luxury Hotels to create a tented spa for The Serai camp in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

Opening later this year, The Serai will feature 21 canvas tents for accommodation, divided into three categories, including one tent with a private spa area, a swimming pool and a lounge.

The spa at The Serai will boast four treatment tents and will be set apart from the main camp.

Each treatment tent will be split into three parts: a welcome area where guests will receive a welcome drink and meet their therapists; a changing area; and a large treatment space.

Locally-sourced stone and canvas are being used throughout the spa, while all tents will be air-conditioned in the summer and heated in the winter.

A range of spa products have also been created exclusively for The Serai, using plants, herbs and spices from the surrounding Rajasthan area.



The building is situated next to the Adriatic Sea and offers many thalassotherapy treatments

## €25m Novi Spa centre opens in Croatia

A new €25m (US\$35.2m, £21.83m) spa and wellness concept has opened at the Novi Spa Hotels & Resort property in Novi Vinodolski, Croatia.

The spa has wall-to-ceiling windows throughout, offering views over the Adriatic Sea to the Island of Krk and includes 22 treatment rooms and six spa suites.

Designed by the architect Ante Murales Bilic from Studio Ante Murales in Zagreb, Croatia, the concept of the spa focuses on traditional Oriental philosophies combined with a more traditionally Western, holistic approach.

Facilities include a total of 14 saunas including an outdoor Finnish sauna, a laconium, three steambaths, a salt peeling bath and a Kneipp area.

There is also a whirlpool with heated seawater and indoor and outdoor thalasso swimming pools featuring waterfalls and a counter-current system.

Treatments include a range of signature massages as well as thalassotherapy and hydrotherapy rituals. Product houses used include Germaine de Capuccini, Charme de O'rient and a Novi Spa-branded cosmetic line.

## Vinotherapy spa opens in Madeira

A vinotherapy-based spa has just opened in The Vine Hotel on the Portuguese island of Madeira.

Located above the cobbled old quarter of the city of Funchal, The Hotel Vine has 57 hotel bedrooms as well as the large spa.

The €1m (US\$1.41m, £873,000) spa features a TheraVine-branded range of vinotherapy treatments and products.

Originating in South Africa, TheraVine was developed in the wine region of Stellenbosch and especially uses the pinotage grape in its treatments.

Additional wellness facilities include a panoramic rooftop swimming pool and a large whirlpool.



Guests will enjoy grape extract treatments

## Cliff Lodge spa opens at Ulusaba Reserve

A new Cliff Lodge, which will be accessed via a wooden walkway, has been added to the Ulusaba Private Game Reserve in South Africa.

The lodge comprises two suites, a large swimming pool and a small spa. South African-based brand Africology spa treatments will be offered.

The reserve is part of Virgin Limited Edition, Sir Richard Branson's privately-owned collection of luxury retreats.

## June debut for Rocco Forte Verdura in Sicily

The €124m (US\$174.62m, £108.27m) five-star Rocco Forte Verdura Golf and Spa Resort, located by the beach on the southern coast of Sicily, is on schedule to open in June 2009.

The resort will have two championship golf courses, as well as a 4,000sq m (430,556sq ft) spa complex with four thalassotherapy pools, 11 treatment rooms and a swimming pool. There will also be a 60m outdoor pool, an open-air amphitheatre and a private beach.

Designed by the Italian architect Flavio Albanese, the property is the first resort in The Rocco Forte Collection, which currently has 12 hotels.

## Starck spa launches at Viceroy Miami

Viceroy Resorts & Residences has opened its flagship spa in Miami within the Icon Brickell Tower in Florida, US.

The Spa at Viceroy Miami was styled by French designer Philippe Starck and covers 28,000sq ft (2,601sq m).

The spa features a 5,000sq ft (465sq m) Water Lounge boasting views over Biscayne Bay.

Designed to resemble a floating library, the lounge has bookcases, an oversized chandelier and waterborne sofas and chairs. Other facilities include 10 treatment rooms.

Therapies will use Swiss brand Valmont and the US-based lines Arcona and Ola Organics.





The lodge is situated on a 50-acre site on a ridge at Willow Vale

## Facility launches at Australian retreat

A AU\$650,000 (US\$518,100, €367,950, £321,150) spa has opened at the Gold Coast Ruffles Lodge in Australia.

The 3,982sq ft (370sq m) day spa is intended to focus on the lodge's surrounding Mount Tamborine environment and complement the existing 10-bedroom boutique accommodation.

The spa is finished in materials such as New Guinea rosewood and granite and features three treatment rooms.

Other facilities include a six-person capacity steamroom, an infra-red sauna, manicure and pedicure areas and a large

relaxation room. Therapies use the botanical-based WaterLily range. Signature treatments include the Organic Honey and Cocoa Body Wrap.

Sydney-based architectural firm Allen Jack+Cottier, which also created Australia's Golden Door Health Retreat in the Hunter Valley, was responsible for the spa design. There was also input from consultants Kirriën Withers.

Located on a ridge at Willow Vale, the lodge is set on 50 acres (20 hectares) of land and is around an hour's drive from Brisbane and the Gold Coast airports.

## Middle Eastern entry for W brand

Starwood Hotels & Resorts has extended its W Doha Hotel & Residences to Doha, Qatar, marking its entry into the Middle Eastern market.

W Doha launched in early March this year and is located in the West Bay of Doha on the Qatar peninsula. The property features 292 guest rooms, restaurants, a poolside outdoor shisha lounge, a champagne bar and a Bliss Spa.

The spa has nine treatment suites – with one VIP suite – a nail lounge with 'movie-while-you-mani' stations and a retail boutique. It also features laconiums and men's and women's water lounges, complete with lounge pools, relaxation space, steamrooms and saunas.

Starwood expects to open a further 11 W Hotels around the world in 2009,



Starwood plans 27 W Hotels by 2011

including W Barcelona – a 473-bedroom waterfront hotel and spa.

W Barcelona will follow the W Istanbul as the brand's second hotel in Europe and its first in Spain. Starwood ultimately plans to launch 27 W hotels by 2011.

## Salamander resort and spa on schedule

Work on a signature new resort and spa from the Salamander Hospitality group in Virginia, US, is halfway to being completed.

Launching in early 2010, the luxury Salamander resort and spa will be located in the village of Middleburg.

The spa will cover a total of 23,000sq ft (2,136sq m) and offer 14 treatment rooms, many with private outdoor terraces. It will also feature two outdoor 'treehouse' treatment rooms on the edge of the woods, overlooking a stream. Project architects are the US-based WATG group.

## The Grange Spa opens in Lincolnshire

A luxury new 8,395sq ft (780sq m) spa with six treatment rooms has opened in Pointon, Lincolnshire, UK.

Called The Grange Spa, treatments use Thalgo, Aromatherapy Associates and Jessica nail products.

The heat experience area was designed by Schietterer Wellness & Spa Design and consists of two feature showers, an aroma bath, a herbal bath, an ice fountain and a gemstone steam bath.

There is also a 1,076sq ft (100sq m) fitness suite which has been equipped by three suppliers: Escape Fitness, Matrix and Keiser.

## ISPA releases Global Best Practices guide

The International Spa Association (ISPA) has released a list of Global Best Practices to ensure that all spas provide quality service to guests.

The document is intended to act as a checklist and was created by a taskforce of spa industry professionals to aid their peers in creating the best spa experience possible for their clientele.

ISPA president Lynne Walker McNees said: "Two years ago, we introduced the ISPA Code of Conduct, which helped to develop a Global Best Practices guide. We are ensuring that our members have the tools they need to stay relevant in meeting consumer needs and expectations."

# battista

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**19-21 July 2009****Cosmoprof North America**

Now in its seventh year, this expo in Las Vegas, US, will include pavilions for spa, hair and nails and cosmetics. More than 730 companies took part in 2008.

T: +1 916 774 8682

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

**8-9 August 2009****Sydney International Spa & Beauty Expo**

One of Australia's largest spa and beauty trade events with the latest products, treatments and equipment. Held at the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre.

T: +61 2 9422 2535

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

**2-4 September 2009****Natural Therapies & Natural Health Expo**

This expo in Sydney, Australia, aims to provide natural health solutions for professionals in the natural health industry.

T: +61 2 9660 2113

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

**4-6 September 2009****Vita Spa 2009**

Staged at the Sheraton Libertador Hotel in Argentina, this South American show and conference is for owners and operators of spas, medi-spas and aesthetic clinics.

T: +5411 4758 4340

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

**13-14 September 2009****European Spa Summit 2009**

This conference, targeting European spa industry professionals, will be located in the Porte de Versailles, Paris, France. It is hailed as a must-attend event for all those who are looking to develop or invest in successful new spa projects.

T: +33 1 44 69 95 69

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

**13-15 September 2009****European Spa Exhibition 2009**

An exhibition for European spa industry professionals in Porte de Versailles, Paris, France, which runs alongside the European Spa Summit (above).

T: +33 1 44 69 95 61

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



The 16,500sq ft spa will complement the luxury resort's existing facilities

**Luxury spa unveiled at Emerald Bay**

A 16,500sq ft (1,532sq m) free-standing spa has opened at the Pueblo Bonito Emerald Bay resort in Mazatlan, Mexico. The site is one of seven in the group's portfolio.

The Emerald Bay Spa has a wide range of signature features, including a chromotherapy room, reflexology paths and aromatherapy areas.

Provided in the men's and women's steamrooms, chromotherapy (or colour therapy) will enable users to enhance their spa experience.

Elsewhere, the reflexology paths are intended to aid guests' relaxation, while the scent of lavender will be used in the reception area, and citrus to help refresh both the wet areas and the fitness centre.

There are also 11 treatment rooms, including a couple's massage room, while therapies will use Natura Bissé products.

Other facilities include aromatherapy and Swiss showers, a cold plunge pool and a relaxation area with two flatscreen televisions showing peaceful videos.



The courtyard area of the 1,500sq m spa, designed by Karim El Achak

**Late 2009 opening for Izuran in Morocco**

Izuran, a luxury resort situated on the outskirts of Marrakech, Morocco, is set to open in late 2009, featuring a 16,146sq ft (1,500sq m) medical spa.

Hamptons International is behind the 37-acre (15-hectare) development, which has been designed by Moroccan architect Karim El Achak in partnership with interior designer Miguel Cancio Martins.

The development also includes 10 luxury villas, two swimming pools and

gardens designed by landscape architect Christophe Girot and Moroccan architect Ahmed Bentaher.

It is claimed that the spa will be run by renowned medical professionals. The therapies on offer will be tailored to suit each spa guest – the philosophy is that individuals are the result of a balance between genetic history and the impact of the everyday environment, and therefore have specific individual needs.

A person wearing an orange sweater is holding a large, thick stack of papers and folders. The stack is held in front of them, and the papers are slightly fanned out. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

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Everyone's talking about...

# spa memberships



Zensation spas in Spain and Portugal offer a monthly membership for €50

RHIANON HOWELLS • CONSULTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

**T**he fitness industry boom brought a revolutionary new business model to the fore: the private health club, whose members signed a contract which commits them to paying a monthly fee – usually by direct debit – for the right to use the facilities at any time.

More than three decades since this model was introduced, it's an industry norm, used by fitness centre chains and independent operators across the globe. Spa operators, on the other hand, have remained largely reliant on ad hoc business from the local market and/or host hotel – that is, until now.

With spa increasingly being seen as a lifestyle choice rather than an occasional treat, an growing number of operators are starting to explore the option of offering memberships to guests who are willing to make a serious commitment to their health and/or beauty regimes.

*An increasing number of spa operators are looking at introducing membership schemes aimed at stimulating usage and boosting revenue. We investigate*

The advantages of a membership-based versus a pay-and-play business model are clear: it delivers a predictable revenue stream, encourages usage (and therefore secondary spend), and makes it much easier to track customers' needs and preferences and to deliver value.

So why doesn't every spa introduce a membership scheme? According to some experts, not every market is ready for this kind of business model – in emerging markets, for example,

consumers may not be willing to make the kind of financial or psychological commitment needed to make a spa membership pricing structure work.

Another issue is balancing the commitment to regular members with the needs of other ad hoc spa bookers. This could be a particular issue for spas within hotels, especially those that see a surge of business during particular times of the week or year when the needs of the two groups could clash.

Once you've decided to go ahead and launch a membership scheme, you'll need to decide how much to charge and what benefits to include in order to ensure the membership offers sufficient added value to members, while also being of maximum benefit to your business bottom line.

So could membership-based models work in the spa industry? We ask four industry experts for their views.

For the last five years, we've conducted a survey of spa customers across the globe. In 2008, 39,700 people were contacted, with a response rate of 5.3 per cent, which is significantly above the norm of 3 per cent. One question asked was, 'would you be interested in signing up for a spa membership?' Around 70 per cent said 'yes'.

As a result of this, we're considering how to implement a spa membership scheme in some Mandarin Oriental spas. The financial benefits are clear: you get a guaranteed amount of revenue up-front, and in terms of yield management, you're able to estimate much more accurately how much business you're going to get in the future.

As to what benefits a membership might include, that will vary from operator to operator, but there has to be some kind of added value. Treatment benefits might be a

## ANDREW GIBSON

Group director of spa,  
Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group



pre-sold, value-for-money block of treatments (such as buy 10, get one free) or a set discount across all treatments. In addition, a membership might include priority bookings, a newsletter and special events, as well as access to the gym, swimming pool and thermal suite, where available.

Significantly, another finding from our survey was that access to saunas, steam-rooms and spa pools was an increasingly important reason for choosing a spa, fourth only to quality of services, quality of facilities and ambience. Thermal facilities were also the most preferred 'treatment' after massages, signature treatments and facials.

For hotel chains introducing spa mem-

berships, creating a global network, so members of one spa can use others in the chain, might seem logical. However, this would be complex to deliver, because management com-

panies work with multiple owners, and dividing revenues would be challenging.

I'm not sure why spas are only just starting to look at memberships. It could simply be that the market wasn't ready before – and public perception will still be a barrier in some markets. A lot of people will ask if they really can't live without their club.

The fitness industry is a wonderful example for us because it's already gone through the process [of promoting memberships] and has developed a very efficient business model. In the 1980s, it was a challenge for private health club operators to persuade people to sign up for memberships. They'd say, 'the local authority facility provides everything I need, why would I join a private club?' Today, people not only join them, they use them three times a week.

"The fitness industry is a wonderful example for us because it's already gone through the process of promoting memberships and has developed a very efficient business model."

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group operates 17 spas within its hotels across the globe (see p58 also). Details: [www.mandarinoriental.com](http://www.mandarinoriental.com)

We launched our first spa in Cascais, near Lisbon, in 2006. Before that, we had spas in our health clubs, but the management was outsourced.

We now have 17 Zensations spas in our clubs in Spain and Portugal, and we'll have three more by the end of this year. With the exception our flagship site in Cascais, which offers seven treatment rooms and a relaxation area, all our spas have between four and five treatment rooms.

It wasn't until a year after launching Zensations that we decided to introduce a direct debit membership scheme for the spas. We'd been over-optimistic about the margins we could achieve with spas, especially as Spain and Portugal's stringent employment laws make it very expensive to replace under-performing staff. We realised early on that the business was quite unforgiving.

In looking for ways to improve the model, we decided to leverage some of the know-how from our personal training (PT) business, which is an area we're very strong in. We'd originally started selling PT in packages of 10 or 20 sessions, but we later moved to a direct-debit model, whereby clients commit to one, two or three sessions a week and we debit them

## NICK COUTTS

CEO, Holmes Place Iberia  
(Spain and Portugal)



revenue targets are €15,000 (US\$20,900, £13,100) to €40,000 (US\$55,750, £34,950) a month, with a 20-25 per cent margin – depending on the size of the spa and time of year

once a month. It was challenging at first, but now 80-95 per cent of all PT we sell is by direct debit. So applying this model to the spa business seemed a real opportunity.

Our Zen spa membership is open to both club members and non-members, and for €50 (US\$70, £44) a month, they get a 15 per cent discount on treatments, additional offers on special occasions such as Mother's Day, and priority booking.

Spa membership works not only because the revenue builds predictability and forecasting into the business, but also because it gets psychological and financial commitment from the guest: it stimulates them to come to the spa regularly, and gives therapists and managers the opportunity to cross-sell and up-sell products and services. It also lets us track their behaviour and spending patterns, which enables us to apply CRM principles and market specifically to them.

Our most successful spas are those that are most effective at building their direct-debit membership. Why? Because our

– and spas that do well at driving direct debit start the month with over 50 per cent of these targets already achieved.

A strategy is only as good as the people executing it, and I'd rather take on a manager with a sales background, with passion for spas, than someone from the spa industry who needs to be taught about sales.

Motivating therapists to sell memberships can be challenging, as selling doesn't come naturally to them and a direct-debit contract is harder to sell than a one-off service. My number one recommendation is to integrate membership sales into your commission structure, so staff have to achieve a set percentage of their sales targets through memberships in order to start earning; if you make something as fundamental as this optional, you're not going to get anywhere.

Holmes Place launched in Iberia in 1997. It now has 30 sites in Spain and Portugal. Details: [www.holmesplace.pt](http://www.holmesplace.pt) and [www.holmesplace.es](http://www.holmesplace.es)



One Spa was designed to cater for hotel guests, day guests and members, and it's a sound business model. About half of our revenue comes from memberships and about half from our treatment business.

Originally the Sheraton in Edinburgh was a business hotel. Since the opening of the spa in 2001, it has attracted more weekend visitors, but from Monday to Friday the spa's capture rate of guests from the hotel is low. Without offering memberships, we'd have to rely on day spa business during the week, which would be a lost opportunity. Memberships give us a regular stream of income during quieter times, and raise our profile in the community – word-of-mouth recommendations are better than any marketing campaign.

We currently have 1,400 members. Just over a quarter are fitness members, who pay £68 (US\$109, €78) a month for access to the gym, swimming pool and spa pools; just under a quarter are Aqua members, who pay £79 (US\$126, €90) a month to use the swimming pool, spa pools, roof-top hydro pool and thermal suite; and half are

## MARK PERKINS

General manager, One Spa, The Sheraton Grand Hotel, Edinburgh, UK



At One members who pay £100 (US\$160, €115) to use all the facilities.

Interestingly, in the last few months, we've seen a very slight increase in the number of Aqua memberships we're selling versus fitness memberships. We're also finding that many of those who sign up for the fitness membership upgrade to the At One membership, after using the complimentary voucher we give them when they join to try out our thermal suite.

Also included in all our membership packages is an incentive to book treatments. Encouraging secondary spend from members is difficult in my experience, both here and at the previous spa I worked at – possibly because they've paid a monthly fee, so psychologically they don't want to pay more.

To begin with, we gave members complimentary vouchers that entitled them to a discount off treatments, but take-up was low. About two years ago, we replaced that

with a card, which gives them a 20 per cent discount across the board from Monday to Friday. This has proved much more popular, and now about 8 per cent of our treatment business

comes from members – it doesn't sound much, but it's considerably higher than it was before we introduced the card.

The main challenge of offering memberships while also catering for hotel and day guests is getting the balance right. In terms of treatments, this tends to be controlled by the number of rooms and therapists available, and because the discount card only works from Monday to Friday, this discourages members from coming at the weekend, when we're busier with hotel guests.

With regards usage of the gym, swimming pool and thermal area, this is harder to control. By and large, we find members tend to self-manage and stay away at weekends of their own volition. Also, use of the gym by guests staying at the hotel over the weekend is low anyway, as they're usually there to relax, so that helps.

