

spa business

uniting the world of spas

INTERVIEW

HEATHER BLANKINSHIP

Making her mark at Amanresorts

TRENDS

Richmond Village

A CARE HOME FOR THE
ELDERLY OPENS A LUXURY SPA

HOT NUMBERS

What do customers really value?

SPA SENTIMENT RESEARCH REPORT ANALYSED



ON TRIAL |||||

energy field imaging

How **Ahu Kerimoglu**
Aysal saved Hôtel Les
Ottomans, Istanbul

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what's valued

In this issue, we analyse new research from the Coyle Hospitality Group and WTS International (see p61), which looks at consumer buying patterns, habits, preferences and best experiences.

The sample of 1,300 active spa-goers was carried out in September 2009, when the Consumer Confidence Index was lower than at present – something which needs to be taken into account when analysing findings which explore purchasing intentions.

Some of the most interesting results relate to what consumers value. They were asked to rate 12 facilities and 12 attributes as very important, somewhat important or not important. If you combine the percentage score in the somewhat important and very important categories, the list reads: relaxation room 85 per cent, locker room 82 per cent, hot tub 74 per cent, saunas 69 per cent, fitness facility 63 per cent, steamroom 68 per cent, spa dining 52 per cent, heated lap pool 46 per cent, outdoor pool 43 per cent, staffed locker room 41 per cent, retail 39 per cent and co-ed areas 23 per cent.

This is good news in that the areas typically provided by spas all score highly and in terms of costs, that staffed locker rooms are significantly less popular than unstaffed ones and yes, the designers have been right all along about those co-ed areas which really seem to be unpopular. However, the relatively



The relatively low rating for pools may need further analysis in light of existing hotel research which showed people are more likely to book a hotel with a pool, however, the majority of them don't actually end up using it

low rating for pools may need further analysis in light of existing hotel research which showed people are more likely to book a hotel with a pool, yet the majority don't end up using it, indicating that consumers' perceptions of what they value and the reality of what they use are not always the same.

The spa attributes results show cleanliness with the outstanding score of the survey, with a massive 98 per cent in the very important category. As if we didn't know it already, this confirms there's no room for error when it comes to hygiene: your cleaners are your most important assets. Scores for professional staff came in at 93 per cent and atmosphere at 92 per cent in the very important category, indicating that human touch is valued more than hardware. Freebies do well, with complimentary refreshments at 55 per cent and free consultations at 43 per cent, although free retail samples only come in at 23 per cent.

If this research could be cross referenced with another piece of work which tracks actual behaviour, to see whether these preferences translate into actions, then we would be able to further understand what our customers want and steer facility investment accordingly.

The fact that two of the lowest scoring areas – retail and spa dining – are important revenue generators for operators, suggests that either the industry hasn't made these experiences compelling enough for customers, or that they're genuinely less interested in these activities. Both interpretations point to the need for research to establish ways in which these areas of the business can be made more rewarding and central to the spa visit.

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SPA VISION

Inspiring innovations, initiatives
and ideas in the world of
wellness and beyond

The floating spa's foundations are
made from recycled polystyrene

SARAH TODD • NEWS EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

All eyes are on Daylesford, Australia's spa-capital in the state of Victoria, following an innovative wellness PR event to break the world record for the largest simultaneous massage.

Massage en Masse took place on 30 March at Lavandula Lavender Farm. In total, 263 qualified therapists and 263 volunteer 'massages' took part in the event, eventually breaking the previous record – of 167 simultaneous massages, set in 2009 in Washington DC, US – by 26.

Chris Sheedy, adjudicator for the *Guinness Book of Records* says: "I've seen a whole lot of wonderful events around



Record breaking
wellness
marketing

the world, but during the past decade I have never seen such a beautiful record attempt."

The activity was part of Tourism Victoria's AU\$7.3m (US\$6.8m, €5m, £4.4m) national campaign to promote the region (see p12).

explore further... tourism.vic.gov.au

Enjoy a pint while you spa

Beer is the USP of a spa located in a converted cellar of the Chodovar family brewery, situated in the Tachov region of the Czech Republic.

Believed to be the first beer health facility, the spa offers beer-based cosmetics and massages. Guests can bathe in Victorian tubs with warm mineral water infused with brewing ingredients and be served a pint. The baths are said to improve skin and joint health.

explore further... chodovar.cz



Bath water includes brewing ingredients



Treatments have been streamlined at MOHG

A greater choice of therapies are often thought to widen a spa's appeal. However, some operators are now carrying out treatment 'menu engineering' processes to come up with a more concise, profit-orientated offer.

For example, in 2009, the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group – guided by Sonee Singh, regional director of spa: the Americas – streamlined the group's spa menus to an average

A sustainable 'floating spa and wellness centre' concept has been developed by Studio Noach founders Kizito Musampa and Michel Kreuger, together with Dutch architect Anne Holtrop.

Created for a Designs of the Future competition at the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam, the spa concept features baths, saunas, terraces and treatment rooms.

The foundations are made from GreenRetxwall, a form of recycled polystyrene; and the exterior walls are covered in an insulating layer of plants thanks to an innovation by French vertical gardens expert Patrick Blanc. Blanc says: "Do

Floating
Gardens
Amsterdam

plants really need soil? No, ... earth is no more than a tool.

From the perspective of nature, it is possible for plants to grow on a surface where there is no soil, as long as there's no shortage of water."

Floating Gardens/SpaWellness Amsterdam has been created to be positioned in a lake near a city where plenty of fresh water is available. Meanwhile, the coating of vegetation means CO₂ is converted and the concept literally breathes oxygen, providing a unique take on wellness for the planet. *explore further...* studioach.nl • anneholtrop.nl • verticalgardenpatrickblanc.com

E E Cummings

(American poet, 1894 to 1962)

"The most wasted of all days
is one without laughter"

explore further...
poets.org

FINE TUNING
SPA MENUS

of 25 services (see SBO9/3 p58) by adapting the Cornell Restaurant Administration Simulation Exercise and categorising its treatments as either Stars (high sales, low cost), Plow Horses (high sales, high cost), Dogs (low sales, high cost) or Puzzles (low sales, low cost). Dogs, such as waxing and Puzzles, such as ayurveda, were either removed or revitalised. *explore further...* mandarinoriental.com

On trend: niche spa experiences

While spa hybrids aren't new – spas for travellers and sleep spas have been strong growth areas in recent years – the most notable niching of late has occurred in the healthcare sector.

Although dental spas first came onto the scene a few years ago, they can't be ignored. One leader in this field, Dr Paulo Malo (see s809/4 p49), launched a US\$46m (£34.4m, £30m) Malo Clinic Spa at the Venetian Casino Resort in Macau in June 2009 and intends to roll out eight more by 2011.

The kidneySPA, which opened in Miami, US, in May 2009, provides spa-like experiences to help make the kidney dialysis process more comfortable and positive. Patients are offered hand massages, healthy snacks and drinks and have their senses stimulated by soothing music and scented candles.

Mature health and wellness is to be given a boost in London's Hyde Park, UK, with the installation of a £40,000 (US\$61,500, €45,950) outdoor 'senior playground' after plans were signed off by Westminster City Council.

The facility, which has been designed to provide exercise for people aged over 60, will be installed in the park's Pavilion tennis and bowls centre. The fitness equipment – including a cross-trainer and a sit up bench – will be supplied by the UK company Kompan.

Elsewhere within the senior health and wellness sector, spa



Dr Paulo Malo is planning eight more dental spas by 2011

Elsewhere in the US, Manhattan is now home to a gyno spa. PHIT (which stands for pelvic health integrated techniques) offers everything from pelvic reconstruction surgery and vaginal workouts to rejuvenation therapies. *explore further...* maloclinics.com • kidnayspa.com • theperfectphit.com



Elderly wellness by Richmond Villages

ELDER POWER

facilities in care homes are another area set to experience growth. In late 2008, the UK retirement community operator Richmond Villages (see p72), part of the Barchester Healthcare Group, revealed

a flagship 534sq m (5,750sq ft) wellness centre at its care home in the Cotswolds, which is used by 80 per cent of residents (see picture above). More recently, Richmond Villages has just completed a second wellness centre

at its retirement village in Oxfordshire. Each spa features hoists and other equipment in order to enable the less mobile to enjoy the facilities, which are free to residents. *explore further...* kompan.com • richmond-villages.com



Music may be good for the heart

Spas which offer personalised music choices to guests may be onto a winner, according to findings from the University of Maryland Medical Center in the US.

A 2008 study led by cardiologist Dr Mike Miller found that listening to your favourite music may be good for the heart. When study participants listened to tunes that they knew made them feel good or joyful, the inner lining

Good beats = healthy heart

of their blood vessels expanded to increase blood flow. On the other hand, when they listened to songs they perceived as stressful, their blood vessels narrowed.

Most participants selected country music as their favourite and heavy metal as the opposite. However, Miller says you "can't read too much into this" as its down to personal choice. *explore further...* umm.edu

Natvar Bhavsar uses traditional Tibetan painting techniques

Artist Natvar Bhavsar's pure pigment paintings are pieces of luminosity, energy and beauty.

The Indian-born artist recently unveiled his inaugural solo exhibition in Hong Kong at the Sundaram Tagore Gallery, following exhibitions at the 2009 Venice Biennale and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, US.

Similar to a traditional Tibetan mandala painter, Bhavsar begins by soaking a canvas with a clear acrylic binder. He then releases dry pigment granules in layers, to form the radiant fields of colour typical to his work.

With a career devoted to the exploration of colour and an influential member of the New York School of Colorists, Bhavsar's works are in more than 800 collections across the world. *explore further...* sundaramtagore.com

PIGMENT PAINTINGS

The average American laughs about 15 times a day. *explore further...* psychologytoday.com



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

Industry benchmarking needs to apply market research principles

Judith L Singer, president & co-owner, Health Fitness Dynamics, Inc.

I was pleased to see two letters focusing on spa industry research in your last issue (see SB10/1 p14). I've been an international spa consultant since 1983 and have spent a considerable amount of time analysing spa financial statements and benchmark reports. More often than not, I find a significant disconnect – too many benchmarking studies do not depict reality: they lack credibility, integrity, quality and reliability.

In November 2009, Health Fitness Dynamics conducted an extensive study of companies that are performing spa benchmarking research. We found that there was lots of room for error and that data was frequently compromised so that case findings might get your attention and

be newsworthy, even though they were unreliable, invalid, not useful and not representative of the industry.

People who rely on accurate metrics and benchmarks need to read studies in full (not just the bits from press releases), have a critical eye and take time to do their own fact checking to see if the numbers seem reasonable. You cannot blindly believe or accept the findings as accurate just because they are quoted in a press release, a printed report, a presentation or conducted by a big name company.

We think professional market research principles and standards need to be applied to industry benchmarking studies, for example a definition of a spa and market segments, sample size and the type of data

collected. The evolution, integrity and efficacy of spa benchmarking and the ability to determine reliable metrics will be critical to the economic reality and potential of the spa industry. The spa industry needs reliable, segment-specific benchmarks which are comparable worldwide.

As spa benchmarking studies evolve, companies will begin to collect, analyse, report and monitor information so that the metrics become increasingly more reliable, useful and universal. Right now, however, our analysis of spa benchmarking companies is that statistically reliable, quality research is scarce.

To receive the *Spa Benchmarking – Reliable Research vs Press-Release Research* email judydsinger@hfdspa.com

Borehole water supplies add to a spa's green credentials

Derek Barton, sales director, Barr + Wray

I was interested to read your article on borehole water supply for spas (see SB10/1 p54). Most recently Barr + Wray has been selected to design and install a borehole to supply four pools and a thermal suite as part of a £17m (US\$26.1m, €19.6m) refurbishment of Carnegie Leisure Centre in Dunfermline in Scotland, UK.

As stated by one of your experts, borehole water is not available to everyone. However, another important point is that what may be an affordable undertaking for one development, may not be for another, due to location and the quality of the water requiring treatment. Both of these can impact on the various expenses from geo-technical surveys and borehole drilling to installation, operation and maintenance of the treatment plant.

While marketing was mentioned in the article, no-one pointed out an obvious

link – to market the 'green' credentials of a borehole, which can make a spa more self-sufficient and eco-friendly. As users of five-star spas are becoming more ecologically aware, this is a huge opportunity. In addition, water treatment can in most cases be done to remove contaminants without necessarily removing minerals present, therefore making the water more therapeutic and adding to the value of using a borehole.

Other eco-practices spas might consider when it comes to water include using ozone or UV-treated water in pools. A minimal amount of chlorine is needed



Borehole water makes a facility, such as the Carnegie Leisure Centre in Scotland, UK, more self sufficient

with these systems – which not only ensures that water is of a better quality, but also that less water needs to be dumped and that more backwash water can be easily retreated and fed back into the system.



Part of the tourism strategy is to invest in high-end facilities such as the Hepburn Bathhouse and Spa, which opened in 2008

Successful wellness tourism in Australia

Tim Holding MP, Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Victoria, Australia

Spa Business recently reported that "governments around the world are starting to show the wealth-creating potential of the wellness and spa industry market" (see s809/4 p3). In response to this Tim Holding MP, the minister for tourism and major events in Victoria – a state in south-east Australia – has written a letter to highlight the successful government and tourism wellness strategies in his constituency.

Daylesford, a town in Victoria, has the largest concentration of naturally occurring mineral springs in the southern hemisphere. Daylesford and its surrounding region offers outstanding spa and wellbeing experiences which are the focus of a AU\$7.3m (US\$6.7m, €5.1m, £4.5m) national advertising campaign (launched in August 2009) which has already attracted more interstate visitors to the region.

Numerous public relations activities have driven awareness of this campaign including Daylesford's Massage en Masse which saw the region beat the Guinness World Record for the largest ever simultaneous massage earlier this year (see p10).

Combined with hot springs in the Mornington Peninsula and untapped mineral



water resources along the Great Ocean Road and on the Bellarine Peninsula, there is so much potential for the spa and wellness industry in our state to keep growing.

Across the globe, people are focusing on personal, community and environmental wellbeing when they travel. In Australia, the spa and wellbeing industry is booming and Victoria is positioning itself as the nation's spa and wellbeing capital.

Since 2005, Tourism Victoria, a state government agency, has been working with regional areas to capitalise on key resources and further develop our spa and wellbeing offerings as part of Victoria's Spa and Wellness Tourism Action Plan 2005-2010.

In 2009 a Brand Health Survey [focused on capital cities in Australia] showed that

by following this ongoing plan, Victoria is now the state best known in Australia for spa and wellbeing experiences.

The plan focuses on strategies to increase visitation, product development and positioning and investment and industry excellence. Vital to our success in creating and implementing this plan, has been our focus on our natural strengths and taking the time to fully engage with industry.

Some of the spa developments since the wellness strategy launched include the 2008 reopening of the Hepburn Bathhouse and Spa (see s809/3 p36), which benefited from a AU\$10m (US\$9.2m, €6.9m, £6m) state government investment and the launch of the Novotel Forest Resort and its day spa in 2008. This December, Peninsula Hot Springs [Australia's only thermal springs resort] also completed a AU\$8m (US\$7.4m, €3.5m, £3m) expansion (see p68).

These have been complemented by investments in our capital city, Melbourne, including the East Day Spa at the Inter-Continental Melbourne The Rialto, which launched in February and the ISAKA Spa at the soon to be opened Crown Metropol.

Victoria is proud to be leading the way in spa and wellness tourism.

news update



Shine Spa has been developed for Sheraton as part of a \$66m strategy to revitalise the brand

Starwood to roll out four-star spa brand

Starwood Hotels & Resorts has just revealed plans to roll out Shine Spa, a four-star brand, in its Sheraton properties.

The in-house brand first debuted in the Maldives in June 2009 as a spa concept for the group's Asia Pacific division, but has now been made available to all resorts within Sheraton's development pipeline. So far, 12 sites, mostly in China, have been confirmed.

Shine Spa is a scaleable model that offers design, development, operational and marketing tools. It also has its own-branded retail line and signature

treatments featuring Germaine de Capucini as the preferred product partner.

The rollout of Shine is part of a \$66m (€4.5bn, £3.9bn) strategy by Starwood to globally revitalise the Sheraton brand.

Back in 2008, Nectar, a four-star spa concept developed by consultancy Spatality, had been selected as the preferred brand for Sheraton. However, at the beginning of this year Starwood and Spatality parted company as a result of changes to Spatality in June 2009, which included the move of its headquarters from the US to Thailand.

Best Western brand has Indian debut

Best Western India has launched its Premier brand in the country by adding the Kolkata-based Vedic Village Spa Resort to its portfolio.

The 150-acre (61-hectare) resort – around 40 minutes from the heart of the city – has a centre for holistic wellness which offers yoga, naturopathy and traditional Kerala ayurveda.

The property was renovated, for a reported INR50m (US\$1.1m, €0.8m, £0.7m), following an arson attack in 2009. It will be managed by Cabana Hotel Management and joins 20 Best Western properties operational and under development throughout India.

Spa Chakra completes sale of assets to HTGO

Management company Spa Chakra – which operates 14 Spa Chakra and Guerlain Spas (see S808/2 p22) – has sold all of its assets to the finance company Hercules Technology Growth Capital (HTGC).

Spa Chakra voluntarily filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the US Bankruptcy Code and arranged for immediate financing from HTGC, which was used to fund operations during the sale process.

HTGC acquired the business through its newly formed entity, Spa Chakra Acquisition Corp.



Three new sites are planned for 2010 already

International rollout for Molton Brown

Retail skincare company Molton Brown has revealed plans to extend a new spa facility concept, following an intensive two-year repositioning period.

The company revealed its first retail day spa at the Bluewater shopping centre in Kent, UK, in 2001 (see S803/Q4 p110), but it has now developed a fresh flagship design concept, treatment menu and products inspired by hands-on methods and ingredients from around the globe.

The first new-concept day spa opened in Manchester city centre, UK, in August

2009 and Molton Brown now plans to approach carefully-selected, exclusive independent hotels worldwide as partners.

The next three day spas will open in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, while a US rollout is scheduled towards the end of 2010. The Asia Pacific region will follow in early 2011.

The new treatment menu has been designed to offer something for every taste, although Molton Brown will also consider creating signature treatments with its partners where the need arises.

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The development has been described as the largest investment in post-war Germany

Bad Orb spa and hotel opens in Germany

A €21.7m (£18.8m, US\$28.8m) thermal spa and hotel called Toskana Terme Bad Orb has opened in Bad Orb, Germany.

Designed by Ollertz & Ollertz architects, the 2,300sq m (24,757sq ft), purpose-built spa sits next to the refurbished 100-bedroom Kurhotel an der Therme. It has been developed – and will be operated by – Tuscan World Consulting, which is owned by Marion Schneider and Klaus Dieter Böhm.

Facilities include six pools, mostly filled with saline water, and a Liquid Sound* pool – with underwater speakers and flood-lights. There's also a 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft)

thermal area with saunas, steamrooms and a bronchiarium – filled with dry saline air to help treat the respiratory organs.

Located north-east of Frankfurt, Bad Orb is the sister property to the Toskana Terme Bad Sulza kurhotel and thermal springs, which launched in 1999 and is situated south of Berlin, near to Leipzig.

Both are believed to be the first German thermal spring spas to go through the Green Globe audit process. Janice Gronvold, director of consultancy Spectrec, has co-ordinated the alliance between the properties and Green Globe.

Trump SoHo spa set for mid-2010 arrival

The spa at the new 391-bedroom Trump SoHo New York hotel in the US, is slated to open this summer.

The Spa at Trump will cover 11,000sq ft (1,020sq m) and has been designed by New York-based DiGiuseppe Architecture. There will also be three purpose-built spa suites on the eighth floor of the hotel.

Treatments have been branded as a Trump Personal Intention, with therapies to calm, balance, purify, heal and revitalise. Treatments will use products from the Shiffa, Tara and Jamu lines.



The development is the fifth within the Trump Hotel Collection

The hotel opened in April in the city's Lower Manhattan district. It is the fifth property in the Trump Hotel Collection.

Spa Botanica debuts at Chikusenso Mt Zao Onsen

Following a six-year search, Spa Botanica has made its Japanese debut at Chikusenso Mt Zao Onsen Resort and Spa – a US\$30m (£22.6m, £19.6m), 32-bedroom property at the foot of the Zao mountain and national park, near Sendai. The 760sq m (8,181sq ft) spa will include six onsens and 10 treatment rooms. The spa interior was designed by Hashimoto Yukio Design Studio and the architect was Hitoshi Abe.

International consultant chapter launched

The Institute of Management Consultants USA (IMC USA) has launched a spa consultants chapter with 14 members already inducted into its International Spa Chapter. Deborah Evans of the SpaSense Group has been appointed founding chapter president.

The main objectives of the new spa chapter are to set new industry standards, promote best practice and to create a forum for professional collaboration. Other goals include educating and informing potential clients about available services through a robust website and blog and providing ongoing education options to members.



All Bliss spas will be overseen by Indursky

Indursky joins Bliss from Burt's Bees

Michael Indursky has become president of Steiner Leisure Limited's recently acquired Bliss World Holdings, Inc. He will be responsible for the worldwide operations of its Bliss and Remède spas and product brands.

With over 20 years of experience in the personal care industry, including business strategy, marketing and product development, Indursky's position immediately prior to Bliss was as chief marketing and strategic officer of natural products company Burt's Bees. He also held leadership roles with L'Oréal USA and Unilever Cosmetics.

For further details on Steiner Leisure Limited see p46.



One of the seven new spas by von Essen will be added to Congham Hall, Derbyshire, UK

Von Essen announces major spa investment

Hospitality group von Essen is to extend its wellness offering by adding seven spas to its portfolio of UK properties in 2010.

Spa facilities will be introduced to Callow Hall in Derbyshire; Congham Hall in Norfolk; The Greenway in Gloucestershire; Homewood Park in Bath; The Mount Somerset in Somerset; and Woolley Grange in Wiltshire.

There will also be a standalone spa in the village of Lower Slaughter in the Cotswolds, which will have combined access to von Essen's Washbourne Court and Lower Slaughter Manor.

Elsewhere within the group, the handover has been completed from Weston Homes to von Essen of the Hotel Verta development – which includes a spa and the new London Heliport terminal in Battersea, London, UK.

Hotel Verta is the group's first London hotel. It will boast 70 bedrooms and the subterranean Falconbrook Spa covering two levels below the property.

The project was initially due to open in June 2009, but has been set back to a final fit out in mid-2010 due to problems in the excavation of the site.

Taj group reveals plans for six new Jiva Spas

The India-based hospitality company Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces (see s807/3 p22) will launch up to six spas in India and one in South Africa during the course of 2010.

Taj's Jiva Spa concept focuses on Asian and Indian traditional philosophies and places a strong emphasis on ayurveda.

Jiva Spas will launch at the Taj Cape Town South Africa and the Falaknuma Palace hotel in Hyderabad. The other spas will open in Vivanta by Taj hotels in Maderki in Coorg; Yeshwantpur in Bangalore; Bekal in Kerala and Shahadara and Dwarka, both in Delhi.

The Indian Hotels Company Ltd and its subsidiaries – collectively known as



Up to six spas will open in India and one in South Africa in 2010

Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces – is part of the Tata Group, one of India's oldest and largest business conglomerates.

In total, Taj has more than 60 hotels in 45 locations across India with an additional 15 hotels in Malaysia, the UK, the US, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Africa, the Middle East and Australia.



MOHG Morocco is in a 131-acre palm grove

MOHG Morocco prepares for May launch

The next Mandarin Oriental (MOHG) to launch in May will be located among 53 hectares (131 acres) of palm grove in the Palmeraie region of Marrakech.

Based on Moroccan tradition (see p64), the hotel will include four riads – self contained buildings – featuring between 16 to 20 guest bedrooms arranged around an interior courtyard.

