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government support



Spa and wellness tourism is emerging as a powerful economic driver and governments around the world are starting to show real interest in the wealth-creating potential of our market.

In this issue, (see p28) Dr Terry Stevens examines how the Swiss government used wellness tourism to reverse a slump in arrivals in the 1980s and 90s, after the country's tourism market stagnated and failed to keep up to date with international industry standards for hospitality and facility provision.

A strategy launched in 1996 involved the use of government tax incentives and aggressive investment to forge an exciting future for Swiss tourism. This has been based largely on the country's wellness offering and has seen tourism grow to become 12.1 per cent of GDP and 15.1 per cent of employment.

The World Economic Forum has now ranked Switzerland number one out of 133 countries in its global tourism competitiveness index and this is in spite of the fact that exchange rates make the country expensive to visit.

In addition, 2008 was the country's most successful year ever for tourism, despite the onset of the global recession. Stevens says: "The Swiss government regards tourism as a strategic sector of the economy worth investing in." Tourism funding currently stands at 7.1 per cent of all federal



The World Economic Forum has ranked Switzerland number one out of 133 countries in its tourism competitiveness index and this is in spite of the fact that exchange rates make the country expensive to visit

expenditure, with the largest allocation of the country's marketing budget going to promoting Switzerland as a wellness tourism destination.

This level of government support has enabled the private sector to make a series of high profile, high quality investments in new spas with the intention of developing world-class facilities, often with signature architecture.

Another government growing tourism through wellness is in the Philippines, which set up a branch of its tourism department in 2004 called the Office of Sport and Wellness. Some of the main areas targeted by the department are the spa industry, medical tourism and care for the elderly. The Philippines' aim is to grow its share of the Asian tourism market by promoting itself as a wellness destination.

Also in this issue, the challenges faced by operators who don't yet enjoy robust government backing are highlighted by entrepreneur Dzigbordi K Dosoo (see p27) who's developing a chain of day spas in Ghana. She says: "Our tourism authorities don't regulate, recognise or include spas in their promotions, as is the case in Asia." Efforts to open a dialogue between the industry and the government are beginning and Dosoo is optimistic about the collaboration.

As the spa industry works to become better established and to create ever more stable trading conditions, establishing links with tourism and with governments needs to be a priority. Spas and tourism are natural bedfellows and developing tourism is a matter of great interest for governments. They're increasingly realising the power of the spa and wellness industry to make a real and significant contribution to the economic success of their nation.

Liz Terry editor lizterry@spabusiness.com

ON THE COVER:

Waldhaus Flims Mountain Resort and Spa in Switzerland. See p28.

Photo: ©Switzerland Tourism.
Swiss-image.ch/Tina Steinauer

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spa business

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in this issue...

spa business
uniting the world of spas



George Yam, Dragonfly retreats, China p20



Global development opportunities uncovered p24



Lanzerac Spa, South Africa p32



Profile: Dr John Ratey p40



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/IVY FRIS-LARSEN

8 SPA VISION

In this new series, Sarah Todd outlines innovations, trends and ideas to inspire spa operators

12 LETTERS

A Japanese operator points out the problems of spa membership schemes

14 NEWS

A staff shake-up at Spatality, a US\$15m underground spa debuts in Mexico and a hospital spa launches in Michigan

20 INTERVIEW GEORGIE YAM

The founder of Chinese spa chain Dragonfly tells Katie Barnes how he's succeeding in the saturated marketplace

24 EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the downturn, there are parts of the world where the economy is growing. Rhianon Howells investigates

27 THE WAY I SEE IT DZIGBORDI K DOSOO

The CEO of Allure Africa on launching the first day spa in Ghana and setting up a beauty expo in sub-Saharan Africa

28 SPA TOURISM BANK ON IT

Terry Stevens reports on how investment in spas and wellbeing marketing have secured tourism success in Switzerland

32 VINE TUNING

South Africa's Lanzerac Spa has carved a niche in the market with vinotherapy and its caring approach to customers. Sarah Todd pays a visit

35 MEETING OF MINDS

Our Global Spa Summit report

40 PROFILE DR JOHN RATEY

A new book pulls together scientific studies on the impact of exercise on the brain. Kate Cracknell talks to the author

43 TRENDS HEADS UP

An increasing number of spas are investing in brain health programmes. Susie Ellis takes a closer look



Spa tourism: Switzerland p28



Villa Lucia, Italy p58



Trends: brain health p43



Sensory zone: barefoot paths p52

46 GAME PLAN

Peter Sargent reveals how G Spa's hip and trendy image is drawing in new customers at Foxwoods: one of the largest casino resorts in the world

49 PROFILE DR PAULO MALO

The pioneering dental surgeon tells Karen Maxwell about his latest medi-spa launches in Italy and Macau

52 SENSORY ZONE FEET FIRST

Vicky Kierlander finds out about the health benefits of barefoot paths and why installing one could be a step in the right direction for spa operators

56 SPA SPY ARMATHWAITE HALL

Sarah Todd explains why she gave this new spa such a glowing report

58 CHIANTI & CACAO

An anti-ageing retreat based on wine and chocolate is expected to breathe new life into a European holiday rental business. Kath Hudson takes a look around

61 PRODUCTS

Product and equipment launches

64 FINISHING TOUCH TOUCH AND GO

A pan-European study gives a greater insight into the benefits of shiatsu

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SPA VISION

Innovations, initiatives
and ideas in the world of
wellness and beyond

SARAH TODD • NEWS EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

With ever-increasing choices for spa time before you fly, one American brand – 10 Minute Manicure – is to extend its reach away from the airport and into towns and cities across the US.

As a result high street clients can now take advantage of the no-appointment-necessary policy usually only available to airport customers.

The model for the company changed as a direct result of the economic downturn, combined with the diminishing amount of renovation work going on in US airports.



Flexi-time
for spa
treatments

First opened in January 2006 at Cincinnati Airport, there are currently 10 airport-based 10 Minute Manicure sites. The franchise model will be available for sites in urban and suburban markets across the US. *explore further...* 10minutemanicure.com

Food chemistry

Eating fruits and vegetables may help the human body make its own aspirin.

Findings from research published in the *Journal of Agriculture and Food Chemistry* indicated that study participants who received benzoic acid, a natural substance in fruits and vegetables, could make their own salicylic acid, the key ingredient that gives aspirin its pain-relieving properties. *explore further...* <http://pubs.acs.org/journal/jafcau>



Since the smoking ban was introduced in England and Wales in July 2007, the hospitality trade, and in particular bars and pubs, have created ever more ingenious ways to market their trade and boost their business. The UK-based Merchant Inns pub company is one example of this.

Merchant Inns has created a new spa-based concept called Pint-Sized Pampering. Based



Missoni's
hotel and spa
collaboration

Luxury Italian fashion house Missoni is to continue its expansion into the hospitality sector with the launch of a second Hotel Missoni in the Middle East, with a spa by Six Senses.

The inaugural Hotel Missoni opened recently in Edinburgh, Scotland, while a further four properties are being planned for Kuwait, Cape Town, Brazil and Oman.

Each hotel – in collaboration with the Brussels-based Rezidor Hotel Group – will be created to be reflective of its location. The interior design is being overseen by one of the original founders of Missoni, Rosita Missoni.

Hotel Missoni Kuwait will open in early 2010 and feature signature Missoni zigzag print and furnishings, as well as the 16,45sq ft (1,500sq m) spa by the Asia-based Six Senses group.

The spa will be located adjacent to the hotel pool, which will be tiled in the signature Missoni stripe, and will boast views over the Arabian Sea.

Following the launch of the first five hotels, there are plans to grow the Hotel Missoni portfolio to see at least 10 hotels open or under development around the world within the next 10 years.

explore further... hotelmissoni.com / rezidor.com

Nelson Mandela, South African statesman, winner of the 1993 Nobel Prize for Peace

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers fear."

explore further...

nelsonmandela.org / nobelprize.org

PUBS, BARS AND SPAS

around the launch of spa treatment rooms at the group's The Lambert Arms property in the Chiltern Hills, near Oxford, there's an extensive range of spa treatments offered as part of an overnight spa break in the pub.

Therapies use the French Ella Baché professional skincare range, which has recently relaunched in the UK.

explore further... lambertarms.com

Waste generates wealth at Six Senses

As part of its bid to become completely carbon neutral by 2010, the Soneva Fushi by Six Senses resort and spa has launched an integrated waste management site.

The site in the Maldives has been designed to have sustainable use of water, energy, land and localisation (WELL). The principle is that if the WELL supply is localised, then waste, food miles and carbon emissions can be greatly reduced.

Through the group's over-arching Eco Centro project, nearly 80 per cent of waste generated from the operation is converted for use elsewhere. The uses range from woody waste (or bio mass) which is turned into charcoal for the resort's kitchens, to organic kitchen waste which is converted to liquid fertiliser for the gardens.