You can't claim to be offering a hugely exclusive experience to members if you've also got the potential for lots of hotel guests to come in, and you need to consider this when you're developing your business plan.

One Spa is housed in a standalone building next to the Sheraton Grand, Edinburgh (see SB08/1 p94). Details: [www.one-spa.net](http://www.one-spa.net)

"Without offering membership, we'd have to rely on day spa business during the week. Membership gives us a regular stream of income during quieter times."

Red Door Spa Holdings has created a new division, called Simply Face & Body, to roll out a membership-based spa model. Offering facials, waxing and massage, the operation is aimed at a broader demographic than the Red Door Spa division.

Members pay a monthly fee of US\$59 (£42, £37). This includes a complimentary 50-minute facial or massage and a 15 per cent discount on retail. All services thereafter are charged at US\$49 (£35, £31). We make no profit on services. If guests don't use their complimentary service during a given month, it rolls to the next month.

Each Simply Face & Body site offers three- and 12-month memberships. Those signing for three months pay a US\$29 (£21, £18) joining fee, which is waived for those committing to a 12-month membership.

If guests choose not to become members, we offer them an introductory service at US\$49 (£35, £31) and subsequent services at US\$79 (£57, £50) – but our belief is they'll

## TODD WALTER

CEO, Red Door Spa Holdings, US



find the first service to be such good value that they'll become members. Our goal is 1,000 members per site, and we anticipate that each member will average one-and-a-half to two services a month.

A typical site will have 12 treatment rooms, and we'll be aiming to deliver 60 treatments a day. The primary benefit of membership is affordable treatments delivered by highly trained professionals in a safe, clean environment and convenient location. While thermal facilities are nice, they add to the cost of doing business and would require us to charge higher prices for our core services. Our goal is to bring wellness to segments of the population previously blocked by price barriers.

The biggest challenge with a value-driven concept is finding and retaining qualified

staff, who are used to earning commissions on much higher-priced services.

However, we're finding that our commitment to training and development, and the benefits and mobility

offered across the Red Door network, is enabling us to attract higher-calibre staff.

So far, we're finding that word-of-mouth and referrals from existing members are the primary source of new guests, and universal praise from beauty editors and bloggers has affirmed our belief in the concept. In this challenging economic environment, the value proposition of first-rate services at rock-bottom prices in exchange for a reasonable monthly membership fee is proving to be very compelling for consumers.

Red Door Spa Holdings operates 23 standalone Red Door Day Spa and eight Red Door Spas in a resort environment. The first Simply Face & Body opened in New Jersey, US, in January (see SB09/2 p24). Details: [www.reddoorspas.com](http://www.reddoorspas.com)



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# Andrew Lane & Frances Hayter

*Spa and Salon International – owner of the Dove Spa and Pond's Institute brands – operates 48 sites across four countries, and is aiming for over 100 by 2013. We talk to the man shaping the company's strategy, and the woman he's charged with overseeing Dove Spa's global growth*

RHIANON HOWELLS • CONSULTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

Considering he's working to grow a multinational business in the midst of a global recession, Andrew Lane, director of Spa and Salon International, is surprisingly upbeat.

"Like any business, we're influenced by consumer spending, so it's not the easiest environment," he concedes. "But we're actually feeling quite pleased, because the changes we've made to our business over the past year have made us much more robust and better able to contend with it."

"In the UK, the fourth quarter was actually our strongest last year, and that's not because there's anything unique about our piece of the market, but because the processes we've put in place are enabling us to swim against the tide – although it is frustrating that the tide is holding us back from making even more progress."

Spa and Salon International was formed in 2007 as a merger of two beauty chains: Pond's Institute in Spain,



Andrew Lane



Frances Hayter



Unilever Ventures aims to have Dove Spa and Pond's Institute franchisees in place by 2010

launched in 2000 by Unilever Spain; and Dove Spa, launched in the UK in 2006 through Serve Health & Beauty, an existing salon operator (see SB06/2 p34).

The common link was that both companies licensed their brand names (Dove and Pond's respectively) from the global conglomerate Unilever; and Unilever Ventures, Unilever's private equity arm, was a significant shareholder in both businesses. Following the merger, Unilever Ventures holds a 48 per cent stake in Spa and Salon; two institutional investors and the founders and former chair of the Serve business also hold significant shares.

Today, the company has 48 sites, and plans to have over 100 in the next three to four years. So how do you take not one but two retail brands and turn them into successful day spa chains across four countries and two continents in just a few years? And what is it about the business model that is enabling the company to swim against the tide where more experienced operators are struggling to stay afloat?

## Building an idea

The driving force behind Spa and Salon – and the rollout of both Pond's Institute and Dove Spa – is company director Andrew Lane. Softly spoken yet direct, Lane was one of two Unilever employees who helped set up Unilever Ventures in 2002 with a view to helping the company leverage its existing core strengths to develop new business models.

Two years earlier, Unilever Spain had launched a beauty centre in Madrid to support its Pond's retail skincare business – a leading brand in Spain. Building on an existing marketing concept that cited an abstract 'Pond's Institute' as an authority on the brand, Spanish marketing director Miguel Angel Rivera pushed through the idea for



a bricks-and-mortar centre by the same name. It was another Unilever employee, Richard Lagnado – looking for ways to build the company's personal care brands through new channels – who put Rivera in touch with Lane, who, in turn, saw enough potential to invest in a rollout.

It was the success of Pond's Institute that sowed the seed for Dove Spa. "I could see the Pond's Institute business was working in Spain, and I knew we had a powerful brand in Dove," says Lane, who graduated from Cambridge University with a degree in biochemistry before joining Unilever as a marketing trainee in 1985.

"However, in an organisation like Unilever there are normally several people involved in building an idea," he says.

"In the case of Dove Spa there are four parents: Miguel Angel Rivera, now vice-president for Unilever in Europe, who showed how a day spa business could benefit and add back to a retail brand; Richard Lagnado, who put Miguel and I in touch and worked on the initial concept for Dove Spa; myself, whose role it was to secure the financing, find a company to invest in to carry out a pilot, and pull together a brand licence agreement; and Silvia Lagnado, the then global brand manager for Dove, who saw the idea's potential and was willing to license the brand to a company Unilever did not control. That was a big step, as Dove is one of Unilever's most valuable brands."

The decision to trial Dove Spa in the UK was partly strategic, as the Dove brand had a strong presence there, and partly practical, as Unilever Ventures was based in London. In 2004, Lane found a UK company he thought

**The company plans to retail its professional spa product lines to expose more consumers to the brand. Direct spa and online sales are already 25 per cent of turnover**

would fit the bill as a partner: Serve Health & Beauty, the operator of a chain of 25 salons called re-aqua, which was growing quickly through acquisition. The first Dove Spa – a conversion – launched in Reigate, Surrey, in 2006, and a rollout followed, with some businesses built from scratch but more converted from existing operations (the company now owns 29 sites in the UK, of which 24 are Dove Spas).

As an investor, what Lane was looking for was "the evidence that if we changed the brand, and also put in our own products, treatments, systems and marketing, we would get growth." He knew the Dove brand alone – although clearly a significant advantage – would not achieve this. "It would be easy to be arrogant and say, 'Dove's a £2bn [US\$3.2bn, €2.3bn] brand, of course it's going to get people flooding in, when what actually brings people in is how the brand is expressed through the service."

"What was obvious was that this was very much a service business, and we needed people who understood it. We found that in re-aqua, and in particular, we found Fran [Hayter, then operations director]. Fran for us was one of the major reasons to get involved with the company."

Thus, when Spa and Salon International was formed a year after the UK launch, Hayter went with the company as international brand development director for Dove Spa.

### Real beauty

With over 30 years' experience in the beauty industry, since starting out as a therapist in the 1970s, Hayter was well placed to help create a concept for Dove Spa, which included developing a whole new range of premium skincare products as well as a design template for the sites, brand standards and protocols, and a strong marketing message.

In shaping Dove Spa, the Serve/Unilever teams drew on the strengths of the parent brand: its reputation for honesty in the claims it makes for its products and the success of the Campaign for Real Beauty: Dove's iconic global marketing campaign, which used 'real women' of all sizes, colours and ages to promote an attainable idea of beauty in contrast with the media ideal of size-zero, airbrushed models.

"We're proud of our heritage and the great things Dove brings to what we're doing," says Hayter, who was director of beauty for Regis Salons before joining Serve in 2000.

In line with the philosophy of catering for real women, a strategic decision was made early on to eschew city-centre sites in favour of suburban areas and small towns where significant numbers of women actually live.

As with the Dove brand, all marketing material features and targets real women, rather than models, while the sites – each with between four and 12 treatment rooms plus a large retail and reception area – aim for "contemporary minimalism coupled with warm comfort", with visuals reinforcing the key brand messages. Meanwhile, in association with the Dove Self-Esteem Fund in the UK, specially selected therapists are trained to hold BodyTalk workshops in nearby secondary schools, which are aimed at helping young girls explore their feelings about physical appearance.

In terms of services, the emphasis, says Hayter, is on delivering real, honest results. "We're positioning ourselves as real skincare experts," she says. A particular USP is the free skin diagnostics consultation offered to every client, which uses a specially commissioned machine to measure hydration and oil levels, UV damage and elasticity.

The products and treatments, meanwhile, have been designed in close consultation with the company's therapists – with a view both to accessing their frontline knowledge and giving them ownership of the end result – and formulated by Unilever's research and development team. "Unilever has a face-care business worth nearly €1bn [US\$1.39bn, £869m]," points out Lane, "so we have access to a lot of experience and technology."

## PERSONAL FILES

### FRANCES HAYTER AND ANDREW LANE

**What's your favourite book?** FH – Anything by Philippa Gregory.

AL – *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K Le Guin

**What's your favourite spa treatment?**

FH – A full-body massage. AL – A facial

**What do you do for fun?** FH – I have a girly evening with my friends, mostly laughing. AL – Hike in the local countryside, go to the cinema or play strategy games

**Who do you most admire?** FH – Nelson Mandela: after 27 years in jail he still came out fighting. AL – Bill Gates: he knew when to step down from Microsoft and then helped treat diseases of the world's poor

**What do you worry about?** FH – The future for my daughters. AL – Letting people down

**What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?** FH – Always have a sense of humour and laugh at yourself a lot. AL – Listen to people

It didn't take long for the model to prove itself. "We've had spectacular growth," says Lane. "When we acquired our first site it was achieving sales of £120,000 [US\$191,900, €138,050]. Last year, it achieved sales of just under £300,000 [US\$479,850, €345,200] – that's a two-and-a-half fold increase in just over two years."

Despite this, Dove Spa has not been universally welcomed by the spa industry in the UK, with some leading players questioning the company's right to use the word 'spa' at all, on the basis that the sites don't offer pools or wet facilities or even relaxation areas. Straight-talking Hayter has no patience with such purists.

"I don't actually care what our business is called," she says. "For me, it's about the perception our guests have of what a spa delivers, and that perception is that a spa is a place you can go to be cared for and pampered. By adding the word 'spa' to our name, we're telling our guests that we're exactly that place. I'm afraid saying that you can't be a spa unless you have water just doesn't work any more."

*Dove's iconic global marketing campaign uses 'real women' of all shapes, sizes, colours and ages to promote an attainable idea of beauty in contrast with the media ideal of size-zero, airbrushed models*





## Creating synergies

So how does Dove Spa compare to its older sibling, Pond's Institute? According to Lane, the two businesses are delivering "pretty much the same message and services but with a different tone of voice."

In real terms, what this means is that while the size of the sites, the mix of facilities, the emphasis on technology and the focus on results-based treatments are very similar – the products are manufactured by the same R&D team although they do have completely different formulations – the Pond's Institute brand image is more traditional beauty than 'real beauty', featuring models rather than ordinary women in its marketing campaigns. As Lane puts it: "The positioning of Pond's Institute is more around transformation."

Also in contrast with Dove Spa, all 17 Pond's Institutes in Spain – all of which are greenfield sites – are located in cities: 13 in Madrid, two in Zaragoza, one in Valencia and one in Seville. However, this is actually in line with the company's philosophy of locating its sites near where its target market lives, says Lane. "People in Spain live much more in the city centres than in the suburbs, in much denser housing than in the UK, so our Spanish customers typically live within walking distance of the beauty centre."

The decision to call Pond's Institutes beauty centres rather than spas is also culturally motivated. "The term day spa originated in the US and Canada, and because the UK is closer to those markets than the rest of Europe, we have a fairly clear idea of what that means," says Lane. "In Spain, a spa has to have water, while a salon implies hair; so in Spain, the term beauty centre best describes what we do."

Pond's Institute and Dove Spa share similar business models in terms of facilities and treatments, but the brand image of each is very different

According to Lane, the merger of Pond's Institute and Dove Spa under the umbrella of Spa and Salon International has resulted in synergies that "enable the two businesses to nurture each other, so they're more alike today than they were two years ago". For example, Pond's Institute has drawn on Dove Spa's experience to introduce massage and IPL (intense pulsed light) technology to its offer, while Dove Spa has emulated Pond's Institute's results-focused treatment programmes. The general managers for the two countries – Sue Shepherd in the UK and Javier Valiente in Spain – "really respect each other and are continually comparing notes," adds Lane.

## Global growth

Another motivation for merging the two businesses, admits Lane, was to create a strong platform for worldwide expansion. "The Dove brand is very strong in Europe and North America, while Pond's is very strong in Spain, Asia and some Latin American countries," says Lane. "So if you consider that our ambition is to grow globally, we are actually in a very good position with those two brands."

The first step towards achieving this was the opening of two Pond's Institutes in Mexico City in November 2007. "We chose Mexico because the brand is very strong there, and because it's Spanish-speaking, which made it easier to transfer the training and marketing materials, and also for our Spanish team to provide support," explains Lane.

Canada was chosen as the second testing ground for Dove Spa for similar reasons, with the first site launched in the suburbs of Toronto last October (see p30), and a second opened in a downtown location in April. "Dove is stronger in Canada than anywhere else in the world, even the UK; it's an iconic brand there," says Lane. "Added to which it's



an English-speaking country, and Toronto, in particular, is a great place to start.

"Greater Toronto has a population of nearly six million, which gives us the capability to open at least 20 sites there. That creates a cluster model, which is a much easier business to run, because you can move staff between sites and it's also easier to manage the training."

Lane anticipates opening 20-30 sites in Canada and sees the potential for the same number in Mexico over the next three to four years, if the pilots prove successful. He's confident that once the company has consolidated its foothold in Canada and Mexico, it will be in a strong position to expand further. "If it works in those four countries, there's no reason it shouldn't work in almost any other country," he says.

Of course, having a parent such as Unilever is bound to help any young spa company taking its first steps into foreign lands: "It provides us with contacts within the country, as well as marketing and PR support, which makes it easier for us to expand the business," says Lane.

For now, however, the focus is on consolidation, and outside its four key markets, Spa and Salon is in the process of opening just one other site: a Dove Spa located within Unilever Germany's corporate offices in Hamburg, which will cater for both employees and the general public. Operated by Unilever, but supported and closely monitored by Spa and Salon, the operation will enable the company to test the model in Germany.

At the moment, all Dove Spas and Pond's Institutes are owned and operated by Spa and Salon, but as part of the strategy for future expansion, Lane and his team are actively looking for franchise partners. "Our ideal franchisee would be an independent spa or salon operator who's already doing a good job, but who we can help to develop their business to make it more profitable," he says. "We need to make sure our systems and processes are properly

Dove Spa offers a range of treatments using its own dedicated professional skincare line and has collaborated with Pond's on the transfer of skills and concepts

set up to support franchised as well as managed spas, but once we've got that got sorted out, I'd be disappointed if we didn't have franchisees in place by 2010."

Another growth opportunity, recognised by both Lane and Hayter, is the potential to take Dove Spa products into retail – the homecare items are currently only for sale via the website or in Dove Spas, yet retail still accounts for 25 per cent of the company's overall sales. "We'd want any retail environment to be true to our brand, but we don't want to be exclusive," says Lane. "Retail is a good way to get in front of consumers and it all helps to build scale."

As the company grows, Hayter accepts that finding quality staff will become more challenging, making "training and retention absolutely key". However, while far from complacent, she says Dove Spa has a relatively low churn rate compared to other operators, as the opportunities for development and promotion make working for a group more attractive than working for an independent operator.

### Profitable business

Lane acknowledges that his joint position as director of Spa and Salon and director of Unilever Ventures gives him a unique advantage when it comes to growing a business: "I'm in a lovely position of being an entrepreneur with a hell of a lot of backing and support behind me."

And although he has just seven years' experience in the industry, he demonstrates a genuine passion for the business. "I spend about 50 per cent of my time working on Spa and Salon," he says. "It's the largest of the investments I'm responsible for within Unilever Ventures, and it's the one I'm most passionate about. It's an absolutely engaging business, and I could easily spend all my time on it!"

"What's got me so excited is the combination of brand, product, people, systems and marketing, which is giving us a successful unit model. The company overall is not yet profitable, but the unit model looks good, and we're confident that by expanding it we're going to move the business into profit very soon." ●









## Dove Spa, Ontario

Our spa spy is delighted by the welcoming environment at Dove Spa and pleased by the experience and service – despite the odd frustration

CAROLINE WILKINSON • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS



### BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Dove Spa made its Canadian debut in the affluent Toronto suburb of Oakville, Ontario in October 2008. The experience has been designed around making women feel beautiful every day by inspiring them to take care of themselves and to appreciate their natural beauty.

Dove prides itself on providing a professional and accessible environment based on honesty and clarity, so clients feel they are well informed about their treatments.

Dove Spa was launched in the UK in 2006 and is owned by Spa and Salon International (SSI) (see p24), which licenses the Dove name from Unilever. There are now 24 in the UK.

SSI chose to launch in Canada due to strong levels of brand recognition. The 3,000sq ft (279sq m) spa, designed by the Khachi Design Group, has been followed by a flagship in downtown Toronto and is the first of up to 50 sites planned for North America.

### THE EXPERIENCE

Located barely a minute off the congested Queen Elizabeth Way – one of the province's busiest highways – Dove Spa in Oakville has evidently been positioned with accessibility rather than the aesthetics of the surroundings in mind.

The spa's road-front position – part of a commercial plaza – didn't seem at first glance to be the ideal environment to satisfy a craving for peace and relaxation. Nevertheless, situated next to a children's Little Gym, the business, with its iconic dove-shaped sign, beckons passing customers – especially mums with an hour to spare.

On a winter's evening in -20°C weather, the white glow from inside gave a welcoming first impression, even before I was greeted by the receptionist's ear-to-ear smile. I was seated in the salon to wait for my treatment – an effective marketing ploy, as the well-presented baskets and display of Dove Spa professional skincare products kept me occupied. This was less overt advertising than in the relaxation room, where I felt bombarded by looped silent videos about Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty.

The rest of the spa was calming. My spacious treatment room was simply decorated, with soft lighting, white walls and minimalist décor and I was impressed when entering to be asked to select a music style to accompany my treatment.

Following booking advice from a very cheery woman, I'd opted for the 60-minute ayurvedic-inspired BHAM treatment: designed to cleanse, purify and detox. I was frustrated, however, by the fact that holistic therapies are only available on Wednesdays and Saturdays and massages with a registered therapist on Fridays and Saturdays.