The 40,903sq ft (3,800sq m) Spa at Mandarin Oriental Jnan Rahma will offer signature Mandarin Oriental therapies (see s809/3 p58) and treatments inspired by local traditions and custom. A large hammam will also be a part of the spa offering.

Six Senses unveil 2010 expansion plans

Six Senses Resorts and Spas (see p48) is to develop two resorts and a large spa in the Brazilian state of Alagoas.

Both opening in late 2012, one will be branded as a Six Senses Hideaway (the group's boutique offering) while the other will be a Six Senses Latitude (which offers more accommodation).

The Six Senses Spa will serve both resorts and have a core menu of treatments augmented with Brazilian specialities. The site will cover an area of 495 acres (200 hectares).

Champneys considers Caribbean expansion

Stephen Purdew, the director of Champneys – one of the UK's oldest destination spas – is examining the possibility of opening a type of Champneys operation in the Caribbean.

Purdew visited Barbados in March, meeting with government representatives with a view to developing "some level of Champneys operation" there.

The company already has plans for a Champneys Marbella property in Spain, which will open in April 2011.

Elsewhere, it has reported 9 per cent year-on-year growth.



Part of the mixed-use development will include a spa with panoramic views of Paris

2014 arrival for Hermitage Plaza in Paris

Architectural practice Foster + Partners have confirmed that construction of the Hermitage Plaza development in Paris will be underway by the end of this year, with an opening scheduled for the end of 2014.

The mixed-use property, in the La Défense business district outside the city, is owned by French real-estate company the Hermitage Group and will reportedly cost €2.5bn (US\$3.3bn, £2.2bn).

Hermitage Plaza comprises two towers – with 91 and 92 floors – and has a site area of 161,458sq ft (15,000sq m). One tower will feature a spa and fitness facil-

ity boasting panoramic views across the French capital, as well as luxury apartments and a five-star hotel, while the other will contain offices and additional serviced apartments.

The structure will take the form of interlocking triangles which face one another and enclose a large public piazza with restaurants and shops. Large windows will be an integral part of the design, while other standout features will include glazed façade panels with different points catching the light throughout the day as the sun moves.



Uma Punakha is the sister site to Uma Paro (above) and COMO's second property in Bhutan

COMO to open a second resort in Bhutan

COMO Hotels and Resorts' new Uma Punakha boutique hotel in Bhutan is to open a spa in September 2011.

The resort, which is situated in the mountainous upper reaches of the Mo Chhu (Mother River), will offer 11 bedrooms – all with mountain valley views – as well as the spa.

The intimate spa will comprise two treatment rooms – one single and one double – and a hot stone bath.

Other facilities will include a restaurant with floor-to-ceiling windows.

Uma Punakha is around a five-hour drive from COMO's existing Bhutan resort Uma Paro (see SB08/1 p24).

Madinat Jumeirah gains medical centre

A medical centre has been added to the Jumeirah Group's Talise Spa at Madinat Jumeirah in Dubai, UAE.

The centre will be overseen by a conventional and alternative medical practitioners – specialising in disciplines such as naturopathy, psychology and innovative diagnostics – who will develop a course of tailored treatments as well as anti-stress, weight-loss, anti-ageing and detox programmes.



Leela Palace has views over Lake Pichola

ESPA debuts in India at The Leela Palace

An ESPA spa has opened at the Leela Palace Kempinski hotel in Udaipur, Rajasthan, marking the brand's entry into the Indian wellness market.

The ESPA spa has been divided into two locations: The Lake Spa, which features Rajasthan-style tents and includes a couples' suite; and the Haveli Spa, located in a historic building with five single treatment rooms, a spa reception and a roof terrace.

The treatments fuse ayurveda with European therapies and use ESPA's professional products. Six Leela Udaipur Ceremonies have also been exclusively designed for the spa.

600th Massage Envy clinic opens in the US

The US massage facility franchise chain Massage Envy has opened its 600th clinic, The Laguna Beach in California.

The latest opening is a Massage Envy Spa, a model that was introduced in mid-2009 following an exclusive deal with Murad skincare.

The concept focuses on providing guests with facial treatments from Murad, combined with rejuvenating body massages performed by aestheticians and therapists.

The company launched the original Massage Envy franchise concept – based just on body massages – in 2002. By the end of 2010 it hopes to have 636 franchises in total.



The resort will feature the first in a series of Sanctuary Spa-branded facilities

Buccament Bay on schedule for launch

Harlequin Hotels and Resorts is to launch the Buccament Bay Beach Resort in July 2010 on the south-west coast of the Caribbean island of St Vincent.

The resort's Sanctuary Spa is the first in a planned series of Sanctuary-branded spas for the group. It will offer a range of restorative treatments including hydrotherapy, shiatsu and aromatherapy, holistic body and Thai massages. Facilities will include steamrooms, water therapy pools and an aroma sauna. Yoga, pilates, reiki and meditation will also be offered, reflecting the spa's strong holistic focus.

The resort will offer accommodation in 369 air-conditioned suites, designed by architects TVS. The rooms range from Junior Suites (64sq m or 689sq ft in size) to the opulent Waters Edge Penthouse Suites (358sq m or 3,853sq ft).

In addition to this, there will be a 24-berth marina for cruising yachts, including mega-yacht berths that can accommodate yachts up to 250ft (76 metres), and offshore anchoring mooring buoys for larger yachts.

The resort will be managed on behalf of Harlequin by Oasis Hotels & Resorts.



The jewel in the crown will be the Willow Stream Spa at the Fairmont Peace Hotel in Shanghai

Willow Stream Spa expands into China

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts has unveiled its inaugural Willow Stream Spa in China and has two more planned for this year.

The 1,005sq m (11,840sq ft) spa, at the 200-bedroom Fairmont Yangcheng Lake in Kunshan, opened in early 2010.

Elsewhere, a 2,000sq m (21,523sq ft) Willow Stream Spa is scheduled to launch by mid-2010 at the 222-bedroom Fairmont Beijing. The spa will be situated in a sky-bridge, which spans three floors (20 to 22)

and connects the hotel to an office tower. Facilities will include 12 spa suites.

The highlight, however, will be the Willow Stream Spa at the 270-bedroom Fairmont Peace Hotel – a landmark 1930's hotel in Shanghai, which is in a soft opening phase after a multi-million dollar restoration. The 1,008sq m (10,850sq ft) spa, on the second floor, will have 11 treatment rooms, a reflexology lounge, a fitness facility and a sky-lit pool. It is due to open in late 2010.

DIARY DATES

16-19 May 2010

The Global Spa Summit

Çiragan Palace Kempinski, Istanbul, Turkey

This yearly, invitation-only summit attracts top-level business executives with a keen interest in the spa and wellness industries from all over the world.

T: +1 212 716 1199

www.globalspasummit.org

18-20 May 2010

The Hotel Show

Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai, UAE

This hospitality and spa-orientated trade show will feature the Middle East Spa Summit. The inaugural Hotel Spa event will also take place at the show.

T: +971 4438 0355

www.thehotelshow.com

3-6 June 2010

BISA International Conference

Danubius Grand Hotel Marjitsziget, Budapest Hungary

A conference and networking event for global spa professionals covering topics such as Green Globe certification, spa architecture, design and art, natural healing procedures and trends. Workshops will be held on the fourth day.

T: +49 7221 393 9733

www.internationalspa.org

24 June

Hotel & Spa

The Ritz Hotel, Paris France

A networking event and conference that has been designed for leaders in the spa and hospitality sectors.

T: +33 143 21 05 69

www.paris-hotspa.com

18-20 July

Cosmoprof North America

Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas Nevada, US

This international beauty and cosmetics fair – now in its eighth year – attracted 625 exhibitors and 22,500 visitors in 2009. This year, there is a dedicated spa and wellness section with conferences and seminars.

T: +1 480 455 3431

www.cosmoprofnorthamerica.com

longer massages



In shorter slots, therapists tend to focus on areas such as the back. The hands, feet and face are usually overlooked

PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/DOBRI DOBRINOV

An hour has become the industry standard for massages, but on what basis? Is it just that it's convenient, so routines have been shoehorned into this time frame, regardless of whether or not it's the optimum length? Or is any longer just too much, particularly for therapists who have to keep going all day?

Longer treatments allow committed therapists to do their job thoroughly and also to include some general relaxation massage to areas such as the hands, feet and face, which are usually overlooked (see S810/1 p5). But is there evidence to suggest that longer massages provide more physical benefits?

Importantly, longer treatments offer clients the luxury of truly losing track of time and not feeling rushed. A 60-minute massage can seem too short

Is 60 minutes long enough for a massage? Or could longer treatments benefit both the client and your business?

from the outset, particularly if the consultation eats into this time, so a stressed client may only fully relax for the last five or 10 minutes of the service.

One of the most effective massages I've ever had was from a Thai master in Chiang Mai. He worked from home and you were given an approximate time for a treatment and would then wait while he finished working on the previous client. If he was going to be a really long time you were either told to come back later, or sometimes his assistant started

work on you. He made sure every client was given the treatment they needed, even if it overran by an hour. He would then charge according to how long he spent with you and you came away feeling fantastic.

Of course, it's completely impractical for a spa to schedule appointments like this, but it seems there's something to learn from therapists who are not so tightly bound by time constraints.

Is there some middle ground which can be achieved, where therapists have more time to freestyle with different techniques and work on problem areas? Naturally higher prices would need to be charged, and only skilled and experienced therapists could be employed, but would the customer satisfaction and the reputation of giving effective treatments make this a worthwhile experiment?

STEPH CROSBY

Holistic spa manager,
The Scarlet, Cornwall, UK



PHOTO: ALI/CORBIS (GET SHOOT) P168

The Scarlet has four-hour ayurvedic journeys

The nature of the industry is that treatments are run back to back and turned around quickly. At The Scarlet (see s810/p38) we are taking a different approach by offering longer treatments and giving therapists a 15-minute break between sessions.

Our philosophy is to encourage people to spend more time relaxing, so with our four-hour journeys, we offer ayurvedic treatments which are usually 75 minutes long and allow ample time for a detailed consultation and the opportunity to relax before and after a session. This means the body can slow down, so clients are ready to receive the treatment and then it can resonate and continue to work afterwards.

By doing this, we're trying to stop people thinking about time. Most busy people live by their watch and we're encouraging them to surrender to us and give their bodies time to relax. With hour-long treatments, people are still aware of the time, and so we aim to give them the luxury of letting go of that.

We also like to allow enough time for the

therapist to give the client the sort of treatment they need, which isn't possible within an hour. In some cases they might need to finish a bit sooner and would benefit from having a drink and a chat, in other cases the treatment may need to be extended for as long as possible.

We find our therapists enjoy the fact that there isn't time pressure on them to finish and they're not rushed. Additionally, there's ample time for our detailed consultations, which is separate to the massage, not encroaching on the couch time. So the therapist fulfilment levels are increased, which makes them better at their job, which translates to a better client experience. If the therapist feels rushed, then they're not going to make the client feel relaxed.

At The Scarlet, we employ holistic therapists, who are in a league of their own when it comes to the level of care and the amount of energy they put into each

treatment and they prefer to have fewer clients, who they spend more time with. It's not sustainable for holistic therapists to do back to back treatments all day.

That said, it is a harder business model to make work than conveyor belt treatments. Not only are we giving our clients longer with therapists, but we also expect our therapists to give a very high level of care – which is important for people seeking an authentic experience – but tiring for the therapists. I would be interested to open the discussion up and hear from people who are doing the same.

Steph Crosby is the holistic spa manager at The Scarlet, a newly-opened 37-bed eco-hotel and spa on a cliff top in Cornwall, UK. Details: www.scarlethotel.co.uk

Im not aware of any evidence-based studies on whether longer treatments are more beneficial, but it depends on the person and the reason they're receiving the massage. For those who just want a treatment for relaxation, or general health, an hour can be sufficient. Especially if it's their first treatment and they're not used to bodywork.

Those with high demand for physical activity, such as athletes or dancers, might have multiple massages a day, which only need last for five or 10 minutes in order to be effective. However, for clients who have specific problems, then a longer treatment is definitely more effective, as it allows 60 minutes for the general massage and then 30 minutes to focus on the area of interest.

For example, with a back problem, the back needs extra work, as does the gluteal region and hip areas. With a neck problem, the upper back and shoulders will need more work, along with the neck.

A longer session also gives the advantage of adding complementary techniques,

DIMITRIOS KOSTOPOULOS

Founder and director, Hands-On Care
Physical Therapy, New York, US



improves breathing and enhances the lymphatic circulation of the axillary region around the upper chest and armpits, where lymph nodes are situated.

Face massage can relax the muscles used for chewing, promote relaxation and enhance lymphatic circulation.

I believe that in order to have maximum benefit, massaging all parts of the body is important. What is also very important is providing the proper massage sequence. Starting from the abdomen is very beneficial. However, what I think is most effective is the application of specific techniques on a muscle, such as myofascial trigger point therapy, muscle energy technique and strain/counter strain, all of which can treat isolated, specific and regional muscle problems.

Dimitrios Kostopoulos is a leading authority on myofascial pain and the co-founder of the Hands-On Care Physical Therapy centre and Hands-On training seminars in New York. Details: www.handsontpt.org

such as stretches, or myofascial trigger point therapy – which works on tender and painful nodules within muscles and can be effective in treating chronic pain of muscles and connective tissues.

Very often a shorter treatment will lead to some places being overlooked – particularly the abdomen, the chest and the face – but these are very important areas, which will benefit the client if they are worked on. Abdominal massage helps decrease the sympathetic tone of the body and promote relaxation, as well as increasing intestinal mobility, enhancing the lymphatic circulation and promoting overall relaxation.

At the same time, opening up the abdominal, hip, chest and arm lymphatics will aid the circulation of lymph, therefore maximising the treatment. Chest massage helps with the mobility of the ribs,

MARIA ZALAMAR

Spa and massage practitioner
and instructor, Florida, US



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/KRISTEN JOHANSEN

Therapists need a range of massage skills if they're to perform longer treatments

We massage therapists prefer treatments which combine different techniques to longer treatments. It's important that therapists know other modalities to blend with a [basic] massage. This is more creative, less boring and gives more guaranteed commission per client. It's also less tiring.

When we're doing massage, we're working with energies and vibrational fields, so we need breaks to recharge, go to the bathroom and stretch. Any longer than 60 to 75 minutes in one session becomes tiring for the therapist.

Two-hour massages are becoming popular, but most therapists find them too long. You have to consider the size of the client, because a two-hour massage on a petite woman can involve a lot of repetition, unless the therapist knows a variety of techniques. Most massage therapists

prefer to customise the treatment for their client's needs instead of giving a generic protocol or signature treatment.

Not all clients have a wide experience of massage techniques, so I advise my students to design routines with elements of many massages, like spa appetisers. With an aromatherapy massage, I usually blend different techniques based on the needs of the client. For example, lymphatic drainage for the face (for puffy eyes), deep tissue for the back and neck (for tension and headache), stretches for arms and legs (for more flexibility), reflexology on hands and feet (for wellbeing) and some reiki (for good energy) to close with.

Massage therapists have to use their imagination. In some spas, employees are trained to provide set, signature treatments, where every therapist has to do the same and there's not much space for

creativity, but better results can be obtained if the therapist has some freedom, especially with longer treatments.

Some massage therapists can work for long hours, others can't. Some therapists feel claustrophobic after one hour in a small, dark room. At the end, it is very important that therapists love what they do, because that way they'll find ways to re-invent themselves and give their best to clients.

You have to consider the size of a client, a two-hour massage on a petite woman can involve a lot of repetition, unless the therapist knows a variety of techniques

Maria Zalamar is an experienced spa and massage instructor in Florida, US, who practices a number of treatments, including deep tissue massage, reiki, shiatsu and aromatherapy. She has also worked at a number of day spas.

There's no evidence that more time produces better results and that a longer treatment is more beneficial. What really makes the difference is what's done during the time period and sometimes a shorter massage can gain more results if done well.

Some people think the longer they're on the table the more they're able to relax, but there's a plateau and after a certain point it can start to feel like too much.

Definitely 60 minutes is long enough for most treatments if the proper work is done. It's far more about what you want to have done in that time period than the actual length of time. I have seen very effective work done in 30-minute sessions, because it focused on the client's needs.

WHITNEY LOWE

Director, Orthopedic Massage Education
and Research Institute, Oregon, US



When it comes to which parts of the body are worked, it depends on the intention of the session for the client and the massage should be shaped accordingly. Are they looking for a particular area to be treated because they have some pain and discomfort there? Or do they want a general relaxation massage?

Most people will want to have their back, lower back, neck and shoulders worked on primarily, with legs and arms after that. The area most commonly left out is the abdominal region, which has the least

concentration of muscle tissue. Some people do find this particularly relaxing to have massaged, but then again some people don't, so it comes back to the agreement between the

practitioner and the client about what is the intention for that session.

There is a benefit of working a muscle for a longer period of time if you are getting results, but there is a point of diminishing returns, after which you may overwork the tissue, even causing damage or fatigue, resulting in an excessive amount of post-treatment soreness. More than how much time is spent working the muscle, the important point is the techniques used, and reacting appropriately to the way the muscle is responding to your touch.

Definitely 60 minutes is long enough for most treatments if the proper work is done. It's far more about what you want to have done than the actual length of time

Whitney Lowe has been a massage practitioner for more than 20 years. He founded the Orthopedic Massage Education and Research Institute and is an associate editor for the Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies. Details: www.omeri.com

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Light Sauna

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Ice Cabin
Snow Cabin
Crystal Grotto
Frigidarium
Serial Bath

Salty Steam Bath
Salt Peeling
Hamam
Hamam Massage Table
Hamam Bench
Hamam Scrub

Snail Shower
Round Shower
Experience Shower
Hydro Pool
Floatation
Swiss Hydro Compact

Tepidarium
Caldarium
Inhalation Bath
Aroma Bath
Crystal Bath
Cultural Bath

Heather Blankinship

Asian-based operator Amanresorts has 24 spas, with more in the pipeline. Its new spa operations director is aiming to take the company's offer to a new level

A serious car accident at 17 ended Heather Blankinship's dreams of being a dancer and sent her life in a new direction. "I had to figure out ways of mending my body," she says. "I was interested in natural medicine and healing, so I started yoga and went to chiropractors, osteopaths, acupuncturists and massage therapists. "Even at that time, I felt I was being called on to help people find more balance in their bodies and to help them understand healing. I bought my first book on the subject – called *Anatomy of the Spirit*, by Caroline Myss – and I now have around 150 in my collection."

Blankinship, 31 and from Seattle, US, is a graduate of the Hawaiian Islands School of Massage, which is known for producing high-calibre medical massage students. "My aunt, Gloria Summers, was one of the initiators of the American Massage Association and her son, my cousin, is a massage therapist and chiropractor for Olympic swimmers and weightlifters," she says. "In 1997, I went to Hawaii with them as part of the Ironman event massage team. I was supposed to be there four days, but ended up staying three and a half years."

SHARING A VISION

Blankinship was approached to work for Aman after leaving Rocco Forte Hotels – where she created and opened five spas. "My intention when I left was to be self-employed," she says. "I had a consultancy and training company set up, with potential clients,



but then I found out that Aman was interested in recruiting me." The prospect of working with the company greatly appealed to Blankinship, who had felt constrained at Rocco Forte: "Whatever I do, I always want to make a difference," she says, "and I wasn't able to do that previously." However, Aman was a great fit with her philosophy: "They share my vision to create sacred spaces where people feel safe enough to be vulnerable and find balance, even if it's only subtle," she says. "This resonated with Aman's executive director Trina Dingler-Ebert's vision for the company's spas."

Blankinship started in her new role with Aman in July and will be overseeing all the company's spas, as well as working on a new opening this year in Montenegro (see p28). While she will be involved with all new spa development, design and marketing, her main aim is to add depth to the group's spa offer by introducing a range of new treatments which are based on local healing traditions and methodologies. "I've been working on this concept for the last 13 years, ever since my accident," she says.

Typically Aman properties are small – ranging from the 10 luxury tents at Aman-i-Khás in India to 40 pavilions and 20 villas at Amanara in the Turks and Caicos. The company's website says "We prefer to think small. Intimate. Involving". When designing the first Amanresort in Phuket, back in 1988, Zecha wanted to create an extension of his own home, where people could relax and celebrate life together, rather than staying in a big hotel. Blankinship explains: "It's hard to describe what makes Aman so special, but whatever he [founder, Adrian Zecha] is doing, he's doing it right." She's got a point – there aren't many companies which can boast their own-branded customers like the 'Aman junkies': a term which has been coined to refer to the group's repeat visitors

PERSONAL FILE HEATHER BLANKINSHIP

What's your favourite book? Anything by Wayne Dyer
What's your favourite film? *Dirty Dancing*
What's your favourite place? Anywhere outdoors – especially in the woods or water – in the summer
What leisure activities do you most enjoy? Bikram yoga
What's the best spa you've ever been to? Canyon Ranch in Massachusetts
What's your favourite spa treatment? A really good massage
How would you describe yourself? Passionate, intuitive, warm-hearted and genuine
How would your critics describe you? An over-thinker
Who do you admire most? Kabir Jasse and Ritama Davidson, my teachers in leadership training, life essence work and life coaching.



Blankinship (above left) was inspired to create places of healing after a car accident at 17; Amanfayun in China opened earlier this year (above and right)

who find the luxurious, contemporary and individually-tailored properties so compelling. "When the first resort [Amanpuri] opened the Aman junkies were in their mid-30s," says Blankinship. "Now their children visit and we're also welcoming young successful executives in their late 30s to early 40s."

SERIOUS ABOUT SPAS

Aman means 'peace' in Sanskrit and from day one, a wellbeing offering has been integrated into the boutique resorts, which are located in naturally beautiful locations such as Indonesia, Bhutan and Cambodia. Despite this, Blankinship says the company doesn't feel it's been serious enough about spas. "Aman has a strong sense of integrity," she says. "If you ask, they would say they only have five official Aman Spas." Other hotels have some spa facilities, but are not branded as Aman Spas, as the offer is not comprehensive.

Signature Aman Spas typically only have up to eight treatment rooms, but the spas are large – the new one in Utah covers



25,000sq ft, for example (2,323sq m) – and have a full-service offering including a gym and a yoga and meditation pavilion, on top of the treatment facilities. Last year, Aman Pilates was also introduced: this a fitness assessment and wellness programme for individuals, with the option of private instruction using the Gyrotonic® physical fitness systems.

Blankinship says her priority is to implement the more developed spa concept at the new spas in the UK (at the Connaught in London), Utah (Amangiri) and China (Amanfayun). "I want to get

these up and running with a new essence of spa," she says. After this work has been done, she plans to roll it out at all the resorts. "Luckily, Aman has an amazing foundation for me to work on," she adds.

DEEP DOWN

In keeping with Aman's tailored look, mood and guest experience, Blankinship is developing four two-and-a-half-hour core treatment packages for each spa, based on its location and local healing traditions. "For Amangiri [in Utah] I researched the Native Indian healing traditions, rituals and ceremonies," she says. The Navajo belief, she explains, works on four tenets: direction, time of day, metal and colour. She took one part of this – time of day – to create treatments such as Dawn of Day which gives energy. "You bring it down to 'do you use a body scrub in that one?', well no because the dawning of consciousness is a subtle energy and you wouldn't want anything too coarse... and you can extend this so that guests can read books about creative manifestation and vision work, listen to meditation techniques and do certain types of activity which reflect that."

Blankinship also insists treatment menus will be kept simple: "Spa menus are way too long and I often can't stand the wording," she says. As well as the core packages, each menu will offer a scrub, wrap, facial, manicure, pedicure and waxing. There will also be one full-body experience on the menu where separate techniques won't be listed. She explains: "Things like deep tissue, Swedish, craniosacral, reflexology or reiki won't even be mentioned when it comes to this specific experience. All we'll list is that it's a holistic or full-body experience. Each of our therapists has a different skill set and I don't want to constrain their talents by having a structured treatment – four back strokes, two effleurage, for example – I want to encourage them to assess a customer's needs and draw from various techniques in giving the treatment."