Paper is composted, while inorganic matter, like glass, is crushed and used for decorative additions to furniture.

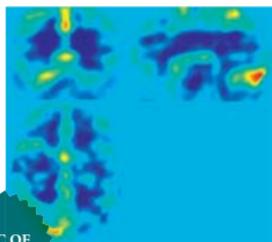
Culinary, medicinal and insect-repellent herbs and plants are also grown on site and used in the operation of the resort, while fish are farmed in tanks filled by collecting rainwater from the garden's roofs.

explore further... sixsenses.com

Human brain activity has been converted into music, thanks to philosopher Dan Lloyd at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, US.

As part of his brainmusic project which is exploring the intersection of neuroscience and aesthetics, the professor has created software that analyses a series of MRI brain scans, assigning a different pitch to regions of the brain that become active together during particular tasks.

The 'brain sonification' software then generates the notes at these pitches when the corresponding areas of the



MUSIC OF THE MIND

brain light up on the scans. Each note is played at a volume that depends on how intense the activity is.

As Lloyd explains, each brain image can be seen as a key on an organ, and a line

graph denotes loudness. Each brainmusic track is then created as a layering of keys.

Lloyd's software could be used to look at the differences and similarities between normal and abnormal or dysfunctional activity in the

brain. In addition to this, it could be particularly useful for regions of the brain where activity is not immediately detectable using conventional imaging, such as temporal patterns. *explore further...* trincoll.edu/~dlloyd

Health, self-esteem and wellbeing can be boosted by reading aloud in group sessions, according to a charity, The Reader Organisation.

The UK-based charity promotes reading to everyone, of all ages and backgrounds and holds group reading sessions for patients in hospitals and hospitals. The patients have different medical conditions, but many have mental health problems.

Building a reading revolution

While group reading sessions may not cure subject, it was found to greatly improve their wellbeing. Reading aloud together helps to raise patients' confidence and improve their concentration as well as their vocabulary.

It is believed that patients can also identify with characters in novels which helps them to face their own personal demons.

explore further... thereader.org.uk/bmj.com



PHOTO: ISTOCK/OMIGTASKELETT



PHOTO: ROBERT BUELTJEMA/NS2009, WWW.BUELTJEMA.NY.COM

PETAL ON THE METAL

California-based artist Robert Bueltjema is a very patient man. He's spent the last 10 years creating 80 images that uniquely capture the ephemeral beauty of plants.

Each plant is placed on a metal board before 80,000 volts are sent through it. As the plant lights up with the current Bueltjema, who works in total darkness, captures the moment by passing a fibre optic cable over the subject. The cable projects a beam of light and whatever the beam touches is transferred on film. The resulting images have the power to radically change the viewer's perception of plants.

Bueltjema's work can be seen the Sense spa at Rosewood Sand Hill in California and Miami's Fontainebleau hotel spa. *explore further...* buelteman.com • rosewoodsandhill.com

explore further... imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/ssdc/edu/hst

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write to reply

Do you have a strong opinion, or disagree with somebody else's point of view on topics related to the spa industry? If so, *Spa Business* would love to hear from you.

Email your letters, thoughts and suggestions to theteam@spabusiness.com

Spa memberships aren't always necessarily a good thing

Hirokazu Iida, president, Shuei UpGrades Co Ltd, Japan

I was interested to read the article on spa memberships in the last issue of *Spa Business* (SB09/3 p20). I run a private tennis club and yoga studio in Tokyo, which both operate under a membership scheme. Memberships are popular in the fitness and wellness markets in Japan, but I can see four critical issues with this business model.

Firstly, though memberships guarantee a periodical cash inflow, more investment is required for customer retention. For example, if an annual due is applied, gimmicks – gifts, coupons, points, retention calls – are needed to avoid attrition. Data mining is regarded as the most effective tool to minimise attrition, however, it requires considerable cost for data analysis: over US\$5,000 (€3,550, £3,050) for software or over US\$30,000 (€21,250, £18,250) to outsource the work.

Secondly, I feel that prices should be based on frequency of visit. Members who visit a facility frequently should have a lower monthly due and entrance fee. For

those who come infrequently, a higher monthly due with a complimentary service is ideal.

The third problem that I see relates to 'membership rights'. A common reason for customers to purchase membership is for the exclusive privilege of using a facility. However, members sometimes expect to receive benefits beyond what's on offer: helping themselves to give away amenity items for home use, for example. Additionally, those who visit extremely frequently, expect to be favoured over other members who don't come so often.

The final issue I see is the administration costs involved in dealing with direct debits, which is the common way for members to pay their monthly dues. In Japan the handling fee for a direct debit is relatively



cheap, but extra costs are involved in managing billing data and collecting charges from customers whose direct debits have failed. If a customer base is more than 1,000, a full-time employee may even be required to deal with this.

I believe membership does not merely mean easy acquisition of repeaters. It requires in-depth customer analysis and a well organised approach.

Proposed 'pleasure service' tax could have severe repercussions

Felicia Brown, owner, Spalutions, North Carolina, US

The spa industry needs to be aware of the push by some of North Carolina's legislators to add a sales tax to personal services, especially 'pleasure services' such as massage therapy, facials, hair cuts and pedicures.

At the moment licensed massage therapists have been exempted from the proposed sales tax (although this could change) because they are classified as licensed healthcare professionals in North Carolina's General Statutes.

Obviously, no group should be singled out from other healthcare providers –

such as chiropractors, physicians and physical therapists – to be taxed, just because the service they provide is enjoyable. This is especially true since massage therapy is not covered by insurance, but paid for entirely by the consumer.

Unfortunately, other personal services are still included in the proposed tax. Many spa, salon and other service businesses that will be affected by it have already seen a drop in revenue. As personal care services are often the first thing to drop out of people's budgets, I suspect the tax – if approved – will not

just be passed on to the consumer but rather absorbed by the business owners. Adding a tax to personal services will hurt these businesses.

So what is the global impact of such a tax being passed? In the US, it opens the doors to other states following suit, potentially creating an even stronger decline in the personal services industry. Across the globe, I believe it will create a stronger impression with the public that spa services are once again out of reach of the average consumer and this, in turn, will decrease business for us all.

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Caldarium
Inhalation Bath
Aroma Bath
Crystal Bath
Cultural Bath

news update



The development has attracted leading hotel and spa operators from around the world

€1bn mega-development for Greece

The first hotels and spas in a €1bn (US\$1.43bn, £863.74m) resort being built in Messinia, Greece, will open in 2010.

Called Costa Navarino and masterminded by Greek company Temes SA, the development will contain 11 luxury hotels managed by various international brands along 150km of coastline. As well as 3,000 hotel rooms, there will be luxury villas, seven golf courses, six thalasso-therapy centres and spas and a marina.

Costa Navarino will be the first 100 per cent emission-free resort in the world. Each hotel is to have over 1 million sq m

(11 million sq ft) of space and will be built to be environmentally-friendly and self-sustaining. Great emphasis will be placed on bioclimatic architecture and preserving the local landscape and habitats. There will also be solar panels hidden in the surrounding mountains and a water management programme will see only surface water from the hills used in the development.

Starwood Hotels & Resorts will open the first two resorts in 2010. A Westin property and a Luxury Collection Hotel, followed by a villa-concept Banyan Tree, will open in 2011.

Double resignation at Spatality and Nectar

Richard Dusseau and Elaine Fenard have resigned from management group Spatality (SB08/1 p22) and its spa brand, Nectar, due to "a combination of unfortunate factors".

According to Dusseau, who was previously CEO at Spatality, these factors included: "the economic climate, our investor's priorities, and a difference of opinion in the management philosophy and strategic direction for the company".

Ingo Schweder will now head up Spatality as CEO, working alongside marketing director Peter Davis. In addition to this, the Bangkok office in Thailand will replace the Denver, US office as the company's headquarters. US and other international projects will still be pursued from Thailand.

Schweder says: "While our company was incubated in the US market, we are finding that our best opportunities at this time are in the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle East and Europe."

Dusseau and Fenard will continue as managing partners of the US-based consultancy Spa Strategy, which Dusseau launched in 2001. He adds: "Spa Strategy will continue to provide the same level of service and support for which the company has become so well known. We remain committed to our involvement with spa and wellness... and enthusiastic supporters of the industry's growth".



Vitality baths and swimming pools are offered

Vine therapy facility opens in Poland

A €5.5m (US\$7.86m, £4.75m) vinotherapy spa has opened as part of the Giebcoczek Vine Resort near Brodnica in the lake district area of Poland.