The treatment, which comprised full-body scrub, mud wrap and full-body massage was delivered with care and technical competence. Communication was comprehensive, and a balance of small talk and treatment knowledge put me at ease.

I was given the choice of two massage scents, but no further product information was volunteered. More could have been done to sell the products and although I purposely showed interest, little was done to link the treatment with the retail items.

For the most part I was well directed: told how to lie, what to do and where to go. Operating the digital steam-shower, however, was a challenge. Although my therapist advised that I sit in the steam to loosen the mud, I couldn't alter the scolding temperature and had to resort to moves best reserved for a Hokei Cokey to get clean. Unfortunately, following the mid-treatment shower I had to put the disposable underwear back on, which was covered with mud.

Post-treatment I was led to the lounge and offered green tea – a perfect finishing touch. It arrived in a glass cup with a hand-tied bundle of fragrant jasmine. However, as the lounge is on the main thoroughfare, I felt on view and found myself rushing my post-treatment drink, which was a shame.

My 90-minute experience was effortless, comfortable and simple. Subtle touches of luxury – a welcome change from intimidating, over-indulgent frills – left me feeling pampered and refreshed while the reasonable prices and efficient service made me want to book another appointment.



Treatment rooms are simply decorated, with a warm and relaxing ambience



Dove's Real Beauty campaign encourages natural beauty (above); the manicure bar (right); Dove Spa's product line (below)



## FACILITIES

Set on one level, the seven treatment rooms are accessible from one corridor which is wide enough for a wheelchair but which would be hard to navigate on a busy day. Before and after my treatment I was directed to the four-seat relaxation lounge, which I expect could also get congested.

On arrival I was escorted to a single dressing room, equipped with a chromatherapy steam-shower and keypad lockers, was given a robe and slippers and introduced to the Dove toiletries that also awaited me post-treatment. As it's the only changing room available, most clients dress in their treatments room, all of which are equipped with wardrobes. The only other steam-shower is attached to a treatment room devoted to colonics and mud therapies so, according to my therapist, most customers go without.

Other facilities include a two-person pedicure bench and a manicure bar, an IPL laser room (for skin rejuvenation and hair removal) and St Tropez spray-tanning booth.



## VITAL STATISTICS

**Dove Spa**  
355 Iroquois Shore Road,  
Oakville, Ontario, Canada.  
Contact: +1 905 339 0772  
Opening hours:  
9am-10pm Monday to Friday,  
9am-6pm on Saturday and  
11am-5pm on Sunday.  
Details: [www.dovespa.ca](http://www.dovespa.ca)

## THE SCORE

Booking	7/10
Service	9/10
Treatment	8/10
Aftercare	7/10
Value for Money	8/10
Overall	8/10

## RIGHT OF REPLY

Fay Chapple, managing director,  
Dove Spa Canada

"The first few months of operation involved assessing the treatment mix most requested by our guests in order to ensure we offer exactly what they're looking for.

As of February 2009, Dove Spa in Oakville was able to offer holistic treatments seven days a week as well as registered massage therapist services by choice of female or male therapist. The same mix of services is now available at our brand new spa in Toronto that opened to fantastic reviews on 28 April 2009."

## POPULAR TREATMENTS

Dove's customised facials are at the heart of its menu. Each starts with a free skin diagnosis to determine a client's skin condition and to ensure the right treatment is administered. The facials range from single-session signature treatments such as the 60-minute Hydro Cleanse and Microdermabrasion facials which cost CA\$135 (US\$121, €87, £76). Dove also offers a selection of skincare programmes lasting four to eight weeks ranging from CA\$635-1,100 (US\$569-985, €409-708, £358-620), each treatment lasting approximately 60 minutes.

The treatment menu is also extended to body beauty treatments and massages, holistic therapies – such as reiki, hopi ear candling and hot stone massage – and a selection of mud wraps and ayurvedic treatments, featuring BHAM which cost CA\$110 (US\$98, €71, £62).



# INSIDE information

**D**escribed as "an insight into the universal spa-goer" by Lynne Walker McNees, the president of the International Spa Association (ISPA), the 2008 ISPA Global Consumer Study analyses the spa-going habits of consumers from 15 different countries. Walker McNees says: "For the last decade, we've known stress was the number one reason people went to spas in the US and that massage was the most popular treatment, now we know this is the case worldwide".

Conducted during September and October 2008, the online-based research study, which surveyed 1,000 respondents per country, was undertaken by global market research agency Research International on behalf of ISPA. The countries covered include six in Europe – Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK; three in Australasia – Australia, Japan and Singapore; and two in the Americas – Canada and the US. In addition, results from China, India, Thailand and Russia were provided, but these are referred to as a 'convenience sample' because of the countries' low internet penetration levels.

*The 2008 Global Consumer Study revealed by ISPA delves into the minds of spa-goers worldwide. We review the findings and reveal the industry's response*

The results from this convenience sample need to be treated with caution because "it does not represent the entire population so it is considered biased". The samples from these countries are generally younger than the population as a whole, "more likely to be employed and are more likely to be in a high income or social class".

The study found that Thailand, followed by Singapore, had the highest level of active spa-goers – defined as people who had visited a spa in the previous 12 months. A facility was classed as a spa when it offered

"at least two of the following: a massage (eg full body), body treatments (eg facials) or skincare treatments (eg hydrotherapy)".

Surprisingly, Japan and France had the lowest number of spa incidences, and accordingly the highest proportion of non-spa goers (see Graph 1). Six countries had 20 per cent or more respondents stating they were inactive spa-goers – in other words, they had attended a spa previously, but not in the last 12 months. At the head of these was Russia with 26 per cent inactive spa-goers. Five other countries with a relatively high proportion of inactive spa-goers included Austria, Germany, Canada, the US and Australia.

This part of the study concluded that globally, active spa-goers average four visits per annum. However, this varies from eight in China, Russia and Thailand to six in Singapore and two in France.

## Treatments and costs

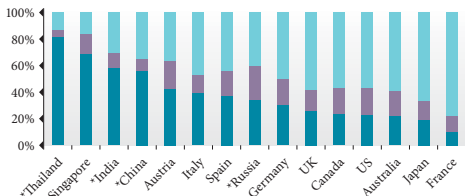
In keeping with other industry studies, Research International found that day spas were the most popular type of spa in every country except Austria and France. Similarly, it was day spas which were

PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCK.COM/ELINDA



About 30 per cent of spa-goers say they'd be most likely to try reflexology in the future

GRAPH 1 — Spa Incidences Per Country



\*Convenience sample countries

■ Active Spa-Goers ■ Inactive Spa-Goers ■ Non Spa-Goers



Germany had the highest proportion of treatments which were bought as a gift certificate at 48 per cent and Singapore had the lowest

visited most often, except in Austria and France where resort/hotels spas were more popular and visited most frequently.

Massage was by far the most popular treatment globally (see Graph 2); cited as the top treatment by the majority of survey respondents. Interestingly, it also generally came top in terms of "most likely to try".

Categories where there was a noticeable discrepancy between existing popularity and likely future popularity include movement/fitness classes, where a significantly higher proportion of respondents intended

to try the activity than practised at present. On the other hand, responses relating to body scrub or wrap and aromatherapy suggest that more people now buy these treatments than intend to in the future. Not surprisingly, there was a strong correlation between the top five treatments and the most recent treatments experienced.

According to the survey, only three countries had a lower proportion of purchased treatments than those that had been given as a gift or were complimentary: Germany with 43 per cent treatments

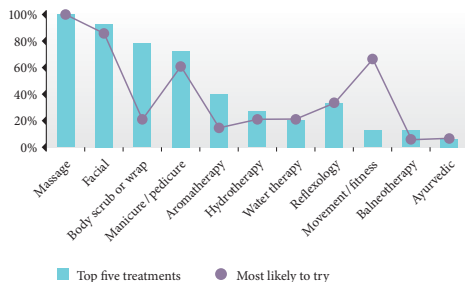
purchased, France and Austria each with 49 per cent (see Graph 3). The other half of treatments were offered as a gift or were given on a complimentary basis.

Canada had the lowest level of complimentary treatments at 3 per cent while Japan had the highest at a surprising 31 per cent. Germany had the highest proportion of treatments which were bought as a gift at 48 per cent and Singapore had the lowest. However, respondents from Singapore stated that one of their main motivators for visiting a spa was a gift certificate, whereas respondents in Germany did not rate a gift certificate as being a major motivator.

The survey reports a significant range in average expenditures on spa treatments – from US\$220 (€159, £138) in India to US\$937 (€676, £588) in Singapore. The survey did not distinguish between expenditure at different types of spas or different quality levels. Thus, comparisons among and between countries is difficult. Nevertheless, the findings show that spa-goers in Singapore, Italy and the US spend the most on treatments and overall, including retail spend (see Graph 4).

Also interesting was an analysis of the proportion spent on treatments versus retail, showing that retail accounted for 10 to 29 per cent of total expenditure in the vast majority of countries surveyed. This proportion rose to unbelievable levels in the countries which made up the conven-

GRAPH 2 — Top Five Treatments versus Those Most Likely To Try



ience sample – the highest being in Russia, where the proportion of retail spend was 71 per cent of total expenditure!

## Why visit a spa?

Friends' and relatives' recommendations were found by the researchers to be the key motivational reason for visiting spas. However, the primary reason for visiting was found to be to "relax and relieve/reduce stress". Accordingly, a stress-free environment was the key element leading to the enjoyment of the experience.

The key reason cited for not visiting spas was that they are "very expensive", by all groups – active, inactive and non spa-goers. Although this was often a reason cited for not buying, given the current economic climate, the fact that it tops the list isn't alarming. ISPA president, Lynne Walker McNees says: "We know people are still going to spas, but booking fewer and shorter treatments. Although spa visits are up, the amount people are spending is down. This may be because many spas are offering 30-minute treatments, instead of the typical 60- or 90-minute – allowing people to de-stress and nurture themselves while still watching their budgets."

The second most important reason for not visiting spas for active spa-goers and non spa-goers was "I don't have enough time to go to a spa". The "uncertainty" reasons also appeared in the inactive spa-goer and non spa-goers responses, as reasons for not visiting. These included: "I don't know what services spa offer"; "embarrassed others may see me without clothing"; and "I don't know what to expect in a spa".

## Industry response

With a number of surveys on the spa industry being launched annually, it's interesting to evaluate how useful they are to operators and industry professionals.



PHOTO: WWW.STOCK.COM/ACOB WACHENHAUSEN

**A significantly higher proportion of respondents said they were most likely to try a movement/fitness class, than those who actively do so at present**

It is clear a global survey is a major challenge from a methodological and evaluation perspective. Ian Brewis, senior director of spas and health clubs at Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, says: "To get complete accuracy in a study like this is a monumental task." This is also recognised by Serena Spa's managing director, Jesper Hougaard: "Like any statistical data, the ISPA 2008 Global Spa Consumer Study has its limitations, simply because more detail requires more data and as a consequence, more resources and more time."

"The study is a broad overview of the global spa business, surveying consumers using all types of spa, from owner-operator day spas to large five-star destination

spas. It would of course be interesting with greater segmentation, but then the question of where to begin and where to end comes into the picture. I feel this is a very valuable study and the first credible attempt to include and compare the spa industry in different countries."

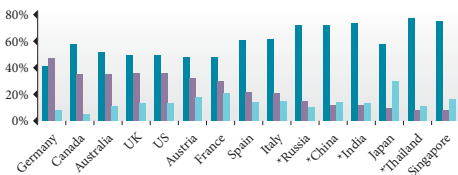
This view is mirrored by Wanda Love, CEO of Leading Spas of Canada: "In reviewing research findings, it's always prudent to view the data as providing a guideline and basic benchmarks, while recognising it may lack detail on specifics. I do, however, find the ISPA research data to be helpful overall in providing an excellent snapshot of where the industry is at and by interpreting the



PHOTO: SHANGRI-LA

The majority of people visit spas to relax

GRAPH 3 — Purchase, Gift or Complimentary Treatment



\*Convenience sample countries

■ Purchase ■ Gift ■ Complimentary

Active-spa goers average four visits a year. Overall day spas are the most popular type of spas and massage is by far the most popular treatment globally

PHOTO: WWW.ISTOCK.COM/NEUSTOCKIMAGES

data, it can greatly assist in providing some directional guideposts."

Despite the study's use as a broad overview, some operators query the accuracy of some of the data. Shangri-La's Brewis wonders whether the findings have been affected by the terminology. He says: "How they have defined a 'spa' on the report (see p32) does not apply worldwide."

Given this, both Brewis and Shangri-La's corporate director of brand quality, Sheila McCann feel they cannot use the study for benchmarking purposes. McCann says: "The report compilation [terminology and methodology] might explain questions about the data." In particular, both were shocked with the statistic that 78 per cent

of French and 67 per cent of Japanese respondents are non spa-goers. This view is echoed by Wanda Love: "I'm surprised by the average number of spa-goer visits per 12 months. Canada shows as three, which would seem a reasonably accurate average from feedback of spa operators; however I'm surprised that the numbers in Europe are not higher. The Europeans have historically adopted spa as much more of a lifestyle than North Americans."

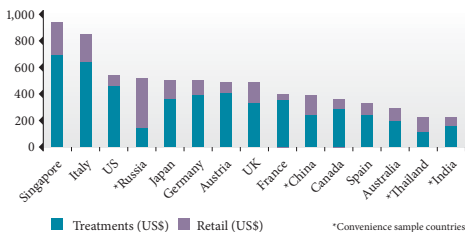
McCann's past experience as spa director for Spa Botanica in Singapore also leads her to question the respondents' stated expenditure (by active spa-goers in the previous 12 months) in this country – at US\$937 (€676, £588), this was the

highest of all countries. Spa consultant and educator in Taiwan, Victoria Liu, also queries spend: "I don't see the China data is correct for that [spend] information. Singapore is enlarged too." Love from Canada adds: "Typically the Canadian industry is closer to the US in terms of development, growth, etc. I can't immediately explain why the average US spend is that much higher. I would have expected it to be higher, just not that much [US\$357 (€258, £224) in Canada compared with US\$537 (€388, £337) in the US]."

Despite these quandaries, operators still found some statistics matched their own operations. In particular, McCann says her experience in Canada at the start of her career supports the findings that a very high proportion of gift certificates (61 per cent) motivates customers to visit in that country. Love agrees: "Savvy spa operators [in Canada] recognise the need to focus marketing efforts on driving gift card sales to increase traffic." Likewise, the report found that a "membership option that offers better pricing or additional benefits" attracted 40 per cent of respondents to spas in Singapore. McCann's experience in Singapore again supports this finding.

Overall, all industry insiders agree that this study is a brave and credible attempt to analyse the global spa market but should be used as a reference with caution. ● To buy the 2008 ISPA Global Consumer Study for US\$800, visit [www.experience-spa.com](http://www.experience-spa.com), or call +1 888 651 4772.

GRAPH 4 — Average Spent (US\$)





# lease of life

A SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT OF GOVERNMENT MONEY HAS SEEN A HISTORIC BATHHOUSE IN HEPBURN SPRINGS, AUSTRALIA, TRANSFORMED INTO A WORLD-CLASS SPA FACILITY

Cox Architects' design allows natural light to flood the new spa buildings (below)

JENNIFER TODD • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

Hepburn Springs in Victoria, Australia, has been known for its healing waters since Europeans first settled in the area in the 19th century.

Captain John Hepburn discovered the mineral springs in 1836 and, when gold was found there in the 1850s, it prompted a massive influx of miners from around the world. The existing settlers established a reserve to protect the springs from the ravages of mining and, by the turn of the century, the area was booming with tourists taking the waters, reputed to treat a wide range of illnesses, including osteoporosis, rheumatism and psoriasis.

In 1894, Hepburn Bathhouse was built on the reserve and became a gathering place for local residents. It has undergone several renovations since – in the 1920s, 1980s and 1990s, when a new bathhouse was built and the original building was extended and turned into a spa.

In the 21st century, the springs have remained central to the local community, with a vibrant spa tourism industry



## Belgravia Leisure background briefing

Belgravia Leisure is a management group that operates 50 leisure facilities throughout Australia. It specialises in partnering in the capital development, extension or refurbishment of major leisure facilities, with a particular focus on aquatic centres, health clubs, sports stadiums, hospitality venues, golf courses and tennis centres.

The Hepburn Bathhouse is the first spa for the group. However, it is currently in discussions with three landlords about introducing spas into its existing leisure facilities and hopes to launch its first day spa this year, with at least two others opening in the early part of 2010. All spa services will be managed by Belgravia.

built around them; the area is marketed as 'the heart of spa country' by Hepburn Shire Council. However, it is the most recent redevelopment and extension of the bathhouse complex, in 2008, which is finally putting Hepburn Springs on the international map.

## INVESTMENT NEED

Located 110km from Melbourne, Hepburn Bathhouse and Spa is built on crown land owned by the government of Victoria, and maintained on its behalf by Hepburn Shire Council. As land managers, the council is responsible for the entire mineral springs reserve, including the bathhouse and spa buildings, as well as the surrounding parkland and a number of other facilities including nature walks, BBQ areas, a children's playground and a café.

In 2002, the state government and the council recognised the need to invest in the complex to capitalise on the tourism opportunities presented by the rise of the spa industry. The buildings were suffering from structural defects caused by corrosion from the mineral water, plus, it was decided that the facility needed greater capacity and a solution to the circulation crossover created when people moved between the dry and wet areas in the spa wing.

At the time, the bathhouse was being run by a private operator. Assisted by an independent feasibility study, they came up with a design brief, which was then passed to a 'project control group', made up of the Victorian Mineral Water Committee, Hepburn Shire Council, the state government's Department of Infrastructure and Environment (DOI&E) and Cox Architects, the practice that had been charged with redesigning the facility.

It was decided that the north wing, where the pools were housed, would be demolished and a new bathhouse



built. The south wing housing the spa, incorporating the original heritage building and a 1980s extension, would be refurbished. Major Projects Victoria (MPV) would oversee the redevelopment on behalf of the state government.

Creating the new facility, which was 1,243sq m (13,379sq ft) and is now 1,750sq m (18,836sq ft), cost AU\$10.6m (US\$8.44m, €6m, £5.24m), of which AU\$8m (US\$6.38m, €4.53m, £3.95m) came from the Victorian government's Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. Hepburn Shire Council contributed AU\$1.2m (US\$956,300, €679,100, £593,000), which it forecasts will be paid back in 15 years, while the remainder came from the DOI&E, the Victorian Mineral Water Committee, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Victoria and the federal government.

Before the construction began, the existing operator's lease came up for renewal, and the DOI&E ran a public tender process to find a new management company. Appointed in March 2008, the successful candidate – the Belgravia Leisure group (see box opposite) – was given a completion date of September 2008, when the bathhouse and spa would reopen for business.

## NORTH AND SOUTH

The first thing Cox Architects did was to test the design brief – and according to project associate Marc Raszewski, it was immediately obvious the budget was going to be a problem. "The aspirations of the client, and ourselves, for what the building deserved to be, given its location and history, meant we had to work really hard to get the outcome we did on such a tight budget," he says.

The new bathhouse now contains one large pool, with room for 75 people, a spa pool and unisex changing rooms with 80 lockers and seven private cubicles. There's also a

relaxation deck and an area called the Sanctuary, which houses another pool featuring 'spa couches' with massage jets, a salt-water float pool, an aroma steamroom and monsoon showers. Entry is via an upper-level mezzanine with a bridge from the car park to the reception. A glass walkway links the new building to the southern wing.