A key part of delivering Aman's higher level spa experience is therapist recruitment – the team at the Connaught in London, for example, has been drawn from all over the world, and includes individuals from Austria, Egypt, Thailand and America. Therapists were picked for their passion and thirst for knowledge.

Another vital part of the new approach is training. "A part of my philosophy is 'people and planet first and profit and pleasure as a result,'" says Blankinship. "The profit comes automatically if you give your therapists enough tools in the box." As well as covering treatment techniques, therapists are taught about assessment and consultation in order to really treat guests holistically.

They also learn about the ancient healing traditions – at the London spa this includes Thai, Chinese, Indian and Navajo therapies – and recently Blankinship took the Connaught spa's head therapist, Kornkanok Sriwan, to Amanpuri in Thailand to experience the signature treatment package firsthand.

Underlying all this training is guided meditation. "In London, the therapists arrived two months before opening and every morning I've led them through 30 minutes of meditation," she says. "Yesterday it was focused on the chakra system, the day before was heart meditation and before that energy balancing. Many people who learn about meditation get a bit lost, but what I teach is fundamental and is something therapists can really grasp."

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

To support the new treatments, Blankinship has teamed up with a well-known (but undisclosed) skincare company, to create Aman's own-branded skincare line. The products, launching in June, will be high-grade organic, meaning that 95 per cent of the ingredients will be organic. "It's going to be an amazing line, I'm so excited," she says.

The organic skincare fits well with Aman's strong focus on the environment. "We've been eco-friendly from day one. We're very



Aman New Delhi (left) has one of only five signature, full-service Aman spas; the spa at London's Connaught Hotel (above) debuted in December and is the group's only spa outside of an Aman resort



Resorts are tailored according to location. Amangiri (above and right) in Utah offers spa treatments based on Navajo Indian healing traditions

respectful of the land and how we comply with green regulations," she adds.

The spas currently use locally-made products, while Sodashi is used in London and Utah, but once the new organic line is introduced these will be phased out.

Blankinship says that this is all part of the company culture and philosophy – "Aman just really wants Aman things" – and also down to attention to detail. "Everything from the service trays and uniforms, to the storage bowls are custom-made with a distinctive look, size or feel depending on the resort's location and what we want to portray."

FINDING A BALANCE

Blankinship's next move is to work out when she'll get a change to visit the other Amanresorts to research local healing traditions. "My biggest challenge will be allocating my time between all of the different resort and spa teams," she says. "I need a deputy!"

In the meantime, she plans to coach spa managers in her vision and the hiring process. "Both general managers and spa managers have been receptive and passionate about it," she says.



It's highly likely that Blankinship will get even busier in the future if the right sites come up. "Adrian Zecha doesn't go looking for locations," she says. "But when he sees a piece of land that he wants, then he goes for it." She hints that areas that are the most appealing are those which don't already host Amanresorts.

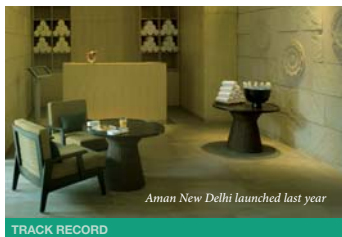
For all the deeper level spa experiences Blankinship has created for Aman, her long-term goal is a simple one. "I want to create platforms where guests and therapists feel able to get back in touch with their own selves and to find balance. Basically, it's about spreading knowledge, healing and light across the planet." ●
For a company background and development pipeline turn to p28. ►

AMANRESORTS: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

Indonesian hotelier Adrian Zecha, born in 1933, launched the first Amanresort on Pansea Beach, Phuket in 1988. The 40-room property reportedly cost US\$4m (£3m, £2.6m). Initially, the resorts were concentrated in Asia, but the chain – now boasting 24 properties – has expanded to Europe and the US (see below).

The history of the Aman, however, is not as peaceful as the resorts it creates. The chain is owned by holding company Silverlink, but in 1992 Zecha sold his controlling interest in Silverlink to hotelier Clement Vaturi. In a series of financial events Vaturi's interest effectively came under control of US real-estate investment fund Colony Capital, fuelling a lengthy law suit. This halted any expansion plans and Zecha resigned from Amanresorts in 1998.

Vaturi eventually gained back his Silverlink shares in 2000, but soon sold these onto Hong Kong property fund Lee Hing Development. Happy with the new investors, Zecha returned as chairman and CEO. In November 2007, he formed a partnership with India's real-estate company DLF Ltd, which enabled him to acquire Lee Hing's controlling interest in Amanresorts – for a reported US\$400m (£301.2m, £261m) – and secure new funds for expansion.

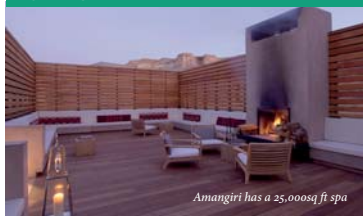


Aman New Delhi launched last year

TRACK RECORD

Amanpuri*, Phuket, Thailand (opened 1988)
Amandari, Bali, Indonesia (opened 1989)
Hotel Bora Bora, French Polynesia
 (opened 1989, a full reconstruction started in 2008)
Le Méridien, France (opened 1992)
Amanusa, Bali, Indonesia (opened 1992)
Amanakila, Bali, Indonesia (opened 1992)
Amanwana, Moyo Island, Indonesia (opened 1993)
Amanpulo, the Philippines (opened 1993)
Amanjiwo, Java, Indonesia (opened 1997)
Amangani, Wyoming, US (opened 1998)
Amanjena, Marrakech, Morocco (opened 2000)
Amansara, Siem Reap, Cambodia (opened 2002)
Aman-i-Khás, India (opened in 2003)
Amanokora, Bhutan (opened 2004)
Amanbagh, Rajasthan, India (opened 2005)
Amanagalla, Sri Lanka (opened 2005)
Amanwella, Sri Lanka (opened 2005)
Amanyara, Turks & Caicos (opened 2006)
Aman at Summer Palace*, Beijing, China (opened 2008)
Aman New Delhi*, New Delhi, India (opened 2009)
Amantaka, Luang Prabang, Laos (opened 2009)

RECENTLY OPENED



Amangiri has a 25,000sq ft spa

AMANGIRI*, UTAH, US ↑

Located on 600 acres (243 hectares) in Canyon Point in southern Utah, the 34-suite Amangiri resort opened in October 2009. Its 25,000sq ft (2,323sq m) signature Aman Spa features a floatation therapy pavilion, a water pavilion with a sauna, steamroom and plunge pool, a fitness centre and yoga pavilion and a watsu pool.



There are five treatment rooms at the Connaught spa

AMAN SPA AT THE CONNAUGHT HOTEL, LONDON ↑

In a one-off deal, Zecha opened the first Aman spa outside of an Amanresort at London's prestigious Connaught Hotel in December 2009. The 500sq m (5,382sq ft) spa is spread over two floors and includes five treatment rooms, a swimming pool, a steamroom, a fitness suite and relaxation area.

AMANFAYUN*, HANGZHOU, CHINA

The 42-room Amanfayun resort in Hangzhou has just been unveiled. Its signature Aman Spa wellness facility comprises five separate dwellings with a combined area of 4,000sq ft (372sq m).

IN THE PIPELINE

AMAN SVETI STEFAN*, MONTENEGRO

The first phase of the Aman Sveti Stefan resort was an overhaul of Villa Milocer – an eight-suite, former royal residence situated on the Adriatic coastline of Montenegro – which opened in December 2008. The second phase, which will include the restoration of buildings on the island of Sveti Stefan, is scheduled for completion in 2010. After that will be the development of a signature Aman Spa offering that's due to open in mid-2011.

*Resorts which offer, or will offer, a 'real' full-service, signature Aman Spa

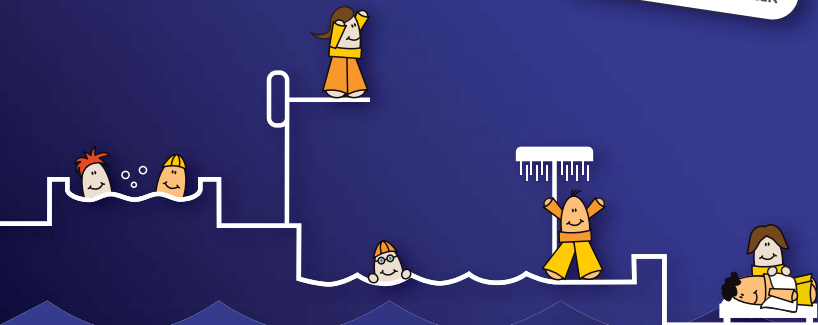
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local hero

PKF Consulting's 2009 Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry report analyses the latest spa revenues and costs and highlights the importance of local markets in the downturn. We review the findings and reveal the industry's response

The latest 2009 Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry benchmarking survey undertaken by PKF Consulting, examines the financial performance of 128 hotel spas in the US during 2008 and shows that the economic downturn began in the last quarter of 2008. "Many expected the downturn in 2009, but not already in 2008," says Elaine Fenard, senior vice-president of spa development and operator at consultancy Spa Strategy.

PKF Consulting's director of research and information services, Robert Mandelbaum, who is now beginning to take a look at the figures from last year, says: "2009 was a horrible year for the US lodging industry, with record declines in both revenues and profits. The luxury segment was hurt the most and luxury hotels have a high proportion of spas."

As for 2010, Greg Miller, area vice-president and managing director of management company Destination Hotels & Resorts, adds: "Industry-wide we're expecting a decline in revenues per available bedroom, so we'll have to work hard in our spas to achieve a flat year-on-year result." But what are the lessons from the historical figures of 2008?



Urban hotels took the lead from day spa chains such as Massage Envy (above) by turning to locals to maintain guest numbers

REVENUES

The number of hotels contributing to the survey has almost doubled since the first PKF Consulting report (see s808/3 p46), from 63 in 2007 to 116 in 2008, to 128 in 2009, resulting in "an excellent report" according to Fenard "with good year-on-year comparisons". There is a slightly higher

proportion of resort, versus urban, hotels in the latest study, but the proportion of hotels within each revenue bracket is fairly consistent (see Table 1).

Revenue per spa varies between just over US\$1m (£749,800, £649,400) for spas with under 6,000sq ft (557sq m) to nearly US\$3.7m (£2.8m, £2.4m) for larger spas of more than 15,000sq ft (1,394sq m). Yet the range on a per square foot basis is equally large, but inverted – spas with under 6,000sq ft report total spa department revenues of just over US\$280 (£210, £182) per square foot, while the larger spas with 15,000sq ft or more, average just over US\$142 (£106, £92) of revenue per square foot. This means that while larger spas generate more income overall, their yield per square foot is nearly half that of smaller spas.

Treatments generate between 85 per cent and 88 per cent of total spa revenues at urban and resort sites and once again, massage is confirmed as the most popular of all treatments, accounting for around 56 per cent of total spa revenues.

GOING LOCAL

As room occupancy levels in hotels dropped in 2008, many urban hotels turned to their local market to maintain

Table 1 Hotel Spa Survey Sample by Size, Type and Turnover

CONTRIBUTING HOTELS					
	TYPE OF HOTEL		SPA REVENUES		
	Urban	Resort	US\$3m +	US\$1m to US\$3m	Less than US\$1m
No of hotel spas (survey sample)	30	98	26	60	42
Sq ft/spa facility	8,000	13,836	23,577	12,485	5,567
Treatment rooms/property	10	14	19	12	8
Stations/property	6.0	6.0	10.0	6.0	4.0

Once again, massage is the most popular of all treatments, accounting for around 56 per cent of total spa revenues

Table 2 Revenue and Departmental Profit Analysis

REVENUE AND DEPARTMENTAL PROFIT ANALYSIS						
Per square foot values	SIZE OF SPA			SPA TURNOVER		
	Spa sq ft greater than 15,000	Spa sq ft from 6,000 to 15,000	Spa sq ft less than 6,000	Spa revenue greater than US\$3m	Spa revenue US\$1m to US\$3m	Spa revenue less than US\$1m
Total spa revenue US\$	142.36	172.32	281.33	187.77	156.6 2	114.32
Total spa revenue US\$	41.2	36.07	56.28	57.73	35.82	12.92
Departmental profit	28.9%	20.9%	20.0%	30.7%	22.9%	11.3%

volumes of business. As a result, while resort hotels experienced a 7.4 per cent decline in total spa department revenue, the decline in urban hotels was much more modest at 2.4 per cent. This was largely the result of an increase of nearly 20 per cent in "daily facility use" revenue at urban hotels compared with 2007. Since a high proportion of daily facility use revenue is converted into profit – as it is not labour intensive – urban hotels performed positively at a departmental profit level experiencing an increase in revenue of nearly 4 per cent compared with 2007. Resort hotels on the other hand, experienced an average decline in operating profit of 16 per cent.

Many believe keeping an appropriate balance between hotel and local guests at the luxury end of the market is not always easy. Cornell University's associate professor Mary Tabacchi (see SB10/1 p52) says: "Local membership guests pay for the right to use the spa all year, so feel entitled to use the spa during non-work hours; whereas

the hotel guest who pays handsomely for a room in a luxury hotel also feels entitled. However, with some spas only capturing 2 to 10 per cent of hotel guests, the local market is an important market sector." But tensions can be managed. Fenard says: "It's about keeping the operation going, making it work as a business as well as having the facility for hotel guests available."

Indeed for many, the local market has become a key source. Miller says: "It has become an important market segment for those spas located in more highly populated areas which are better able to balance their business by promoting their services to a larger population base, than those spas located in more remote areas."

"The local market has become particularly important to hotels which rely on group demand. We have seen a significant decline from the group sector as spas are seen as a discretionary spend." To compensate for the decline in group demand, these hotels have turned to their local market.

COSTS

Although urban hotels outperformed resort hotels in total spa revenue on a per square foot basis and experienced an increase in departmental profit compared to 2007, their conversion to profit is not as good. The study reports average departmental profit levels at urban hotels of US\$36 (£27, £23) – 20 per cent – per square foot compared with US\$42 (£31, £28) – 26 per cent – at resort hotels.

When analysed on the basis of size and turnover, it is not necessarily the smallest of spas which have a lower profit conversion rate, but hotels with a spa turnover of under US\$1m which struggle to convert revenue to profit (see Table 2 above).

Fenard says: "The report shows that the smaller spas are having difficulty controlling their expenses, especially labour costs." Indeed, an analysis of the payroll shows that spas with 15,000sq ft or less, achieve payroll costs of just over 60 per cent, but worse still, spas which have a turnover of

under US\$11m experience payroll costs of nearly 70 per cent (see Table 3 below).

Fenard adds that high payroll costs are "often the result of inexperienced management, as there are simple ways to review a spa's financial performance and strategise accordingly." She says that Spa Strategy offers a back-up service to operators which involves reviewing historical spa financials, together with the staffing guide, menu and marketing plan; looking for trends in over and understaffing; making sure the price points are right and that marketing is hitting spa and not just hotel customers.

Miller also believes it is important to "carefully monitor opening hours, and modify them if needed, ensuring that you are open for your primary demand."

Tabacchi concurs: "The spa industry will have to become more efficient. The spa director who can implement menu engineering and yield management as well as cut labour costs will be successful."

Although all spas reduced their payroll costs between 2007 and 2008, the reductions did not compensate for the decline in overall revenues. Most spas reduced their labour costs by between 2 per cent and 4 per cent (on a square foot basis), while revenues went down by between 5 per cent and 8 per cent, resulting in departmental profit declines of between 11 per cent and 25 per cent. Not surprisingly, the largest declines in departmental profit were in those spas with a turnover of US\$11m or less.

LOOKING TO WELLNESS

Given the higher per square foot revenue levels of the smaller hotels spas, Fenard believes that the economic crisis has "spelt an end to the large opulent spas. When development returns, it will be smaller spas which are developed." But this contradicts findings which show that smaller spas find it harder to convert revenues into profit than the larger spa facilities; the study suggests that those spas with a turnover of under US\$11m struggle the most.

In these difficult times, spas will need to run efficient operations, particularly in regards to labour, as well as sharpen their



Spas should make more of wellness services, such as nutritional cooking classes, as they only account for 0.2 per cent of revenue

marketing to increase revenues. Tabacchi points out: "Spas have to develop and market their own uniqueness. New spa customers will have to be found in this ever expanding spa industry. This requires considerable strategic marketing and flexibility of hotel and resort spas."

With demand for hotels expected to decline further during 2010, Miller believes "it is important to educate our guests and buyers – spas should not be perceived as a discretionary indulgence, but as an important part of a healthier lifestyle." This is clearly an opportunity given that the PKF Consulting study reports that health and wellness services, such as nutritional cooking classes and life coaching, represents a measly 0.2 per cent of total spa revenues.

However, Tabacchi is concerned at the overuse of the 'wellness' term. "Due to criticism of the luxury market there is a strong drive back to wellness," she says.

"Those who espouse wellness must make sure that guests see results." These could include spa treatments to relieve stress and promote wellbeing, she says, but warns that "treatments alone are not enough to promote fit bodies and minds. The move towards wellness will have to be authentic."

Canyon Ranch's vice-chairman and CEO, Jerry Cohen, concludes: "The real test is whether the new wellness focus will simply be a marketing ploy or whether there will be real substance to it. If there is going to be real substance then whatever dollars are directed away from the opulent facilities will have to be completely dedicated to programming. I am not sure if any of the hospitality companies will really be willing to do this as the return on dollars from the health and wellness programming is not that great." ●

To purchase a copy of the 2009 Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry report by PKF Consulting, visit www.pkfc.com/store, or call +1 866 842 8754. The cost of the report is US\$795.

Table 3 Payroll Analysis

PAYROLL ANALYSIS		SIZE OF SPA			SPA TURNOVER		
Per square foot values	Spa sq ft greater than 15,000	Spa sq ft from 6,000 to 15,000	Spa sq ft less than 6,000	Spa revenue greater than US\$3m	Spa revenue US\$1m to US\$3m	Spa revenue less than US\$1m	
Total payroll costs US\$	78.23	106.33	175.18	99.81	94.6	79.64	
Payroll as % of spa revenue	55.0%	61.7%	62.3%	53.2%	60.4%	69.7%	

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Founded by businesswoman Ahu Kerimoglu Aysal, Hôtel Les Ottomans, Istanbul, is a fitting testament to Turkey's glorious past – yet the success of its spa owes as much to European and Far Eastern spa cultures as it does to Ottoman tradition

From the moment Turkish hotelier Ahu Kerimoglu Aysal laid eyes on the ruins of Les Ottomans, overlooking Istanbul's Bosphorus strait, it became her mission in life to restore the building to its former glory.

In the late 18th century, the mansion and gardens had been the seaside home of the famous Pasha artist and calligrapher Muhsinzade. In the 1930s, the site was rented for coal and sand storage and fell into disrepair, before eventually being sold to tourism developers in the 1980s. To bring the building back to life, Aysal made its former resident her muse. "When I started designing," she says, "my main consideration was how Muhsinzade would want his mansion to look today, if he was able to travel through time."

An Istanbul native, Aysal has long been a leading figure in Turkey's hospitality industry. Her husband Unal Aysal is founder and chairman of the Unit Group, an energy investments company with a small but significant tourism arm. In 1985, Ahu helped to launch the group's first hotel; others followed and in 2002 she became vice-president. Hôtel Les Ottomans – opened in 2006 after seven years in development and costing a reported \$56.5m (£48.5m, £42.2m) – is the fourth property in the group's portfolio,

CROSSING



The resorted 18th century mansion (above) was the home of calligrapher Muhsinzade; the spa concept came from French vinotherapy operator and product company Caudalie (below and opposite top left)

though first in the affections of its creator, who personally oversees operations.

The hotel's combination of authentic Ottoman design, modern luxury and exclusive service has secured it commercial success and industry acclaim. In 2007, the 10-suite property was named the world's leading all-suite hotel and spa at the World Travel Awards, followed by Turkey's leading boutique hotel in 2008 and Europe's leading boutique hotel in 2009. The spa industry is also taking notice – so much so that Aysal has been invited to give a keynote address at the Global Spa Summit in Istanbul this May.

Interestingly, however, Aysal has taken a somewhat different approach with the spa at Les Ottomans from the rest of the property. Far from being a purely Turkish concept, the facility is a *Vinotherapie* Spa by Caudalie – a franchise model from the French, family-run operator and product company (see S807/2 p48). So how exactly does this very western-European concept fit in with Aysal's Ottoman dream?

MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCE

The spa at Les Ottomans is by no means Aysal's first foray into the sector. In 2000, she and her husband opened Ma Biche on the Mediterranean coast, one of the first hotels in Turkey to boast a thalassotherapy



CULTURES



centre. The Caudalie Spa is, however, her first within a city hotel and in Istanbul's increasingly competitive market – with Swissôtel, Ritz-Carlton, Kempinski and Four Seasons all offering five-star spas – the vinotherapy concept is a genuine USP. But where does it fit in to Aysal's vision for the hotel as a whole?

"Mrs Aysal found that Mathilde Thomas, the creator of Caudalie, had a vision very similar to her own," says spa director Lenka Dorskocilova. "Mathilde did not want to choose between effectiveness and naturalness [when she created Caudalie skincare]. Mrs Aysal also strives to achieve a duality, offering the best of the traditional Ottoman experience with modern technology and luxury... she believes the natural yet luxurious quality of the products to be a good match for the hotel."

According to Dorskocilova, Caudalie provides all products as well as training on the Vinotherapie concept, with a representative from France visiting twice a year for two weeks to introduce new treatments and ensure standards are met. In addition to this, in April 2009, Sophie Cot – previously international training manager with Caudalie France – joined Hôtel Les Ottomans as full-time training and development manager for the spa. The Unit Group is also the sole distributor of Caudalie products in the country, with Hôtel Les Ottomans being the exclusive point of sale.

Dorskocilova is quick to stress, however, that the look of the spa was very much the brainchild of Aysal herself, who worked with Austrian spa designers Schletterer Wellness & Spa and local company Promet to create a facility that, like the rest of the property, is "firmly rooted in Ottoman decorative traditions". Also in common with the hotel, the spa is designed according to the principles of

The spa's look, created by Aysal, Schletterer and local company Promet reflects Ottoman decorative traditions (above right); it features a luxury version of Istanbul's public bathing hammams (right)



Hotel spa

feng shui, as outlined by Singaporean feng shui master Yap Cheng Hai, who Aysal brought in to advise. As a result, the spa – much like Istanbul itself – is a harmonious melting pot of diverse cultural influences, with a Japanese meditation garden and traditional Turkish hammam sitting alongside Vinotherapie treatment rooms.

Spread over 2,400sq m (25,835sq ft), the spa is divided into six areas, starting with the Golden Door Reception. The second area is the sensory-rich Aqua World, where the ubiquitous hammam – providing a more refined, private version of the scrub and foam-massage ritual offered in public baths – is complemented by an 'adventure shower', a relaxation room with colour therapy, and a Liquid Sound Pool combining floatation with sound and light. Other facilities include Kneipp basins, a sauna, ice fountain, oxygen room, salt inhalation room, meditation area and indoor swimming pool.

The third part of the spa is the Vinotherapie Treatment Area, where the Caudalie's treatments are delivered in five multi-use rooms as well as a dedicated facial room. The menu includes a vast range of massages, baths, scrubs, wraps and facials, all using Caudalie's antioxidant-rich grapeseed products. Treatments range from the 15-minute Red Vine Barrel Bath which costs TRY120 (US\$81, €60, £53) to the 45-minute Crushed Cabernet Scrub priced at TRY160 (US\$108, €80, £70) to the hour-long Pulp Friction Massage with Fresh Grapes which costs TRY210 (US\$142, €106, £92).