The spa has been built in a manor-house style with a straw roof and is indicative of local architecture. Facilities include a pool, gym, vitality baths and 10 treatment rooms, including one double spa suite with a hammam, where treatments using local peat, herbs and mud will be administered.

The core products for treatments will be from the South African TheraVine

brand from the Stellenbosch region, which uses extracts from the pinotage grape in its products (see p32).

In addition, French brand Académie Scientifique de Beauté will be used for selected treatments and rituals as well as AlphaSphere relaxation treatments, which combine sounds, colours and vibrations to promote deep relaxation.

Local company MPM Produkt was the investor in the property, while Polish spa consultancy ForSpa helped to develop the project and train therapists.



The spa's ceiling has been raised 30ft to allow natural light to flood its central space

Jungle-inspired spa debuts in Mexico

A US\$15m (€10.49m, £9.06m) new spa has launched at the Grand Velas Spa Resort Riviera Maya in Mexico.

Inspired by the jungle and natural water pools of the Yucatan Peninsula, the 89,000sq ft (8,268sq m) spa was designed by Mexican architects Ricardo Elias and Alexis Elias of EliasElias AR, with consultancy from Diane Mestre of Pro-Spa.

The facility is set below ground level and has 40 treatment rooms. Guests enter on the spa's top floor, at a lobby with Balinese-style decor, before going below for their treatments.

The signature therapy offered is the Water Journey, a guided hydrotherapy ritual which takes place in a 40,000sq ft (3,716sq m) Water Lounge. Guests will work their way around the lounge, which comprises a pebble foot water pathway, a vitality pool, a plunge pool, saunas, circular glass-tile lined steamrooms with fibre-optic ceiling lights, clay rooms, an ice room with floor-to-ceiling windows and experience showers.

The interior design is influenced by the stones, plants and streams specific to the Riviera Maya landscape.

Hospes sleep spa package revealed

A sleep getaway package called Learn To Sleep has been launched by European company Hospes hotels and Bodyna Spas.

The package follows strict scientific guidelines and has been created in partnership with Spanish sleep disorder specialist Dr Estivil. Taking place over four or seven days, it is designed to help guests to regain control of their sleep patterns and includes spa treatments, siestas in special chill out rooms and daytime diets and activities designed to create alertness.

Learn To Sleep debuted in Hospes Maricel in Mallorca, but will be rolled out to other Hospes properties next year.



The outdoor sea spa at Hospes Maricel

Sabi Sabi Reserve extends offering

Two new Amani-branded spas have opened at the Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve, within the Kruger National Park in South Africa.

The two facilities are at the reserve's Earth Lodge and Bush Lodge and are run by Amani African Spas. They offer a range of treatments with Africology products, while a selection of therapies are available, including massages, manicures and facials.

September launch for Sansha Spa Udaipur

The latest Sansha spa will open later this year at Fateh Garh, a Heritage Renaissance Resort located on the edge of the city of Udaipur in India.

Operated under a franchise agreement with owners The Sansha World, the 2,500sq ft (232sq m) spa offers a 'lounge experience' which has been inspired by Indian royal traditions.

Facilities will include five treatment rooms, a steam bath, a whirlpool and a gym. Signature treatments will consist of a range of gemstone therapies.

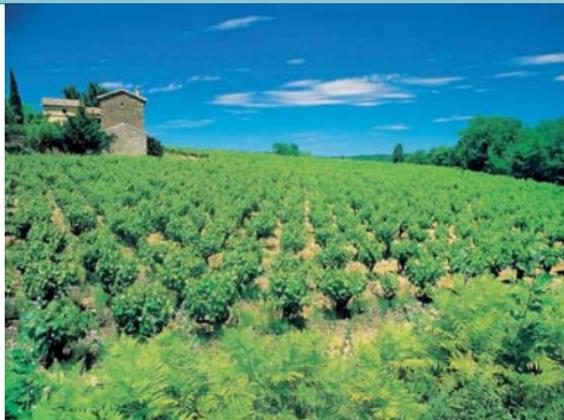
The luxury Fateh Garh resort has 48 bedrooms and boasts stunning views over the City of Lakes.

Sulwhasoo extends brand with spa launch

Korean skincare brand Sulwhasoo has extended its brand, by launching a spa concept at a new flagship facility in Hong Kong, China.

The inaugural Sulwhasoo Spa recently opened in Tsim Sha Tsui and features nine treatment rooms. Sulwhasoo's own-brand of skincare products, based around Korean herbology, are used in treatments.

Further expansion into China and the US is planned in the future. Over the next two years, Sulwhasoo will first enter each market with its skincare products, and then expand to a spa business model, similar to the Hong Kong offering.



Accommodation owners gain a share in the vineyard and olive groves surrounding the resort

Spa opens in 20-acre French vineyard

A mixed-use development called Les Jardins de St Benoît has opened within a 20-acre (8-hectare) vineyard in the Corbières region of the Languedoc in France.

The estate is an extension of the picturesque village of St Laurent de Cabrerisse. Onsite facilities focus around a central building, which houses a spa, as well as restaurants, a large outdoor swimming pool and sporting facilities.

The spa, called Le Retour aux Sources, features six treatment rooms as well as a couples' suite. Other facilities include terraces and large gardens.

Natural and organic plant-based ingredients will be used for spa treatments, primarily drawn from organic agriculture, while there will also be a herbal tea bar, offering a wide range of gourmet, detox and iced varieties.

Masterminded by French developer Garrigae Resorts, the property also encompasses 171 luxury townhouses and villas which are available to rent or buy.

Other French properties within Garrigae's portfolio include Le Couvent d'Hérépian boutique hotel and Château de la Redorte estate and spa.

Michigan hospital trials new concept

The new Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital in Michigan, US has launched with the inclusion of an innovative complementary wellness facility called Vita.

The 8,000sq ft (743sq m) facility has been created primarily to serve patients, their families and the community and combines wellness and preventative care.

Providing a model for affecting positive change in healthcare, Vita – named after the Latin word for life – contains programmes created for sustained wellness.

All integrative therapies and programmes have undergone a rigorous review by a committee comprising Henry Ford physicians, scientists, nurses and other healthcare professionals, to ensure that the experience within Vita is both safe and suited to patients' needs.



The exterior of the progressive new hospital

Creative Spa Concepts consulted on Vita and was responsible for shaping services, which include health coaching, traditional Chinese medicine and beauty therapies for cancer sufferers, as well as group exercises classes and activities.

Raison d'Etre's first branded spa launches

Spa development and management consultancy Raison d'Etre (SB06/3 p66) has launched its first branded spa within the Grand Hotel Stockholm, Sweden.

Raison d'Etre for the Grand Hotel Stockholm marks the end of an extensive search by the consultancy for the right partner and location.

Located in the hotel's Burmanska Palace wing, the spa will merge a Nordic theme with contemporary design.

Swedish architectural company Per Öberg Arkitekt AB was responsible for the architecture and interior design of the 15,069sq ft (1,400sq m) facility.

Casa Velha do Palheiro spa debuts in Madeira

Opened this June, the €2m (US\$2.86m, £1.73m,) Palheiro Spa at Casa Velha do Palheiro on the Portuguese island of Madeira covers 6,458sq ft (600sq m) and has four treatment rooms.

It was designed by Bruno Martins of MSB Architects in Madeira, while spa consultants on the project included the Portuguese firm ASPA. Treatments use Pevonia products, with anti-ageing electrotherapies from Caci.

The hotel is a country house-style property, situated on a golf course and is part of the Relais & Châteaux group. The property is also part of the Quintas da Madeira collection.

Buddha-bar brand extension by 2012

George V Restauration (GVR) – the group behind the buddha-bar chain – has revealed further details about the licensing agreements for five new spas under its Buddhattitude day spa concept and its buddha-bar spas.

Each spa will be owned by a separate company. GVR won't own the spas, but instead will license its brand names. First to open, in February 2010, will be a Buddhattitude in Dakar, Senegal. Further Buddhattitude spas will open in Dubai, UAE, and Shanghai, China in late 2010. There will also be buddha-bar spas opening in Panama City, Panama, in 2010 and Sahl Hasheesh, Egypt in 2012.



The spa and fitness centre is located on the oceanfront of the Palos Verdes Peninsula

50,000sq ft spa resort opens in California

Low Enterprises has opened the US\$450m (€314.82m, £271.92m) Terranea resort near Rancho Palos Verdes, US.

Managed by the Destination Hotels & Resorts group, the development features a 50,000sq ft (4,644sq m) oceanfront spa, fitness and wellness centre and salon.

The 24-treatment room Spa at Terranea was designed by the San Francisco-based firm BAMO, with architects Hill Glazier from Los Angeles and input from consultants Brahm and Schultz.

Treatments have been created to mirror the body's natural biological process,

or 'circadian rhythm'. Certain treatments are recommended for the morning and different ones for the mid-afternoon and evening in order to maximise the natural benefits of the therapy in question.