To stay within budget, the architects had to be clever. Rather than overlay walls and ceilings with expensive finishes, they chose earthy materials to blend with the fabric of the building, such as steel, recycled ironbark and cast aluminium bronze elements. To keep costs down, the walls and ceilings are made from raw concrete, which became the defining material for the building. "A very strong design intent from the beginning was this idea that the bathhouse would be carved from rock," says Raszewski. "In an ideal world, guests would be enjoying bathing in the mineral waters in the natural environment, surrounded by rocks, so we tried to recreate that sensation with the use of concrete."

Light also plays an important part in the design. The building has floor-to-ceiling windows offering views of the adjacent creek, while skylights in the roof let in more light. The huge skylight above the salt-water pool, says Raszewski, was inspired by a painting they found of a woman lying in a cave bathed in sunlight. The design was also influenced by traditional Japanese bathhouses, as well as architect Peter Zumthor's Therme Vals in Switzerland.

One challenge was the location. Construction was delayed because the foundations and pipework for the town's drainage and sewer works lay adjacent to the building. These had to be relocated, causing a time delay.

*Raw concrete and wood are used throughout to give bathers the impression that they're bathing in a natural environment 'carved from rock'.*



### OLD AND NEW

Refurbishing the southern wing of the complex, housing the spa, was challenging for different reasons. The treatment rooms were basic, requiring them to be stripped out. The floor was removed and sections of the wall replaced within the existing, non-heritage part of the structure.

"The amount of work we had to do to bring the southern wing to a reasonable level was incredible," says Raszewski.

The redesign increased the number of treatment rooms from 15 to 19, while the number of private baths was reduced slightly, from 14 to 12. Raszewski admits the simple interior – a cream and white palette with just a few tiles on the wall in each room to add interest – was a response to the budget as well as a way of creating calm.

As in the bathhouse, light is central to the design. Each treatment room has a large window overlooking the creek, which Raszewski says fitted their vision to "create a spa where you didn't need to turn lights on when you walked in to the room if you didn't want to".

As well as renovating the treatment area, Raszewski and his team were also faced with converting the room housing the original waiting room, from a reception with a mezzanine office to a relaxation area. The office was stripped out to re-establish the sense of space and Raszewski says this was one of the most satisfying parts of the project, as it gave them plenty of scope to showcase the original architecture, mixing materials such as stainless steel with the original timber and brickwork to underline

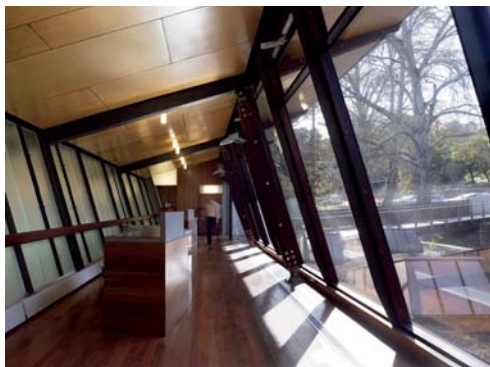
the sense of history. "We kept the room faithful to how it would have looked in Edwardian times," he says, "[while making] the modern design elements clearly discernable in order to accentuate the difference between the old and the new."

Also in the south wing, the architects built 12 private mineral bathrooms, each with its own concrete bath; whereas the pools in the bathhouse are 50 per cent mineral water, 50 per cent potable water, the private mineral baths use 100 per cent pure mineral spring water. Just two months of opening, the concrete has stained. However, this is no surprise to Raszewski, who says that they filled a replica bath with mineral water for six months before confirming their choice, and were happy with the way it built up a patina over time. "A pristine white porcelain bath would quickly have looked dirty and tarnished," he says. "We love the fact the concrete baths will develop their own character over time, reflecting the changing conditions of the natural landscape."

### WATER AND ENERGY

Alongside preserving the building's historical features, creating a sustainable building was high on the agenda for the project control group. The objectives were to make the water and energy consumption more efficient, protect the natural springs and ensure the building's longevity.

*The design for Hepburn Springs was influenced by the work of architect Peter Zumthor who created the Therme Vals spa in Switzerland*



*The aim was to create a spa where "you didn't need to turn lights on when you walked into the room, if you didn't want to".*



*Hepburn combines traditional spa bathing with a five-star spa experience. The changing rooms (above) and the relaxation area (right)*



One of the greatest obstacles, says Raszewski, was juggling the demands of a community gripped by water restrictions with a business that uses water as its saleable item and wanted to double its capacity. Nevertheless, they managed to maintain the amount of water used by switching filtration systems from a sand filter to an ultra-fine alternative, which reduces water waste by 10 per cent. They also created a system whereby water coming out of the aquifer can be collected at quieter times and stored until peak times – mainly weekends. Finally, no-flush urinals were installed and rainwater used for all other toilets.

New boilers helped increase energy efficiency, as did double glazing and the use of recycled ironbark timber (which has low thermal conductivity). Meanwhile a plan to include an outdoor element in the bathhouse design was shelved, on the grounds that it would have been too energy-intensive to keep the pool water warm.

When it came to extending the life of the building, protecting it from corrosion was key. The ironbark timber was used as a thermal break throughout the project to stop the cold creating condensation, as it has low thermal conductivity. Sourced from an old pier in Sydney, it is proven to be able to withstand the rigours of salt water.

## WORLD-CLASS FACILITY

With just six months to get the facility up and running, Belgravia Leisure used technical staff and managers from its existing aquatic centres to set up operations. However, having never run a spa before, the group appointed an experienced manager to run this side of the business.

Kim Whitehouse, who previously managed multiple-site spa operations for Voyages Hotels and Resorts (formerly P&O Resorts) and Mandara Spa, came on board in July 2008. Although she admits that it would have been better if she'd had longer to bed in, she says it was surprisingly easy to recruit for the spa. "Because Hepburn Springs is an alternative lifestyle area, the talent pool was very experienced. That, and the fact the community took ownership of the baths, meant there were lots of applicants." The result is a mature team of male and female therapists with an average age of 32.

## Hepburn Springs by numbers

- Massages account for 70 per cent of the spa's turnover
- Nearly 60 per cent of all spa-goers upgrade their booking to include a private mineral bath
- Use of the mineral relaxation pool and spa pool for two hours costs AU\$15 (US\$12, €8, £7), from Monday to Thursday and AU\$30 (US\$24, €17, £15) from Friday to Sunday. Local residents are charged AU\$10 (US\$8, €6, £5).
- Use of the Sanctuary area costs an additional AU\$35 (US\$28, €20, £17) from Monday to Thursday, and AU\$55 (US\$44, €31, £27) from Friday to Sunday. Towel hire is AU\$3 (US\$2, €2, £1).
- Private mineral baths cost AU\$65 (US\$52, €37, £32) and treatments range from AU\$95 (US\$76, €54, £47) for a 45-minute body polish to AU\$480 (US\$382, €272, £237) for a four-hour spa ritual.

Overall, Whitehouse is happy with how the design works in practice, although she admits to facing a few difficulties. "At peak times, the reception area can get so busy that noise levels can compromise the spa experience," she says. "A separate entrance for spa goers and those using the baths would have been preferable." She also believes the unisex changing rooms are an issue for some guests and that the couples' treatment rooms are too small.

So far, business at both the bathhouse and spa – which uses Thalgo, LaGaia and Sodashi products – has been good. "It is an interesting facility to manage," Whitehouse says, "because it combines traditional leisure baths aimed at the masses with a five-star spa experience."

Competition is fierce in the heart of spa country, so marketing for the new Hepburn Bathhouse and Spa focuses on the heritage of the bathhouse as well as the healing properties of its natural mineral springs. Belgravia is also working with Hepburn Shire Council to develop the parkland around the bathhouse, in the hope that guests will come for the day and extend their stay.

Whitehouse, however, is already confident of success: "This is a historic facility with a bathing tradition that can't be replicated elsewhere, so we're enjoying the opportunity to be custodians of a world-class facility that sits very differently to anything else in Australia." ●

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People KATIE BARNES • MANAGING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

*the way I see it*

## Alain Massaza, 59, founder, Imagine International, France

I worked for Club Med for 20 years, firstly as a professional pianist, then as chef de village [resort general manager] in Mexico, Morocco, Turkey and the Bahamas. This quickly taught me how to really understand guests' needs and attitudes on vacation, which helped me when I went on to develop spas. I admire Gilbert Trigano [the co-founder of Club Med]: Club Med came just after the World War II and he had a vision of making a business out of making people happy. He taught me about what is important in life.

When I first joined Accor I developed leisure concepts for its Novotel and Mercure brands, but as Sofitel was an upscale brand introducing a spa was an obvious thing to do. The LeSpa concept was simple: it was the perfect blend of French beauty, expertise and service standards delivered by the best in the industry, mixed with the very best from each site locally – be it architecture or indigenous plants – to add a unique touch. The overall aim was to make guests' skin as healthy as possible and to instil a blissful sense of wellbeing within the body.

I was born in Africa in 1950 and stayed there until I was 12, then lived in France until I was 18. The fact that I was from nowhere in particular and ready to go everywhere has shaped my life. I've lived in many countries and freedom is very important to me. Although I'm now settled in Paris – that's where Accor and Imagine International are based – I travel as much as possible with my family in my free time.

*Although working with Accor was great, I really wanted my own company. While at Accor I set up thalassotherapy centres under its Accor Thalassa division and realised there was no one company that provided advice on concepts, feasibility, design, architecture, finance, human resources, operations and marketing for thalassotherapy centres. That's why I set up Imagine International: to offer all this expertise in one place. My long-term ambition is to become the world's best company in developing and managing thalassotherapy centres and spas.*

We're also developing spa concepts for two major French cosmetic companies. Esthderm, well-known for its skincare (especially sun care) lines, will launch its spa by May 2010. Dessanage, renowned in hair-dressing and skincare, will open its first spa in the next 12 months.

Being creative, and having the freedom to be creative, is very important to me: it's what drives me. I don't like to manage, I prefer to create something, make it happen (or build it) and then move onto something else.

**My favourite spa treatment is a simple, basic massage. For me, a good spa is one where the guests are satisfied and the owner makes money. In a great spa, however, guests are very satisfied and the owner makes a lot of money.**

### ABOUT ALAIN MASSAZA

Massaza began his career at Club Med in 1977 and eventually became the group's director of operations worldwide. In 1998 he founded a hotel management firm and created the Village Ocea holiday hotel concept, which was bought by Accor when he joined as director of marketing, tourism and leisure products in 2000. Massaza developed Accor's first spa brand, LeSpa, for its Sofitel hotel chain which he rolled out in over 30 sites globally. Last October he left Accor to set up Imagine International, a consultancy which specialises in thalassotherapy.

As a new company the global financial crisis has not hit us yet. We have enough projects for this year, but I'm more concerned about 2010: if the worldwide economy doesn't improve then I think many projects will be put on hold. We've noticed that big hotel companies have reduced their investments, or are postponing projects until 2010 or 2011. Investment is still happening in some countries such as Morocco, but the Middle East has been hit particularly hard – we have no work there at the moment. Our plan to weather these hard times is to be more careful when spending and to be more aggressive when it comes to selling and marketing.

We have 15 staff and our headquarters are in Paris, but we're working on about 15 projects worldwide, from the Caribbean and Canada to Morocco. One of the most innovative developments is in Plénuef Val-André [a resort in north-west France] which will open in June 2010. The 1,500sq m (16,146sq ft), 24-treatment-room spa is the first to mix the best of thalassotherapy, with sea water relaxation and exercise pools and thalassotherapy wellbeing packages with a high-end design and service.

Guests want more results from their spa experience, that's why medical spas will be one of the biggest trends in the future. I also think spas will become totally integrated into the life of consumers, playing a role in their health as well as how they look. Spas need to develop more professionals in different fields to cope with this demand: they're certainly not ready yet.

*My favourite film is Lawrence of Arabia: I've watched it about 30 times. Peter O'Toole is one of the best actors and his character [the lead role of T E Lawrence] is very inspirational – Lawrence has an ambition in life and despite being used and manipulated by the political and military forces of World War I, he reached his goal. Everybody wants to be Lawrence of Arabia: I read that after the film the character never really left O'Toole.*



# FEEL *the* Force

Modern research is backing up the efficacy of energy medicine. We explore the different approaches and why operators should open their eyes to this emerging field

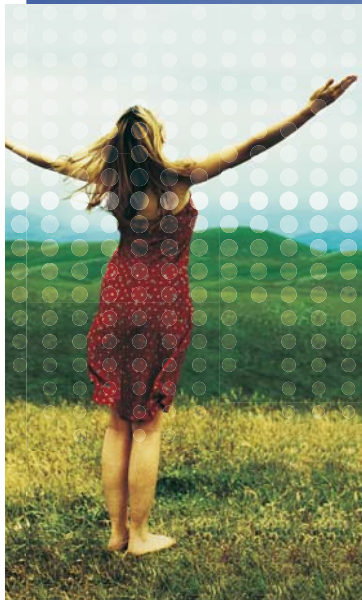
JAMES OSCHMAN • FOUNDER • NATURE'S OWN RESEARCH

When I received the invitation to present at the 2008 Monaco Spa Event, I thought the organisers had made an error. Why would leaders in the spa industry be interested in hearing from a biophysicist specialising in energy medicine?

I found out the answer soon after arriving. A leading spa architect and one of the event organisers, Dagmar Rizzato, informed me that my two books on energy medicine – *Energy Medicine: The Scientific Basis* and *Energy Medicine in Therapeutics and Human Performance* – had become standard references for spa design in Europe. This was a delightful surprise.

It was not long before Rizzato and I were discussing the ancient arts and sciences of placement, and the crucial understanding that there are ideal locations for healing, as well as places to avoid because of certain emanations from the earth. Unknown to most in biomedicine, both the Hartmann Net and the Curry Grid map reveal geomagnetic disturbances over the world and many health problems have been consistently observed over the centuries when dwellings have been constructed on such sites.

Our relationship with the earth has become one of my favourite subjects, as I am engaged in research on the benefits of connecting ourselves to the earth, as happens when we take our shoes and socks off and walk barefoot in the grass. In collaboration with several scientists, I have reported the physiological and health benefits of connecting to the earth, such as better sleep and the rapid reduction of aches and pains. An earth connection delivers electrons and subtle rhythms to the body, which can help to



normalise the daily rhythm of the stress hormone, cortisol, helping to reduce inflammation throughout the body.

This is, in fact, one of the most exciting developments in the field of energy medicine, and has enormous implications for the spa world. Adding an earth connection at various locations in a spa would not be difficult and would have a variety of beneficial effects. I am exploring what happens when barefoot contact with the earth is combined with other energetic approaches. A grassy walkway between a pool or sauna and a treatment facility can provide a few minutes walking barefoot in conductive contact with the earth, and enhance the benefits of a wellness spa. Or barefoot pads could be added to relaxation couches and treatment tables. The pads contain conductive silver fibres that connect to a wire leading to a stainless steel rod inserted into the earth. These would deliver the same benefits as walking barefoot around a spa. The effects are so beneficial that it will not be long before every bed in a spa/hotel will have a barefoot system.

## SEEING WITH NEW EYES

Energy medicine can be defined as the diagnostic or therapeutic use of energy – heat, light, sound, gravity, pressure, vibration, electric, magnetic, chemical or electromagnetic – whether produced or detected by a medical device or by the human body. It is not really a new subject, it is just that for a variety of reasons we have been taught to keep our eyes closed to energetics.

However, modern research on energy medicine has enabled energetic therapies to acquire the respect, validation and interest



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/WOLFGANG AMRI

they deserve. Energy medicine is emerging as a breakthrough paradigm for healthcare worldwide. The reason is that patients and healthcare systems are

recognising the value of preventive measures that are cost-effective, non-invasive and that have few if any side effects. Biomedical research worldwide shows that virtually all diseases are related to chronic inflammation, caused by excess free radicals. Energy medicine techniques can be used to quickly neutralise free radicals to treat existing chronic pains or to treat them in the early stages before they become serious. A growing number of patients are enjoying working with practitioners of energy therapies. Many medical issues make more sense to the patient when the energetic aspects have been explained, and this greatly facilitates the healing process. This shift in interest has influenced the medical community, as more patients are asking their physicians about energy medicine, and more physicians are learning energy medicine techniques. As one example, over 1,800 medical doctors in the US have become acupuncturists, something that was unheard of a decade ago. Hence energy medicine provides many opportunities and challenges for the spa industry.

**A barefoot earth connection (above) has been said to help normalise the production of hormones and reduce inflammation**

## IT MAKES SENSE

Touch, hear, look, smell and taste was the theme for the Monaco Spa Event I spoke at. The focus was on delivering these sensory worlds to guests. The same five senses provide a perfect theme

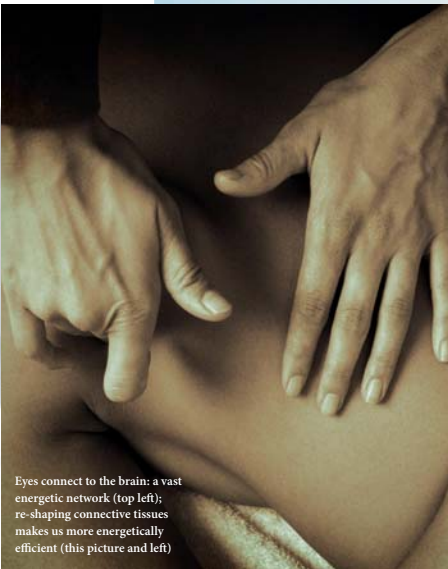
to introduce you to energy medicine, since each sensation is a window into part of the energetic landscape surrounding us and that enables us to function and enjoy our environment. And each sensation introduces a set of energetic therapies that are destined to become a part of the spa of the future.

**Touch** is a good place to start our exploration of energy medicine. Touch therapies such as massage and bodywork are well accepted components of the spa. Energy medicine research teaches us that there is more to massage than meets the eye. It's long been established that massage can stimulate the circulation of blood and lymphatic fluids and thereby enhance the operation of the body's immune and detoxification systems. Less appreciated is the ability of touch therapies to relax muscles and reorganise soft tissues so movements become smoother and more efficient.

In the development of the soft tissue manipulation technique Rolfing®, Ida P Rolf documented the malleability or plasticity of the body: the connective tissues can be re-shaped to make one's entire physical structure more balanced in the gravitational field, and therefore more flexible and energetically efficient. When we become balanced around a vertical line, gravity ceases to be 'the enemy', ceases to pull us down, but instead makes us feel



PHOTO: DREAMTIME.COM/ALLAN ANGEL



Eyes connect to the brain: a vast energetic network (top left); re-shaping connective tissues makes us more energetically efficient (this picture and left)

PHOTO: DREAMTIME.COM/ANIRAY

supported, even lighter. This sensation not only feels good, but is indicative of less stress on the musculoskeletal system. Since gravity is a form of energy, bodywork therapies that appreciate the role of gravity in health and disease have become extremely valuable. For example, gravity is one of the leading causes of physical debilitation in the ageing population.

A frequent but less obvious reason for visiting a physician is the prolonged misuse of the body and poor body mechanics such as improper lifting of heavy objects or sitting for long periods with poor posture.