Reflecting the spa's multicultural identity, there are also several Eastern-inspired services on offer, from Chakra Balancing Stone Massage to Asian Dry Massage and Balinese Massage (though all use Caudalie oils). And despite Doskocilova's assertion that spa services are geared towards "a holistic renewal for body, mind and spirit", the menu also includes Starvac SP2 body-sculpting treatments, which uses patented mobile rollers to combat cellulite.

The fourth area is a private spa, which can be hired out by individuals, couples or small groups (for example, bridal parties) who want a truly exclusive spa experience. The final two areas are a pilates studio and fitness centre, equipped by Precor, Hoist, Panatta Sport and vibration plate manufacturer Power Plate. In addition, there is a Dead Sea floatation pool – claimed by Les Ottomans to be the only one in the world to use water actually sourced from the Dead Sea – and an outdoor swimming pool.

The relaxation and meditation areas (above) create a sense of luxury at Les Ottomans; antioxidant grapeseed products (below) from Caudalie give the spa a genuine selling point



The spa at Les Ottomans by numbers

- The overall male-to-female ratio of guests using the spa (excluding the pilates studio and fitness centre) is 35:65
- The male-to-female ratio of spa and fitness members is 60:40
- The spa employs 23 staff members, including pilates and fitness instructors, receptionists, housekeeping attendants, hair stylists and therapists
- The nine therapists come from Turkey, Bali and France
- Average treatment room occupancy (across the five multi-use rooms, facial room, hammam and private spa) is 55 per cent

PASSIONATE PROJECT

With a capture rate of 50 to 60 per cent of guests, the spa at Les Ottomans clearly plays an important part in attracting business to the hotel. It's also independently profitable – thanks, in part, to its policy not only of accepting day guests but also of offering spa and fitness memberships to 180 local residents, where a year's membership costs TRY3,500 (US\$2,350, €1,750, £1,550).

As well as being advertised in national and international magazines, the facility has benefited from a listing on Caudalie's website on top of the positive national and international press generated both by its success in travel industry competitions and its popularity with celebrities. Aysal certainly knows how to maximise the latter, as demonstrated by the numerous photos of herself on the hotel's website with stars from Kevin Costner to Kylie Minogue.

This is a savvy businesswoman – albeit one whose business is also a passion. "I committed myself to the art of hotel management when I realised that sharing was what satisfied me the most," she says. "After spending years in this business, I'm now using every drop of my energy to share the beauty I've gathered at Les Ottomans." ●



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Presentations by a wide range of international industry professionals will address topics on spa business, education, architecture, treatments, medical spa services, and products. "Responsible Spa" theme for BISA 2010 Conference will be highlighted with presentations by BISA partner, Green Globe Certification, the premiere global certification for the spa, hospitality and travel industries.

3 JUNE 2010

RESPONSIBLE SPA SPA ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND ART



Speakers will address international trends in green building standards, certification, and benchmarking programs with profiles of projects specific to the spa, resort, hospitality, travel and personal care product industries. The creative aspect of spas will also be included with presentations on evolving spa concepts and environments. Speakers include: *Janice Gronvold • Guido Bauer • Dr. Peter Zimmer Bradley Cox • Micky Remann • Linda Troeller • Ute Rührig*

4 JUNE 2010

SPA BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INDUSTRY TRENDS

As the spa industry continues to evolve and diversify, a global outlook is critical to understand diverse economic, demographic, and industry specific drivers stimulating challenges and opportunities facing spa professionals. Speakers: *Terry Stevens • Yvonne Crook • Roger Allen • Anna Bjurstam • Jane Crebbin-Bailey • Richard Gomersall • Kate Hardcastle • Peter Elsner • Marion Schneider • Katinka Will Joan Thornycroft • Masatsuyo Matsumoto • Sonal Uberoi • Aldina Duarte Ramos • George Tavelis*

5 JUNE 2010

SPAS, MEDICINE, WELLNESS AND THE HEALING ARTS

Spas, medicine and the healing arts have centuries of tradition throughout the world. With references to historical influences and an examination of spas in a contemporary context. This day will focus on the role of spas in the wellness, healing arts, and medical arenas including developments in the medical and wellness tourism markets. Speakers include: *Jean-Guy de Gabriac • Mark Wuttke • Joerg Demuth • Professor Zeki Karagülle • Dr. László Puczkó • Mary Elizabeth Bondu*

6 JUNE 2010

WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS HANDS-ON AND SPA BUSINESS

Expanding upon topics covered during the conference, this day will feature a variety of hands-on seminars and business workshops. Workshop presenters: *Nirvano Martina Schulz • Mary Elizabeth Bondu • Hans-Peter Kuhl • Shambala Cornelia Wegner • Anna Bjurstam • Roger Allen • Mark Wuttke*



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CURIOUS ABOUT

Croatia

The turbulent history of the Balkans has all too often affected the development of tourism. In this three-part series, we look at how the spa and wellness sector is driving growth in the region. Croatia is first on the list



Massage terraces at the Adriana hvar marina hotel

case study 1: sensori spas

There are two Sensori spas in Suncani Hvar Hotels' properties on the island of Hvar, south Croatia. The first spa, which covers 1,400sq m (15,069sq ft), is located in Adriana hvar marina hotel which reopened in 2007 after a significant refurbishment.

The four-star hotel, a member of The Leading Small Hotels of the World marketing group, has 59 bedrooms and has a key location on Hvar's waterfront promenade.

The spa is spread over three levels and includes four treatment rooms, a couples' suite, a hydrotherapy room, a wet room, an aroma steamroom and an exercise studio, as well as outdoor amenities such as terraces for massage, yoga and relaxation. In addition, relaxation and massage cabanas

are located around the hotel's 25m seawater pool on the rooftop

Treatments include sea mud wraps and olive and sea salt scrubs, while the products houses are Carita from France and Swiss brand After the Rain. According to Corinne Ott, head of spa development for Ocro (Suncani's investors): "The menu offers a distinct sense of place, integrating the healing properties of the local plants and environment with the traditional treatments of massage, movement, hydrotherapy and aesthetic care to invigorate and restore the senses."

Sensori Ô, the second spa, opened soon after the one at Adriana. This smaller offering comprises a series of seaside treatment cabanas on the private beach of Bonj les bains.



The Balkans extends from the beautiful mountains of Slovenia and Bulgaria in the north to Macedonia and Albania in the south. The region has been the geographic meeting point of east and west for many centuries and is part of Mediterranean and central European cultures and economics.

Over the last 10 years many in the region have begun to see tourism development as a major driver of growth. Slovenia (see SB04/Q2 p28) and Croatia, for example, have focused on redefining and renewing their international tourism industry with the aim of regaining the market share they enjoyed in the 1970s and 1980s as part of the former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, Serbia, Montenegro and, to a lesser extent, Albania, Bosnia and Macedonia, are nurturing the industry as a potential new economic force.

The UN World Tourism Organization, World Travel and Tourism Council and European Tourism Council, are optimistic about the growth potential of the region. As such, there's an increasing amount of domestic and inward investment in tourism projects, much of which is being channelled into wellness and spa facilities.

POTENTIAL IN CROATIA

One of Europe's leading holiday tourism destinations for more than 40 years, Croatia's recovery since the 1991 to 1995 war of independence from the former Yugoslavia has been remarkable in terms of visitor numbers and product development.

TABLE 1 Number of Wellness Centres in hotels in Croatia*

Year	Number of wellness centres
2003	5
2004	17
2005	28
2006	44
2007	65
2008	69
2009	75

*Source: Department of Tourism, Croatian Chamber of Commerce



case study 2: maistra wellness and spa centres

Maistra is a subsidiary of the Adria Group (see main text) which was set up in 2005 to manage and develop wellness and spa centres for Adria Resorts (also owned by Adria) in the region of Istria, north Croatia. So far it has opened four wellness centres including the 1,350sq m (14,531sq ft) Wellness Otok at the Hotel Istra in Rovinj; a beauty and spa centre at Hotel Eden also in Rovinj; and a spa zone at Hotel Pineta in Vrsar.

The most impressive facility however, is the wellness centre at

Hotel Monte Mulini – a WATG-designed five-star, 109-room hotel which opened in Rovinj last year. The three-storey wellness centre, which covers 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) in total, has a Mediterranean theme and incorporates elements of stone, water, wood and gold. Facilities comprise four treatment rooms, a hydro-massage tub area, a floatation room, a Turkish sauna and a Finnish sauna, a serial steamroom, a pool, a fitness suite and a relaxation room leading out to a Mediterranean garden.

Maistra manages and develops spas for Adria Resorts in Istria, north Croatia. Its three-storey spa at Hotel Monte Mulini (all pictures) was designed by WATG and incorporates elements of gold, stone, water and wood



By 2005, with international tourism arrivals exceeding 10 million a year, traffic was back to its 1985 peak and – according to the Croatian National Tourist Office – by 2009 Croatia was welcoming more than 11 million international tourists who bought over 58 million bed-nights. Domestic tourism has also flourished and tourism now accounts for 22 per cent of GDP.

Croatia covers 57,000sq km (22,007sq miles), has a population of 4.5 million and a per capita GDP of US\$18,500 (€13,800, £12,000). Although mainly famous for its dramatic, 2,000km (1,243 mile) Adriatic coastline and 1,000 or so offshore islands, Croatia's landscape is diverse, with plains, lakes and rolling hills in the continental heartland. The Ministry of Tourism's Tourism Management Strategy 2003–2010 stresses the importance of diversifying the country's appeal, with the development of wellness tourism highlighted as a key aim.

The report says "the sea air and thalassotherapy, as well as innumerable healing thermal springs in the hinterland, require

an adequate infrastructure to position themselves as a quality tourism offering". The areas with the greatest potential for spa development are identified as Zagreb and central Croatia, where links between thermal spas and outdoor activities are highlighted. Importantly, the past five years has witnessed a significant investment in spa in both the southern region of Dalmatia and its city of Dubrovnik (at the tip) and the region of Istria in the north.

NEW INVESTMENT

As a former communist state, Croatia's government has gone through a national privatisation programme which has been critical in stimulating investment and raising quality standards in the hospitality sector. Since 2004, a number of well-known hotel and spa brands such as Starwood (with Le Méridien), Kempinski, Falkensteiner, Sol Méria Hotels, Rezidor (with Radisson Blu – formerly SAS) and the Hilton Group have started investing in Croatia. This has, in turn, stimulated



Kempinski's Carolea Spa, which has a Greco-Roman style, was designed by Italian company Consonni Contract

the creation of new tourism organisation structures at local level to support product investment. It has also encouraged quality upgrades among local businesses and wellness has become an integral part of most of these new investments. At the end of last year, the Croatian Chamber of Commerce recorded 75 wellness centres in hotels (see Table 1 on p38).

Home grown talents include Suncani Hvar Hotels, the Adris Group and Novi Spa, Hotel & Resort which had a soft opening of its massive 14,000sq m (150,695sq ft) spa development in March 2009 (see p42).

Suncani owns and operates nine hotels on the island of Hvar in the south, two of which boast Sensori spas (see case study 1). The company's investment capital of €50m (US\$66.9m, £43.5m) has been provided by the Orco Property Group – an investor, developer and asset manager of real estate in central Europe.

The Adris Group, a Croatian tourism and tobacco company, set up Adria Resorts in 2001 to manage a number of businesses in the Istrian towns of Vrsar and Rovinj. Today the Adris Group owns and manages nine hotels, seven resort complexes and six campsites handling

Wellness tourism is a major growth opportunity and spa development is an essential piece of the jigsaw ... efforts are clearly working and this is a destination to watch for the next five years at least

34,000 guests a day. In 2005, the Adris Group embarked on an asset management plan focusing on new product development of five-star hotels with wellness centres. These are being developed and managed by Maistra, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adris (see case study 2).

Launches by international companies were particularly prevalent in 2008 and 2009. Such developments included the arrival of Radisson Blu Resort & Spa in July 2009 (see case study 3) and the re-opening of the Excelsior Hotel & Spa in June 2008 (see case study 4) – both in Dubrovnik. Near to this is the Babin Kuk peninsula where the 401-room Valamar Lacroma Resort – operated by Special Hotels of the World – debuted in June 2009 with the 10,097sq ft (938sq m), 10-treatment room Afrodita Spa.

Elsewhere, the 186-room, €210m (US\$281.1m, £182.6m) Kempinski Adriatic, featuring a 32,291sq ft (3,000sq m), 16-

treatment room wellness centre, opened in Istria in August 2009; and a 2,500sq m (26,910sq ft) spa was unveiled at the 97-room Hotel Riu Blue Waves on the island of Krk in the north in May 2009. In July 2009, the 210-room Falkensteiner Hotels & Residences Punta Skala – complete with its 8,000sq m (86,111sq ft) Acquapura Spa with 25 treatment rooms – opened in Zadar, central Croatia.

All of these new national and international investments sit alongside traditionally strong spa centres in Istria such as the Relax Village in Hotel Sol Umag, the San Rocco boutique hotel and spa, the wellness centre at the Valamar Diamant Hotel in Porec and the medical aesthetic spa at Hotel Valsabbion in Pula. Other successful operators include the Terme Tuhelj and Stubicke Toplice thermal springs near Zagreb and Varazdinski Toplice, also a hot spring destination, in north-eastern Croatia.



case study 3: radisson blu resort and spa, dubrovnik

The new Radisson resort, which opened in July 2009, is 20 minutes from Dubrovnik on the Adriatic coast. The five-star property – one of the largest on the coast – has 201 rooms, plus 207 fully-furnished, one-, two- and three-bed deluxe apartments for families and groups travelling together.

The resort's 3,000sq m (32,292sq ft) Anne Sémonin Spa, was designed by the Zagreb-based firm Kušan Studio and features the Anne Sémonin French skincare



line which is the preferred supplier across a series of Rezidor properties. It has nine treatment rooms – including two couples' suites and a spa apartment with a private lounge and sun terrace – a fitness suite with Technogym's Kinesis equipment and a vibration therapy area by Power Plate.

Additional spa facilities include a thalassotherapy bath and a thermal area with a traditional coal sauna, salt sauna, hammam, aromatherapy steamroom

The resort (above) opened last year; the 3,000sq m Anne Sémonin Spa has extensive thermal facilities (above left)

and a large cold plunge pool. A hydro-therapy pool with therapeutic massage jets and an 18m lagoon pool with waterfall and underwater vitality jet loungers complete the offer.



The Excelsior Hotel (both pictures below) has a stunning waterfront location and regularly hosts celebrities; its Comfort Zone Space wellness centre (left and above) is part of a €22m overhaul which was completed in 2008

case study 4: the excelsior hotel and spa, dubrovnik

Owned and operated by Adriatic Luxury Hotels, the Excelsior Hotel & Spa has been running since 1913 and has established a worldwide reputation for luxury hospitality characterised by the elegance of its setting, architecture and style of service. Located on the waterfront close to the UNESCO World Heritage Old City of Dubrovnik, the hotel has regularly hosted royalty, political leaders and film stars.

The 158-room property reopened in June 2008 after undergoing a refurbishment costing around €22m (US\$29.4m, £19.1m).

The 850sq m (9,149sq ft) Comfort Zone Space wellness centre, which is supplied by the Italian

spa brand Comfort Zone, the French beauty line Maria Galland and the nail company Alessandro, includes a spa and beauty complex as well as Finnish saunas, Turkish and Roman baths and massage rooms. A 20m swimming pool, a spa pool and fitness and relaxation areas complete the offer.

General manager, Jasna Durkovic, recognises the importance of the wellness centre for all markets. He acknowledges that "the balance of spa treatments with health and fitness, combined with the relaxing atmosphere in the hotel and range of fine wines and foods is the essential formula for the upscale traveller to Dubrovnik".



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Adriatic Coast is the biggest draw for recent hotels and spas, meaning Croatia's biggest challenge is to upgrade existing thermal spas, especially those inland, and to attract visitors for different wellness experiences throughout the country.

Sandra Skoblar, the managing director of Novi Spa (see p42), pointed out another area for improvement at last year's Global Spa Summit. She said: "the market awareness of spa products and services in Croatia is relatively weak, due to inadequate marketing. The spa industry has yet to effectively promote and portray the necessity and benefits of health promotion and enhancements to quality of life available in the spa culture." It is hoped that the creation of an organisation for Croatian spa owners called Croatia

Wellness – which has the support of the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Tourism – will go some way towards rectifying this.

With such a burgeoning wellness sector, Skoblar also emphasised the need "for a qualified and educated workforce" that can measure up to standards of international hotels. The majority of training consists of secondary school physiotherapy and beautician courses, yet Skoblar mentions four noteworthy academies including her own Novi Spa Academy (www.novi.hr), which has been verified by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sport; the Vimal Institution (www.vimal.hr), also verified by the government; the Spa Wellness Academy at the University of Lovran (www.akademija.wellness.hr); and the Aroma Academy (www.aromaakademija.hr).

Education was also touched upon in the Global Staffing Guide in the 2009 *Spa Business Handbook*. In the handbook, Jarmila Migelová, previously director of spa operations for Suncani Hvar Hotels suggests that the University of Suvremeno in Split (www.suvremenouciliste.hr) offers some of the best in-depth training.

Overall, Croatia's transformation and emergence as a competitive, high-value, tourism destination over the past 10 years has been based on strong leadership, a focused strategy and organisational structure and a determination to succeed that other destinations would do well to emulate. Wellness tourism is recognised as a major growth opportunity, with spa developments as an essential piece of the jigsaw. The efforts are clearly working with Croatia being a destination to watch for the next five years at least. ●

the big picture

Covering 14,000sq m, Novi Spa in Croatia is one of the largest wellness facilities in Europe, but is it delivering the numbers? We find out more

Bruno Oresar, a former tennis professional from Croatia, travelled to some top hotels and resorts in his career. His rationale behind building the Novi Spa, Hotel & Resort was to prove that his home country – still carrying the scars of the war of independence from the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s – was capable of offering something worthy of five-star international guests. “There was no new development in Croatia, just renovation,” he says. “We wanted to do something different.”

To fund the project Oresar set up an equal-share partnership with developer Gordan Sirola. The pair part invested their own capital but were also assisted with bank loans.

Development began by selecting a beautiful 30-hectare (74-acre) site in the small town of Novi Vinodolski on the south coast of Croatia. Next came a €150m (US\$200.6m, £130.3m) 129-room hotel and 336 apartments which opened in 2005. Yet it was missing something: a spa. Oresar says: “A hotel needs a spa to get five stars. Every spa I had ever visited, however, was always in the basement but we did exactly the opposite by placing our spa at the heart of the resort and inviting the view [of the Adriatic Sea] inside.”

SEA VIEW

It took four years to plan and two years to build Novi Spa, which had a soft opening in March 2009. The architect behind the €23m (US\$30.7m, £20m) project was Ante Nikša Bilic, owner of Zagreb-based firm Studio Ante Murales, who has used an abundance of glass internally and on the façade facing the sea to magnificent effect.

The driving force behind the development, however, was the spa's managing director Sandra Skoblar. A trained physiotherapist, kinesiologist and massage therapist, Skoblar has lectured on these

subjects for the past 15 years. She set up her own spa consultancy and education company Veda Centar eight years ago. “Spa design in Croatia is not good, so I helped the owners develop a concept,” says Skoblar. “I became the managing director three and a half years ago. I didn't want to run the spa, but as it was my vision I became involved in it.” The rest of the hotel is overseen by management company Falkensteiner.

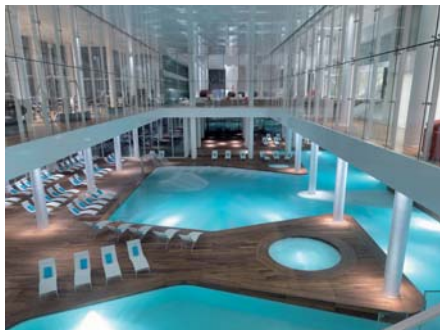
The aim of Novi is to offer the biggest and best spa facility in Europe. The sheer scale of this development – the spa covers 10,000sq m (107,639sq ft) of indoor space, plus 4,000sq m (43,056sq ft) outside including its own spa beach – certainly makes it one of the largest. The two-storey spa houses everything you could possibly imagine, from 23 treatment rooms and five suites to a Thermal Spa World area which offers more than 10 experiences. In addition, there is a 1,000sq m (10,764sq ft) fitness area, supplied with Technogym kit and Tomahawk bikes, a 700sq m (7,535sq ft) pool and relaxation area and a spa restaurant and bar serving healthy cuisine created by nutritionists.

Since the war, much local and international investment has been put into Croatian spas (see p38), but one key feature of Novi Spa which gives it an edge over competitors is its focus on thalassotherapy. “I wanted to make the most of our natural setting,” says Skoblar. The main swimming pool, which includes hydro massage areas, is filled with treated seawater from just a few metres away and other treatments include saltwater Vichy showers, jet massages, a shell massage, a salt peeling steam bath and a Dead Sea floatation pool.

A COMPLETE CONCEPT

The goal for Novi Spa wasn't just to be the largest, however, it was about having a complete concept. “I've worked in Thailand, India and Italy and have travelled a lot and I wanted people to experience wellness in a different light and all in one place,” says Skoblar. Signature rituals – incorporating Novi's own skincare line, as well as Linge St Barths, Germaine de Capuccini and Charme d'Orient products – have been inspired by spa cultures such as the Turkish hammam treatments, Thai massages and ayurvedic therapies, which are performed by hand-picked therapists from those countries. Lifestyle programmes lasting up to three weeks, where customers are examined and prescribed physical activities, diet and spa therapies, are another USP.

To keep on top of such a complex offering, Novi uses TAC booking software and to track all customer movement and additional spending it relies



Glass is used throughout the spa to provide a sense of space and stunning sea views





on Gantner Technologies' electronic pass control system. Records show that the most popular treatment is the Novi Holistic Massage, where therapists adapt the treatment according to the clients needs.

SPA ACADEMY

While the spa industry has grown quickly in Croatia over the last few years, there is a distinct lack of training for professional spa therapists. Education is restricted to secondary school physiotherapy and beautician courses. "People don't really know about spas, saunas and steamrooms in Croatia and hardly anyone knows how to massage," says Skoblar.

With the need for up to 70 therapists Skoblar created an on-site school. "I'm passionate about training and I wanted to make a difference in the treatments by having really well-trained staff," she says. "The building is the body of this spa, but the staff are the heart and the brain."

The Novi Spa Academy, which launched in 2007, is recognised as an official training body by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. Lectures are given by Skoblar, in addition to visiting speakers from Croatia and abroad. While students are free to work for any spa they choose after they've completed the courses, the majority stay at Novi.

There are two main programmes which are offered on a roll-out basis and can take up to 20 pupils. The wellness receptionist

Novi Spa, Hotel & Resort by numbers

- About 50 per cent of the hotel customers are business travellers
- 50 per cent of visitors come from Croatia, with the rest mainly from German speaking countries such as Austria, Switzerland and Germany itself.
- The average length of stay is 4.9 nights
- About 60 per cent of hotel guests use the spa facilities and 10 to 15 per cent of guests have treatments.
- Spa customers comprise hotel guests (75 per cent), day guests (10 per cent) and members (15 per cent).
- A half day spa ticket costs €20 (US\$27, £17) and a full day costs €28 (US\$37, £24)
- A Novi Holistic Massage costs €75 (US\$100, £65) for 60 minutes

The spa is the key to success at the resort (above), it accounts for about 20 per cent of revenue and will enable it to open all year round in 2010

course lasts for three months and the spa therapist for four months. Once receptionists and therapists pass the programmes they become level II employees. The next step is to become a level I employee in a management role, which usually takes about two years.

BOOSTING NUMBERS

According to Falkensteiner the spa is "a key driver for success at the hotel". It's attracting higher quality customers with more disposable income. It also boosts numbers at weekends and public holidays. Overall the spa generates 15 to 20 per cent of the resort's revenue.

Most importantly, however, the spa has enabled the resort to extend its season – before 2009 it only operated from June to mid-September, but in 2010 it will open all year round. A sports training facility and dental and

medical clinic expected to open by 2011 will only help the cause.