Located on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, the Terranea resort covers more than 102 acres (41 hectares) of coastline and has taken 10 years to create.

With a total of 582 rooms, accommodation options include guestrooms, suites, bungalows, casitas and villas. The resort also has a par three golf course.

Rezidor teams up with Anne Sémonin

Spa and beauty brand Anne Sémonin has revealed details of a new partnership with the Rezidor Hotel Group.

The brand will be working as the preferred supplier to a series of properties across the Rezidor portfolio, beginning with two Radisson Blu Spa Resorts in Dubrovnik, Croatia and Cesme in Turkey. Bespoke treatments have been created for each of the new spas and allow for individual customisation.

Radisson already works with Anne Sémonin for bathroom amenities in all Radisson Blu hotels and is aiming to open further hotel spas using the brand within the next 12 to 18 months.



£8m spa for Hoole Hall manor house

An £8m (US\$13.24m, €9.26m) spa will open this November near Chester, UK.

The Club and Spa at Hoole Hall will boast 14 treatment rooms and is being built in the grounds of the former 18th century Hoole Hall manor house, which is now the Doubletree by Hilton Chester hotel. Located in the hotel's walled garden, the spa will include a Rasul chamber, a hammam, a meditation room and a relaxation lounge.

South African Tourism focuses on wellness

National tourism agency South African Tourism (SAT) has launched a new, health, spa and wellness element as part of its existing global My South Africa Feast marketing campaign.

First launched in 2008, the campaign initially focused on South Africa's food and wine. The new wellness element is intended to build upon the success of the first branch of the campaign.

One of the key themes will be how indigenous African products, such as rooibos tea, are being integrated into spa treatments. The agency has also partnered with the Condé Nast Media Group to further promote South Africa.

New eco-concept for Mandala Spa debuts

An environmental initiative called The Treatment Project has launched at the Mandala Spa and Villas on Boracay Island in the Philippines.

For every spa treatment that is purchased and every room night booked, a tree will be planted and cared for by Mandala Spa staff.

The tree seedlings will be planted in Filipino government-designated and protected areas on Boracay Island.

Guests can opt to have their tree named and will be given updates on its growth and development.

Mandala Spa and Villas is a member of the Great Hotels of the World (GHOW) organisation.

13-14 September 2009

European Spa Summit 2009

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

T: +33 1 44 69 95 69

www.spasummit.com

13-15 September 2009

European Spa Exhibition 2009

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

T: +33 1 44 69 95 61

www.beyondbeauty.com

5-8 October 2009

ISPA Conference & Expo

This key international conference, exhibition and networking event for the spa industry will be held in Austin, Texas, US. It will feature a wide range of speakers, seminars and exhibitions.

T: +1 859 226 4326

www.ispaconference.com

14-16 October 2009

Wellness Summit 2009

An event which aims to provide attendees with knowledge and techniques. Delegates include therapists, managers, operators and owners, as well as manufacturers, investors and venture capitalists. The event takes place in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.

T: +603 9200 7966

www.wellnesssummit.com

18-19 October 2009

Spa & Resort & Expo Conference New York

Held at the Jacob Javits Convention Center, New York, this event features spa trends, techniques, services and products.

T: +1 203 840 5546

www.sparesortexpo.com

23-26 October 2009

Wellness Spa & Beauty Exhibition

These two separate, but complementary, events cover a broad range of specialist wellness and beauty topics. Taking place at the Fiera Milano centre in Italy, these events will feature the latest services, technology and products.

T: +39 02 349 841

www.wellness.fieramilanoexpos.it

The Desert Island Resort & Spa was the first MENA-based development for Anantara

MENA focus for Minor International

Minor International – parent company of MSpa International (SB06/3 p22), operator of the Mandara and Anantara brands – has revealed further details about the rollout of its Anantara resort and spa brand.

The luxury spa resort operator intends to expand its portfolio across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by opening four new properties by 2011.

The MENA region is seen as a key development area for the company and follows the successful entry into the region

with the Anantara Desert Island Resort & Spa on Sir Bani Yas island off the coast of Abu Dhabi in the UAE.

Next to open will be the brand's flagship property in the Middle East, Anantara Qasr Al Sarab, which will launch at the end of 2009, in the Liwa desert in UAE's Empty Quarter (Rub Al-Khali). This will be followed by a 122-bed resort which will open in partnership with the Blue City Company 1 in Al Madina A'Zarqa, a new city for 200,000 people in Oman.



One of the new spa's treatments combines water and ayurveda

Schletterer unveils latest Italian project

The Andreus resort and spa has opened in the town of Merano (SB06/4 p76) in the Passeier Valley area of northern Italy.

Schletterer Wellness and Spa Design was responsible for the creation of a number of areas within the resort, including the interiors of the spa and gym and the hotel's lobby and restaurants.

Wood and natural stone is used throughout the hotel, which allows in a large amount of natural light. This is

followed through into the design of the 53,819sq ft (5,000sq m) spa, which combines Alpine elements with a Mediterranean influence. Facilities include a herbal bath, reflexology foot baths, whirlpools with underwater sound, a Kneipp walk, a panoramic sauna and a heated outdoor pool. Signature therapies include ayurveda and aquaveda treatments.

The hotel also has a garden with indigenous olive and palm trees.

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GEORGIE YAM

With 20 franchises, Dragonfly is one of China's most successful domestic operators. We talk to the founder about how he's grown the business and the new direction he's taking

Georgie Yam doesn't like to give too much away. The Chinese spa market is booming, but highly competitive.

While this native Hong-Kong 53-year-old is chatty and has an open demeanour, his strategy for keeping one step ahead of the influx of large, international conglomerates and local rivals is to play his cards close to his chest. So far, this has served him well. Having established the Dragonfly day spa chain only six years ago, the business has grown to 20 franchises – 18 in China, one in the United Arab Emirates and one in Norway (see p22) – and employs close to 1,000 people.

A chance meeting

Yam has always had a creative flair: before developing Dragonfly, he was a renowned hairdresser to Asian celebrities. Prior to that, he was a budding film producer – as a young man, he travelled from Hong Kong to the UK to enrol in a film school. However, a chance meeting with a hairdressing student on his flight saw him take a place at the Vidal Sassoon Academy in London instead. "I had to call my mum because I needed support," he says. "During the mid-1970s you didn't find many Chinese families sending their kids to hairdressing school. The change from movie director to a shampoo boy was a big one. I was down to my last penny, but my mum told me to follow my heart and just do my best."

As it happens, his best was very good. After training and working in London, he

moved to Singapore in 1982 and by 2000, owned three hair salons and two spas: one at the Grand Hyatt and another at the neighbouring JW Marriott. "The foundation from Sassoon was tremendous," he says. "It helped me a lot. Not just in hairdressing, but in business too." He sold the businesses for an undisclosed sum in 2002.

The middle road

"I love visiting spas," says Yam. "When I was a consultant for German haircare brand Goldwell, I visited China every two months and used to try local massages. Dragonfly stemmed from my observation that there was something missing in the market. There were several high-end spas, usually in luxury hotels and many low-end offerings, targeting mostly local customers. Yet there was nothing in the middle for expats and business travellers."

Yam, along with Eva Zhou – a savvy Shanghai businesswoman who also

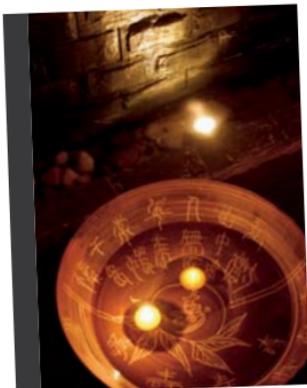
worked for Goldwell – invested RMB1m (US\$146,300, €102,350, £88,450) to bridge this gap. The first Dragonfly opened in January 2003 on Donghu Road, Shanghai, in the Xuhui District, a well known shopping destination. While Zhou offers occasional advice, Yam heads up the business. He admits that having an artistic licence is a favourite aspect of the job: "I really enjoy decoration, planning and styling," he says.

Yam describes the Dragonfly concept he's created as "a uniquely styled, intimate, affordable boutique and with a reasonable price point". He prefers to call Dragonfly a retreat rather than a spa, as no water treatments are offered.

A typical Dragonfly retreat is about 3,767 to 4,305sq ft (350 to 400sq m) and has around 20 stations – a partitioned area with a bed or chair – as well as one VIP couples suite with a bathroom, simple changing rooms and a lounge/relaxation area, a nail spa and a small retail area. Showers are not necessary, as scrubs aren't offered. There are two exceptions to this: the full-service Dragonfly @ Qingdao, in China's hot spring area and the Dragonfly @ Sea, on a cruise ship on the Yangtze River.