One way touch therapies have deep effects on the body is by the piezo-electric or pressure electricity effect. Touch and pressure cause the tissues to generate electrical fields that influence physiological regulatory processes. To summarise, touch is a form of energy that can affect the ways the body utilises other forms of energy, such as movement and gravity.

**Hear** refers to the vibratory sense that enables us to communicate verbally, but there is much more. What is it about music that relaxes us, makes us feel good or even upset? Music therapy has long been used to help with medical and psychiatric disorders, physical handicaps, sensory impairments, substance abuse, and ageing. Sounds can also be used to improve learning, build self-esteem, reduce stress, support physical exercise, and facilitate a host of other health-related activities. Again, there's more to the story than relaxation.

» The potential benefits of energy medicine – hands on or technological – are virtually unlimited, everyone can have their diverse needs met and the spa is the ideal place for this

Energy medicine teaches us that sound is one communication media within the body, and that certain sounds can open up channels for information flow that have been blocked due to injury or illness. For example, muscles produce sounds when they are functioning properly. Tense muscles relax when provided with

a tone at the natural frequency they have when functioning normally. This is an example of rhythmic entrainment, or resonance, and is part of the energy medicine field known as vibrational medicine (see SB06/4 p88 for more about how this can be used in spas). Music therapy is an interpersonal process in which a therapist uses music and its facets – physical, emotional, mental, social, aesthetic, and spiritual – to help people improve or maintain their health (see SB08/1 p86).

**Look** refers to another key vibratory or frequency sense that enables us to see the colourful world around us. Connected to our eyes (our visual receptors), is a vast energetic network – the brain, which has the capability of recognising, storing, and interpreting the constant stream of visual pictures that are a major part of our experience of life. Once we interpret what's going on around us, decisions are made about where to go and what to do; decisions that are communicated to our muscles enable us to move, grasp, type, play a musical instrument, and so on. Light therapy or phototherapy, a form of energy medicine, consists of exposure to daylight or to specific wavelengths of light using various light



sources such as lasers, light emitting diodes, fluorescent lamps, or bright full-spectrum light, for a prescribed amount of time and, in some cases, at a specific time of day. Light has proven effective in treating a variety of medical conditions including skin conditions, depression and seasonal affective disorder. Low level laser light therapy, produced by 'cold' lasers (which do not heat tissues) has proven effective for a variety of musculoskeletal conditions and has demonstrated remarkable success in maintaining the strength and enhancing recovery in athletes engaged in competitive events.

**Smell and taste** are key senses related to our enjoyment of life. While there's debate about the precise mechanisms by which these senses operate, there is no question that a wonderful fragrance or a delicious taste can bring about a delightful change in attitude.

### A BENEFIT TO ALL

By this time, you may be realising that all the sensory/energetic modalities have corresponding therapeutic approaches. Yet there's also room for machine-based energy medicine in spas. ONDAMED® is a battery-powered biofeedback device that can be used to determine which frequencies of sound, as well as weak-pulsed electromagnetic fields, cause a response in a patient's autonomic nervous system. Temporary stimulation by these frequencies, combined with the patient's cognitive and non-cognitive participation, promotes relaxation, muscle re-education and other prescription uses such as pain relief, stress relief linked with reduction of inflammation and improvement of the immune system.

**Light therapy (above) can help with a variety of conditions including skin complaints, depression and seasonal affective disorder**

Other possible technologies include: the L.I.F.E system, which can perform thousands of medical tests in a few minutes by using electromagnetic fields to quickly locate and correct energy blocks and imbalances; and CEM-Tech, which records signals emitted by diseased tissues and then feeds them back into the body to treat bacterial and viral infections as well as oncological diseases. There are many other technologies, but you get the picture: such modalities can be used to bring everyone up to the optimum health that can be achieved for them and provide the best of prevention and treatment if illness or injury arise.

The challenge is to think holistically about how all these approaches – hands on and technological – and the energetic environment can benefit all concerned. By 'all concerned' I refer to the whole community: the owners, the investors and the staff, as well as those who visit the spa. Obviously such a project should be done in collaboration with a wide variety of healthcare professionals, including the various physician specialists and in association with hospitals and clinics, but the spa is an ideal place to offer them. However, the potential benefits for various members of this 'family' are virtually unlimited. All can have their diverse needs met, and a special opportunity arises for the elite athlete who must maintain optimum physical functioning and rapid recovery from injury should it occur.

The homework from this article is to pay attention to the various forms of energy you experience everyday and note how they contribute to the quality of your life and to the wellness of those around you. Through such observations you can become your own expert in energy medicine and better able to evaluate techniques that you might want to implement in your spa. ●

# The Real Thing

Ayurvedic therapies are available across the spa world, but how many do justice to the ancient Indian wellness system? Indian company Ayurcare is facing up to the pretenders by taking its ayurvedic concept to the world

Ayurveda may be thousands of years old, but until recently, this ancient approach to wellness was comparatively unknown outside India. Not so today: in 2006, the World Health Organization said that ayurveda had become the most popular alternative health practice in the world.

The spa industry has helped to popularise ayurveda; spas were among the first non-Indian facilities to adopt its unique therapies, herbs and oils. However, purists say that although this trend has raised the profile of the discipline, it has led to the dilution of both the authenticity and effectiveness of many ayurvedic practices.

In India, ayurveda is a legitimate medical system, used by 70 per cent of the country's population. Practitioners are



Shirodhara helps with insomnia, loss of memory and mental tension

## AYURCARE TREATMENTS

Ayurcare offers both ayurveda-influenced spa treatments and panchakarma: medicinal ayurvedic therapies for chronic ailments which include:

**PIZHICHIL:** luke-warm herbal oils are poured all over the body continuously for about 45-90 minutes a day for seven to 21 days. This treatment is most effective in rheumatic diseases such as arthritis, paralysis, hemiplegia and paralysis-agitans.

**NJAVARAKIZHI:** the whole body, or a specific part, is made to perspire by the application of certain medicinal herbs applied for 45-90 minutes a day for 14 days. This treatment is given for rheumatism, emaciation of limbs, high blood-pressure, cholesterol and certain skin diseases.

**ABHYANGAM:** an oil massage given for 45 minutes a day for 14 days. The treatment is said to be highly effective in combating obesity, loss of skin

lustre, sleeplessness and fatigue.

**SHIRODHARA:** a warm oil is poured onto the forehead for 40 minutes a day for seven to 21 days to treat insomnia, loss of memory, headaches, mental tension and certain skin diseases. This is generally applied after a 'vasthi' head massage.

**UDVARTHANAM:** a powder massage effective for obesity, hemiplegia, paralysis, skin diseases, and impaired circulation.

**NASYAM:** involves the application of juices and medicated oils for seven to 14 days to cure headaches, paralysis, mental disorders, certain types of skin diseases.

**SNEHAPANAM:** the oral intake of medicated oils for body purification.

licensed by the state following thorough, graduate-level medical training.

Authenticity is the battle-cry of Ayurcare, the operator of ayurvedic wellness centres in southern India. The company is taking its one-stop-shop concept – which offers a full range of ayurvedic services, from nutritional guidance, herbal medicine and rejuvenation and purification therapies to exercise practices, such as yoga – to international markets. Already a major player in India, the company has recently established franchise partnerships in South Africa, Canada, Australia and Europe, and is now putting in place the infrastructure to build a global network.

## Setting a benchmark

Established in 2002, Ayurcare has the largest portfolio of ayurvedic centres in India, with 32 locations (some owned, some franchises) operating in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Kerala.

Depending on location, a typical Ayurcare centre covers 1,500-1,800sq ft (139-167sq m), with three treatment rooms: one containing a swedana casket (steam bath); another with a traditional, wooden dhroni massage table; and a consulting room. All centres have an on-site doctor trained in both ayurvedic and allopathic medicine, and many have a on-site pharmacy.





The bolus treatment uses warmed ingredients wrapped in a tight ball (top left); heated herbal liquids are poured over the body in the dhara therapy (top right); vasthi uses a dough bowl filled with warm oils to relieve localised pain (right)



The secret of Ayurcare's success must be attributed, at least in part, to its collaborative approach. The primary partners in Holistic Healthcare Pvt Ltd, Ayurcare's privately held parent company, are seasoned in ayurvedic doctrines as well as international marketing and business practices. Concerned by how ayurveda was being interpreted by non-specialist operators, they saw an opportunity to bring the practice back to its roots and contribute positively to community health, while also establishing an authentic ayurvedic brand overseas. "We want to set the benchmark for ayurvedic wellness," says Ranveer Puri, Ayurcare's executive director.

Currently valued in excess of US\$5.2m (£3.73m, £3.26m) – calculated on revenues, assets and franchise agreements – the company has grown at a rate of 30 per cent a year since its inception. Ayurcare's directors are so confident in their model that

they expect to buck the depressed economy to sustain this strong growth, with a view to floating the company on the Indian stock exchange in 2011. Expansion plans include opening sites within all Accor hotels in India, exploring merchandising opportunities and rolling out overseas.

Bennett, Coleman & Company, India's largest media company, came on board in 2008 as an investor, while Canadian Tumuluri Hospitality invested CA\$1m (US\$898,150, €643,750, £562,900) for a 20 per cent holding and the right to franchise the brand internationally.

Also backing Ayurcare is the Indian government, which has identified ayurveda as one of the country's fastest growing industries. Although ayurveda is integral to life throughout India, it involves completely different approaches from one end to the other: in the south, a more purist system uses medicinal tree and herb extracts,

whereas in the north, the system uses metals such as chromium, zinc, nickel and copper; traditions also vary widely from region to region, as familial practices pass from one generation to the next.

Consequently, Ayush, the government department responsible for regulating alternative practices in India, is now working with private companies such as Ayurcare to standardise ayurveda's protocols. Its mandate, over the next five years, is to create an international brand standard for the system by which all others can be judged

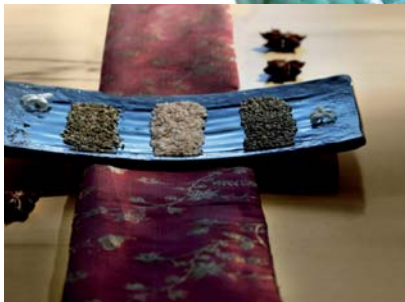
## Global growth

To serve as a showcase to potential franchisees overseas, Ayurcare opened a prototype facility last year in Tofino, British Columbia. "All international franchised operations are valued at approximately CA\$250,000 (US\$224,400, €161,000, £140,700) for an estimated ROI





Ayurcare offers a full range of ayurvedic services including herbal medicine (above right) and yoga (above left)



of CA\$600,000 (US\$538,500, €386,300, £337,600)," says Ram Tumuluri of Tumuluri Hospitality.

"The majority of revenues will be derived from treatments which, at the outset, will be priced competitively to build brand awareness and loyalty. Ayurvedic massages are, however, more value-orientated than regular massages, since many involve two therapists and use oils which are custom-blended to suit a person's body type."

Unlike other ayurvedic operators outside India, Ayurcare maintains its own training institute in Hyderabad, India. Accordingly, ayurvedic resources and expertise can be exported to any franchise location where local supply falls short. Ayurcare will meet up to 50 per cent of a centre's staffing needs with graduates of its training institute in order to ensure standards and cultural understanding (on both sides) are more easily integrated. "This ensures quality and consistency of delivery in centres around the world, as the international Ayurcare model finds its footing beyond Tofino," says Tumuluri.

In December 2008, a 1,600sq ft (149sq m), three-room centre opened on Illovo Sandton in Johannesburg – Africa's 'embassy row'. Initial investment was ZAR1.2m (US\$148,600, €106,800, £93,650), which, based on 10-12 treatments per day, is expected to turn a profit within two years. Plans are underway to open more centres in Durban and Cape Town later this year with a projected half-a-dozen operations in South Africa by the end of 2010.

Meanwhile, back in Canada, a location is set to open in Whistler for Canada's 2010 Winter Olympics, and although the eco-

nomic climate has slowed ambitious plans for Europe are still underway, franchisee agreements are in the works for the UK (London and Manchester), the Netherlands and Germany; as well as the US (Washington State and California), Australia (Sydney and Perth), Malaysia and Singapore.

### Firm belief

In addition to its tie-up with Tumuluri Hospitality, the company has a key alliance, closer to home, with the Dhanwantari Vaidyasala Ayurvedic Institute. Over 70 years old, the institute is highly regarded in India for its training courses and pan-chakarma programmes, as well as for manufacturing and distributing in excess of 350 herbal medicines. The partnership gives Ayurcare access to the institute's 2,000 acres of organically grown herbs for its beauty product line – Ajara Skin Care by Ayurcare – as well as a signature brand of medicinal products, Ayurcare Medical.

The Ajara Skin Care products have been formulated to suit the different 'doshas' (mind-body types) found in ayurveda – vata, pitta and kapha, and their various combinations. Ajara is a sanskrit word which means ageless, and the collection includes essential oils, skin cleansers, masks, shampoos, conditioners, bath salts, shower gels, and eye creams; and for men, a shaving cream and a hair gel. Ayurcare Medical, meanwhile, will comprise half-a-dozen patented natural products to address cholesterol, arthritis, obesity, weight loss,

diabetes, and pain management.

With appropriate licensing now in place, both lines are launching this year via e-commerce and retail in Ayurcare's spa centres and selected distribution outlets. Together, revenues are estimated to reach CA\$3.7m (US\$3.32m, €2.38m, £2.08m) within two years – largely because European and North American markets still consider ayurvedic medicines to be natural food supplements, which means they're not subject to pharmaceutical regulations.

Also in partnership with the institute, Ayurcare opened a 25-bed ayurvedic hospital, complete with spa centre, in January 2009 – a move that not only underscores the health focus of Ayurcare, but also advances the emerging trend of hospital spas.

Elsewhere, Ayurcare is developing its own brand of destination resort. Its flagship Ashram Spa opens this year on Kerala's beachfront, a popular health and spa destination for international visitors. Because future spas will be situated in resort or hotel premises – either as a joint venture or franchise agreement – the size of facilities will vary. As a minimum, they will share the same blueprint as the standalone wellness centres, but with accommodation and resort amenities on hand, Ashram Spas will offer residential programmes of three to 21 days.

While the next few years will see many businesses facing tough times, there's a firm belief at Ayurcare that its brand of authentic ayurveda will ride the tide. ●

*Ayurcare opened a 25-bed ayurvedic hospital, complete with spa centre, in January 2009, a move that advances the concept of the hospital spa*

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# Paul Lehr



The Pritikin Longevity Center in Florida has achieved commercial success and scientific reputé in its three-decade lifespan. Now the son of its co-founder and president Paul Lehr is taking the brand to a new audience, both at home and abroad

RHIANON HOWELLS • CONSULTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS



**T**hink of an iconic American brand – Coca Cola, McDonalds, Marlboro – and the chances are it won't be associated with health. So it's surprising to learn that, while it's less well known globally, Pritikin is a household name in the US. Ask anyone stateside, and they'll probably be able to tell you something about the diet-and-exercise programme that claims to be able to prevent and reverse some of Western society's most pervasive health problems, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

The programme was originally developed by Nathan Pritikin, an engineer who became interested in nutrition after being diagnosed with advanced coronary heart disease at 41. At that time, in 1956, the standard advice given to heart disease patients was not to over-exert themselves, to carry on as normal and wait to die.

Unwilling to accept there was nothing more to be done, Pritikin took it upon

himself to study world cultures which had a low incidence of heart disease. He used what he discovered to develop a special diet, and went on to live for another 28 years (eventually dying from unrelated causes connected to leukaemia).

In 1975, Pritikin set up a centre at his home in Santa Barbara, California, to share his findings with others. But it wasn't until he met Dr David Lehr, a renowned cardiologist, that anyone took him seriously. Convinced Pritikin had caught on to something big, Lehr contacted the producers of the US current affairs TV show *60 Minutes* and persuaded them to investigate.

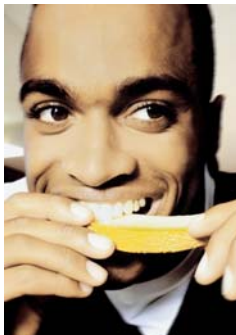
Pritikin and Lehr appeared on the show twice – in 1977 and 1978 – alongside three men with advanced heart disease, who all saw huge improvements in their health by following Pritikin's diet and lifestyle recommendations. The publicity gave the programme the credibility it needed, and in 1978, Lehr and Pritikin opened

The Pritikin website gives programme guests access to information and support once they've completed their visit

the Pritikin Longevity Center in Miami, Florida, where patients could get started on the regime under medical supervision.

Over 30 years later, the business – now The Pritikin Organization, LLC – is still going strong. Since the Pritikin family sold its stake following Nathan's death, the company has been co-owned by the Lehr family and a silent investor. When David Lehr died in 1996, his son Paul, a lawyer, took over the stewardship of the company.

In 1999, the centre moved from its original home to its current 78-room site in the City of Aventura, and Lehr is now looking for a bigger site in the Miami area to meet demand. But as well as continuing to develop the mother ship, Lehr is working to take the programme to a new audience through a raft of initiatives and deals.



Exercise, fresh fruit, vegetables, lean animal protein and whole grains – these are the bedrock of the Pritikin approach to wellness and health



Paul Lehr is leading the company into joint ventures and a Medicare tie up



"We believe that if you lead a healthier lifestyle you can either avoid or reverse most of the diseases that kill most people in the world, such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity, so our goal is to give to people the tools they need to change the way they live"

A significant source of revenue for Pritikin is its publishing arm, and its latest book – *The Pritikin Edge: 10 Essential Ingredients for a Long and Delicious Life*, co-authored by Lehr and Dr Robert Vogel, a cardiologist and weight consultant – is currently being promoted. Also launched is a web-based scheme – MyPritikin – which enables members worldwide to get daily coaching from the doctors, nutritionists and other experts at the Florida centre.

The company also has a supplements line, and a Pritikin packaged-food brand, which was bought by Quaker Oats in the 1980s, before being sold to another company and recently bought back by Pritikin.

Elsewhere, Lehr has confirmed a partnership with real estate developer Boymelgreen to create a 235-unit Pritikin Living project in Houston, Texas, and a licensing deal with Indian health and beauty operator VLCC to roll out 12-15 Pritikin day centres in India within three years. Further deals with operators in the

UAE and Singapore are under discussion.

Meanwhile, the US government has passed legislation which, from 2010, will allow participation in the Pritikin Program for heart-disease patients to be covered by Medicare – its public health insurance scheme – thereby greatly increasing the potential for a domestic rollout. Speaking to *Spa Business*, Lehr explains what makes the Pritikin approach unique and shares his vision for the brand in the 21st century.

#### When and why did you join the family business?

Growing up, the Pritikin Center was right across the water from my house. Because my father was the owner, I used to go there all the time, and run around and wait for him to finish work. I got to meet all these movie stars and I just thought it was normal! When I was older, I never really had any intention of following in my father's footsteps. I was a musician for a while, living in Paris, and when I came back to the

States I went to school to become a lawyer. But when my father passed away, I started looking after the business, and eventually realised that I needed to take care of it.

#### How would you sum up the Pritikin philosophy?

It's essentially one of prevention and reversal. We believe that if you lead a healthy lifestyle you can either avoid or reverse the diseases that kill most people in the world, such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Our goal is to give to people the tools they need to change the way they live.

We prefer prevention to reversal: we've got a family programme, where people can bring their kids from the age of seven. But some people wait until they have a health issue before they come to us – they want to reverse the problem or avoid surgery, and we're successful there too. In one study, 80 per cent of people who came after being told they needed heart bypass surgery didn't need it after five years of follow-up.