Oresar says: "When people come to the spa for the first time, they're surprised that something like this exists in Croatia and the [high quality of the] staff and people surprises them even more."

Skoblar concludes: "The owners gave me a blank piece of paper and I'll always thank them for that because they gave me a chance to make my vision come true." ●

THE SPA TABLE





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Jeff Matthews

53, president and COO, Mandara Spa

Jeff Matthews joined Mandara Spa in 1997 and today oversees its 72 sites and expansion into new territories such as the Middle East, India and Russia. He is also heading up Chavana, a four-star hotel spa concept by Mandara which launched in November 2009 and which is already the preferred spa operator for Novotel, Mercure and Four Points hotels in certain countries. Mandara is a subsidiary of global spa company Steiner Leisure. At the end of last year, Steiner Leisure bought Bliss World Holdings – operator of the Bliss and Remède Spa brands – from Starwood Hotels & Resorts for US\$100m (£74.6m, £65m).

I was born in Edmonton, Canada, and grew up in the cold, white north of Alberta. Life was all about playing hockey in -30° on the front street until your mother forced you inside for dinner. My older sister and younger brother were always nearby and, when I look back, we were a very close-knit family. My sister and her husband are still best friends with my wife Joan and I, while my brother and I still seem to compete at everything... but just not as well as we used to!



The biggest challenge I've ever faced was during the Asian monetary crisis in 1997. Mandara Spa was just a year old. We had five spas operating and simply did not have the cashflow to pay bills, let alone salaries. I cut my salary in half for nine months and cut many salaries of the highest paid employees by 20 per cent too. It was a hard time.



My favourite spa in the world is a little place in Bali way off the radar called Cozy. They know my name, are priced fairly, let me change the treatment to suit my needs and are very consistent in what they deliver. It doesn't get much better than that. Without doubt I think it's staff that make the difference between a good spa and great one. This may be a cliché, but I have seen spas built with so much money that are staffed with people who simply have no passion for what they're doing.

Bliss has created a very distinct, clever, lively and unpretentious brand in the beauty industry. We are very excited about introducing Bliss products and broadening its appeal through our distribution channels. The Steiner and Starwood folks will meet imminently to better understand how we can bring everything together.

Everyone is so focused on being the best that they've forgotten how to take care of the millions of people who travel on a budget. A four-star spa is aimed at less frequent spa-goers, maybe even first-timers, who can sometimes be overwhelmed by five-star opulence. So, in Chavana Spa, we tried to harness the freshness and energy of the Balinese spirit to provide a simple and approachable spa experience.

A year ago, I would have said that my life wasn't on track. But things are falling into place nicely. I'm finally getting enough family time with my kids in Canada, as well as work time in Bali. My job is fantastic. We are growing – although not as fast as I'd like – and changing and that keeps me very motivated. I'm driven by signing a contract with a person for a long-term partnership: that feeling is like no other. It satisfies the 'hunt' I have been on.

The economic downturn has been a difficult time: we're still tackling it and feeling the pain in all areas. That said, we are in more than 20 countries, so some areas are doing better than others. Also, Chavana is the perfect concept to be in the market now. Without it, we may have fallen prey to the discounting and value-adding methods that other spas are taking. The growth will be slow for 2010 as the world rebounds from the financial crisis but we feel 2011 will be very good.



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Uncommon Sense

Six Senses' first destination spa in Phuket, opened during a time of political, economic and social turmoil. But a year on, occupancy is growing at a healthy rate and plans to roll out the concept are proceeding



The spa has four themed areas: The Thai Spa, the Indonesian Spa (above left), the Chinese Spa (above right) and the Indian Spa

When operations manager Lionel Valla talks about the extraordinary level of service on offer at Six Senses Destination Spa in Phuket, Thailand, there's one story in particular which drives the message home. When a guest lost her wedding ring while swimming in the sea, the resort's managers didn't just commiserate – they hired a team of 20 scuba divers to search for it. “We found the ring and gave it back,” says Valla. “The couple celebrated their 24th wedding anniversary with us, and wrote us a beautiful letter saying they would surely be back for their 25th.”

This absolute commitment to service excellence is just one of several factors which sets Six Senses Destination Spa apart in a country which already has two other award-winning destination spas in Chiva-Som and Kamalaya (see sbo6/3 p82).

According to Ana-Maria Tavares, the resort's general manager – and managing director of the Six Senses Destination Spa division – occupancy at the 61-villa property reached 60 per cent in December – healthy figures for a resort which, by anyone's estimation, had a pretty rocky opening period.

A rocky start

The decision to open a destination spa was a natural one for Six Senses: the Asia-

based resort management company has an international reputation for sustainable and ethical business practices, and an independently successful spa division; in addition to the destination spa, the company currently operates 13 resorts and 27 spas across Asia, the Middle East and Europe, and will open one more resort and one spa in 2010.

When a pristine site became available on Naka Yai, an inhabited fishing island off mainland Phuket, it was deemed a perfect location to launch the concept and in 2006, Tavares – whose CV includes a seven-year stint as founding general manager of Chiva-Som – was brought on board to execute it. In total US\$37m (£27.6m, £24m) was invested and by the end of 2008, everything was in place for opening.

But it was far from the best start: Six Senses Destination Spa opened on 1 November 2008 – at the height of both the financial crisis and the global panic about swine flu, and just a month before anti-government protestors brought Bangkok International Airport to a standstill. “We could not have opened at a worse time,”

admits Tavares. “It affected us tremendously; not just us, but a lot of properties in Phuket. However, I truly believe we suffered more because of the perceived security threat than because of the financial crisis. The clientele we cater for is very affluent and they consider their annual visit to be a necessity, not a luxury.”

According to Tavares, it took four or five months for consumer confidence to return, but rather than bemoaning the lack of business, she and her team focused on dealing with snagging issues and fine-tuning the concept – and what a concept!

Each of the beautifully designed villas covers 450sq m (4,844sq ft), and comes with its own steam and shower room; an outdoor tub and ‘bathroom garden’ with herbs for organic baths; an outdoor treatment sala; and an infinity swimming pool with sea views. In addition to 50 standard villas, there are four 900sq m (9,688sq ft) villa suites; a six-villa compound; and a spectacular 2,500sq m (26,910sq ft) Retreat on the Hill. To top it off, all guests are assigned a butler, whose sole purpose is to anticipate and attend to their every need.

But while the level of luxury and hospitality at the resort is certainly impressive, it is the cohesion of the wellness concept that really stands out – not only in the wide range of services offered at the Seventh Sense Wellness Centre, but also in ▶

This absolute commitment to service excellence is just one of several factors which sets Six Senses Destination Spa apart





▶ the varied fitness programme, including everything from yoga and qi gong to Thai boxing and kayaking, and in the resort's two restaurants: Tonsai, serving sumptuous but healthy 'fishtarian' cuisine, and Dining at the Point, a dedicated raw-food restaurant with views over the bay.

Edible landscaping

With regard to philosophy, Six Senses is no different from Chiva-Som or indeed any other destination spa, says Tavares: "We're about helping people to change their ways." But conceptually, she argues, the newcomer could not be more different. One area where the property has an edge is the cuisine. "We're the only destination spa with a dedicated raw-food restaurant and it's an amazing success," she says. "We have guests from America who come here for two weeks just to eat raw food."

But what makes the gastronomic offering really impressive is that 70 per cent of

There's a strong focus on healthy but sumptuous cuisine (above), including a raw food restaurant; 70 per cent of ingredients are grown on site (below)

what's served is grown on site – not in a separate area, but in the hedgerows and gardens of the resort itself. "The entire property is planted with fruit, vegetables and herbs; it's like being in the middle of a huge, organic farm with all these wonderful smells around you," says Tavares.

This 'edible landscaping' concept is very much in line with Six Senses' policy of sustainability. All the fish on the menu is caught locally, while the company uses local filtered water and 'gem water' (ordinary water energised using crystal-filled rods) in lieu of imported mineral water. By the middle of 2010, the aim is for the property to be 100 per cent self-sufficient.

Another USP, says Tavares, is a wellness centre that "is absolutely second to none."

Covering 7,000sq m (75,347sq ft), the facility comprises gardens, courtyards, treatment rooms and relaxation spaces divided into four areas: the Thai Spa, focusing on traditional Thai massage; the Indonesian Spa, specialising in Indonesian water therapies; the Indian Spa, offering ayurvedic services under the supervision of an ayurvedic doctor; and the Chinese Spa, offering traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) services under a TCM doctor.

As well as all meals, the property's basic room rate – around THB24,000 (US\$746, €557, £484) for single occupancy in low season – includes a wellness consultation and two treatments a day. All guests meet with a wellness consultant to devise a tailored programme. On top of the inclusive treatments, this might incorporate fitness activities, cooking classes, lectures on health and nutrition, and any one of a whole range of integrative health services, from chi nei tsang (see S806/3 p90) to watsu or colonics.

In addition to its in-house team of therapists and wellness consultants (most of whom are qualified naturopaths or forensic nurses), the spa welcomes visiting consultants. During my visit, there were three on site: Orapin Soon, specialising in hypnotherapy, reiki and crystal therapy; Dr John Rogerson, offering energy and bio-field analysis (see p52); and Kris Matela, an expert in neuromuscular massage.

While all guests receive a tailored programme based on their consultation, those who come with a specific goal can opt for one of the all-inclusive Life Passages on offer, such as Detox & Purify, De-stress & Energise, or Fitness & Weight Loss. These range from three to 14 days and start at THB49,000 (US\$1,500, €1,150, £988).

Wellness roadshows

At present, the spa's biggest market (60 to 65 per cent) is Europe, headed by the UK, Germany, Sweden and Norway. Australia





Each 450sq m villa has its own steam and shower room, an outdoor tub and a garden with herbs for organic baths, an outdoor treatment sala and an infinity swimming pool with sea views

comes next, closely followed by Asia, where India leads. Although the property is working with the usual tour operators, the concept – with its various inclusions and subsequent pricing premium – has not proven easy to sell in a brochure packed with beach resorts. Tavares also feels that mainstream travel trade shows are “not the right forum to talk about it”.

Instead, she’s spent the last year travelling the world to host week-long wellness roadshows at carefully selected, high-end hotels, resorts and private clubs. With a chef and a team of consultants – and supported by local Six Senses therapists where available – they take the experience direct to the markets they want to capture.

“It’s the only way to promote destination spas,” says Tavares. “It’s not the quantity, it’s the quality. Even if we only reach 120 people, and only 20 per cent of those visit, it’s word of mouth.” Over the next year, roadshows are planned for Dubai, Mumbai, Sydney, Melbourne, Doha and Muscat.

Another focus for Tavares is the corporate market. The resort’s six-villa compound was built largely with this in mind – although, as she points out, it’s also ideal for celebrities with entourages, large family groups, or special programmes such as silent retreats.

Nevertheless, offering corporate wellness retreats has always been a central to the plan, and there’s even an open-air jungle gym specifically for team-building activities.

Last year, the spa hosted its first major corporate event following the merger of two large Asian banks. “The first thing they did

was come here so their employees could bond,” says Tavares. “They hired the entire resort for three days and it worked marvelously.” The company has now partnered with businessman-turned-spiritual guru Vikas Malcani – known as the Deepak Chopra of Asia – to further develop the corporate retreat product.

Exceeding expectations

So confident is Six Senses in the concept it’s created in Phuket that the company is already forging ahead with its rollout. There are three sites on the drawing board: one in India; one in Tuscany in Italy; and

Six Senses Destination Spa by Numbers

- The average length of stay is one week
- The spa currently has 224 staff
- There are eight wellness consultants, five natural health practitioners and 22 spa therapists employed in the wellness centre
- At every Six Senses property, 0.5 per cent of revenue goes into a social and environmental responsibility fund
- Fifty per cent of the profit the company makes from selling gem water in its properties is used to provide underprivileged communities with access to clean water

one in Oman. Tavares is confident all will open within the next three to four years. In the longer-term, she foresees sites in India, China, North and South America. “Of course, we won’t cut and paste,” she says. “They will each have their own personality.”

Other goals include launching a Six Senses Destination Spa packaged-food line, with products such as salad dressings and raw-food cookies, and, of course, the continued development of the parent site in Phuket. “We want to exceed the expectations of our guests,” says Valla. “Our primary goal is to be the best destination spa in the world. It’s been that from the start and it will always be that.” ●

Energy Field Imaging

Offered by some of the world's top spas, energy field imaging uses cutting-edge technology to capture detailed images of our body's energy fields. We find out more

THE THEORY

Energy field imaging (EFI) uses infrared and visual-range digital photography – as well as full-spectrum lighting techniques, a colour-coding filter and specialised computer software – to capture detailed images of our body's 'biofield' (electromagnetic energy field) plus its surrounding energy field. The colours and patterns shown are said to reflect areas of stress and ease, enabling EFI scans to identify possible health issues. Delivered with a tailored wellness programme, follow-up scans can also be a valuable motivational tool.

THE HISTORY

The photography of human energy fields was pioneered in 1939 by Russian couple Semyon and Valentina Kirlian. Their technique involved placing a subject (such as a human hand) on sheet film on a metal plate connected to a high-voltage source. This allowed images of electrical discharges at the edges of the subject to be captured on film as sparks of light – a phenomenon described as a 'halo' or 'corona'.

Controversially, the Kirlians believed this

to be a visual representation of an aura, or spiritual life force – a concept central to both traditional Chinese medicine and ayurveda – and conjectured that their photographs could be used to detect changes in the vitality of living things.

Despite opposition from mainstream scientists, other researchers have built on the Kirlians' work. In the 1980s, British biologist Harry Oldfield developed the first computer-based EFI system, known as Poly-contrast Interference Photography (PIP).

Two more EFI systems have since been created by Dr John Rogerson, a biophysicist and alternative healthcare practitioner, working with Indian partners Ravi Deshpande, Mahesh Gupta and Lalit Mittal. These include the Intra-Spectral Imaging System (ISIS), a version compatible with emerging computer technologies, and Multi-Tonal Contrast Photography (MCP), which uses a cutting-edge photo-capture system. They're now working on a 3D package.

EFI is currently offered at over 600 clinics, hospitals and spas around the world, including Chiva-Som and Six Senses Destination Spa in Thailand (see p48).

HOW IT WORKS

With both PIP and ISIS, images are captured using a video camera while the



EFI is currently offered at over 600 clinics, hospitals and spas around the world

■ The operator's view

Dr Ravindra Tulpule, founder, Prakruti Health Resort, Maharashtra, India

We've been offering EFI at our resort for four years. I came across the MCP system at a conference and was impressed by the way it could be used to show people where they have problems and blockages.

Clients like it because it gives them a map of their health and shows them what they need to work on – pictures are powerful. We charge INR5,000 (US\$112, €84, £73) for EFI, including a follow-up scan at the end of the guest's stay. We saw a return

on the investment within six months, and, in high season, we sell an average of four scans a day, seven days a week. The system is simple to use and good value for money.

■ The sceptic's view

Dr Victor J Stenger, PhD, adjunct professor of philosophy, University of Colorado; professor emeritus of physics and astronomy, University of Hawaii

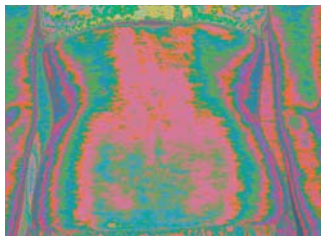
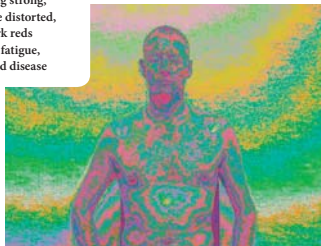
There is zero scientific evidence for a special human energy field or any unique form of energy associated with living things. The classical theory of electromagnetic

waves has been fully understood since 1873. Electromagnetic waves are produced by accelerated charged particles such as electrons. All physical bodies, including biological organisms, have these particles which generate thermal electromagnetic waves called 'black body radiation'.

For humans, this radiation is in the infrared region, invisible to the naked eye, but easily seen with special equipment such as an infrared camera. It is indistinguishable from the radiation from a rock at the same temperature. The heart and brain emit electromagnetic waves by the same process. EFI is a total scam.



Clear, vibrant patterns in light shades of yellow and green relate to being strong, well and able, while distorted, dull patterns in dark reds and purples reflect fatigue, weakness, stress and disease



subject stands against a white backdrop in a room filled with full-spectrum light. This information is then fed into a computer software programme, which displays the energy-field images on screen as bands of colour. The MCP system follows the same principles, except with digital still-frame photography rather than video.

EFI practitioners use these images to provide clients with a broad-based evaluation of their health. According to Rogerson, clear, vibrant patterns in light shades of yellow and green relate to being strong, well and able, while distorted, dull patterns in dark reds and purples reflect fatigue, weakness, stress and disease.

The practitioner may then suggest specific treatments and/or lifestyle changes to help the client address causes of concern. What EFI cannot do, says Rogerson, is confirm medical conditions such as cancer or heart disease, and so it should not be used as a diagnostic tool.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Operators purchasing an ISIS or MCP system receive two to three days' training on the basics of the system, with further training available as required. Warranties, maintenance and upgrades are free for two years. An MCP software licence with full-spectrum lighting starts at £1,250 (US\$1,900, €1,450).

WHY OFFER IT?

With the continued emphasis on wellness in the global spa industry, and energy medicine increasingly attracting attention with consumers, an EFI system could

provide operators with a strong USP, while also being profitable. In the UK, an MCP system can pay for itself within three weeks, based on three £30 (US\$46, €35) sessions a day, offered five days a week. ●

Energy field imaging at Six Senses Destination Spa

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: RHIANON HOWELLS

I experienced EFI with Rogerson at Six Senses Destination

Spa, Phuket. First, Rogerson guided me through a health questionnaire. Then, wearing a bra top and loose cotton trousers, I stood in front of a white screen and looked at a bright light, while he took a series of photographs. While this did make me feel a bit like a criminal, Rogerson's congenial manner soon put me at ease.

Once I was dressed, he talked me through the images. Dominated by green and yellow concentric circles, they confirmed I am generally pretty healthy. But the locations of a few congested, reddish areas were revealing: around my shoulders, tense from too much screen time, and my lower abdomen, indicating menstrual pain.



Most interesting were

Rogerson's comments about my mental wellbeing. While the image of my head indicated I was bright, logical and strong on ideas, a small patch of red suggested this might be at the expense of my long-term memory – an observation that

rang true, as I often struggle to remember details from years ago which my peers recall with ease. Also, while I was empathic and sensitive, the images also hinted I take things too much to heart – another bulls-eye.

At the end of the session, Rogerson gave me a CD containing the scans and analysis to take home. And while my logical brain still hankers after more proof as to exactly how it all works, I was intrigued enough to want to find out more.

swede heart

Raison d'Etre, the consultancy behind many successful spas worldwide, has launched its very own branded spa facility in Stockholm. We pay a visit

The gentle sound of trickling water can be heard throughout and subtle lighting illuminates the beautiful new Raison d'Etre Spa & Fitness facility in Sweden, yet there's also an air of excitement at the end of the first day of opening. Therapists beam with pride and there's an emotional woman beside me: Rosamond Freeman-Attwood, founder of the Raison d'Etre spa consultancy. "I'm going all wishy-washy now," she says. "I've never seen a spa more beautiful and that's not just me being biased – well, maybe I am a little bit!"

Following more than 12 years opening and managing successful spas for many prestigious operators, such as Four Seasons and Amanresorts under the Raison d'Etre consultancy (see s806/3 p66), Freeman-Attwood and business partners Anna Bjurstam

and Kasha Shillington are now stepping into the spotlight themselves with the development of their first own-branded spa. The trio have poured their hearts into the creation: a €10m (US\$13.3m, £8.7m) facility which opened at the prestigious Grand Hôtel (see box below) in the centre of Stockholm in November 2009.

TAKING OWNERSHIP

"The problem with consulting is that people can decide against our recommendations or cut the budget," says Bjurstam. "For the first time, we can do exactly what we want and can be hands-on to continue the development [of staff and services]."

Raison d'Etre's relationship with the Grand Hôtel was formed around three years ago. Both companies are based in Stockholm as well as having the same high quality standards and a strong environmental focus. Nils Axing, CEO of the Grand Hôtel says: "To charge [higher] rates, we needed to position ourselves at the top end of the five-star segment. The last piece to add [to our luxury offering] was the spa... and Raison d'Etre is one of the best spa companies. They have an open attitude, were willing to help us develop the spa, train the staff and organise it, and are now letting us manage the spa as part-owners." After lengthy negotiations, it was decided that the two businesses would run the spa as a joint venture under a new company, Raison d'Etre Spa, in which they both have an equal 50/50 ownership.

While effectively now competing against their consultancy customers with this venture, Bjurstam doesn't foresee any conflicts of interest. "On the contrary, our [new] clients are even more impressed and want to see what we've done." Bjurstam stepped in as temporary managing director of the new spa five months ago,

yet is still the owner and director of the Raison d'Etre consultancy. Once she hands over to a new managing director in May, Raison d'Etre Spa will run the business as its own entity.

GRAND APPEARANCE

The inaugural Raison d'Etre Spa & Fitness covers 1,400sq m (15,070sq ft) and is set over two floors in the hotel's Burmanska Palace wing. Swedish spa architect and interior designer Per Öberg has skillfully created a contemporary look which is mindful of local wellness traditions. Most obviously, the male and female changing rooms comprise fir-panelled saunas, and plunge pools in honour of 'det Nordiska badet' or Nordic bathing rituals which combine extreme temperatures to release muscular tension, eliminate toxins and improve circulation.

PHOTO: FATHILINDBLOM, SCANDINAVIAN FLAME DESIGN



Interior architect Per Öberg created the spa's contemporary look

Grand Hôtel: a history

Built in 1874, The Grand Hôtel has a prime position on Stockholm's waterfront and is one of Sweden's most famous hotels. It was bought by the Wallenbergs, a prominent Swedish family, in 1968 and joined the Stockholm Stock Exchange under the family's investment company Investor AB.

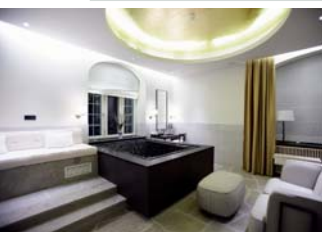
In 2004, the company embarked on a major renovation programme. The 'Change Grand' overhaul included buying Burmanska Palace – an adjoining building, to make 76 new rooms – expanding meeting facilities and adding luxury restaurants such as the two-Michelin star Mathias Dahlgren. CEO Nils Axing, who has worked at the hotel for 15 years, says: "We wanted to transform this old lady into a modern five-star international hotel... the final piece of the jigsaw was the spa."



The hotel's renovation began in 2004



When granite was discovered in the main swimming pool area (above and below right), it had to be drilled – rather than blasted – out, delaying the spa's opening by nine months



Other facilities – presented in a palette of granite, blonde ash, creams and whites – include six treatment rooms, a swimming pool, a communal wet area with a steam-room and hydropools, a relaxation area and a silent room. A gym and yoga room complete the offer.

Despite its polished look, the spa was not straightforward to build. Getting the layout right was challenging as the spa inherited a footprint that couldn't be changed – it's situated at the bottom of a heritage Art Nouveau baroque building where thick walls help to support the rest of the hotel. "This has been absolutely the most difficult spa we have ever done," says Bjurstam. "For instance, I think we placed the reception in every area and it took us about a year to draw up final plans... but it was fantastic to work with Per as he's done spas before and he saw things from aesthetic and functional points of view. He's really hands on and has put so much of his own heart into the project."

The big setback, however, was discovering granite at the bottom of the pool, which had to be drilled rather than blasted out. Over all the opening was delayed by nine months, but the Grand Hôtel owners weren't fazed by this. "It wasn't a problem," says Axing. "We just postponed the opening. We hadn't promised anything."