Georgie Yam (below left) has grown the Dragonfly spa chain to 20 locations (below right), including 18 in China alone





A typical retreat has around 20 stations – a partitioned area with a bed or chair – as well as one VIP couples suite with a bathroom, changing rooms and a lounge, a nail spa and a small retail area

"Our interior design is a fusion of south-east Asian elements," says Yam. "Massage has been in China for thousands of years, but no one has ever packaged it in such a stylish, or relaxing way. Usually the rooms are full of cigarette smoke, where you can watch TV and drink alcohol." In contrast, Dragonfly retreats focus on sophistication and sensuousness, from the delicate dragonfly logo to the mix of soft fabrics, stone and muted cream and brown interiors. The atmosphere is designed for men, women, couples and families, and for either leisure or corporate guests.

The cornerstone of Dragonfly is that it offers upscale treatments compared to the RMB30 (US\$4, €3, £3) services in low-end spas, but an affordable alternative to expensive hotel or destination spas, which charge up to RMB1,500 (US\$219, €155, £133) for therapies. As such, walk-in

rates are RMB135 (US\$20, €14, £12) for an hour, while a membership card costing RMB3,000 to 5,000 (US\$439 to US\$731, €310-€516, £267-£444) every 12 to 18 months reduces charges by 30 per cent.

Treatments include Chinese tui na, Japanese shiatsu, foot massages – the signature offering – facials using the French line Sothys, an aroma oils massage and manicures/pedicures. The top three services are the aroma oils massages, tui na and the foot massages, with most customers opting for an hour-long service.

When it comes to clientele, Yam says: "We entered a very fragmented and competitive market with a clear focus on a small segment – the busy international traveller [including North Americans, Europeans, Japanese and overseas Chinese] or foreign expatriate living in Shanghai. Affluent and white collar local

customers have increasingly fallen in love with Dragonfly... and comprise about one-third of business."

The two main areas of competition for Dragonfly are five-star hotel spas and stand-alone day spas. The brand competes with both by offering high-quality customer service, great value for money and complete attention to detail.

Training focus

Interest soon spread for the first, tiny, 1,506sq ft (140sq m) Dragonfly retreat. "The brand caught on quite quickly with our expat clientele," says Yam. "Some would brave the horrendous traffic for an hour or more each way just to have a one-hour foot massage." This loyalty combined with how the facility maximised space – "we are quite economical in the

room we allocate to each station" – made the business ideal to roll out.

"I wanted to serve customers from other parts of the city, but I knew I couldn't simultaneously oversee multiple shops with my small staff." Cue Randal Estman: a Canadian with roots in Shanghai, who became the company's third business partner in February 2003. His primary role was to help develop a suitable franchise model and grow the business nationally and internationally. Reticent to give away precise figures, Yam says that under a Dragonfly franchise agreement, the franchisee pays an upfront fee as well as a design fee, which depends on how big the retreat is. On top of this, they take a percentage of revenue each month and have a rolling monthly or quarterly management fee. In return, the Dragonfly head office handles operational support and helps with recruitment. As Yam explains: "We have reinvested the majority of fees from franchisees back into our head office to further support our businesses and their growth. Our team visit sites weekly to ensure quality control and we also respond to customer service issues that can't be dealt with at shop level."

By far the most important thing head office provides is training. "Training, motivating and respecting staff, is key [to surviving the heavily saturated marketplace]," says Yam. "If the staff are happy



Dragonfly employs nearly 1,000 people across 20 retreats while its training academy produces 300 graduates a year

they will treat clients well and be full of joy. We want our staff to grow with us."

To this end, Yam set up a Dragonfly Academy in July 2006. But things did not go well for the first year. Originally, this was in conjunction with a school in Chongqing, a municipality in west China that was home to Dragonfly's chief trainer. However, it was difficult to recruit therapists. Yam explains: "There are a lot

of bad training schemes in China. We found moving our facility back to Shanghai helped to reassure trainees and their families that we're a reputable company that can offer career prospects."

The 1,615sq ft (150sq m) academy in Shanghai can train up to 35 staff at a time and produces around 300 graduates a year. Courses last for about three months, but at the moment efforts are focused on retraining employees in new techniques.

Tuition fees cost RMB2,000 to RMB2,500 (US\$293 to US\$366, €206 to €258, £17 to £222) but students don't have to commit to working for Dragonfly. "If people don't like the company, there's no point tying them down, but our stay-on rate is 95 per cent," Yam says. "It's hard to keep staff in China, but our philosophy is to treat staff well and there aren't many massage places that do"

"The biggest future challenge is finding middle management. "We're slowly promoting senior therapists to supervisors, but the language problem means we can't promote them to a shop manager unless they are in a second or third-tier city."

The first-tier cities in China are Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (SB09/2 p30). A second-tier city can be practically defined as having a population over 300,000, but less than one million. A third-tier city has a population of less than 300,000.

Yam is hoping to work with internship students at university level in Shanghai to tackle the management challenge.

The Dragonfly family

All the existing Dragonfly retreats are located in high footfall areas such as central business districts, tourist hubs and busy suburban communities.

While all franchisees must demonstrate business acumen, it's important that they're

DRAGONFLY RETREATS

SHANGHAI

Dragonfly @ ...

Donghu, Xuhui District (opened 2003)

Kerry Gym, Nanjing West Road (opened 2003)

Xinle, Xuhui District (opened 2004)

Biyun, Pudong New Area (opened 2005)

Changyi, Pudong New Area (opened 2005)

Hongmei, Hongmei Road (opened 2005)

Fuxing Park, Luwan District (opened 2006)

Jingan, Jing An District (opened 2006)

Shanghai Racquet Club & Apartments,

Minhang District (opened 2006)

Anfu, Xuhui District (opening October 2009)

Sietu, Xuhui District (opening October 2009)

BEIJING

Dragonfly @ ...

Forbidden City, Dong Hua Men (opened 2006)

Sanlitun, Chaoyang District (opened 2006)

Yan Sha, Chaoyang District (opened 2008)

SUZHOU

Dragonfly @ ...

Jinjihu, Suzhou Industrial Park (opened 2007)

Shi Shan, Suzhou New District (opened 2008)

HANGZHOU

Dragonfly @ ...

Huang Long, Xihu District (opened 2008)

Nan Shan, Shangcheng District (opened 2009)

YANGZTE RIVER

Dragonfly @ ...

Sea: sails between Yichang and

Chongqing (opened 2008)

QINGDAO

Dragonfly Hideaway @ ...

Baden Club, Jimo Hot Springs (opened 2008)

NORWAY

Dragonfly @ ...

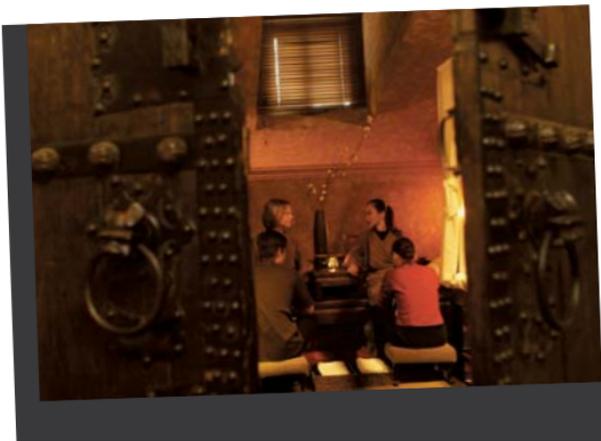
Oslo, Oslo, Norway (opened 2006)

UAE

Dragonfly @ ...

BurJuman, Dubai, UAE (opened 2008)

Half of Dragonfly franchises are fully owned by franchisees and half have a mixed ownership, where Dragonfly retains a stake in the business



also devoted Dragonfly customers. "In all cases, franchisees have been passionate customers who wanted to become a part of the greater Dragonfly family," says Yam.

It's this passion that led to the unlikely placing of Dragonfly's two international retreats in Oslo, Norway and Dubai in the UAE. Yam says: "The owners were expatriates living here, but they became addicted to the service and, when they returned home, Dragonfly was too far away!" The Oriental themes work well in these countries, says Yam, but needed certain Western touches such as a less-rigorous version of tui na, which some foreigners find painful. "We are proud to be one of, or maybe even the first, Chinese services brand that has been successfully exported," says Yam. "Overseas, you may be familiar with Haier refrigerators or Tsingtao beer, and half of your clothes may have been manufactured in China, but how many world-class service brands can you name that compete in your markets?"

Spain, the UK and especially Germany are other international markets that Yam is interested in opening franchises in, but their unstable economies means he's focusing most of his efforts domestically: "Consumers still have cash here and are looking for smart ways to spend it," he says. "Being a Chinese company with a more traditional mindset, we have not borrowed money ourselves. When the credit crunch began, many operators cut costs – turning off air conditioning, lights and cutting staff until they lost their soul. We wouldn't do that, but we are saving in other ways... most importantly by becoming more green: producing less paper waste and modifying our air con system."