### Who do you compete with?

That's hard to answer because Pritikin does so many different things. Pritikin has sold more than 10 million books, so in a sense we compete with popular diet and lifestyle books. In terms of our one or two day executive physicals programme, we compete with the facilities that offer those. In terms of our one and two week residential lifestyle change programme, I don't really think there's another facility that competes with us directly because our programme is more medical and results-oriented. The dramatic health improvements and weight loss results achieved by our guests are not marketing claims, but rather have been published in more than 110 studies in the top peer reviewed scientific journals like *New England Journal of Medicine* and *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

So while we have a great spa as part of our program at Pritikin, I don't believe any of the top spas who people compare us to have published scientific studies showing their health and weight loss results. It's the results achieved at Pritikin that set us apart from others and they're one of the reasons we have such devotion from our guests.

### How important is the scientific research to Pritikin's credibility?

Incredibly important. Our money doesn't go into marketing. If you look in any of the magazines where you see spas advertising, you won't see us. All our money goes into science, because we're trying to change the way America and the world looks at nutrition and exercise – so they become the first line of defence in healthcare rather than drugs and surgery.

Most of the studies are done at UCLA, some at Washington University in St Louis and some are going to be done here at the University of Miami. They're funded by outside resources or our non-profit Pritikin Research Foundation, but if that ever doesn't have enough money then the company will sub it out of ongoing expenses. It's that important.

### PRITIKIN BY NUMBERS

- The Pritikin Longevity Center employs close to 200 staff
- Maximum capacity is 100 guests at any one time, with occupancy at close to 100 per cent
- 62 per cent of visitors are repeat visitors, worked out as a yearly average; around 80 per cent of guests return to Pritikin at least once
- Average length of stay is two weeks
- Around 20 per cent of guests come from outside the US, with the biggest contingent, after Canada, coming from the UK; other guests come from France, Italy, Spain, Greece and the Middle East
- Pritikin Enterprises, LLC, has published 10 million books



The Pritikin Centre also offers wellness programmes for children and families

### Pritikin has dramatic results. Can you explain, in lay terms, how it works?

It's not only in some cases; in the most recent study, 74 per cent of diabetics, and 44 per cent on insulin, came off and stayed off their medications. In another study, 83 per cent of people on hypertension medication came off it. These are medications that doctors have told people they're going to be on for the rest of their lives.

What happens is this. You go to the doctor and get diagnosed with high blood pressure. The doctor tells you to cut salt out of your diet and come back in 60 days. Sixty days later, you go back and you're still hypertensive, so the doctor says 'salt clearly isn't the problem' and prescribes medication instead, telling you you'll be

on it for the rest of your life.

So what's the magic pill we offer at Pritikin that allows these people to get off their medication? Well, it's not magic: it's a healthy diet and lifestyle, and the education to sustain it. Doctors don't learn about nutrition in medical school, so they don't know to tell people that if they stop using salt-shakers, they'll only be cutting 11 per cent of the sodium out of their diet; the rest of it is in the processed food they're eating. People don't realise there's more sodium in cornflakes and bread than there is in potato chips and pretzels.

The difference, when they come to us, is that they really are getting less sodium in their diet, and we also show them how to avoid it in everyday life. We have our daily cooking school for those who like to cook; we take people to the supermarket and teach them to read labels; we show





Pritikin is reformulating its food lines and plans to expand by setting up a licensing deal with a food company that has a national network



Guests are advised to opt for fresh rather than packaged foods to keep sodium intake down and avoid high blood pressure

them how to read menus at their favourite restaurant; with the kids, we take them to the food court at the shopping mall. We teach them to make better choices – and the fact is that when you cut out salt, you can lower your blood pressure, and when you eat a better diet, you can control diabetes and heart disease. It's that simple.

#### **You've launched a less rigid version of Pritikin. What's the thinking behind it?**

The new programme has been in development and beta testing for a couple of years. It was originally called Pritikin Lite, but we've changed the name to Pritikin First Step, which gives a clearer indication of what we're aiming to accomplish. It's similar to what we do with the kids, but we've never had an official programme for it before.

It's got slightly looser guidelines for sodium and animal protein, and includes more foods that, while not perfect, are not bad in limited quantities. This may make it easier for some to follow. It's suitable for those in reasonable health who want to stay that way, and allows us to cast the net wider for a younger, healthier clientele. But if you come to us with severe diabetes or a heart disease, we'll still strongly recommend the traditional Pritikin programme.

#### **How's the deal in India progressing?**

We've granted VLCC a master licence; we're providing the know-how, programme and recipes, but they'll be running the centres. They're sending key people to us for training, and we're helping with hiring.

The centres are going to offer non-residential programmes similar to something we offer here, called the PM Program, where people sign up for a 12- or 16-week course and come in two or three times a week for an exercise session, a lecture and a meal. We're doing field research to see what'll work in India in terms of schedules.

#### **Will you expand in any other countries?**

We're speaking with potential partners in Singapore and the UAE, but they're not confirmed. We're particular about who we do business with to ensure our programme is adhered to so guests get consistent results.

We'll only look at forming partnerships in countries where there are significant cultural differences from the US. If an opportunity presented itself in England, for example, we'd operate that ourselves.

#### **Is the Pritikin Living on track?**

This project's a partnership – Boymelgreen will develop and we'll provide the Pritikin services. They approached us before the real estate market dropped and while every place else was suffering, Houston continued to do well for longer, as it's an

oil economy. We're hopeful the developer will complete without significant delays.

I don't expect there'll be many opportunities [for Living projects] now, but there will be in the future, because people are focusing on health and longevity.

#### **You bought back the Pritikin food lines. What are your plans for it?**

Plans include reformulating and we're in discussions with larger food companies about licensing. We're in 20 per cent of the US, and want to expand.

#### **What's next on the agenda?**

Our relocation in Florida to accommodate expansion and the Medicare rollout: as from January 2010, Medicare will be authorised to cover certain people to undergo the programme in 72 one-hour sessions.

This will be non-residential business, and Medicare will pay for doctors, exercise classes and nutrition lectures. We'll be setting up non-residential centres in local communities offering 12- or 16-week programmes. This will enable us to expand across the US and where Medicare goes, private insurance companies follow. Medicare realises it's worth investing a few thousand dollars for someone to go through our programme, if it means they can avoid surgery or get off their medication. ● See p54 to read our writer's verdict of his stay at the Pritikin Longevity Center.



# I'm a believer



Jonathan Whittle signed up for a programme at the Pritikin Longevity Center and Spa after doctors told him that, if he didn't change his lifestyle, he could die. He explains what the experience did for him



**A** 46-year-old man, I've long been in possession of too much weight, thanks to years of food-fuelled self-abuse. But the trigger to making a trip to the Pritikin Longevity Center and Spa (see p50) and actually doing something about my health was a visit to a new doctor about a non-weight-related problem. Having dealt with my minor complaint, the man turned his attention to the elephant in the room: me. The exchange that followed was depressing. Did I smoke? Yes. How many a day? Too many. Did I drink? Yes. How much? Too much. Did I exercise? Yes. How much? Not much. Not if I'm honest. Did I eat well? No. Not if I'm honest. What did I eat? Lots of meat, dairy, microwave meals and take-aways.

Then he weighed me, measured me and took a lot of blood pressure readings. Over the next few weeks, further tests revealed the extent of the dreadful condition I was in. Pills were prescribed to deal with my high blood pressure and cholesterol level,

while more doctor's visits to see how I was progressing only served to increase the strength of the medication, or add new pills to deal with new problems. All because, despite the appalling impact my size was clearly having on my health, I still wasn't willing to lose weight or change my lifestyle.

The Pritikin Center's website seemed to suggest it could cure all my ills: the facility appeared to have been created to deal with people like me. I asked my doctor whether he recommended the Pritikin approach. He'd never heard of it; nor had the diabetic nurse, nor the staff at the hypertension clinic. Pritikin may be well known and well regarded in the US, but it doesn't appear to register on the collective consciousness of the medical fraternity in the UK, let alone that of the public.

My initial dealings with Pritikin, prior to my trip, further reinforced the view that this was primarily an American operation. If one doesn't live in the US, one can't use Pritikin's online questionnaires and forms, because they've been constructed on the assumption that all its guests have US addresses, US telephone and mobile (cell)



The centre is near a number of golf courses and nature walks which guests can use

numbers and are users of US healthcare and health insurance systems. Pritikin feels American, rather than international.

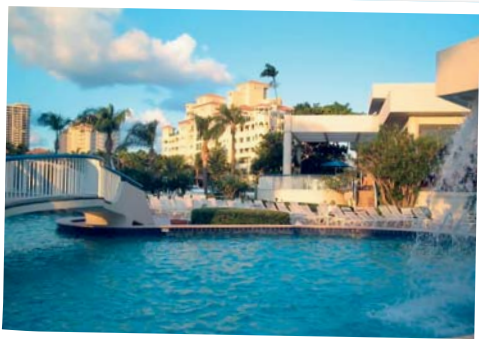
Another preconception was that the operation was rather evangelical. Everything on its website, marketing collateral, and in the interaction between staff and prospective guests, was 'on message' and continuously reinforced. To the uninitiated, this had the faintest hint of cultism about it.

However, I also suspected that Pritikin had the potential to be life-changing. Its claims that it could deal with the dread diseases of the modern Western world – hypertension, diabetes, obesity – led me to hope it would give me a set of tools, possibly even an approach to life, which would redress all those years of over-indulgence. But could it really be that good?

## NEW BEGINNINGS

The Pritikin Longevity Center and Spa is located in the City of Aventura, Florida, a 30-minute drive from Miami Airport. Hidden among high-rise condos and clustered around a marina for mega-yachts, the complex itself is unostentatious. But once through the sliding doors and into the

The Pritikin Center is located on a marina in the City of Aventura, Florida (right)





Guests are assessed by trained professionals, including doctors and dietitians

glacial lobby, filled with marble, water features and attentive staff, it's obvious this is a place that's taking itself seriously.

During the welcome tour, the true purpose of Pritikin starts to show itself. Most of the facility is housed in a building that used to be part of a yacht club. The wood panelling, brass fittings and huge models of old boats attest to its previous life, and, while everything is in perfect working order and beautifully maintained, it is, stylistically, a bit of a throwback. This part of the centre contains the reception and administrative offices; dining and public areas for residents, including an alcohol- and caffeine-free bar; a clinical-looking medical centre; a lecture theatre, and some guest bedrooms.

The rest of the centre has been built alongside the marina. The site is shared with boat owners, and some of the facilities, such as the open-air swimming pool, are shared with non-residents. Past the pool, a three-storey building houses an extensive gym and spa complex, along with more health-testing facilities, while a short walk along the dock leads to another accommodation block, where my room is located.

The rooms are immense. Mine has a gargantuan bathroom containing a whirlpool bath large enough to keep a medium-sized

porpoise. Although the décor is old enough to almost be retro-chic and, in places, a bit tatty, the rooms are immaculately clean and fully accessorised; among the more unusual in-room amenities are vials for collecting urine.

#### GETTING STARTED

Pritikin operates on a one- or two-week cycle, though many guests book in for much longer. Saturday and Sunday are registration days for new arrivals, which means rounds of blood tests, medical questionnaires, consultations with doctors and physical assessments. As a result, I spend most of my first couple of days at the centre being prodded, poked, weighed and measured. I can't help feeling like a child on my first day at school, doing what he's told but not really knowing where to go next and rather worried about getting something wrong. I certainly don't feel as though I'm on vacation.

In these early days – before I fully adjust to the idea that this is a medical centre rather than a five-star resort – it's easy to pick holes in Pritikin. Many of the staff are

paramedics, doctors and other healthcare professionals with a tendency to treat guests like patients; they're polite but detached, even a touch brusque. In contrast, the hotel employees, from the maids to the waiting staff, are universally lovely.

To begin with, the diet is a huge challenge, as the approach is uncompromising: no caffeine, alcohol, refined sugar, salt, or fat and very little animal protein. This means that, to an unreconstructed palate such as mine, the food is, frankly, awful.

What this does, however, is help to create a bond between guests. Whether comparing notes on the headaches we're getting from caffeine withdrawal (caffeine tablets are provided to those in serious trouble) or moaning about the lack of salt, all everybody talks about is the food. We all hate the food. But the food isn't bad; the food is very good – we're just not used to good food. The staff and repeat guests reassure us that the first few days are the worst and it will get better.

On the plus side, we can graze as much as we like on fresh fruit and there's plenty of choice during meals. The staples of the

*"We all hate the food, but the food isn't bad; the food is very good – we're just not used to good food. The staff and repeat guests reassure us that the first days are the worst and it will get better"*

diet are fruit, vegetables, unrefined grains and the occasional bit of tofu or fish. In my opinion, the food tastes better when prepared and served simply, while attempts to make healthy ingredients mimic full-fat, bad-for-you foods are much less successful. The Pritikin version of cheese-cake or chocolate mousse actually leave me wishing for a nice tasty apple.

### SUPPORTIVE ATMOSPHERE

After a couple of days, my taste buds adjust and the old hands are right – I start to appreciate the food for what it is, rather than for what it isn't. I also start to see the impact of the diet on my health. After just 24 hours without salt in our diet, those of us with high-blood pressure start to see our levels returning to normal. Suddenly the relationship between what we eat and our health seems undeniable. It's a revelation. Eating the right things in combination with exercise can arrest debilitating conditions. It can even reverse conditions that you had thought were chronic and intractable.

Many people, though not all, come to Pritikin with a serious health problem – usually linked to diet – with which they need help. It makes sense, then, that during my stay the majority of guests are over 45. Although it welcomes children, Pritikin is not a family-centred resort; this is a place to come and get well, away from the distractions of the real world.

### RIGHT OF REPLY PAUL LEHR • PRESIDENT • THE PRITIKIN ORGANIZATION

Congratulations Jon, on your Pritikin-inspired successes: weight loss, major reductions in blood-pressure medication, and newly normal blood-sugar levels.

Your article said "some claim Pritikin may be nutritionally lacking". This claim was made by those who inaccurately grouped Pritikin with vegetarian dietary programmes. Pritikin petitioned the dietary committee that made this claim to review the evidence and this statement was retracted. Indeed, Dr Janet King, chair of the American Dietary Guidelines Committee, commended Pritikin's nutritional benefits and wrote "computer analysis of Pritikin's menus shows it's nutritionally adequate and the inclusion of animal protein sources eliminate the need

for supplements." Not only is the program nutritionally adequate, it's precisely what the Western world's population – growing more diseased with diabetes and plaque-ridden arteries – desperately needs.

Prevention is the future of healthcare. Fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, lean animal protein, and exercise – so simple, so inexpensive, yet so powerful!

Your son spoke the truth – "you can check out any time you want, but you can never leave". We teach the best choices, and you change your lifestyle as much as you desire (or your health status requires). The degree of your adherence fluctuates based on these factors. You may even want to come back for a check-up and re-education. You're a great success story and we applaud you.

Most of my fellow guests are American, though a few come from Canada, and one or two from Europe and elsewhere. As Pritikin is not cheap, most are wealthy. But within these boundaries, the centre seems to attract all sorts – my peers include the CEO of one of the world's largest companies, a globe-trotting lawyer, an oil magnate, an alligator farmer and a housewife. One of the great strengths of Pritikin is that it brings people together with a common purpose. What you do outside is of little

consequence; the conversation revolves around how you're doing here, which makes for a very supportive atmosphere.

### GET WITH THE PROGRAMME

The driving force of everything at the centre is the Pritikin Program. Tailor-made to each guest, this covers three key areas – medical consultation, exercise and education – and fills almost every hour of the day. Although everything is voluntary, guests are expected to engage



The spa at Pritikin was designed by the same company that worked on Canyon Ranch



fully with the programme, which means that, sometimes, life at Pritikin can seem a little puritanical. While the benefits are self-evident, I can't help wondering if the centre could lighten up a little without losing its sense of purpose.

From Monday to Friday, the first part of the morning is given over to exercise: a personalised programme of cardiovascular and resistance training alternated with core stretching. This is supplemented, in the morning and afternoon, with optional classes such as yoga or aqua-aerobics. The rest of the day is given over to classes on nutrition, exercise, health and lifestyle.

The education programme is a real point of difference at Pritikin. It's an opportunity to learn exactly what's going on in our bodies, what's going on in our food, what's going on in society – and what's going on when we put too much of the wrong stuff into our bodies and don't exercise enough. Taught by highly qualified professionals, mostly doctors, the classes are interactive and authoritative, supported by the most up-to-date research into the impact of diet on health. The science is compelling. It feels trustworthy and important.

#### A LITTLE MIRACLE

For those guests who come to be converted, Pritikin offers an experience that is almost religious. For those who believe in and follow its teachings, the rewards will be better health and a longer life. And, like all good religions, Pritikin can offer

'miracles' to help the faithful to believe. My own little miracle was that I was able to stop taking my blood-pressure medication less than a day after I arrived.

An even bigger miracle was visited on a fellow guest who arrived the same day. Walking with the aid of sticks, he was a big man, bowed down by excess weight and assailed by illness. Quiet and patently unhappy, he told me Pritikin was his last resort. A week later, I encountered him at dinner, his walking sticks forgotten, tucking into a salad, laughing and entertaining his table with jokes and tricks – unshackled from the misery his lifestyle had wrought.

Pritikin has its critics. There are those who say that the strictures of the diet are untenable in the real world, while others claim that the very low fat levels impair one's ability to absorb essential vitamins. Once in the Pritikin bubble, however, and feeling the tangible benefits of the programme, such criticism seems irrelevant.

During my stay, I was concerned that half the guests I met were repeat visitors. Did this mean that, post-Pritikin, we would revert to our bad habits and have to come back to start again? But while some people inevitably relapse, I'm inclined to believe that return guests are as likely to be looking for re-affirmation as re-education. Pritikin makes you feel good, physically and emotionally; it's a life-affirming place.

So did it work for me? In the short term, there's no denying it. During my stay, I lost nine pounds, got my blood-pressure read-

Whittle big game fishing off Florida during his visit. The programme advocates exercise and fresh air. (The fish was put back!)

ings back to normal and took myself out of the at-risk bracket for type 2 diabetes.

The longer term, of course, is a different story. Back home, I was talking to my young son about my time at Pritikin. He said it sounded like the Hotel California, from the song by The Eagles: "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave!" In a sense, he's right. I'm no longer in the Florida sunshine thinking only about that day's programme. But I learned things I won't forget for a long time. The real test is how far I can remain true to the Pritikin lifestyle in the real world.

#### FOUR MONTHS LATER, JONATHAN WHITTLE SAYS:

I'm still a work in progress but, in headline terms, my weight has gone from around 18 stone when I went to Florida to around 16 stone today (after a very substantial 'break' for Christmas!). My blood-pressure readings have gone from 150/110, with lots of medication, to 110/80, with much reduced medication. In addition, my blood-sugar and insulin levels are now within normal ranges, reducing my risk of developing diabetes. I sleep two hours a night longer than I used to, which, coupled with the exercise I now do regularly, is having a continued and positive impact on my energy levels. So, broadly speaking, it's all good! ●

# 金木水火土



## Tales of the Orient

THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL GROUP HAS LAUNCHED A TREATMENT AND PRODUCT CONCEPT ACROSS THE GLOBE. WE FIND OUT MORE



This month, the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group (MOHG) will roll out its own-branded treatments and products worldwide. From 1 June, 11 MOHG spas – stretching from Tokyo to London and Miami – will be ready to win over guests in these times of economic gloom with a series of innovative new offerings. The seven other spas in the portfolio will follow suit once licensing approval is granted.