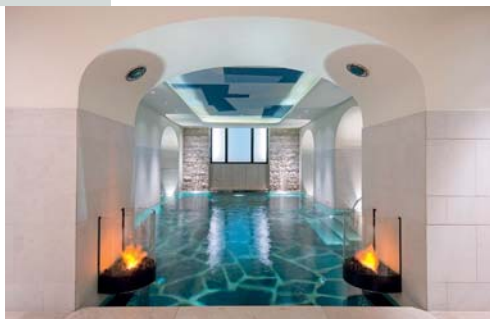


PHOTO: PÄRIL LINDBLAD & ANNA WILIN FLAHE JENSEN

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

According to the marketing collateral, this debut spa "typifies Raison d'Etre's approach to health and fitness", which, says Freeman-Attwood, means everything is focused around healing. "We want to make a difference in people's lives," she says. Bjurstam adds: "We have many competitors in Sweden who offer massage, but they're mostly about pampering, not healing."

The treatments that Bjurstam and Freeman-Attwood have devised play a key part in this approach. The menu – which includes facial acupuncture, structural integration (Rolfing), naprapathy (neuromusculoskeletal manipulation), nutrition and life coaching, and functional fitness/personal training – is broad and results-orientated.

The true gems, however, are the three signature experiences: Be Rested, Be Balanced and Be Renewed which incorporate the spa's own range of body products made with local ingredients such as blueberry, buckthorn and lingonberry. The experiences, which cost €220 (US\$293, £190) last for two hours and there's also a number of



Mosaic patterns by the hydropool (above) are reminiscent of local archipelagos; the six treatment rooms are decorated in neutral colours and feature lots of wood (right)



CREDIT: LUX EMBASSY/WWW.LUXEMBASSY.COM

90-minute therapies too. "In a 60-minute treatment, many therapists only get 50 minutes to do a quick massage before moving onto the next [see p20]," says Bjurstam. "For the first time many of them are actually able to work with their own ideas."

Another core element of the spa is the attitude of the therapists, says Freeman-Attwood: "Our staff need healing hands and a radiance about them. It's also important we like the person and that they share our passion. We have a unique training programme that we've perfected over the last 10 years. It involves daily meditation and many aspects of 'the self' – because if you don't heal yourself, then you can't heal somebody else.

"I'd love the training to last a year, but times vary. It's only been five weeks here, but it lasted for three months at a spa in India. It depends on the staff's level of knowledge." The main thing, adds Freeman-Attwood, is that "therapists do it from the heart and tailor the treatment to whatever the guest's needs are."

A FLYING START

If the first day is anything to go by, the hard work on this spa has paid off. All appointments on the Friday it opened were fully booked, with the Saturday and Sunday following suit. It bodes well for the return on investment, which Raison d'Etre Spa expects to see by the third year of operation.

Axing, who says this latest addition brings a more modern image to the hotel, predicts they'll be able to sell up to 50 more rooms per weekend because of the spa. He also believes it will encourage more day spa guests.

Grand Hôtel by numbers

- The Grand Hôtel has a turnover of SEK400m (US\$55.2m, €41.5m, £36m)
- The hotel has 368 rooms
- The average length of stay is two nights
- Average occupancy is 50 per cent
- 50 per cent of guests who visit the hotel are business travellers and 25 per cent come for leisure purposes
- 80 per cent of guests are international, the majority of whom come from the US and the UK

The eco touch

Being gentle on the environment is a core philosophy of Raison d'Etre. "When we first started, being green was a grey area," says owner and director Anna Bjurstam.

"We now have a sustainability manager, Patrick Wahlberg, and written guidelines, which I don't see many other spa companies having. We have Fair Trade (materials and products), which can be costly."

The Raison d'Etre Spa & Fitness at the Grand Hôtel Stockholm, is no exception to this eco-friendly rule: even the door knobs are nickel- and chrome-free and the plastic pipes are non-PVC. The uniforms and linen are made from organic, Fair Trade materials and products houses include The Organic Pharmacy (for facials), Jane Iredale (for make-up) and Rescue Beauty (for manicures).

"We've got off to a flying start," says Bjurstam. And if you do the maths – this modest-sized spa is serving a 360-room hotel – it's likely that demand will continue. The team is aiming for a 12 per cent capture rate, but will only let hotel guests having treatments use the facilities. On top of this, there's an existing spa and fitness membership of 270 people which will be capped at 300 – it's expected that day guests (including members) will make up 70 per cent of customers. "Being full is a nice challenge to have," says Freeman-Attwood, "but it could also be our biggest hurdle. The hotel guests will always come first and we will have to block slots out to make sure they can have their treatments."

Overall, Bjurstam and Freeman-Attwood are satisfied that they've built the perfect platform for expansion of the Raison d'Etre Spa business. "It's the first step on a future journey where we can really realise our dream," says Freeman-Attwood.

In the long-term, the two hint at opening more own-branded spas – the goal is up to two a year – and hope to have two more underway this year. The aim is to set up a similar ownership structure to the one they have with the Grand Hôtel.

"The hotel has to be of a high standard and must want to create something unique," says Bjurstam. "We want to make sure we can build from scratch, although we might take over an existing spa if it's really amazing. First and foremost, however, it's about location, we'd possibly like a spa in each continent."

Freeman-Attwood adds: "We'd like a mountain spa, a beach spa – but whatever we go for would need to be in a beautiful location."

Bjurstam concludes: "It won't be a quick roll out, we want to be selective and will make sure that we have enough time to produce something of quality: something that's tailor-made and unique." ●

3rd edition

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KEY OBJECTIVES 2010

- Authenticity & lifestyle
- Expanding internationally
- Offering a strong message
- Facilitate a friendly dialogue and exchange of ideas
- Create profitable spa business and increase revenue

FUN TIME SPA

With its disco showers and bright interiors, the new spa experience at the Butlins UK holiday camp is unconventional but proving profitable. We find out about spa-ing the Butlins way



The £20m Ocean Hotel was operating at 89 per cent occupancy within four months

When Billy Butlin opened his first UK holiday camp in 1936, its fun-orientated ethos was to provide families with a pleasure-filled "week's holiday for a week's pay". Nearly 75 years on, the camp's traditional entertainers – fondly known as the Redcoats – remain and value for money is still at the core of the company's concept, but Butlins looks nothing like it used to.

Known in the past for its no-frill holidays for Brits on a budget, shabby chalets, amateur evening performances and children-packed facilities, Butlins was one of the least likely places a stressed-out holidaymaker would think to go in search of a little luxury or a spa break – until now. Over the past five years Bourne Leisure, the owner of the brand since 2000, has

invested £100m (US\$154.5m, €115.9m) into its three Butlins seaside camps and has injected the British institution with a modern twist. The most recent addition, which opened in August 2009, is the modern £20m (US\$30.9m, €23.2m), 200-room Ocean Hotel and Spa on the south coast at Butlins Bognor Regis.

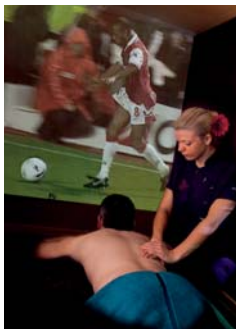
In 2009, Bognor Regis bucked the downturn trend by boosting revenue by 10 per cent for the second year running; so, the reason behind adding a spa at Bognor Regis was not to attract new business, but to sustain its success. "Butlins aims to offer everybody a holiday," says resort director Jeremy Pardey. "Adding a £2m (US\$3m, €2.3m) spa was not about attracting up-market clientele, but more about offering the experience to guests who want it. The spa adds quality to the resort, which then

surpasses guest expectations. It also adds a fresh appeal for 'mum and dad' as it gives them a place to relax as well."

Butlins is not a newcomer to the spa market: six years ago it opened a more conservative seven-treatment room spa at its Skegness site in east England. Its success – the spa was required to double its number of treatment rooms to meet demand – made it evident to Pardey that a spa should be added to the other resorts too, but this time with more Butlins personality.

COLOUR IT CALM

Butlins and designers Newman Gauge injected fun into the 660sq m (7,104sq ft) Ocean Spa at Bognor Regis by including playful, bright furniture and a vivid mix of colour, which is meant to positively influence a guest's frame of mind. Yet while



The spa uses bright furniture and a vivid mix of colour (left); the men's Sporting Highlight's Massage incorporates football clips (right)



the 125sq m (1,345sq ft) thermal suite has a rainbow palette, the 10 spacious treatment rooms are kept relatively neutral with earth-toned walls, soft-coloured lighting, and cloudy sky projections on the ceiling. Facilities, courtesy of Klafs and Cheshire Wellness, include a -16 °C snow cave, a hydropool, a sauna and mango-scented steamroom, a John Travolta-singing disco shower and an outdoor hot tub.

It took two years, and a lot of briefing, to refine the spa's funky concept, says spa manager Amy Neale. "Everyone involved had to understand the project to avoid it looking tacky, which is where it could have gone had the team not had the right expertise," she says. "Adding lots of colour and breaking away from the norm could be very dangerous for business if done wrong. But we've proven that a spa can be

colourful and still relaxing if it automatically makes guests smile."

But it's not the funky colours, or the perky therapists that spark enthusiasm in the guests; the treatment menu is what really sells the concept. Butlins and its exclusive partner, Dead Sea product supplier Spa Find (see p58), have revamped the classics with some simple yet effective twists and have created some unusual signature treatments too.

"As with everything at Butlins we needed to inject some fun and entertainment," says Andrea Knowles, Butlins' head of public relations, who was the mastermind behind the signature treatments. "From using ultra-soft mattress covers and marshmallows in teenage facials, 'tummy pods' that play classical music to unborn babies, facials with real flakes of gold and

Classical treatments with a twist are what really sell the 'fun spa' concept and with up to 70 different options, the spa has something for everyone

a men's massage with rugby and football highlights projected onto a wall, there's something for everyone."

Yet Neale, who has spent most of her 10-year career working for cruise spa operators catering to mature spa guests, is a self-professed 'spa snob' and was reluctant to create a spa in a child-orientated environment. The Ocean Spa is for over-18s only, which was a bold move considering 70 per cent of Butlins' customers are families. "It's the only place adults can come to get away from the kids, as the entire resort



The spa's playful design is intended to make guests smile and relax

Ocean Hotel and Spa: by numbers

- Within four months of opening, the spa hotel was operating at 89 per cent occupancy and by December 2009, Butlins already had £1m-worth of hotel bookings for 2010. Fifty-five per cent of these customers were new to Butlins
- The average length of stay at Butlins is four days
- 20 per cent of spa guests are male and 80 per cent are female
- Spa guests are aged between 25 and 45
- The spa employs three receptionists and 10 therapists
- Five more therapists will be hired in peak season from late July to early September
- 29 per cent of the spa's revenue comes from the thermal spa passes, 11 per cent from retail and 79 per cent from treatments



Dead Sea product house Spa Find is the spa's exclusive supplier

SPA FIND

Spa Find, which specialises in Dead Sea mineral-based products and mud, salt and water therapies, was set up in the UK by Robert Czik in 1981 under the parent company Finders International. Originally known as Finders Professional, the range re-launched as Spa Find in 2006. Today the company, now overseen

by Czik's daughter Kate Bunyan, also offers a support service comprising bespoke treatment menus, marketing and branding.

Spa Find had a 25 per cent revenue increase in 2009 and about half of its business comes from international markets such as Spain, Scandinavia and Germany. Details: www.spafindskincare.com



revolves around them," she says. Nevertheless there are some exceptions to this rule: for parents who want to spa with their teenagers, Neale has introduced a Father and Son, and a Mother and Daughter treatment package for 13-year-olds and above. She is also considering introducing a specific time slot in the thermal suite for parents and their teenagers.

Neale adds that she wanted to create a spa that would suit people from all walks of life. She explains: "A lot of people think that spas are just for those with money, when they really can be for everybody. The whole purpose of this spa is to banish these preconceptions by offering quality at great value."

"Although the treatments are competitively priced with the few spas in the area – and are by no means cheap – the difference is we have more than 70 to choose from. People can spend £20 (US\$31, €23) or more than £100 (US\$154, €116) on a two-hour body treatment." Ocean Spa also offers a two-hour session in the thermal suite for £19 (US\$29, €22) for people who do not want a treatment.

The most popular treatments are the Sporting Highlights Massage, a 25-minute treatment for men which incorporates clips of top sporting moments of choice, for £29 (US\$45, €34); manicures and pedicures, which start at £18 (US\$28, €21); the 45-minute Heavenly Head, Neck and Shoulder Massage, which is priced at £38

(US\$59, €44); and Spa Find's 45-minute Complete Calmness 2-in-1 Facial and Massage, which also costs £38.

CATERING TO THE MASSES

In January 2010, the spa hotel at Bognor opened up to the general public. Until then the spa had only catered to guests on-site, 65 per cent of whom were staying at the hotel. Regardless of the new audience, however, the spa still mostly attracts middle-income customers.

Daily tours of the spa give guests – particularly new spa-goers – a chance to look around without feeling pressured to buy anything. This approach must be working, because more than 50 per cent of those who book-up are spa virgins.

While the treatments are competitively priced, the client traffic is constant, especially during family breaks (packages focused around the school holidays) when the Ocean Spa runs at around 60 per cent occupancy and during Butlins' adult-only weekends when the thermal suite nears its 30-person capacity with guests who have purchased a thermal spa pass.

With expected high usage, Newman Gauge was briefed to future-proof the spa, which it did by picking hard-wearing yet attractive materials such as quartzite flooring and slate/limestone tiling. The designers have also made many of the features removable so they can be updated. To help protect staff, some therapists have been trained in

A two-hour pass to experience the thermal suite – featuring a snow cave (above) – costs £19 and makes up 29 per cent of the spa's revenue

forearm massage to reduce the possibility of repetitive strain injury and they never do more than four consecutive treatments.

SET FOR SUCCESS

Revenue targets for Ocean Spa were based on the best year performance of the company's Skegness spa and also on customer feedback. While numbers cannot be disclosed, it's reported that Ocean Spa surpassed these goals within its first three months. Since opening to off-site day guests, it's likely that the spa will be even busier and will need to juggle the demand. Indeed, the Ocean Spa has finished ahead of budget in the first quarter of 2010, so the year ahead is set to be a successful one.

Yet there still are no signs of complacency; Butlins is already planning new experiences for its spa guests, including birthday party packages for girls over eight and further treatment packages, along with a pencilled-in £20m (US\$30.9m, €23.1m) swimming pool and possibly a spa at its other site in Minehead.

So while the brand's 75th anniversary in 2011 is fast approaching, the beloved British institution shows no signs of ageing. ●

The majority of spa goers (71 per cent) use the internet to look for spa deals and offers. Only 12 per cent use social media websites like Facebook

PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/JACOB WACKERHAUSEN

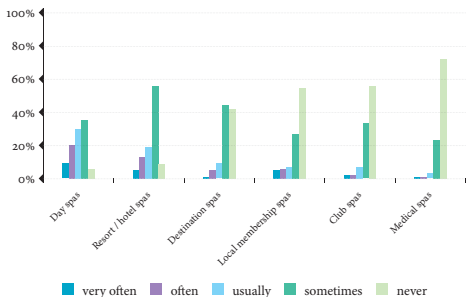
SPA PSYCHE

A recent report delves into the minds of spa consumers and their buying patterns. We take a closer look and get the industry's feedback

LEONOR STANTON • CONTRIBUTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

Operators are always keen to monitor whether their marketing efforts are effective, and studies such as the Spa Sentiment Research Report 2009 by market research company Coyle Hospitality, in conjunction with management and consultancy firm WTS International, can be a useful guide. Their online survey of 1,300 active spa-goers in the US was conducted in September 2009 and its key goal was "to help the industry understand the spa guest better and improve its offerings".

GRAPH 1 — Spa Type and Frequency of Usage



From a demographic point of view, most spa-goers had above average income levels. Indeed, the majority of this survey's respondents enjoyed average household incomes of US\$125,000 (€93,350, £81,200) or above. Only around 14 per cent of respondents had average household incomes of US\$50,000 (€37,350, £32,500) or less. In terms of age, 74 per cent of respondents were between 30 and 59 years of age, with the highest proportion (30 per cent) in the 30 to 39 age band.

Surprisingly, 88 per cent of respondents of the survey were female. Given the growth in consumption by men, this figure seems higher than would be expected and perhaps there is a consequent skew in some of the results.

TREATMENTS AND MARKETING

Many of the findings of the Coyle Hospitality study are consistent with that of a myriad of other surveys, as well as general industry knowledge. For example, 92 per cent of respondents said they typically bought massages, making it by far the most popular of treatments. This was followed in second and third place by pedicures (63 per cent) and facials (62 per cent). The least popular treatments were injectables (Botox, etc) at 3 per cent, laser treatments at 5 per cent and metaphysical treatments at 6 per cent. Given that such services are not offered by many spas, their lack of popularity is not surprising. Interestingly, only 15 per cent of respondents used signature therapies.

The importance of word of mouth in customers' decision-making was found to be critical: 74 per cent of respondents said this was salient in their selection of a spa. This correlates with other spa surveys. Arthur Chang, vice-president of development for Coyle Hospitality says: "While word of mouth was unequivocally the biggest driver of new business to a spa, it cuts both ways. Our next piece of research will look at what causes a spa client to never come back. If spas are aware of the most common 'emotional negatives' they can take action."

Not surprisingly, the importance of mediums such as television, radio and newspapers in driving business to spas



Gift vouchers, such as those by UK website Lavish, are very sought after. The average spend on a voucher is about £150

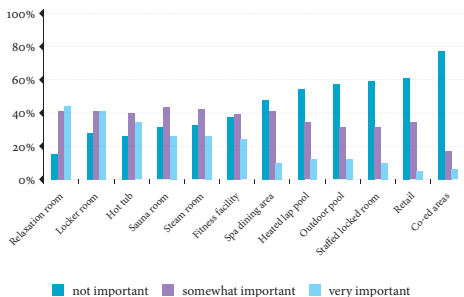
was lower than word of mouth, with responses at 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively. Accordingly, when looking for spa deals, packages and offers, magazines, newspapers and television scored relatively modestly with 35 per cent, 25 per cent and 8 per cent of respondents using such media, respectively. The internet however was much more popular with 71 per cent of respondents claiming they would look for spa deals, packages and offers online (see SB07/3 p86), 59 per cent use email and 12 per cent prefer social media websites such as Twitter and Facebook. Susie Ellis, president of global media and marketing company SpaFinder says: "Of note, this study reveals that email and online sources are extremely important in finding spa offers/deals, and this mirrors research we've conducted, as well as that of other industry reports."

SPA TYPE AND FACILITIES

The most popular type of spa frequented were day spas, followed by hotel/resort spas as shown in Graph 1 (see p61). Increasingly,



GRAPH 2 — Importance of Spa Facility Offerings



spas have become an expected hotel amenity, particularly at the 5- and 4-star levels. This survey found that 15 per cent of respondents felt it would be "very important" for a hotel to have a spa, 62 per cent found it to be "somewhat important", while 23 per cent "did not feel it would impact their property selection".

Also consistent with many studies' findings, the most important factors affecting customers' enjoyment of their spa experience were relaxation, scoring 91 per cent, followed by detox and stress management, scoring 56 per cent. Accordingly, respondents rated the provision of a relaxation room within a spa as the most important spa facility offering (see Graph 2 above). Some of the findings in this area, however, are difficult to interpret. The survey contains no segmentation in terms of quality of provision or indeed in terms of type of spa. Thus, a spa dining area was deemed to be "not important" by 48 per cent of respondents, yet clearly an essential facility in a destination spa, for example, where guests are staying over.

As in most other studies, cleanliness, professional staff and atmosphere were found to be very important in the Coyle Hospitality study. A total of 84 per cent of respondents also "consider it helpful when the therapist discusses products that are used in a service".

TRENDS

Respondents were asked to evaluate the importance of 11 stated and defined trends. Not surprisingly, "increased spa amenities" scored highest at 72 per cent – survey respondents tend to ask for more if given the chance! More interestingly, the next highest scorers were holistic (57 per cent), organic (49 per cent) and then green (40 per cent) spas. Holistic spas were defined as ones which "treat the individual as a whole – mind, body and spirit"; green spas as ones which "embrace environmental processes and sustainability" and organic spas as ones which "feature eco-friendly facilities, use of organic products in treatments".

Only 24 per cent of spa goers valued therapies with local produce – like those at Jamaica's Fern Tree Spa – while organic spas were more popular

Of interestingly, organic spas also feature as one of SpaFinder's top 10 trends of the decade. "Indigenous treatments" contained both in the Coyle Hospitality study and in SpaFinder's Top Spa Trends for 2010 predictions did not score too highly at 24 per cent.



SpaFinder also identifies gift certificates, vouchers and cards as a major trend of the decade (see SB09/2 p52). "Research shows that approximately one-third of all spa visits are generated by the redemption of certificates and vouchers," says Ellis. "Spa gifting has been galvanized by their near-universal availability at almost every individual spa and via third-party programmes, and they've not only given people permission to pamper themselves, they've ushered in a new era where gifting 'spa' represents an expression of true thoughtfulness and care." Although this does not appear as a trend in the Coyle Hospitality study, the study found that 80 per cent of all respondents had purchased gift certificates at a spa in the past, with an average spend of US\$150 (£112, £97); most gift vouchers were found to be purchased at the spa itself (70 per cent), while 22 per cent were bought online and 7 per cent over the telephone.

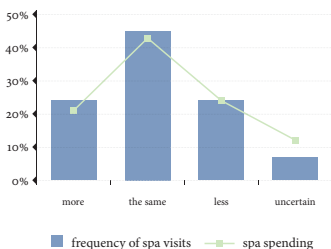
Ellis adds: "The trends spotlighted in the Coyle study were, of course, predetermined by their research team, and then consumers weighed in on whether they were a top trend for them. There are a number of other trends highlighted in other studies [and not in the Coyle survey] such as gift certificates/vouchers/cards, wellness or deals/pricing; we can't assume these other trends don't actually resonate as strong trends from the consumer perspective."

PRICE TO PAY

A large proportion of respondents stated that their usage and spending in spas in 2010 would be the same to that in 2009 (see Graph 3). Further, similar numbers of respondents were proposing to use spas less compared to those proposing to use spas more. However, a greater proportion of respondents (24 per cent) proposed spending less in spas, compared with those thinking of spending more (21 per cent). Given the economic climate when this survey was undertaken, Coyle's Chang believes "it's interesting that many of the respondents could be swayed to spend more at spas with the right motivating forces. People need to feel that their treatments are truly an investment in their wellbeing and are looking to get value. Many commented that they would be drawn to spas that are somehow giving back to the community."

Spas which embrace environmental processes and sustainability – such as those by Banyan Tree – were deemed as important by 40 per cent of spa goers

GRAPH 3 — Respondents Spending and Visiting Intentions in 2009 versus 2010



Given the global financial downturn, it is not surprising that price, and price-related issues such as the economy, were the most cited deterrents from using spas in the past, and price-related reasons were also the key reason why consumers said they may use spas less, and spend less, in 2010 compared to 2009. Of those proposing to use spas less in 2010, 20 per cent had not actually lost any income, "but the fear of an uncertain future has made them wary of spending more money". When asked what "would entice respondents to try a new spa" 81 per cent cited a discount card. When asked "to select their top three choices on what would provide the most value to their overall spa experience", the highest proportion (66 per cent) picked "bargain/discounted prices", while "shortened services for a lower rate" only scored 18 per cent.

Despite a rebound in the stock market and certain positive economic signs, it is clear that price, and price-related issues, are likely to remain on the minds of consumers. Spas will need to market creatively with price and perhaps utilise more sophisticated yield management measures to retain and grow demand. ● To download a copy of the Spa Sentiment Research Report 2009, visit www.coylehospitality.com, or call +1 212 629 2083.

Modern Morocco

To visit Marrakech, Morocco's teeming tourist hub, is to experience a city of extreme contrasts. Five-star international hotels, upmarket restaurants and chic boutique riads – traditional houses with an interior garden – live side by side with fluorescent-lit cafés, scruffy streets and chaotic souks.