On the other hand, Yam says the company is also taking advantage of the current economic climate in certain areas

The retreats focus on sophistication and sensuousness, mixing soft fabrics, stone, and cream and brown interiors

of operation. "Now is the right time to find top talent at an affordable salary," he says.

A new direction

So far, business in China is holding up. Dragonfly's customer occupancy levels sit at 60 per cent. By the end of 2009, there will be two more franchises, both located in the Xuhui District and more new openings are planned for 2010 and 2011.

In the future though, refurbishments are likely to take precedence over new openings. The first overhaul of the original Dragonfly retreat in on Donghu Road was completed in March. Work included refreshing the décor and removing the retail area in exchange for a nail spa, which doubles as a foot massage station. In addition, all stations now feature multi-functional beds for body or feet treatments. The retreat reopened under a new brand, Dragonfly Petit, and Yam says that from now on every retreat below 1,615sq ft (150sq m) that doesn't have a retail area will follow suit. The main rationale behind this is to make more room for Dragonfly's foot massage, which is the most popular treatment.

Another new tactic for Dragonfly is to reach out to more local Chinese customers as it expands into second-tier cities such as Suzhou and Hangzhou. "We have a smaller base of foreign customers to target in our second-tier cities, so our client mix will change dramatically as we push further away from Shanghai," says Yam. Currently expats, business travellers and tourists make up 70 per cent of customers for Dragonfly and locals account for 30 per



PERSONAL FILE

GEORGIE YAM

What is your favourite book?

Thirty-Six Stratagems, a historic Chinese essay about strategies used in war, politics and civil interaction. It's a wonderful way of using wartime methods in the business world.

What's the best spa you've ever been to? The Mandala Spa & Villas in Boracay, the Philippines. It's beautiful there. The staff are so warm and the atmosphere is so welcoming.

What's your favourite spa treatment? An aromatherapy massage. **How would you describe yourself?** Confident.

How would others describe you? As a warm and understanding person.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given? Be patient, by one of my best friends.

cent. In second-tier cities, Yam predicts locals total 80 per cent of guests with the remainder comprising expats, tourists and business travellers. He expects the average age to rise from 32 to about 40 years-old.

These changes will have a direct effect on marketing. Yam's keeping tight lipped about what exactly this will involve, but says one of the biggest obstacles will be in educating locals about Dragonfly and how it differs from traditional bathhouses.

Yam says: "We'll have to tell customers 'Sorry you can't smoke and you must turn your mobile off'; there will be a lot of nos, but, of course, we do find local audiences that appreciate that." ●

Everyone's talking about

development opportunities

Six Senses says its spa in Con Dao, Vietnam is performing well and suggests the country holds much potential for future development



RHIANON HOWELLS • CONSULTING EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

There's no denying that these are difficult times for the international hotel and spa industry, as the impact of the recession really begins to be felt. While existing operations are battenning down the hatches in an effort to weather the storm, new developments are being put on hold across the globe.

It will undoubtedly be some time before the rain clouds clear, but there are still some rays of sunshine. Despite the downturn, there remain parts of the world where the economy is still growing, albeit more slowly than before, and cash-rich hotel and spa investors can capitalise on significantly lower real estate and construction costs.

We might be in the midst of a recession, but there are still opportunities out there for savvy spa developers – so what and where are they?

China, for example, still has huge growth potential, with real GDP predicted to increase by 7.5 per cent in 2010, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, World Economic Outlook: Crisis and Recovery, published in April. Furthermore, a forecast by the Institute of International

Finance in June put this figure even higher, at 9 per cent. India is also expected to grow strongly, with a real GDP increase of 5.6 per cent next year, according to the IMF. Other regions where growth is predicted (in some, though not all, countries) include the Middle East, Africa and south-east Asia.

Even in those regions hardest hit by the recession – Europe and North America – there are opportunities to be had, with both the four-star hotel market and day-spa sector benefiting as consumers downgrade.

So which markets hold the greatest potential for spa development in the current climate? And how can you make the most of it? We ask the experts.

Based on our performance, certain parts of Asia still seem to be doing quite well. The Maldives and Vietnam are holding up better than

Thailand, while China, India, Bali and the Philippines are also doing alright. If a country is viewed as a value-for-money destination, that's an advantage, and when there is uncertainty in one country – such as the recent unrest in Thailand – then its neighbours certainly benefit. In countries such as China and India strong domestic markets are also helping maintain demand (see p20).

Within Six Senses, our spa development projects are largely on track – we've just opened a spa in Egypt, we have one in Paris opening later this year and another in Kuwait in February 2010. We also have

SAMIR PATEL

Managing director,
Six Senses Spas



spas in the pipeline in India, Oman and Morocco. However, some of our resort projects, in countries such as Brazil and Vietnam, have been put on hold for 12-18 months because of the economic situation.

Nevertheless, there are opportunities in all parts of the globe for someone with cash to invest. Countries with the most potential include China, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Morocco and Brazil – in fact, Latin America as a whole. These places all have changing population profiles with greater purchasing power than ever before. They're also becoming more politically stable and they have attractive

cost structures and excellent growth opportunities. Investors who understand the nuances of these markets, and can create differentiated local experiences of a global standard, have the chance to be pioneers.

India, in particular, has huge potential thanks to its economic stability and a young population with strong purchasing power. The Indian economy has been cushioned from the full force of the global recession by its domestic consumption patterns. However, while investors are in a good position to exploit this, the system's complexity and the need for local market knowledge continue to act as rumble strips.

In the longer term, emerging markets for hotel and spa development will continue to grow and mature, and spas will still penetrate all segments of the hotel sector – but with a new emphasis on wellness and transformation rather than just pampering.

"There are opportunities in all parts of the globe for someone with cash to invest. Countries with potential include China, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Morocco and Brazil"

An Asia-based resort and spa development and management company, Six Senses currently has 13 resorts and 24 spas across the globe. Details: www.sixsenses.com

In terms of hotel and spa investment, the Middle East is holding up best overall, although some countries are doing better than others. At present, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia all seem to be doing very well. They entered the cycle later than Dubai, so supply did not get so far ahead of demand. That put them in a stronger position when demand slowed down, and the development now under way should coincide with a recovery in demand. So projects there are continuing and, certainly in Saudi Arabia, new projects are being announced.

Other bright spots include Bali, where demand has held up pretty well. Some of China's resort destinations, such as Hainan Island, also seem to be prospering, probably because the government has slowed down the issuance of visas for international travel, encouraging its citizens to visit domestic destinations instead. In contrast, major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou are seriously over-supplied, as they're very dependent on international corporate travel; hotels targeting the domestic market are doing better.

ARTHUR DE HAAS

Global CEO,
Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels



India is another country with great potential, despite a fairly serious blip recently. Before the downturn, a lot of the demand in India was international and corporate-driven. A decline in that, combined with the terrorist attack in Mumbai, meant the last quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of this year were very tough. However, the re-election of the Congress Party in May has brought greater stability to the business community and will encourage new investment.

From a development perspective, I'd look at mid-scale hotels targeting the domestic market, and also some of the resort locations – despite having some fantastic hotels, India is still relatively undiscovered by the international tourist.

Brazil also has potential, thanks to its extensive coastline. Several projects already under way in the north-east have been put on hold following the downturn, but in five to 10 years' time, I believe

there will be some good opportunities there.

In north Africa, both Morocco and Tunisia are coming strongly back into fashion as destinations for European travellers, so

there are openings there. New markets such as Libya and, to a lesser extent, Algeria are also emerging, but they're more corporate and, I would think, they're very difficult environments in which to operate a spa business.

Europe is pretty universally tough at the moment, although Scandinavia has been hit less hard, and London is holding up quite well thanks to the weak Sterling, which is helping to attract leisure travellers from mainland Europe. And while travellers across all markets are being more careful with their ancillary spend, a lot of hotels in developed countries have been very successful at marketing their spas to day guests – so spa remains an important part of the package for hotel investors.

Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels is an international hotel investment services company. Details: www.joneslanglasallehotels.com

The markets that are proving the most resilient to the economic downturn, in terms of hotel and spa development, are those that are still emerging; the newer the market, it seems the less it is affected. In Africa, for example, there are good opportunities in stable developing countries such as Ghana (see p27), which has large oil reserves, a growing middle class, an influx of ex-pats and a growing tourism industry.

The somewhat more developed African countries, such as Morocco and South Africa, are also still attractive to investors – especially South Africa (see p32), where [international football tournaments] such as the Confederations Cup this year and the FIFA World Cup which will take place in 2010 are helping to push the hospitality industry forward.