This isn't just another private-label launch however, this is a new spa therapy concept: a hybrid of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and aromatherapy. Neither is this something introduced on a whim to win over customers in the credit crunch: it's something the group has been working on for more than four years and has invested hundreds of thousands pounds in.

### ORIENTAL HERITAGE

While it's good practice to keep treatment offerings fresh and interesting, an investment of this amount is not something any company makes lightly. This is serious business. "Mandarin Oriental Spas are not sub-branded, like many of our competitors: the brand is Mandarin Oriental," says Andrew Gibson, MOHG's group director of spa. "We're a rapidly expanding global chain that needs a core. While each spa has a degree of individuality, such as local treatments, they need a common binder and that's what this is. It's a tangible expression of the Mandarin Oriental philosophy."

The idea to develop an own-branded product and treatment line was something that had been on the cards for around two years before Gibson joined MOHG in early 2007.

"The process began with me trying to crystallise the Mandarin Oriental philosophy," Gibson says. "We have a strong Oriental heritage, so the treatments had to have this base. There are strong elements of TCM in what we're doing, although we don't want to label ourselves as this. We also wanted our products to be natural.





[Aromatherapy] oils and scrubs are the easiest way to do this and keep authenticity."

Then came choosing a company to make the products and here, after a tendering process, the decision was made to go with Aromatherapy Associates. Geraldine Howard, co-founder, says: "People think it's easy to put a product line together, but it isn't. There's a massive business consideration. Logistically we needed to determine whether we were able to distribute the products to all the countries [that MOHG is based in]. We also needed to be sure we could meet the criteria to get the products registered, accepted and legal in all of these countries. Then it's about production, cost-effectiveness, minimum order quantities and stockholding. We did a lot of research into numbers and it's a massive process to work out how many products are going to be used in all of these spas around the world and this is something that people just aren't aware of."

It wasn't until January 2008, however, that the real shaping of the concept occurred, when key figures from the two companies got together for a five-day brainstorming session. From MOHG was Gibson; Andrea Lomas, the head of group spa operations who has been a major driving force for the concept since its inception and has had an integral role in its development; MOHG's regional trainers from the Americas and Asia; and an independent Chinese, holistic medical doctor, Claire Beardson. From Aromatherapy Associates was Howard; two of the company's senior trainers; and Howard's business partner Sue Beechey – the first time in 15 years that Beechey and Howard have collaborated on a new line of oils for spas. "It was a phenomenal team," says Gibson.

"Everybody knows the efficacy of aromatherapy and meridian massage, which is a real Chinese massage, but trying to get them

*Mandarin Oriental Spa Therapies have been devised as tailor-made treatments for each guest, based on their personal, current state of wellbeing*

to work together is very complicated," he adds. Yet with this experienced team collaborating around one table things seemed to slot into place. Howard says: "We all worked well together and learned from each other. Essential oils are complex substances, so unless you really understand them, it's difficult to get them working effectively in TCM. All of the essential oil blends we've developed link to one of the five Chinese elements. And although many people think aromatherapy is just Swedish

massage with essential oils, it's not. Aromatherapy massage (based on the Marguerite Maury technique) is based on Eastern techniques and meridian massage."

## WHEEL OF WELLNESS

The Mandarin Oriental Spa Therapies have been devised as a tailor-made treatment for each guest. The experience, which lasts for two hours, begins with a questionnaire and a physical analysis of the spine's pressure points to determine the individual's personal and current state of wellbeing. Based on this, the therapist gives the guest two oils to smell and choose between for their treatment – reflecting yin and yang. There are five oils altogether, each of which have been custom-blended by Aromatherapy Associates to support the problems associated with each of the five Chinese elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water. The earth oil, for example, comprises lemon, lemongrass, coriander and cardamom oils, as these help to energise people and work particularly well on the digestive system. Both of these are troublesome areas for people who are linked to the earth element.

The 90-minute massage that follows focuses on certain meridian points over the body, depending on the answers given in the questionnaire. "There are probably about 10 different massage styles,



As well as a signature retail line, bespoke nutritional and exercise guidance is offered to guests according to their original consultation – this has been developed in conjunction with Hong Kong-based Ross Eathorne

which are based around the meridians," says Gibson. "The therapist may start on one side of the body, or work up or down. It's very complex.

"It's been tested with our staff and management for the best part of a year, in addition, we've tested it on consumers in Hong Kong and Chinese doctors have checked it for authenticity to ensure we're hitting the right meridian points. If you are a person that understands spa treatments, then you'll recognise the complexity of what we've done. If you don't, it doesn't really matter: all you'll need to know is that you're going to get a fantastic massage."

But the concept doesn't stop at the massage. As well as a signature retail line, bespoke nutritional and exercise guidance is offered to guests according to their original consultation – this has been developed in conjunction with Hong Kong-based lifestyle coach Ross Eathorne. In the future, the group will also extend this line of thinking to teas and music for customers. "We call this our wheel of wellness: we've looked at the different components of wellness and were building that into our concept," says Gibson. "It's this thought process that makes us unique."

## BRAND VALUES

In parallel to treatment and product development, MOHG has been putting its spas through a 'treatment menu engineering exercise', based on an adapted version of the menu engineering process from Cornell's Restaurant Administration Simulation Exercise (CRASE). "We took every single treatment from our spas worldwide and analysed them on cost versus sales," says Sonee Singh, MOHG's regional director of spa – the Americas, who headed up the exercise. "The result was a grid of Stars (low cost, high sales), Plow Horses (high cost, high sales), Dogs (high cost, low sales) and Puzzles (low cost, low sales). Our aim was to maximise Stars and Plow Horses, and minimise Dogs and Puzzles, but maintain a well-balanced menu." As such, MOHG has cut its spa menus down to 25 treatments, leaving enough room for the new signature therapies to make their mark.

To further prepare for the rollout, each treatment manager from 12 spas underwent two weeks of training – headed up by Aromatherapy Associates representatives, Lomas and MOHG's regional trainers – five months before launching.

So, with everything in place, what is MOHG hoping to achieve? "The investment has been very high end," Gibson says. "If we get that back within three years that would be very good. It's more



## HOME IMPROVEMENT

The Mandarin Oriental signature product line, developed in conjunction with Aromatherapy Associates, incorporates body and bath oils matched to each of the five elements, as well as a generic body scrub, body wash and body lotion and a range of candles and travel-sized products. The prices start at £10 (US\$16, €11) for the travel body wash and go up to £31 (US\$49, €35) for a pack of five body oils.

All the products use natural ingredients and are devoid of chemicals such as SLES and parabens (see SB06/1 p22 for more details about the use of chemical ingredients in skincare). All the packaging is eco-friendly. "This is something both of us feel strongly about," says Aromatherapy Associates' Geraldine Howard. Mandarin Oriental's Andrew Gibson adds: "The challenge is to deliver on luxury, but to also have respect for the environment. That's something personal to me, but I also think that if you're a public business today and you're not taking care of that, you're losing an advantage."

than worth it though because this is giving us a foundation to really take the [Mandarin Oriental Spa] philosophy and expand it.

"But the real upside is the brand value. We've now got a tangible core to our wellness philosophy and you can't place a value on that."

Howard says: "For me, as a therapist, what really makes me tick is knowing how these fantastic treatments and products are going to help people." Gibson agrees: "I think that would be the reward for all of those involved: to get all the guest feedback forms saying that this is something they really enjoyed."

Although Gibson admits that the timing of the launch at the height of a global recession is far from ideal, he's remaining positive. He concludes: "I think it will offer some glimmer of hope to people, something positive. I think it will actually motivate a lot of people and give them a reason to come and see us." ●

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Face to face with the leisure industry



# world of wellness

**T**he beautiful, humbling Taurus mountains provides a fitting backdrop to the Sanitas Spa & Wellness centre in Antalya, Turkey where helping guests to regain a personal sense of perspective is high on the agenda.

Sitting on 2.5km of secluded Mediterranean coastline, which can only be reached via a long, narrow, dirt track snaking between pomegranate crops and shanty towns, the centre is a central element of the five-star LykiaWorld & LinksGolf (LWLG) Antalya resort. The resort is part of the LykiaGroup portfolio and is owned by Turkish company Silk Road Holding (see p64).

The 449-room resort, located over 30km from the nearest tourist hub and the ancient towns of Belek, Side and Manavgat – has two clearly defined USPs, aimed at distinct

The LykiaWorld Antalya resort is combining links golf with the Indian discipline of ayurveda to give itself a competitive edge in Turkey's top tourism region

markets. For golfers, there's an 18-hole links golf course (the country's first), with every hole facing the sea, plus a training academy and 16 golf villas. Meanwhile, for those seeking rejuvenation, the wellness centre is one of just a handful of facilities, in a region with over 70 hotel spas, specialising in the Indian discipline of ayurveda.

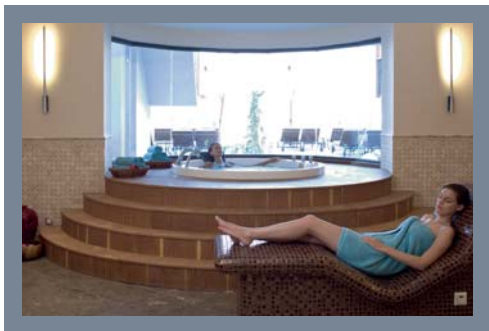
Costing €6m (US\$8.53m, £5.15m), the 4,000sq ft (372sq m) wellness centre was

developed by ayurveda specialists Sebose Spa Consulting, or SSC (see p65), in collaboration with the LykiaGroup and architects Artspa. Alongside a whole gamut of other spa services, the facility offers numerous ayurvedic therapies, and plans to launch a full programme – supervised by a qualified ayurvedic doctor and incorporating a significant dietary component, including ayurvedic cooking classes – by 2010.

Yoga in the Zen garden: the resort sits on 2.5km of secluded Mediterranean coastline



The region has over 70 hotel spas, but only a handful specialise in ayurveda... There are plans to launch a full programme for this discipline – supervised by a qualified ayurvedic doctor and including ayurvedic cooking classes – by 2010.



## COMPETITIVE EDGE

Spas are becoming an essential ingredient in Turkey's new hotels and resorts, particularly in the province of Antalya – often referred to as the country's capital of tourism.

Antalya welcomes almost 30 per cent of Turkey's tourists, which have increased by 10.5 million since 2004 to 23.8 million in 2007. This has had a significant impact on the Turkish spa industry, says Ingrid Seliga-Bostanci, founder of SSC and manager of the LykiaWorld wellness centre, who has 27 years' experience in the sector: "In the early 1990s, no hotel had a spa. They had just a small corner for massages, a post on a beach or a facial cabin. But now every hotel with more than 30 rooms has a spa."

Attila Silahtaroglu, a LykiaGroup board member, adds: "A good spa is one of the most important investments to differentiate a holiday product from its competition."

To give the LykiaWorld facility a competitive edge in the region, SSC decided to avoid the term 'spa' and the water-based treatments associated with it, focusing in-

**The resort at night (top); wooden treatment beds or 'dronis' absorb the sesame oil used during treatments (left); the women's changing rooms (right)**

stead on ayurveda and 'wellness'. Almost 80 per cent of LWLG guests are Russian, while the rest are Turkish, British or German nationals, and according to Seliga-Bostanci: "[Ayurveda] is nothing new to this clientele; around 70 per cent regularly travel to India, other parts of Asia or America, so have experienced ayurvedic treatments."

To add authenticity to its offering, the facility's 24 treatment rooms include two massage suites with 'dronis' – surprisingly comfortable, traditional wooden beds that absorb the warm sesame seed oil used generously during ayurvedic treatments. There's also a room for kaları massages – ayurvedic massages performed with the feet and hands; a room for Thai massage and shiatsu; a balneo room with a Vichy shower; two couples' suites with private whirlpools and two beauty treatment rooms.

In addition, the centre has a range of other facilities, including a thermal area with bio, Finnish and Russian saunas and steamrooms and an indoor, Japanese pool lined with cedar-wood and an extensive relaxation area. Rebalancing classes, such as yoga, tai chi and meditation, take place in a, shore front Zen garden.

However, the centre also maintains its Turkish roots. "A Turkish spa can not be without Turkish baths," says Seliga-Bostanci. In line with this, the facility has a group hammam and two private ones, including one for couples, while the resort itself features duplex 'hammam residence suites' with private Turkish baths.

Activities on offer at the resort – from belly-dancing and Turkish cooking classes to swimming, tennis and water sports – complement the wellness experience.

## DUAL CONCEPT

Turkey sits between two continents – Asia and Europe – and this is reflected in its culture. This duality is consciously evoked in



the wellness centre, which offers treatments from both Eastern and Western traditions.

It took Seliga-Bostanci four months to create the treatment menu, which combines a wide range of ayurvedic therapies, massages from other cultures – including Swedish massage and Hawaiian lomi lomi – and beauty treatments. To tap into the golf

market, the centre offers golf-specific treatment packages, while to cater for families, there's the Ayurveda Happy Family bundle, including a massage for mum, dad and baby and a seminar on baby massage.

For guests staying at least a week, there are three multi-day programmes. These include the five-day Ayurvedic Laksmi,

The resort (above) has 449 rooms and about 20 per cent of guests use the spa; treatments include those incorporating Japanese singing bowl (below left)

Goddess of Beauty programme, a tightening cure for the body which is ideal for new mothers and the five-day Maharadsha Kings Cure, which is designed to relieve chronic exhaustion, sleep disorders and headaches through a combination of marma abhyanga (stimulating ayurvedic massage), shirodhara (the pouring of warm oil onto the forehead, or 'third eye') and Tibetan singing bowls therapy.

Skincare products are supplied by French company Algotharm, which offers paraben- and phenoxyethanol-free, seaweed-based products; Swiss brand Mavala, and Thailand-based Panpuri. For some ayurvedic body treatments the products are made fresh on-site using organic, Eastern herbs, yogurt, fruits, green tea or coffee.

In contrast with common practice in resorts with spas, treatment menus are not placed in guest rooms or on the website, as often, "the treatment a guest wants isn't the most suitable for them, as needs change from day to day," says Seliga-Bostanci.

Instead, guests are encouraged to take up the offer of an ayurvedic analysis prior to their treatment. Ayurveda focuses on rebalancing a person's 'dosha', or psychological type. This can be predominately 'vata', 'pitta' or 'kapha' or a combination of these. According to Seliga-Bostanci, if a person is vata, their imbalance is likely to be related to muscles, nerves, spirit or organs. Pitta is linked with digestion and metabolism and for a kapha person, the immune system is likely to be the source



#### ABOUT THE LYKIA GROUP

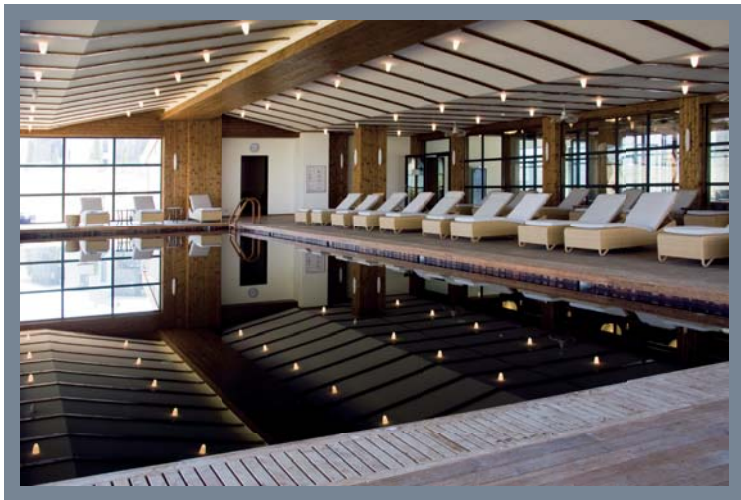
The resort is part of the LykiaGroup portfolio, owned by Turkish company Silkar Holding, which entered the tourism sector in the 1980s and has become a pioneer in recreation tourism.

The LykiaGroup portfolio comprises LykiaWorld Ölüdeniz, which includes the thalasso-focused Manolya Spa (also launched by Sebosa Spa

Consulting), LykiaLodge Kapadokya, and LykiaConference Turkey.

Another subsidiary of Silkar Holding is Silkar Mining Joint-stock, which specialises in marble and natural stone production and supplies the floor-to-ceiling marble that can be seen throughout LykiaWorld & LinksGolf Antalya. Details: lykiagroup.com





The cedar-lined Japanese pool (above) is an unusual addition to the experience on offer at the Sanitas Spa & Wellness centre

of any problem. Once the dosha has been established, a treatment can be prescribed to bring the body into balance.

At the LykiaWorld wellness centre, this analysis takes the form of a 30-minute questionnaire, answered on the day of treatment, although Seliga-Bostanci says she can get a good indication of someone's ailments by looking at skin texture and build, as well as the way they talk, walk and behave.

## GROWTH POTENTIAL

Seliga-Bostanci recruits most therapists fresh from college with a basic qualification in massage or beauty, and trains them in ayurvedic therapies herself. Between 2006 and 2008, she and Yücel Bostanci, her husband and business partner, completed two six- to eight-week courses at the College of Ayurveda and Panchakarma in Kerala, India. Crucially, she also holds an Ustalik Diplomi, the state qualification needed to conduct in-house training in Turkey.

The centre employs seven Turkish staff, and took on an additional three foreign workers during the busy summer season (March to September). Although under Turkish law, an employer must have 10 Turkish nationals to every foreigner, this

## ABOUT SEBOSE SPA CONSULTING

SSC is a family-run firm specialising in thalasso, wellness and ayurveda, owned by German-born Ingrid Seliga-Bostanci, her Turkish husband Yücel Bostanci and her sister Susanne Seliga (both massage therapists).

Ingrid Seliga-Bostanci has been a qualified beauty therapist since 1982, moving to Turkey from Germany in the early 1990s. Her first project with

LykiaWorld was the Manolya Spa, Turkey's first thalasso spa, at LykiaWorld Ölüdeniz, where she worked as both a consultant and a therapist, before going on to manage numerous other spas.

The Sanitas Spa & Wellness centre is SSC's fourth resort spa project in Turkey. Other projects the firm has consulted on include a thalassotherapy facility within the five-star Kempinski Hotel

isn't an issue for SSC, as the wellness centre's numbers are balanced out by the Turkish staff count within the resort overall.

However, while recruiting local staff was relatively easy, considering the small size of the Turkish spa market, employing foreigners was challenging, says Seliga-Bostanci, as non-Turks must demonstrate a rare specialisation in order to get a work permit – for instance, a lymphatic massage qualification that can only be obtained in Germany.

While Seliga-Bostanci insists communication inside the treatment room is crucial, the language barrier is an issue. Although therapists are provided with a basic list of instructions and questions in English, conversation outside these boundaries is limited to hand signals and gestures. During my visit, the Czech receptionist, who spoke five languages, was called on to

conduct consultations and translate queries from guests. I couldn't help but wonder how they would manage during the winter months (November to February), when she and the other foreign staff had left.

As business grows, Seliga-Bostanci hopes to increase staff to 30, adding that she would like to employ three Balinese therapists for the summer season, as she believes they're particularly skilled in massage.