The city is also awash with modern spa facilities in the guise of standalone centres housed in restored riads, or integrated into the latest international hotels. And amid all this, real Moroccan wellness rituals, in the form of the hammam (public bath), are alive and well in the back streets. Often the focus of the community, alongside the mosque and the madrasa (school), these facilities date from ancient times when houses had no plumbing or hot water.

The hammam is still a popular and cheap neighbourhood meeting place – with separate time slots for men and women. There are few frills: just a good hearty steam, scrub down and cleanse with local products. The heat is traditionally generated from wood-fired ovens often shared with the local bakery.

Modern spa brands have seized on this ancient custom and brought it into the

Morocco has a thriving tourism industry and a strong wellness tradition, but how is it attracting a contemporary audience?

We give an overview of the market and visit Les Bains de Marrakech spa to find out

21st century with a flutter of rose petals and scented candles. Yet many core spa products used still date from past centuries. These include savon noir (black soap made from olives), rhassoul (mineral clay found exclusively in Morocco at high altitude) and argan oil (a light, non-greasy oil from the crushed nut of fruit from the argan tree).

"Morocco is rich in indigenous plants and minerals which are used for wellness," says Raoul Andrews, a Florida-based spa consultant who is currently developing a spa training school in Marrakech under his company International Hotel Spa Academy. He adds: "Many are used by nomadic Berber tribes from the south and are sought-after ingredients. Argan oil is

used by international beauty companies for its anti-ageing properties, and the rose oil produced in Morocco is one of the best anywhere." Soothing mint, rosemary and eucalyptus are also found in abundance.

Majda Berrada, president of the Moroccan Spa Association (A-SPAMAROC), says the roots of spa culture in Morocco date back to 3rd century, Roman times. "There are drawings and plans on the ancient walls of Vollubilis near Fez, which are testimony to this," she says.

In more recent times, according to Berrada, the number of modern spas really began to multiply from 2005, and in 2008 the market positively mushroomed. There are currently around 600 spas in Morocco, with Marrakech having 40 per cent of the market, she says.

Berrada believes there is room for many more successful facilities, provided new businesses follow world trends closely and focus on very personalised care. "We're seeing a growth in our Moroccan clientele, and also the proximity of our country to the Middle East and Europe makes for a varied market. Our challenge, which I feel we will realise in the near future, is to firmly establish Morocco as a wellness destination – like 'the Thailand of Europe'."

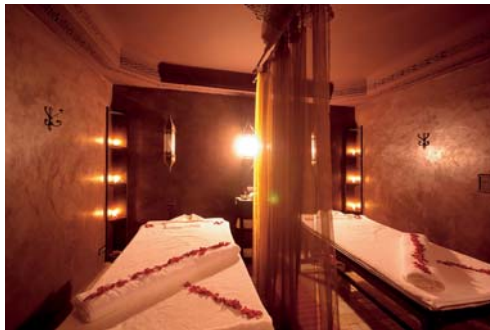
Classy and contemporary

A short distance from the exotic Place Jemaa El Fna main square – the centre of all life in Marrakech – is Les Bains de Marrakech. Tucked away at the end of a rose-coloured alleyway by the ramparts, it is a prime example of an authentically-designed and very classy standalone spa.

Les Bains has been a labour of love for Moroccan owner Kader Boufraine, who worked for many years as a therapist near Paris before returning to his native Marrakech. "I wanted to create a place that was

Les Bains has six dimly-lit treatment rooms, two of which are doubles (left) to cater for the many couples who visit

PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/PALM AGLINE





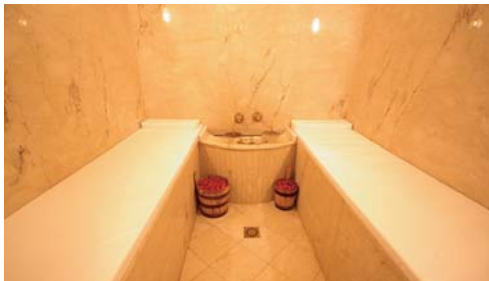
There are around 600 spas in Morocco, 40 per cent of which are in Marrakech. Les Bains (above and right) aims to stand out with its distinctive local design and – most importantly – European standards of service

very distinctly Moroccan in its design and spirit, but somewhere that offered European standards of service,” he says.

That dream started in 2000 when Boufraine acquired a site adjacent to the city ramparts, where he demolished five houses and began to build a 1,700sq m (18,300sq ft) spa facility, in the form of a traditional Moroccan riad, from scratch. When the site opened in 2003, he says, there were very few boutique spa facilities in Marrakech – now there are many.

Boufraine is, quite rightly, proud of the design finish he has achieved. Everything, he says, has been handmade to his specification by local craftsmen: from the beautiful bejmat and zellige terracotta inlaid floor tiles, to the ornate wall lamps which cast shadows all around. There are thick cream woollen rugs (impractical but lovely) along the low-lit corridors, which give a very cocooning effect, while dark chifon curtains give veiled glimpses into other parts of the facility.

Boufraine also paid attention to layout. “I wanted to create a natural flow through the spa with different entrances and exits, allowing clients to experience all areas



as they progress through,” he says. From the two private hammam cabins on the ground level, clients are led to the double-height covered courtyard to lounge on day beds or to experience a large oriental bath for two, before being meandering up to one of six dimly-lit massage rooms or two beauty rooms on the upper floor and further on to another relaxation room.

From there, is a bar area with a view onto the outdoor heated pool, which was added in mid-2009 and will this year get a glass cover to ensure all-year use. Another new addition in 2010 will be a Vichy shower in one of the upstairs beauty rooms.

When the site first opened, Boufraine said it attracted nearly 100 per cent foreign

tourists – aided by the spa’s inclusion in high profile guide books like *Lonely Planet* as well as positive press in publications such as French *Elle* magazine and *The New York Times*. In recent years, this has started to change, with 10 per cent of custom coming from middle-class Moroccans.

Like Berrada, Boufraine is clear that the success of spas in Marrakech lies in the quality of their service. At Les Bains, staff in traditional black tunics seem to appear from nowhere (Boufraine says there are 52 employees) to cater to your every need.

Couples are well catered for – two of the treatment rooms are doubles and many services are geared towards them. For example, the Duo Detente consists of a

25-minute oriental bath with essential oils and algae, followed by a one-hour massage for MAD600 (US\$72, €54, £47).

After seven years perfecting every part of Les Bains, Boufraine is now fully wrapped up in his next development – a brand new Les Bains in St Tropez, in the south of France which will open imminently.

Visitor vision

As Morocco's tourism industry grows – fuelled by King Mohammed VI's Vision 2010 strategy – so too does the spa sector.

Established in 2001, the monarch's public-private partnership strategy set a target of attracting 10 million tourists by 2010 and the creation of 110,000 new tourist beds. According to a 2008 market report by Oxford Business Group (OBG), the number of tourists visiting Morocco rose 69 per cent between 2001 and 2007 to over 7.4 million. Air traffic grew 17.5 per cent in 2007, thanks to the country's Open Skies policy of 2006 to allow more carriers from more destinations. In 2009 the total number of visitors was 8.3 million.

Recent larger scale spa openings include the US\$800m (£597.4m, £519.4m) Mazagan beach resort by Kerzner International on the west coast near El Jadida. In Marrakech, the historic Mamounia hotel has undergone an extensive refurbishment and recently reopened with a new 2,500sq m (26,910sq ft) spa.

New marketeers are looking beyond traditional European visitors like the French, Spanish and British, and aiming to attract tourists from Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East, Japan, China and the US.

Marrakech, the capital of the mid-south-western economic region, still



Everything at Les Bains has been handmade by locals, including the terracotta floors tiles (above)

attracts the lion's share of overnight stays (35 per cent), followed by the resort of Agadir on the south-west coast with 29 per cent, according to OBG. Under the king's ambitious Azur Plan – a US\$5.9bn (£4.4bn, £3.8bn) investment – six new major

coastal resorts (five on the Atlantic and one on the Mediterranean coast) are under construction. These include Saidia near the Algerian border and Mogador, south of the fishing port of Essaouira.

Even before Vision 2010 comes to fruition, Vision 2020 is underway. Here, says OBG, the focus turns to quality not quantity, plus an emphasis on eco-friendly tourism and a commitment to making the most of natural and cultural resources. ●

Les Bains de Marrakech

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: JULIE CRAMER

No trip to Morocco would be complete without indulging in a hammam experience.

At Les Bains de Marrakech, my partner and I opted for a Duo Traditionnel treatment, which comprised a 45-minute hammam session and a one-hour massage for MAD550 (US\$66, €49, £43). Interspersed with ample relaxation times, this felt like a proper half-day experience.

First stop was the small hammam cabin where we were left to simmer on hot marble slabs under a vaulted ceiling until sweat was oozing out of every pore. Then in



marched the two petite, black-clad 'hammam girls' ready to invigorate our pale, lifeless skin. First the traditional savon noir soap – a thick gelatinous paste made from olive oil by-products mixed with sweet-smelling eucalyptus oil – was smeared all over us. The aroma has the additional effect of opening the nasal passages.

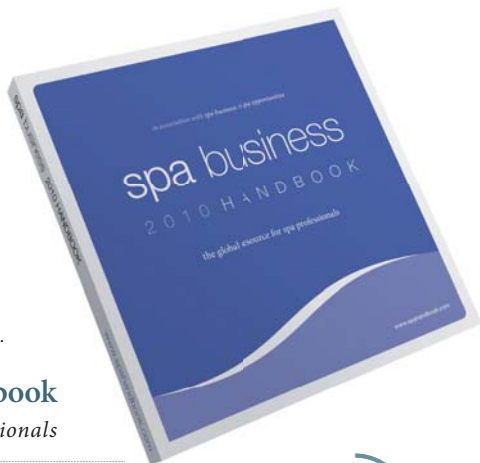
Little did we know that this was the gentle, relaxing bit before the onslaught of the black glove (kessa). The girls scrubbed our tired bodies with gusto until the outer layers of our skin were literally peeling off. There followed much dousing with warm

buckets of water straight over our heads, which sometimes left me gasping for air. After that we were left alone again to broil.

The finale was the soothing application of the rhasoul mineral clay which was spread over our now super-smooth skin for around 10 minutes before yet another dousing and another steaming. We were then swaddled in fluffy white robes and left – feeling slightly light-headed – to come round on day beds in the bright, covered inner courtyard. The sweet mint tea served tasted deliciously good. A one-hour massage with argan oil awaited: this almost seemed superfluous given our deeply relaxed and pummeled, post-hammam state.

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The *Spa Business Handbook* is the ultimate reference guide for the international spa market. Published in January 2010 as a comprehensive resource for operators and suppliers worldwide, it will be read by key decision makers including leading hotel and spa operators, suppliers, developers, consultants and other experts. It will also be distributed at key spa events.



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living the DREAM

An investment of AU\$8m to create six acres of bathing facilities has been made in Peninsula Hot Springs, Australia's first thermal spa resort. The project is testament to the sheer determination and courage of a man who couldn't let his dream go



The inspiration to create a thermal spa in Australia, came after Davidson visited Japanese hot springs in 1992

Charles Davidson was working in Japan for a food exporting company when he had his first spa experience. It was mid-winter 1992, when he took a trip with friends to Kusatsu, a town famous for its thermal waters situated north of Tokyo. Sitting in the open-air hot springs surrounded by snow, he had an epiphany. "I'd travelled to 42 countries and had never experienced anything as relaxing as those hot springs," he says. "There I was, an Australian, knowing how laid-back my countrymen like to be, and yet there was nothing like it in Australia. I knew I had to take the concept home with me."

It wasn't until five years later, when Davidson had changed careers and was

working for the Australian embassy in Tokyo that he took a step closer to his dream. A chance conversation with the head of Australia's Victorian State office at a function in 1997, led Davidson to discover that geothermal water had been detected on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria – a coastal area south-east of Melbourne and the very place he had grown up.

He immediately researched records which confirmed that hot springs were occurring naturally in the area (see box on p70). That same year, he and his brother Richard bought a 42-acre (17-hectare) block of livestock land in Rye, in the heart of the Mornington Peninsula, with the intention of building a hot springs resort just like he'd experienced in Japan. In late

1998, Davidson quit his job in Japan and moved to Melbourne with his Japanese wife, in order to work on the hot springs project full time.

INITIAL SETBACKS

Securing finance for the hot springs resort was the first stumbling block. Lenders were effectively investing blind, as no other similar business existed in Australia. "If we had been in any other country with a lot of geothermal activity, financing would not have been an issue," says Davidson. "In Australia, however, there is little commercial history in this field, so banks were reluctant to finance projects like ours."

Eventually, the brothers found an investor group, but then an even greater



It was difficult to secure finance because this was the first thermal spa resort in Australia, so lenders were effectively investing blind



challenge almost halted the project. In order to access the hot springs, they hired contractors to drill a geothermal bore. This failed and the bore broke just as it reached the hot steamy mud. Major problems with a second contractor meant that instead of it taking three months to bore the hole, it took nearer 18 months and, in that time, their investors went cold. For Davidson, it was the lowest point of the project. "We lost our investors, I had no income, an anxious wife and four children. The pressure of not knowing what our future was going to be was extreme."

Yet Davidson says he could not walk away. "No other thoughts stirred passion in me like this dream did. I consoled myself with the belief that perseverance would pay and determination would deliver." Thankfully, he also had the support of his brother.

In 2002, once the hot springs bore was finally complete (see SB10/1 p54),

the brothers began their search for investors again, which proved successful. These included Norm and Bruce Cleland, who own a third of the business alongside the Davidsons. Since then, Norm has been actively involved in the management of the business.

Having obtained planning permits, secured the water license and – most importantly – gained access to the hot springs, the next hurdle was to find an architect. The Davidsons looked all over Asia, but found their man on their doorstep in Melbourne. Gregory Burgess had never designed a spa before but that didn't worry them. "It was more important that the designer had an indigenous connection than a spa one. We looked for someone who could design a property in sympathy with the environment."

The 2009 upgrade included 20 new thermal experiences such as cascading pools which flow through a bathing valley (above and above left)

Burgess' work includes the Uluru-Kata Tjuta cultural centre in Australia's Northern Territory. The brothers saw that Burgess' talent for constructing buildings with environmental integrity made him perfect for the project.

Davidson says: "We took Greg [Burgess] on a tour of the Japanese hot springs to show him how they are designed to be sympathetic to their surrounding environment. Our brief had specific requirements for functionality but the eventual mood of the building was left in his hands."

Despite his love of Japanese hot springs, Davidson knew he wanted to create a resort for the multi-cultural Australian market. "By calling ourselves an Australian spa, we cater for everybody because Australia is such a global community." In that vein, Burgess created a large wooden



The extensively refurbished Spa Dreaming Centre opened in December. It features lots of wood and was designed to fit in with the local landscape



and glass spa, in a neutral palette, featuring Aboriginal artwork on the walls. Outside, the hot spring pools were built into the land in sympathetic, earthy tones.

TESTING THE WATERS

The Davidsons always had grand plans. However, finance, time and the need to test the market first, meant the development had to be opened in stages. The first stage, completed in 2005, consisted of a public bathing area with capacity for 70 bathers and an indoor Aboriginal-themed spa. The spa housed seven double treatment rooms, one group treatment room for up to eight people, three private indoor thermal mineral baths and two outdoor ones, in addition to changing rooms, a relaxation room, café, gift shop and reception. It cost AU\$5m (US\$4.6m, €3.5m, £3m) to build.

The initial development opened with 40 staff members (which soon grew to 85) and received 100,000 visitors per year by the end of 2009. The spa treatments were given in private rooms, but in the tradition of Japanese onsen, Davidson opened up public hot springs (right next to the spa) to everyone, including families with children. He admits that this caused

operational problems. "We couldn't cater for both families and couples wanting to get some peace away from their kids."

The problem was that spa guests (who paid a premium for their experience) and the general public using the bathing pools (paying substantially less), shared the same reception area, café, changing rooms and the main thermal pools. It was decided at that stage to restrict the entry of children until a dedicated area could be constructed. So, having established a positive turnover early on – thanks to a good gift voucher scheme and a strong customer base with up to 50 per cent of repeat visitors – the Davidsons knew that next the move was to invest a significantly larger bathing facility that could include a separate family area.

BATHING WONDERLAND

At a cost of AU\$8m (US\$7.4m, €5.6m, £4.8m), the second stage of development opened in December 2009. Engaging the services of Burgess once again, a brand

new public bathing facility – The Bathhouse – was built around a large lake. The original bathing pools and spa, renamed the Spa Dreaming Centre, were extensively upgraded and are now designated only for the use of spa guests aged 16 and over. If visitors to the spa want to use the new public bathhouse they're still required to pay the AU\$25 (US\$23, £17, €15) public entry fee, which goes up to AU\$30 (US\$28, €21, £18) in peak times.

The impressive offering at The Bathhouse has extended the total resort area from one to seven acres (three hectares) and it boasts 20 additional experiences inspired by Davidson's travels to hot spring bathing destinations around world. The new experiences include a cave pool, an underground sauna, plunge pools and a reflexology walk. Particular highlights include a series of cascading pools which flow down through a bathing valley, as well as a Turkish hammam and hilltop spa with a 360-degree view of the Mornington Peninsula, both of which are still under construction.

Once fully completed this latest development will enable capacity to increase to 500,000 visitors per year. The number of staff has grown to 110 to cope with demand and, so far, business is booming – at weekends the Spa Dreaming Centre is booked out up to six weeks in advance and even on the quieter weekdays, its occupancy is at 75 per cent. Davidson has noticed a shift in the demographic of customers since the new opening. Although out-of-town visitors account for nearly 80 per cent of guests, he says more locals are using the new, larger facilities.

PENINSULA HOT SPRINGS WATER

The thermal, mineral spring water used at Peninsula Hot Springs comes from an aquifer, or water reserve, 637m (2,090ft) below ground level. The 50°C water rises under its own pressure through a bore to within 10m of the surface from where it is pumped to the pools. Pool temperatures range from 37 to 42°C.

The water is classified as a sodium chloride bicarbonate spring and its therapeutic benefits are said to include

the alleviation of neuralgia, bruising, articular rheumatism, skin diseases and muscular complaints.

Currently around 210,000 litres of geothermal water is used per day at Peninsula Hot Springs and this water is recycled for irrigation on the property. However, a reinjection bore is under construction and this will allow the water to be returned to the subterranean aquifer after use (see SB10/1 p54).



In keeping with the brothers' original vision that the spa should not discriminate against anyone, the new hot spring pools are open to people of all ages. "We have a very specific target market – which is everybody!" explains Davidson.

The design even includes some tiny baby baths so that newborns can experience the natural warm water. "Stage one introduced people to social public bathing," he says. "The second stage is our natural bathing wonderland, which – with our hammam and cave pool – is introducing visitors to a wide variety of global and wellbeing bathing cultures."

Currently, around 25 per cent of visitors to Peninsula Hot Springs use the Spa Dreaming Centre, while 75 per cent come for the new public bathing experiences, although there is some crossover between the customers. Spa services include a selection of massages, facials and scrubs and wraps which incorporate products from Li'Tya, an Australia brand based on native plants and Aboriginal healing techniques; and Phyt's, a French organic range.

Couples are still the most typical spa-goe, which is reflected in the fact that all treatment rooms have twin beds. Various couples packages are on offer and start at AU\$370 (US\$344, €258, £222) per couple for two and a half hours. A Moroccan-themed tented structure housing eight massage

beds is also popular with groups and packages start at AU\$185 (US\$172, €129, £111) per person.

COMPLETING THE VISION

In order to totally realise the brothers' dream – to create a complete health, wellness, relaxation and rejuvenation centre with both day visitation and short stay accommodation – there will be a third stage of development. Just as he has done before, Davidson plans to get customer feedback on the existing facilities before he ventures on. "Understanding what it is that drives our customers to a health lifestyle change is important if we are to achieve a lasting positive change," he says.

Work is set to start on the third and final development stage in early 2011. Over a phased programme, it will include the building of 126 rooms of accommodation and a wellness centre. Approximately AU\$30m (US\$27.9m, €20.9m, £18m) will be invested in the accommodation, which will be a mixture of private lodges for couples, as well as three guest houses each with 20 rooms. The guest houses and many of the lodges will have their own outdoor private hot spring baths and guests will be able to have private spa treatments in

Around 75 per cent of visitors come for the public hot springs, while others opt for the more tranquil spa centre, which is only open to over 16s

their room. Some of the private lodges, intended for honeymooners, will contain their own separate yoga studio, although the wellness centre will also offer yoga and a number of other studio-based classes.

It's estimated that up to an extra AU\$5m (US\$4.6m, €3.5m, £3m) will be required for the wellness centre and although it's still early days, the initial plan is for it to include about seven treatment rooms, a food learning and preparation area, a fitness studio and many outdoor activity areas. The centre is due for completion in 2015. Davidson's aim overall is to offer week-long spa programmes which include a total wellness check and assessment for every guest.

So, just what will finishing this final stage of development mean to him? "Happiness," he says. "Realising a dream is a dream in itself. I plan to enjoy the feeling of completion when I come to it... and look forward to making a positive contribution to our customers and our community." ●

To read more about spa development in the state of Victoria see p12. To find out more about Charles Davidson please take a look at the latest Spa Business Handbook at www.spahandbook.com/digital

Village life

A retirement home may not be the obvious location for a luxury wellness centre, but that hasn't deterred the UK developers of Richmond Village Letcombe Regis. We find out more

Walking around the property, you'd be mistaken for thinking you were in a stylish five-star resort, albeit a rather traditional one. Here's a reception area as elegant as that of any hotel, with fine furniture, sumptuous fabrics and floral arrangements. Here's a comfy meeting room and a fine-dining restaurant. And, of course, here's the other facility that no self-respecting high-end resort can be without: a luxury spa and gym.

There are just a few clues – handrails running along the corridors, a portable hoist in the pool, people who look suspiciously like medical staff – that betray the true function of the place. Richmond Village Letcombe Regis in Oxfordshire is the fifth and largest 'retirement village' opened in the UK by Richmond Villages, a sub-

siary of care home operator Barchester Healthcare. Located by the picture-postcard village of Letcombe Regis, this lakeside property is also the second in the portfolio to have a wellness centre at its heart.

Zest for life

With 34 'independent living' apartments, 23 'assisted living' apartments and a 51-bed care home, this £60m (US\$92.1m, €69.2m) development, opened in March, is catering for the whole gamut of retired people, from those who want to maintain their independence, with the safety net of knowing help is at hand, to those who require round-the-clock care. What they all have in common is independent wealth: this is a high-spec facility and the property prices and fees reflect this (see p74). A second



Residents are aged between their early 70s and late 90s and the centre's priority is to help them to maintain their 'zest for life'

development phase will see 38 more independent living apartments and 30 assisted living apartments added over time.

According to marketing manager David Reaves, most residents are aged between their early 70s and late 90s; the lower age limit is 55. Yet far from being places where old-timers go to end their days, the ethos is one of helping people maintain their 'zest for life'. "The challenge is overcoming the misconceptions of what we are," says Reaves. "People think of us as a place for old fogies, but when we get them through the door, that changes to 'wow, this isn't what I was expecting, I'd like to live here!'"

It was to reinforce this philosophy of encouraging residents to enjoy life, as well as its high-end remit, that a 534sq m (5,750sq ft) wellness spa was included at its fourth site, Richmond Village Painswick, when it opened in Gloucestershire in 2007.

But while the concept might have started life as a clever marketing idea, it quickly grew into something more



profound. Brought on board to oversee the launch, spa manager Bev Boyce – a qualified nurse and former fitness club manager – was determined that the full potential of the facility to benefit people's physical and mental health should be realised.