ANNA BJURSTAM

Concepts director,
Raison d'Etre



Another region that remains strong is the Middle East; this is where most of our new business is coming from. Dubai has taken a big hit due to its rapid early growth, but the rest of the UAE, particularly Abu Dhabi, is doing well, thanks to government measures to develop and diversify the economy, plus the fact it has the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world [the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority]. Saudi Arabia is another big player, and Qatar and Oman are also still growing.

In terms of hotel occupancy, Europe is suffering badly, particularly in eastern countries such as Russia, where a lot of projects have been put on hold. However,

we're still getting quite a bit of business from existing properties that want to upgrade their facilities. We're also getting business from pre-studies (investment analysis plus spa concept and footprint) for developers looking at investing in spas or hotels with spas – especially in Scandinavia.

For those who have the capital, this is a good time to invest, as the cost of real estate, construction and consultancy can all be negotiated down, ultimately leading to a higher return on the development.

We see huge opportunities in the four-star market as leisure and business clients, who traditionally used five-star hotels are now looking to cut costs. Some four-star hotels have actually increased their occupancy, and spa developers need to seize this chance. Day spas are doing quite well thanks to the 'lipstick effect' of affordable luxury: instead of going on holiday, people are doing something smaller.

"We see huge opportunities in the four-star market – with some five-star leisure and business clients looking to cut costs, some have actually increased their occupancy"

Based in Sweden, Raison d'Etre is a spa consultancy and management company, working with hotel partners across the globe. Details: www.raisondetrespas.com

So far, 2009 has been difficult for the hospitality industry. However, year-to-April results show that the Middle East was the most resilient in terms of revenue per available room (revPAR), down 14.9 per cent to US\$142 (€99, £84). The Americas was the second most resilient region, with revPAR down 18.9 per cent, followed by Asia-Pacific, down 30.3 per cent. Europe was the last in line, as revPAR fell 32.7 per cent in US dollars – although when analysed in euros, the decline was not so severe, at 20.5 per cent.

The Middle East's metamorphosis over the past decade has been outstanding, with the UAE's powerhouse, Dubai, driving much development. The region's geographical position, mix of source markets, growing importance as an aviation hub and the size of its investments will help ensure that it has a bright, long-term future. Even with the current cooling-off, the Middle East still has the best occupancy and average room rates in the world at 63.8 per cent and US\$224 (€156, £132).

MARVIN RUST

Managing partner,
Deloitte



Since the start of the downturn, there has been little new investment activity in destinations that were otherwise inactive, but global hotel chains are pushing ahead in the Middle East; despite some developments being put on hold or cancelled in Dubai, new projects are still being announced in Qatar, Jordan and Bahrain. Meanwhile, the Saudi Arabian government will publish a new tourism master plan this year, which it hopes will double the number of visitors to the country, from 47 million in 2008 to 88 million by 2020.

Hotel chains are also continuing to expand at full force across China: Langham Hotels, InterContinental and Accor have all announced plans to increase their presence in the region over the next two to three years. Investors are still interested in China and less-developed destinations in the Middle East because they see the

potential for long-term changes in demand, and know they must make their mark in these key global markets to ensure they develop their market share. In contrast, it's more

difficult to make an impact now in an over-supplied market such as Dubai. The economic downturn will ultimately provide plenty of opportunities for hotel investors to snap up good deals on distressed assets. Although there were not many deals in 2008 and the beginning of 2009, the second half of the year is expected to see an increase in transactions. When hotel real estate prices hit the bottom of the downturn, cash-rich investors such as sovereign wealth funds will look to pick up trophy assets in key global cities, with a view to benefiting from the investment when the economy picks up again.

Deloitte offers audit, tax, consulting and financial advisory services and published its sixth Global Performance Review – an analysis of hotel performance trends – in March 2009. Details: www.deloitte.com



Dzigbordi K Dosoo

38, CEO, Allure Africa Limited, Ghana

Dosoo worked in finance for 10 years as a consultant for firms such as the International Finance Corporation, before relocating to Ghana in 1998 and setting up beauty company Allure Africa. She launched Ghana's first day spa in 2006. Today she operates two large locations, each with separate spa (Allure Spa in the City), hair and beauty (Allure Beauty Palace) and male grooming (AllureMan) facilities. Dosoo also owns a beauty product distribution company, a training college – which she plans to turn into an institution for up to 100 therapists – and set up beauty expo, Iyaba, this year.

My early years were spent in Accra, Ghana, where I was raised by two unique individuals who shaped my life. My dad was from a poor family, but educated himself to the highest level and became the first Barrister at Law from his village. My grandmother was semi-literate, but had a sharp eye for detail and a solid business acumen. She was a trader and her strategy was: 'let everyone assume you're average, but learn everyday with consistent focus and discipline to surprise them all'.

My life is on track – this is exactly where God meant me to be at this moment and this time. I would describe myself as the apple of God's eye, a child of destiny, a uniquely committed mother and wife and a driven and passionate entrepreneur, although I'm still trying to achieve a good work-life balance. If I lost it all tomorrow, I'd still have my faith so all would not be gone. It's also my fear of the wrath of God that keeps me on the straight and narrow.

I love following grand slam tennis tournaments on TV. It's a fantastic game and watching it keeps me motivated. It teaches you that there is a thin line between risk and opportunity and success and failure. I play myself and have had a coach for some years now. I'd like to say that I practise in my spare time, but I just don't have any, although I'm taking baby steps to address this.

After years of feeling unfulfilled in finance and economics, I decided to quit my career and follow my dream. My critics might call me a risk taker, but I had visited a few local salons in Ghana and identified a gap in the delivery of beauty and spa services to the emerging middle class and the expatriate market. It set a spark in my heart, which grew into a flame and then a burning fire.

Ghana is the most stable sub-Saharan country politically and oil has just been discovered here. Its spa industry is a field of dreams: there is an emerging middle class who are beginning to embrace wellness as a lifestyle and a strong expatriate community who know spa. However our tourism authorities do not regulate, recognise or include spas in their promotions, as is the case in Asia. Yet Allure has started dialogue with these authorities and I must say they've been very co-operative so far.

The best decision I've ever made was to create a spa and beauty trade show for sub-Saharan Africa. I conceived the idea years ago, but this year I got a team of eight people together and brought it to reality within three months. The first Iyaba show was held in June and was a phenomenal success. It included 11 exhibiting brands from North America, Asia and South Africa and attracted 1,500 delegates. My aim is to reach those in the farther rural village to help them fulfil their dreams.

The difference between a good and a great spa is premium service: it's that simple. The Spa at Mandarin Oriental in Washington DC is my favourite. It is luxurious and contemporary, but it also has a blend of traditional flavours, which is important. The fact that its deep tissue massage is great doesn't hurt either! No matter how many spa treatments I've had, a deep tissue massage with hot stones always gets me.

bank on it

High levels of investment in spas and wellbeing, along with strategic wellness marketing, have secured Switzerland's position as a top tourism destination

DR TERRY STEVENS • MANAGING DIRECTOR • STEVENS & ASSOCIATES

Switzerland can now add tourism to its trophy cabinet. The 41,284sq km (15,940sq miles) landlocked country is considered a global leader in many business sectors. One of the world's wealthiest nations, thanks to its long-standing neutrality and political stability, it's also one of the most mature and established international tourism destinations.

Over the past 10 years Switzerland has re-engineered its appeal to tourists. As a result, 2008 proved to be the most successful year in the history of Swiss tourism. For the second year running, the World Economic Forum (WEF) ranked Switzerland number one out of 133 countries in its global tourism competitiveness index. Wellness and wellbeing tourism have been at the heart of this recovery. Today, the country is an example of best practice in its overall strategic approach to tourism development through to its delivery of innovative, high-quality spas.

Remarkable revival

Switzerland has specialised in tourism for more than 100 years. The National Association for the Development of Tourism, later becoming Switzerland Tourism, was established in 1917.

In the 1980s and into the 1990s, tourism in Switzerland experienced stagnation and then a major slump as it failed to keep up with the global marketplace. Since 1996, however, a remarkable revival has taken place thanks to a realisation of the importance of tourism to the economy, a willingness to invest and the creation of favourable taxation rates to encourage product development.

Switzerland's ease of accessibility – it has nine major airports and an excellent rail network – its stunning landscapes and underlying strong tourism infrastructure were other critical success factors.

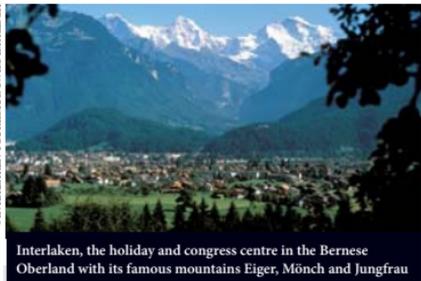
According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism's contribution to Switzerland's GDP is currently 12.1 per cent, equating to CHF64.6bn (US\$59.4bn, €42bn, £36bn). There are 712,000 jobs supported by the industry, representing 15.6 per cent of all employment.