So far, in the first year of opening, 20 per cent of the resort's guests have used the centre, and Seliga-Bostanci is confident this will improve next year. Meanwhile, LykiaGroup's Silahtaroglu says they expect a return on investment in eight years, arguing that good value for money in Turkish hotels will lead to an increase in the number of visitors coming to the country in search of spa and wellness experiences. ●



# EXERCISE HIGH

**S**hort of breath, heart rate rising – and yet I was standing

totally still. But that's what happens when the oxygen levels in the air surrounding you are reduced to simulate high altitude environments.

I'd come to The Altitude Centre, in the Metis Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Centre in London, UK, to find out how simulated altitude (or hypoxic) training can be used for rehabilitation and how it can be incorporated into fitness centres and possibly spas. In order to appreciate its applications, however, it helps to understand the science – and, I was assured, to experience it for yourself.

And so it was that I found myself climbing onto an exercise bike in the centre's hypoxic chamber. "Hypo" means less and 'oxic' is oxygen – 'less oxygen,' explained Richard Pullan, director of The Altitude Centre, as I started to pedal. Right on cue, the on-screen number indicating my body's current oxygen levels began to drop.

"By changing the air you're breathing, we're making your heart beat faster," he continued. But what did that mean physiologically? What were the fitness benefits of reducing the oxygen supply to my body?

## STRESS LEVELS

"If you train at the gym, you stress your body. It adapts to that stress and gets used to it – that's how you get stronger," Pullan explains. "It's the same with breathing. If I give you the stress of reduced oxygen, your body will adapt and become more efficient with the oxygen it breathes."

"This has many benefits. Every chemical reaction in your body requires oxygen – the body produces energy by metabolising oxygen and glucose, for example. Training at altitude is like giving your body a tune-up. You feel better, have more energy, you can run faster and further, there's less wear and tear. You're more efficient generally."

Thanks to simulated altitude technology, altitude training is starting to gain a foothold in the fitness industry. We find out about its benefits and whether spas could offer it too



Pullan thinks some of the benefits would be of interest to spa-goers: "It can help with weight loss, as it changes the way your body metabolises food and can help treat cellulite by speeding up lymphatic drainage and boosting collagen production: poor drainage and weak collagen production is the cause of these uneven, fatty deposits."

"In addition, it helps you look and feel younger by encouraging the body to produce more regenerative human growth hormone – something it naturally does less as you get older or heavier. It can even help bring down blood pressure and cholesterol levels, as it changes lipid levels."

## HYPOXIC REHAB

Increased production of human growth hormone is also one of the reasons hypoxic training can be used for rehabilitation, a service which spas can and do offer.

"Human growth hormone is responsible for producing new cells – it stimulates the body to recover," says Pullan. "Also, if you break or tear something, the oxygen supply is cut off. It's that hypoxia that stimulates the osteoblasts in the cell to produce more collagen type 1 and 2, more red blood cells, more capillaries to help the body repair itself. In the same way, if you do hypoxic training, your body's more likely to produce these things, which help it mend."

When someone is injured, there are various ways hypoxic training can help. "If they can't weight-bear, they can do intermittent hypoxic training," says Pullan. "That requires no exercise at all – simply breathing hypoxic air – and can help improve hormone levels responsible for recovery. It can speed up metabolism levels, encouraging the body to mend quicker by making everything work

## SETTING UP A HYPOXIC OFFERING

**Options:** There are two ways of providing hypoxic training – through a mask, allowing users to breathe hypoxic air when training on any piece of equipment on the gym floor, or building a small hypoxic room in which you then place standard fitness kit.

**Hardware:** Equipment is made by Hypoxico and is distributed in the UK by The Altitude Company. The UK is its biggest market, although it has partners across the world including China, Thailand and Australia. The equipment works by reducing

the oxygen in the air to reflect the number of oxygen molecules in the thinner air at the heights being simulated (around 2,500–3,000m for a first session).

**Costs:** £3,500 (US\$5,600, €4,050) for the mask set-up; from £15,000 (US\$23,900, €17,250) for a hypoxic room.

**Training:** No formal qualifications are available at the moment. However, The Altitude Centre and ATS are developing a training programme catering for all levels from personal trainers to a masters degree,

which they aim to offer through a UK university. Distance learning will be an option.

**Risks:** "You should check fitness levels, medical history, blood pressure and so on, just as you would in any normal health club, but there are no reported cases of negative effects of working at simulated altitude," says Pullan. "Indeed, it helps asthma: you don't dehydrate as you do at real altitude, so there's no increased risk of thrombosis. Your body protects itself – it can't go to the same maximum heart rate as at sea level."



The City Point Club in London, UK, has Hypoxico equipment supplied by The Altitude Company and has opted to install the mask system which allow users to breathe hypoxic air while training on any standard item of fitness equipment in the gym



faster. Just by breathing less oxygen, athletes can train their bodies and maintain some level of fitness. You can't discount the psychological benefit in that.

"Then, when they're able to weight-bear they can start to train in a hypoxic environment. Obviously they can't train at the same intensity as when they're fit so they're not getting the same CV challenge. However, CV stress is higher in a hypoxic room, so you can exercise at a much lower intensity, putting less load on your injury, but still get the same CV workout.

"Alistair Brownlee, the [UK] junior triathlete who was selected for the Olympics, got a stress fracture in 2007 and was on crutches. We did the full package with him: he slept in a hypoxic tent, did intermittent hypoxic training and then, when he could weight-bear, trained in hypoxic conditions. After just five weeks of proper training, he got the silver medal at the Junior World Championships.

"In the professional football clubs in the UK where we've built hypoxic rooms – Liverpool and Tottenham, for example – when someone is injured for more than three weeks, the physio hands them over for hypoxic training. It helps them stay fit, so they can go straight back into full training as soon as the injury's repaired, and they've been able to get players back into the system quicker.

"At the moment, it's mostly elite athletes who use hypoxic training for rehabilitation; the public tend to come to me with a goal in mind – for example, to lose weight or to train to climb a mountain or some other physical challenge."

## HYPOXIC WELLNESS

But is there a market for hypoxic training in spas? "Definitely," says Pullan. His company has already installed an altitude centre in two UK venues: Champneys Tring, and the day spa at City Point Club in London. He's also installed a hypoxic room at an anti-ageing clinic in Barcelona.

"More gyms are becoming wellness orientated too," he says. "The best benefits of hypoxic training come from a course, usually lasting about two weeks, but short-term exposure can have benefits."

One such short-term exposure could include devising a bowl to fit onto headrests on treatment tables, hypoxic air could then be pumped into this when the client is lying face down. "At the European Football Championships the Belgium team had massages while breathing in hypoxia. With a hypoxic massage muscles will be more relaxed and your capillaries will dilate to increase blood flow."



The Third Space health club in London, UK, offers circuit classes in its hypoxic chamber. Called Hypoxic Fives, participants switch between five pieces of CV kit to get a high intensity workout (top right). The Altitude Centre's kit at Champneys Tring (top left)

Pullan feels that hypoxic systems could be used to create a mountain chillout room, imitating an offering which is usually restricted to spas in high altitude climates. Just by breathing in the air, Pullan says "you will feel calm and relaxed due to a rise in serotonin and dopamine."

Another suggestion is to use hypoxic systems to add another dimension to sleep health. "We already supply Olympic athletes so they get the benefits of altitude training in their sleep," says Pullan. "We can convert hotel bedrooms so people can get a 24-hour treatment in their sleep." This could provide a unique selling point to the growing number of hotels and resorts which are launching spa bedrooms.

## FIT FOR GYMS

The area where Pullan sees the most crossover in spas, however, is installing hypoxic chambers in fitness suites to aid general fitness. This is something that health clubs operators are already doing. The Third Space, a high-end club in London has a hypoxic room, in which circuit classes are held – known as Hypoxic Fives – where participants switch between five pieces of CV kit. Members can use the room at any time as part of their membership.

Meanwhile, in Australia, Pullan's partner company ATS (Altitude Technology Systems) has set up the world's first hypoxic group cycling studio. "Hypoxic training has particularly taken off in New Zealand and Australia," says Pullan. "In Australia, ATS has built hypoxic rooms in four health clubs and is talking to a large chain about launching in their sites, while New Zealand has a population of 5 million people and about seven of these centres."

"I have some Danish people coming over who want to build a hypoxic spinning studio – spinning is massive in Scandinavia, so I can see it taking off there. You could, of course, use the room for yoga or pilates too, giving those classes a cardio training element."

"Most of the facilities we've built in the UK are in universities, institutes of sport and professional sport clubs. However, we've built one at the Stephen Price gym in Chelsea, as well as the installation at The Third Space."

"If you're looking for calorie burn, the more intense the workout the better – and you get a higher intensity workout at altitude. And, of course, hypoxic training means you can have a quicker workout. For members who are short of time, it's about getting maximum returns." ●

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# Spa Products



## Balineum debuts Braga bath mat

Balineum has unveiled its latest addition – the Braga bath mat. Named after the region in Portugal in which it's made, Braga features a woven floral-geometric pattern inspired by traditional Portuguese textile designs. Made from 100 per cent soft cotton with a heavy weave, it's claimed to be both thick and comfortable under a client's feet when they step out of the shower. Furthermore, its luxury weight is intended to make sure the edges won't curl once it's been washed. Available in two colours – clay and white – the bath mat is also machine washable.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) KEYWORD: **BALINEUM**



## Ecocert-certified hair range launched by La Biosthetique

A haircare range, which has been certified 'eco-friendly' by the French organisation Ecocert, has been launched by the La Biosthetique brand under its Natural Cosmetic range. The luxury line contains products from almost 100 per cent natural sources, is free from silicones, parabens and paraffin oils and is made without synthetic colourings or fragrances. The range has been intensively researched by La Biosthetique scientists.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) KEYWORDS: **LA BIOSHTHETIQUE**



## Yon-Ka's new anti-ageing range launches

Two new products have been introduced under the Yon-Ka brand. The Advanced Optimiser Serum is rapidly absorbed and has hibiscus as a key ingredient, while the Advanced Optimiser Creme contains white lupin. Other ingredients include marine collagen, vitamin C and silicon-rich horsetail extract. Both products have undergone rigorous clinical tests, contain ingredients that are 80 per cent natural in origin and are being marketed as a 'personal trainer for the skin', for people who are 35-years-old and above. The products are intended to stimulate cellular activity of the epidermis and dermis, as well as repairing and protecting the face. A new lifting and firming facial treatment has also been launched to further support both products.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) KEYWORD: **YON-KA**

## The i-sopod relaxation device is unveiled

Floatation centre The Floatworks has revealed the i-sopod, a new sensory relaxation device designed for commercial use. Based on three years of research and development, the i-sopod can be produced in a range of colours. Containing 1,000 litres of water and 500kg of Epsom salts, the water and air inside are heated to skin temperature, 35.5°C, so users can't work out when their body is in contact with the water. A scrolling interior light display can be used, accompanied by soft music, or silence.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) KEYWORD: **I-SOPOD**







## Two products added the Elemis portfolio

Elemis has developed the Pro-Collagen Body Serum and the Tri-Enzyme Resurfacing Gel Mask. The body serum aims to restore firmness in specific areas of the body, including the backs of hands, décolleté, the arms and abdomen. Easily absorbed, it contains an anti-ageing peptide, combined with acacia, paracress (a South American herb) and padina pavonica (a brown alga from the Mediterranean). The other new product, the mask, is the latest addition to Elemis' Tri-Enzyme Programme. Containing amino acids, acerola cherry, the anti-ageing tetra peptide and the patented Tri-Enzyme Technology, the mask is formulated to remove dead skin cells and accelerate cell-renewal to leave skin appearing smoother and more radiant.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **ELEMIS**

## Disability lifts for spa pools and hot tubs

Two disability lifts specifically designed to be used in spas, swimming pools and hot tubs have been unveiled by aquatic lift developer Aqua Creek Products. The manual Super EZ Lift is operated by a hydraulic ram, while the Super Power EZ Lift has a battery-assisted 'lift and lower' function, allowing a smooth transition into and out of the water. Both lifts are made of epoxy powder-coated stainless steel, and have a lifting capacity of 28.5 stones.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **SUNTRAP SYSTEMS**

## Innovative massage tool is launched

A versatile, eco-friendly massage product called Lava Shells has debuted in the UK and Europe. A patented self-heating solution called LavaGel that contains natural minerals, algae and sea kelp is placed within the shells. When combined with salt water, the gel generates heat for up to an hour-long massage. Therapists then use one or two shells to deliver continuous heat during the treatment. Sourced from the Philippines, the shells were previously regarded as a waste product of an everyday Filipino seafood diet.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **LAVA SHELLS**



## Rare Tea Company extends mountain tea range into spas

The Rare Tea Company is further expanding into the international market with a number of new launches into spas. The ingredients from the teas can be incorporated into bathing rituals, as well as being used in refreshments. Currently popular types include the Jasmine Silver Tip Tea, which is scented with fresh jasmine flowers, and the Flowering Silver Tip Tea (above). A selection from the company's range will soon appear at the spa in Blythswood Square hotel in Glasgow, Scotland.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **RARE TEA**

## Anti-age skincare collection by Aromatherapy Associates

Aromatherapy Associates has enhanced its portfolio of products with an anti-age skincare range, comprising six new retail products and an introductory set. Containing pure plant extracts and essential oils, the range includes a Fine Line Facial Oil and a Rich Repair Eye Cream. All are intended to slow the ageing process and leave skin plumper and more supple. An Age Repair Facial, incorporating the new range, has also launched.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **AROMATHERAPY ASSOCIATES**







### Parmar & Parmar's bespoke furniture

The UK-based furniture company Parmar & Parmar is setting its sights on the international spa industry. It offers exclusively designed pieces such as inlaid glass tables (pictured) and hand-painted silk pictures, alongside exterior pieces such as planters, spheres and intricately carved wall panels. In addition, it stocks an array of reclaimed Indian furniture and artefacts. The company is working on a number of spa projects, providing furniture and adornments as well as architectural, interior and landscape design services.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **PARMAR AND PARMAR**

### New web bookings software introduced by Gumnut

Gumnut Systems has unveiled its new Real Time Web Bookings Interface. The intelligent interface gives spa clients real-time website booking access directly into Gumnut Systems. Clients can use the website to not only book appointments, packages and classes but also purchase gift vouchers and products online. Managers and owners have total control over what services and packages are available on any particular day or specific times of day.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **GUMNUT SYSTEMS**



### Handcrafted baths from Spa Vision

Spa Vision has introduced a collection of luxurious traditional baths, each of which are hand-crafted from either copper or brass. Each individually handmade bath takes skilled craftsmen 120 hours to create, resulting in a unique and matchless piece. There are a wide range of options for finishes to suit both contemporary and traditional projects, while a durable coating allows the baths to withstand high volume usage. An added benefit of the range is that copper and brass warms up instantly, retaining the temperature of the water. Surprisingly light, the baths weigh from 45-80kg and are said to be a great addition to any spa suite or hotel room.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **SPA VISION**

### Ghd IV styler in limited edition tribal style

The RARE hair straightener set has just been released by ghd. Available at all approved ghd spas and salons, the limited edition set contains a black ghd IV styler with golden plates, a heat-resistant leopard print styler pouch and a black case. 2009 also marks the third year that ghd has been voted as one of the coolest brands in the UK via the annual CoolBrands' survey initiative.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **GHD**



### Certified organic facial products for Pinks

The Pinks Boutique Organic Facial range has launched. Designed to help restore the skin's natural balance, the products contain herbs, essential oils, natural antioxidants and plant extracts to promote clear, hydrated, radiant skin. The range conforms to European safety standards and contains organic ingredients from sustainable sources that are certified by the UK's Soil Association. Suitable for vegetarians, the products are packaged using recyclable glass and minimal plastic and card, to prevent excessive waste. The full Pinks Boutique range includes: Organic Lemongrass and Mandarin Cleanser, Toner, Facial Massage Oil and Moisturising Lotion; Organic Ocha Cleanser, Toner and Facial Massage Oil; as well as Organic Eye Make-up Remover, Deep Cleansing Facial Melt; Night Balm; and Anti-Age Serum.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **PINKS BOUTIQUE**



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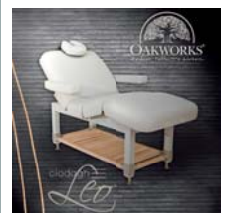
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## GREEN TALK



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**D**oes it pay to have a business that is eco-friendly in Asia? Possibly not, according to a recent convenience sample survey released by Hong Kong-based consultancy CatchOn & Co.

Called Does Green Sell in Asia?, the free report explored consumers' concerns for the environment, their commitment to eco-friendly habits, their propensity to opt for eco-friendly products, their purchase decision criteria and the premium they were willing to pay for eco-friendly goods.

Data was gathered – via online surveys and one-to-one interviews – from 248 Hong Kong, Chinese, Singaporean, Thai, Malaysian and Filipino consumers. Results from convenience sample surveys do need to be treated with caution, however, as they do not represent the entire population.

The survey showed that there was a source of green sentiment in Asia: 58 per cent of respondents were “very concerned” about the environment and 97 per cent were willing to pay a premium for eco-friendly goods and services. Yet when it came to purchasing decisions, eco-friendliness consistently ranked low as a factor.

### DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

The study showed a difference in attitudes toward eco-friendliness among generations in Asia, suggesting some groups may be better eco-targets than others.

**Babyboomers** (aged 44-59) the ‘True Greens’ were the most receptive. They had the most concern about the environment, participated in more green habits and bought more eco-friendly products.

**Generation X** (aged 28-43) the ‘Pragmatix’ were ambivalent. While 60

### A new consumer survey looks at the green movement in Asia, with a special focus on spa and non spa-goers. We find out more

This was echoed in the choice of spas, with only 16 per cent of subjects saying they would be most likely to choose an eco-friendly spa. The most important factors for choosing a spa were price, brand/quality and health concerns, although attitudes differed across generations (see below).

#### SPA-GOING SYNERGIES

A special spa section of the report sought to verify the belief that active spa-goers are more likely to demonstrate LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) traits than non spa-goers (see SB08/3 p62).

The sample base was split into active spa-goers (who had visited a spa at least twice

in the last 12 months), who made up 58 per cent of the subjects, and non spa-goers.

The result showed that active spa-goers are not more inclined toward green practices and consumption. While active spa-goers professed to be more concerned about the environment, they were actually less likely to participate in eco-friendly practices – such as recycling, reducing waste and using energy efficient electrical appliances – than non spa-goers.

When it came to the likelihood of buying green products, such as electrical appliances, personal care products, household products and food, there was no significant difference between active and non-active spa-goers. The only exception here was that active spa-goers were much more likely to buy an eco-friendly spa service than non spa-goers.

Words and deeds also parted ways when purchasing decisions were made. Although they claimed they were more likely to purchase eco-friendly products/services, active spa-goers did not rate eco-friendliness as a more important driver across any of the categories, compared to non spa-goers. What's more, non spa-goers were actually consistently more generous and willing to pay a higher premium for green products than active spa-goers, except when it came to spa visits/services.

Cathy Feliciano-Chon, MD and founder of CatchOn & Company concludes: “Our study suggests that simply being green isn't enough to sway Asian consumers unless green practices are communicated in terms of cost savings and health benefits. Spas should, however, still consider greening up their act because it makes economic sense.” ●  
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