Nearly three years after opening, the spa at Painswick is used by 90 per cent of residents, as well as catering for 85 to 90 members from the local community. Given these figures, the decision to add a second facility at Letcombe Regis was a no-brainer.

Personalised service

The £1.75m (US\$2.69m, €2.02m) wellness spa at Letcombe Regis was designed by Neil Fairplay and Beverly Bayes of London-based Sparcstudio – the company which also designed facilities at Painswick. At 560sq m (6,000sq ft), the Letcombe spa is larger than the one at Painswick and, unlike Painswick, it has its own front door for external members. It's also been brought from

the basement to a prominent location on the ground floor, with spaces that provide lots of natural light and views of a nature reserve (see p75). Sparcstudio's Bayes says: "We also consciously increased the number of wellbeing areas not connected to fitness."

The facilities at Letcombe include a spacious reception area, changing rooms, a 16x4m pool – for aqua classes and physiotherapy as well as swimming – and a large whirlpool, sauna and steamroom, all supplied by Buckingham Pools. There is also a beauty salon providing hairdressing, a double manicure and pedicure bar, a relaxation area and two treatment rooms.

Rounding off the offer is an exercise studio where classes will range from the usual circuits and 'legs, bums and tums' to falls prevention training. There will also be seated classes for the less mobile. A gym, equipped by Technogym, includes an upright bike, reclining bike, rower and treadmill, as well as its full range (seven pieces) of Easy Line resistance kit.

The pool in the Letcombe wellness centre, supplied by Buckingham Pools, is used for aqua classes and physiotherapy, as well as swimming

The company has just recruited spa manager Samantha de la Querra, who previously managed a fitness centre and ran her own beauty/spa business. In the interim Boyce was on loan from Painswick. A full-time fitness instructor has already been recruited (more will be brought on board as needed) while freelance staff members include a hairdresser, spa therapist and an array of visiting specialists, from chiropractors and physiotherapists to yoga and pilates teachers. It's an impressive set-up, but it is not only the range of facilities and services available that make the offering special.

As at Painswick, the Letcombe spa aims to deliver a very personalised service, says Boyce. Although use of the facility (with



All spa facilities at Painswick (above) and Letcombe are free to residents, but are also available to locals for a monthly membership fee of £70

the exception of hairdressing, spa treatments and physio) is free to all residents, many of the older people are unfamiliar with the concept of a spa or gym and feel that it is 'not for them'.

In an effort to overcome this, De la Querra will meet with every single new resident to allay their concerns and talk them through the benefits. Boyce explains: "If someone's coming to live with us [at Painswick], I go and have a coffee with them and get some background on their health. A lot of these people have been doing their own cooking, cleaning and gardening, then they come here and they stop, so their mobility decreases if we're not careful. I explain how important it is to keep them moving. It's about independence. If someone can only walk with a frame, I say: 'Let's keep you fit so you can continue walking with that frame.'"

"In the beginning, we might go and do exercises with someone in their room – for example, some core stability work to help

them with getting in and out of their chair. But once they're more confident, we encourage them to come down to the spa."

Multiple markets

As well as serving residents, both the Painswick and Letcombe spas welcome local members aged over 50, who pay a monthly fee of £70 (US\$115, €86).

"In the early days, there were some concerns about the impact this might have on residents, but it's actually been extremely positive," says Boyce. "Our members often get involved in other activities in the village and it creates a sense of community."

Reaves says the marketing of memberships is done through targeted leaflet

drops – for example, at other retirement homes – and talks to local groups, such as the Women's Institute and the Rotary club.

The final group the spa caters for is people who come to the village for respite care or convalescence – for example, following hip or knee replacement surgery. This market is largely dependent on networking within the local medical community, says Reaves, and the spa's rehabilitation programming is a big draw.

For all users, the first step once they arrive in the spa is a consultation to establish what they want to achieve, and a 'health MOT' comprising height, weight, body mass index, body fat and blood pressure checks. Goals are then set and a programme designed to help achieve them, with staff gently encouraging, coaching and monitoring them on a regular basis. "There's a lot of one-to-one work and a lot of educating," says Boyce. "We even offer nutritional advice if needed."

A team effort

Inevitably there are some challenges when working with this population group.

"When teaching a class in an ordinary gym, you go in with a very set idea of what you're going to do," explains Boyce. "Here, your class comes in, and there'll be Mrs Smith, who can't step up and down, or Mr Brown, who hasn't got the mobility in his shoulder to do that exercise, so you have to be adaptable. It's important to have a memory bank of alternative exercises that are safe for them to do."

"Communication can be another challenge, as some of the people here are very hard of hearing; with one lady, we use

RICHMOND VILLAGE LETCOMBE REGIS: BY NUMBERS

- Independent living at Letcombe Regis starts at £295,000 (US\$452,900, €339,800) for a one-bed apartment to £595,000 (US\$914,150, €685,700) for the largest two-bed property. All units have their own front door, a generous lounge/diner, a fully-equipped kitchen and two bathrooms (one en suite)
- Assisted living starts at £240,000 (US\$368,750, €276,600) for a one-bed unit. There's also a weekly fee of £375 (US\$576, €432) for a single person or £575 (US\$883, €663) for

couples, which covers utilities, daily maid service, laundry service and all meals. Residents can also pay for domiciliary care – for example, if they need help getting washed and dressed

- Independent and assisted living residents pay a weekly service charge of £115 (US\$177, €133) per property for maintenance and communal facility use
- Care home fees start at £850 (US\$1,300, €980) a week, depending on needs
- Once complete, the village will have around 200 residents and 100 staff



Many older people feel a spa is 'not for them'. To overcome this, each new resident meets with the spa manager to talk through concerns and benefits

a small whiteboard so we can write her notes. Other clients have problems with their sight, and therefore need help using the equipment in the gym."

In order to better meet the needs of users, there are regular in-house training sessions and 'case study' meetings, often in conjunction with other medical staff such as the on-site GP, the nurses from the care home or the physiotherapist.

"If there's someone we're struggling to help, we'll get together as a team to discuss what we can do for them. For example, we had a lady with Parkinson's who was also in a wheelchair, so there were two issues there we needed to address," says Boyce.

Mental wellbeing

Due to the free-to-residents policy, neither spa is (nor is expected to be) independently profitable, although memberships help to cover costs. But as a marketing tool they are invaluable, says Reaves. In addition, the very real benefits they deliver speak volumes about the integrity of the Richmond Village brand.

"We've seen great improvements in mobility," says Boyce. "We've had people come in who have had to use a mobility scooter to get around. After doing some core and balance work with them, we've got them to the stage where they can walk around with a stick, then eventually to the point where they can manage without it.

RICHMOND VILLAGE LETCOMBE REGIS: FACILITIES

In addition to the spa, facilities at Letcombe Regis include a restaurant and private dining area, meeting rooms, an arts and crafts room, IT area, library and bowling green. In a charming thatched gatehouse at the village entrance there's also a café and a shop open to the public. The pièce de résistance, however, is a 30-acre (12-hectare)

nature reserve, managed by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. With guided trails, permissive pathways



PHOTO: HELEN WALSH

Letcombe Valley Nature Reserve is a particular highlight

and benches, the reserve is also open to the public, fitting in with the company ethos of creating 'a community within a community'.

We also do a lot of work on falls prevention and I'm convinced that, if we could measure it, we'd see a significant reduction in falls among our users."

One area where the Letcombe spa will be pioneering new ground is in dementia care, as the Letcombe village has a specialist dementia care unit. Working closely with carers and activity organisers, the spa will hold weekly classes for this group; given the growing body of evidence showing that regular exercise can significantly delay cognitive decline, it will be interesting to see the results.

Although Painswick does not cater for dementia patients, Boyce believes that the spa has just as positive an influence on its elderly users' mental wellbeing as it does on their physical health.

"We've got one old boy called Fred who comes down every morning: I could set my clock by him," she says. "He goes on the treadmill, then afterward we sit and have a chat, and when he walks out he always says: 'Thanks very much, you've made my day'. The thing is, I know it's true, and I think: 'If nothing else happens today, I've done something for somebody.'"



Getting Personal

We take a look at how the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality test can motivate customers to take part in workouts and to include exercise in their spa visit

There's growing evidence to suggest that people who participate in exercise that suits their personality are not only happier, but also more likely to stick with the activity. In a previous issue of *Spa Business*, we outlined the work of Jim Gavin, who has devised questionnaires to help pick exercises for people based on their psychological profile (see SB08/4 p91).

Another possible system that spa operators could turn to, however, is the Myers-Briggs 'Type Indicator' (MBTI) – a self-report questionnaire developed by American psychological theorist Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother Katherine Briggs in the 1940s. The pair based their inventory on the psychological types of

people as described by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung in the 1920s. Their aim was to make it "understandable and useful in people's lives". Today the MBTI is available in 21 languages worldwide.

A PERSONALITY WORKOUT

The majority of us start to exercise to be healthier and more comfortable in our own skin. Yet when progress is measured in numbers, we can get negative feedback and stop exercising altogether. With consumers looking to save money, this could be all the rationale they need to not take part in physical activity. It's therefore vital that spa operators do more to ensure customers see the real value and benefits of their workout time.

If you probe deep enough, you may find out that customers don't consider working out when they're at a spa because not enough has been done to keep them engaged in fitness activities. This is easier said than done, and any fitness professionals fail to appreciate the role that individual personality type plays in determining approaches to fitness.

Personality can have a big impact on the way people think and feel about exercise. Would regular classes be your choice – group workouts in a noisy, crowded room – or would you prefer to swim laps solo with only your thoughts for company, just when you feel like it? Do you feel better about exercising with a fitness partner or on your own? The answers to these questions have little to do with physical ability and more to do with personality.

With this in mind, spas need to be doing more to understand their customers by investing in tools that can establish their motivations and different approaches to working out. By starting with personality, as opposed to the activity, psychological tests such as the MBTI instrument can be used to help discover what activities and regimes customers will most enjoy, engage and hopefully stick with.

Currently the MBTI self-report questionnaire is the most widely used instrument to make psychological types understandable and useful in everyday life. The tool sorts individuals into psychological 'types', helping them to understand how they are different from other people, and

Fitness instructors can also use questionnaires to help them understand their own working preferences... when designing workouts, they tend to structure them in a certain way, which might not be effective for all customers



PHOTO: ISTOCK/OMG@AMOREMIS

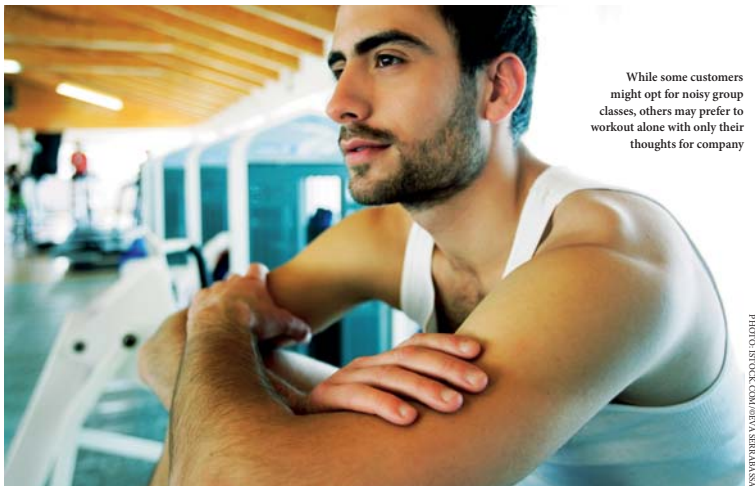


PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/@VA-SERIALASSA

While some customers might opt for noisy group classes, others may prefer to workout alone with only their thoughts for company

how they can improve their working and personal relationships in a positive way.

What the MBTI questions reveal is a set of four basic characteristics: whether you get your energy from the outside world (extroversion) or your inner world (introversion); whether you gather information by looking at the evidence of your five senses (sensing) or by those things that 'go together' (intuition); whether you make decisions with your head (thinking) or your heart (feeling); and whether you like to make up your mind and move on (judging) or explore possibilities and keep options open (perceiving).

These different types of personality directly feed into the individual fitness plan. The effectiveness of the full training cycle, from the moment a customer steps into the fitness facility, is dependent on how the programme relates to the different preferences of each individual.

Do they prefer to talk through their programme, or do they want time and space to think about it independently? Do they like to interact while they exercise, or do they want quiet so they can concentrate? Are they more active learners, preferring to learn by do-think-do, or more reflective learners, preferring think-do-think? When setting goals, do they prefer lots of specific, detailed objectives, or would they rather have bigger picture targets?

Do they want a more regulated schedule, with activities decided in advance or would they be more energised by spontaneity, deciding what to do on the

day? When getting feedback, are they achievement-based, wanting praise as and when they achieve something, or effort-based, wanting more regular feedback as and when they work hard?

These are just a some of the questions staff should think about when they're addressing the needs of exercisers, and this is how the MBTI can be used to shape the best programmes.

STAFF APPLICATION

Fitness instructors can also use this tool to help them understand their own working preferences. For example, they might not be aware that, when designing and organising workouts, they tend to automatically structure them in a certain way. This might be effective for some clients, but not for all.

Some people thrive on repetition and structure, but others detest it and won't exercise if that's what they're forced to do. Giving your customers a timetable or exercise plan that matches their personality type increases the likelihood that they'll join in or engage with it over the long-term.

These techniques can also be applied behind the scenes among colleagues within a team. By identifying differences, which can be the source of much misunderstanding, teams can work much more effectively together. This will create a happier and more productive workforce.

MBTI techniques can also be used to help shape the approach used to sell activities, as different 'types' will respond to different styles of communication.

HIGH IMPACT TRAINING

Many people dismiss psychometrics as expensive and time-consuming, yet running costs are low and the time taken to administer a test or questionnaire varies from just 10 minutes to around an hour. Most people are able to complete the MBTI in 30 to 40 minutes and the test can be sent to customers ahead of their visit if necessary. Questionnaires can also be administered to many people at the same time, which can make them more time-efficient than other assessment or development methods.

An instructor or manager can also complete the MBTI questionnaire themselves, and then train the rest of the team members. If staff can be trained in how to pick up on these differences in others, as well as making changes in their own behaviour, they will be able to make a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

With spas worldwide under increasing pressure to step up to the challenge of maintaining and growing their customer base, personality questionnaires for those interested in fitness can have a significant role to play. Investing in tools to further engage and motivate members, and staff, will go a long way to improving the fitness of the industry. ●

OPP is the sole licensed provider of the MBTI and certification training in Europe. Other details can be found on the Myers-Briggs main website: www.oppp.eu.com or www.myersbriggs.org

Spa Products



Kettal reveals three furniture products

Spanish furniture company Kettal has unveiled three new products for indoor and outdoor use. The Kettal ZigZag oil lamp has been designed to withstand the elements such as wind as the flame sits inside, rather than on its surface. Secondly, a fresh collection of outdoor rugs – created by Spanish furniture designer Patricia Urquiola – have been made available for outdoor use (pictured). Finally, the company has released a range of Kettal Zigzag Planters. These come in three different sizes and are braided with exterior cord. All three contain a plant pot holder and a drainage hole.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **GRUPO KETAL**



Velaqua floating bicycle is launched

Velaqua Diffusion of France has launched the Velaqua®, a floating, pedal-less bicycle for use in water. The bike, which is said to be both unsinkable and uncapsizable, can be used for a range of activities, including physiotherapy, relaxation and exercise. Consisting of a frame and two high-density floats, the device has been made to withstand loads in excess of 120kg. The range includes four models and a further bike for non-abled body users is currently in development.

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

AW LAKE unveils Royal Obsessions product line

AW LAKE Spa Concepts is to introduce a new product line in mid-2010 called Royal Obsessions. The first range – The Egyptian Queens Masterpiece Collection – will feature authentic scent formulations from the 18th dynasty of ancient Egypt, created during the reign of Egyptian Pharaoh, Queen Hatshepsut. AW LAKE says ingredients – including soaps, creams and room scents – will be 100 per cent natural and, where possible, certified organic.

They will include extracts from the Nile white iris, blue lotus and myrrh. The collection will be available worldwide and the company is also looking to work with selected high-end spas to create a range of signature treatments based on the same concept. The next Masterpiece Collection will be based on the Imperial Japanese scented rituals.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **A.W.LAKE**



International Blossom range is unveiled by Orly

US-based company Orly International has released a range of limited edition shades entitled the Bloom collection. Consisting of six shades, the polishes are designed to add an extra finishing touch to any manicure or pedicure treatment. The full list of shades is: Thorned Rose, a rich burgundy; Blushing Bud, a hot pink; Wild Wisteria, a deep purple; Ginger Lily, a terracotta shade; Wandering Vine, a vibrant green; and Pure Petunia, a pink violet colour.

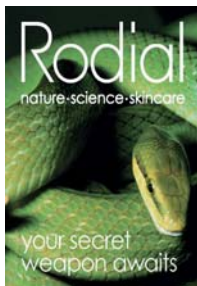
spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **ORLY**



Debut for Emeyu's whole-leaf muslin tea bags

Emeyu has introduced a range of whole-leaf muslin tea bags. Sourced from specialist tea gardens in India, China and Japan, flavours range from breakfast tea to herbal blends, with the tea bags themselves being biodegradable. The full range on offer is: Organic Pai Mu Tan white tea; Eight Butterflies green tea; English Breakfast black tea; Organic Assam; Organic Earl Grey black tea; Summer Bird herbal tea and Pu-erh Chai, which is said to be ideal for aiding digestion.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: EMEYU



Glamoxy™ skincare from Rodial

Rodial has revealed its latest anti-ageing product – glamoxy™ snake serum. The 25ml serum contains a neuropeptide called syn-ake which is designed to mimic the effects of the temple viper's venom, thus lifting the face, freezing muscles and plumping fine lines. This temporary immobilisation is said to give skin a younger, tighter look. Hyaluronic acid is also included, to stimulate skin cells and help increase moisture retention.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: RODIAL

Zen Garden 2 is released

New from Gap MuSiC is a second edition of its Zen Garden CD, intended to encourage a state of relaxation in the spa and at home. Entitled *Zen Garden 2*, the CD is a one-hour soundtrack that can be used to help create a relaxed atmosphere during a massage treatment or a mind body workout. Described as "a fusion of Eastern and Western sounds", the soundtrack can also be used to help listeners in their homes unwind at the end of a day. This follows the original *Zen Garden*, which also features an hour of melodies and sounds designed to promote an air of tranquility.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: GAP MUSIC



The ultra-accessible SpaVault hot tub

The SpaVault, by Bullfrog Spas, allows a hot tub to be used in spas either below or partially below ground level. With this capability, the SpaVault can be used in a landscaped area as part of a stone or concrete-based theme. Also, by being at ground or below ground level, it is designed to be more accessible than other brands. The SpaVault also includes Bullfrog's patented JetPak technology, where users can choose different Jet-Pak water massage techniques such as a soft and soothing setting or a deep-tissue massage effect.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: BULLFROG



New candle from Anne Sémonin

The Verbena Scented Candle is the latest product from the Paris-based spa and beauty brand Anne Sémonin. Containing the essence of the verbena plant from the Provence region in France, the candle has been designed to aid relaxation and bring the fragrance of the region into the spa. Weighing in at 165g, the candle is said to have an approximate burning time of around 45 hours, thanks to its pure cotton wick.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: ANNE SEMONIN



Clarins Daily Energizer range

Skincare company Clarins has launched the Daily Energizer line, which has been specifically formulated for young skin. Consisting of five treatments, the range is designed to eliminate impurities from the skin as well as keep the skin looking bright and cleansed. The products come in three textures – a cream-gel, a cream and a lotion. One of the products, the Daily Energizer Wake-Up Booster, is formulated to give the skin an instant morning boost and contains vitamins sourced from redcurrants and green coffee.

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

New from Dalesauna

Dalesauna has been appointed as the UK distributor for a new range of products from the German spa equipment manufacturer Unbescheiden. The Baden-Baden-based company has a wide range of products including a Balance Hammam Table with a heated table top and thermostatically-controlled shower head; Vichy Showers and a Caracalla Bath with 260 water nozzles and 50 air nozzles for a range of different water massage programmes.

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



New poles from Nordic Walking

A fully-carbon, adjustable pole is greatly aiding fitness instructors using Nordic Walking in their exercise programmes. The Speed Pace Vario Nordic Walking Pole comes with a 10cm adjustment for performance according to both the user's level of technique and the terrain that is involved. It is said to be ideal for those undertaking conditioning training for cross-country skiing. Nordic Walking is a specific fitness technique that involves the enhancement of natural walking using poles.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **NORDIC WALKING**

Nutro Body Care

Oakworks has become the exclusive distributor of Nutro Body Care's range of lotions, oils, crèmes and gels. Founded by Mary Gentry-Randall, Nutro Body Care's aim is to provide high-quality, affordable body care products with formulations containing natural and organic ingredients.

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



Aromatherapy-orientated suncare from Decléor

Aromatherapy-orientated skincare brand Decléor has unveiled a range of suncare products. Called Aroma Sun Expert, the new products contain active plant ingredients said to draw their vitality from the sun. Extracts used include Egyptian jasmine, Tahitian vanilla and extract of reia (oceanic ginger), as well as the essential oil of damask rose – all intended to boost skin cell defences. The products focus on preparing, protecting and soothing skin and include an Aromessence™ Solaire Tan Activator Serum, a Protective Hydrating Milk for the body with SPF30, a High Repair After Sun Balm for the face and protective anti-wrinkle cream for the face. There are also two pre- and post-sun treatments to accompany the range.

spa-kit.net KEYWORD: **DECLÉOR**

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Just taking part in exercise convinced people they looked good

A PIECE OF THE ACTION

Most hotel, resort and destination spas have some form of fitness offering, and while it may be easier for members to see and feel the advantages of working out on a regular basis, occasional visitors may now also benefit mentally from just a one-off session. A new study from the University of Florida has found that, when it comes to body image, just taking part in exercise is enough to convince you that you look better. It's said that even those who don't reach fitness goals – from toning up to running a certain time or reaching a target weight – can get as much of an exercise feel-good buzz as those at the top of their game.

The simple act of exercising, rather than necessarily even achieving fitness goals, can have a positive effect on body image

Study author Heather Hausenblas says: "You would think that, if you were to become more fit, you'd experience greater improvements in body image, but that's not what we found. It may be that the requirements to receive the psychological benefits of exercise, including those for body image, differ substantially from the physical benefits."

THE STUDY

The research, which was published in the *Journal of Health Psychology*, consisted of a meta-analysis, bringing together 57 studies – with pre- and post-data for exercise, as well as control groups – that examined the effects of physical activity on body image.

The participants were grouped by age, gender, ethnicity, body composition and pre-intervention fitness levels. The exercise was coded according to type, duration, length, frequency and intensity.

By incorporating findings from all intervention studies carried out on the subject between 1972 and June 2008, the study by Hausenblas and her student, Anna Campbell, is the first to systematically analyse the effects of exercise on body image.

BODY IMAGE, EXERCISE, GENDER AND AGE

Although the study didn't find a significant difference between gender and effect size, Hausenblas says it's "important to note that an [improved perception] of body image was found in more females than males after exercise." Indeed, the non-significance of the findings was put down to the lack of studies focusing on men. Hausenblas says more research is needed on gender, body image and exercise – especially resistance training.

With regards to age, the researchers found that exercise had a more significant effect for adults than for young people of university age, or for elementary, middle and high school kids combined. It's believed these findings may reflect the fact that "body dissatisfaction continually increases across adolescents... female and male"; by the time adulthood is reached, dissatisfaction has reached a level at which all can benefit from the exercise effect.

THE RESULTS

Overall, the contribution of exercise to improved body image was small, but results showed that exercise did improve body image from pre- to post-intervention compared to control groups.

It was found that the duration of the exercise, the number of weeks subjects had been exercising and the intensity of a workout did not impact on body image. However, those who exercised more frequently each week had a higher regard for the way their body looked. Hausenblas says the difference relating to age and gender are also worth noting (see opposite). ●



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