Last year there were more than 75 million overnight stays in all types of accommodation, including 37.3 million (50 per cent) in hotels, resulting in CHF46bn (US\$42.4bn, €30bn, £25.6bn) of tourism revenue. This was up by 2.7 per cent from 2007 with domestic tourism increasing at 2.4 per cent and foreign tourism growth at 2.8 per cent. The most popular overnight destination was Zurich, followed by Geneva and Zermatt (see p31). The growth in city tourism was also strong, with an exceptional growth in demand for short breaks in Basel, Bern, Zurich, Lucerne and Geneva.

In 2008 there were 14.4 million foreign tourists to Switzerland with growth recorded in all geographic markets with the exception of the US, which was 8.8 per cent down on 2007.

Switzerland's primary originating volume markets in 2005 were Germany, the UK, US, France and Italy. Its major growth markets in 2008 were the Gulf States (up 15.3 per cent from 2007), Russia (up 14.4 per cent) and the Netherlands (up 14 per cent).

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Interlaken, the holiday and congress centre in the Bernese Oberland with its famous mountains Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau

DISTRIBUTION OF WELLNESS HOTELS BY TYPE AND REGION

	WI	WII
Granbünden 'Wonderland of Water'	3	11
Bernese Oberland 'World Class Panorama'	3	7
Valais 'Power Summits'	6	3
Central Switzerland 'Pretty as a Picture'	4	4
Lake Geneva Region 'World of the Senses'	2	4
Eastern Switzerland 'Natural Beauty'	2	1
Ticino 'Wellbeing: Southern Style'	1	4
Zurich Region 'Thrilling Inspiration'	0	3
Total = 58	21 (36%)	37 (64%)

(Source: Switzerland Tourism, 2009)





PHOTO: SWISS IMAGE CENTER/STERN/ANNA

WALDHAUS FLIMS MOUNTAIN RESORT AND SPA

A strategic approach

Over the next 10 years, Switzerland's tourism industry is expected to achieve annual real growth of 1 per cent direct employment, 1.1 per cent of GDP and 2.3 per cent in overall growth of tourists. While these growth rates are lower than for the rest of western Europe, they continue to ensure Switzerland's pre-eminence as a leading destination. As such, the Swiss government regards tourism as a strategic sector of the economy, worth investing in.

Support for tourism accounts for CHF4bn (US\$3.68bn, €2.6bn, £2.2bn) or 7.1 per cent of all government investment. In 2007 to 2008, Switzerland Tourism's budget was CHF76.4m (US\$70.3m, €49.7m, £46.2m), 59.5 per cent of which came from federal funding. The largest allocation in the country's marketing budgets goes to promoting Switzerland as a wellness destination. Wellness is also regarded as part of the core appeal of Switzerland for both

This resort (above), one-hour south of Zurich, is surrounded by the Flims and Laxx mountains and has drawn on 'Swissness' branding by promoting itself as a mountain resort and spa.

It successfully transformed into a year-round hotel following a CHF58m (US\$53.5m, €37.7m, £32.3m) refurbishment, including a CHF13m (US\$11.9m, €8.4m, £7.2m) investment on its 26,909sq ft (2,500sq m) Delight Spa which opened in 2004.

In 2008, the resort posted record trading results for the third year running: EBITDA rose by 13.7 per cent to CHF4.3m (US\$4m, €2.8m, £2.4m) from a total of 47,000 overnight stays.

leisure and business tourism. In the most recent Switzerland Tourism Annual Report (2007), the organisation's CEO, Jürg Schmid, says: "Nature, authenticity and health are the central positioning elements of Switzerland. Consequently, wellness is entirely integrated into our overall brand and positioning."

Switzerland Tourism has a carefully targeted tourism marketing policy. It has four main national campaigns: three focusing on city, summer and winter breaks and the fourth target-

ing the MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and events) market. These are then supported by promotions of specific regions (see table on p28). In addition, there are eight niche campaigns, including wellness and other themes such as design, lifestyle, gastronomy, gold and luxury. Each of these is marketed using discreet, web-based and print collateral.

Switzerland's overall wellbeing campaign focuses on Switzerland, Germany, the UK, France, Italy and North America. The campaign is underpinned by a strategic partnership between Switzerland Tourism and the Swiss Hotel Association (SHA) which has developed detailed specifications for the wellness sector, introducing two quality grades. Similar to the other initiatives, this campaign is marketed using web and print marketing material. The grading scheme has the advantage of a greater clarification of products on offer for the consumer, allowing for easier selection and a greater differentiation between products.

The grades include: WI Wellness Hotels, which are hotels offering a good range of wellness facilities including a swimming pool, saunas, treatment rooms and a free programme of indoor and outdoor activities. There are also the WII Top Wellness Hotels, facilities where wellness is "given pride of place and celebrated in style" and which fulfil additional requirements in terms of infrastructure and the variety of services provided.

Hotels which apply for a grade have to pay a fee and are inspected by the SHA: all must achieve a minimum three-star standard and all must qualify for WI Wellness Hotel status. Individual hotels can refer to the grading in their own collateral, but there is another extra fee if they want to participate in the Wellness Hotels campaign. Prices vary, as there are many tiers of marketing which target different audiences.

In 2008 there were 80 wellness hotels recognised in Switzerland under this scheme with 58 participating in the marketing campaign, of which 60 per cent were in the top range having achieved WII status (see p28). Interestingly, while the number of overnights in Swiss hotels has increased by 10 per cent since 1997, growth in overnights in the wellness hotels has been 32 per cent.

Switzerland Tourism's lead officer for special product campaigns, Catherine Zimpfer, is convinced that this criteria-based



AROSA KUJUM HOTEL & ALPIN SPA

This 119-bedroom hotel dates back to 1882 and is located south east of Chur in the village of Arosa. In 1999, the property underwent a CHF12m (US\$11m, €7.8m, £6.68m) refurbishment, led by Zurich-based architect Jo Brinkmann. This included an overhaul of the three-storey Alpin Spa, which features green granite, polished stainless steel and cedar wood. Facilities include seven treatment rooms, a gym, a stainless steel pool, a reflexology path, a scent and sound grotto, a sauna, a summer-rain massage shower and a glacier grotto with a fog lane to replace a conventional cold water plunge pool.

The general manager, André Salamin, says the resort embodies the Swiss approach to wellness tourism because of its "symbiosis between this state-of-the-art design and the majestic tranquility of the [nearby] Grisons Mountain".

approach is a crucial driving product for investment in wellness tourism. She says: "The hotel marketing strategy is focused on quality. Demanding criteria that have been defined by the industry are the catalyst for hotels to realise the product development that is needed for tomorrow's guests.

"In addition, Switzerland Tourism has introduced (together with its partner Holidaycheck) a user-based, online rating system for all hotels. Every guest can rate their hotel and share their experience. This has had a remarkable impact in stimulating quality improvements in a very direct and efficient way."

Creativity and innovation

With investment secured, the key to making spas stand out in Switzerland is creativity and innovation. Emphasis is placed on 'getting back to basics', 'nature at the heart' and 'Swissness' with spas using local materials to build facilities and indigenous herbs and flowers to create treatments.

Another focus is on architecture involving world-renowned architects and designers who are pushing the boundaries and creating highly differentiated products. This approach is allowing traditional spa destinations with thermal or natural mineral waters – such as Leukerbad, Vals, Scuol and Bad Ragaz – to capture market interest alongside new premium market products such as



THE VICTORIA-JUNGFRAU GRAND HOTEL & SPA

Situated between lakes Thun and Brienz, Interlaken is one of Switzerland's most attractive year-round destinations. It's also the home of the luxury Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa (SB06/3 p98).

The original spa opened in 2002 and included a Clarins Beauty Centre, a gym, a swimming pool and salt-water hydro-pool. A year later, CHF17m (US\$15.7m, €11m, £9.46m) was spent on extending facilities.

Today, the 59,200sq ft (5,500sq m) ESPA wellness centre also includes 16 treatment rooms and a VIP spa suite.

A particular highlight of its wellness approach is the Spa Fitness Test and medical check-up which covers nutrition, exercise and relaxation. This fits in well with outdoor adventure activities offered in the area, which Interlaken Tourism has identified as a key driver for future tourism.

Switzerland's top 12 destinations with the largest number of overnights in 2008 were:

1. Zurich
2. Geneva
3. Zermatt
4. Lucerne
5. Basel
6. Davos
7. St Moritz
8. Lausanne
9. Bern
10. Interlaken
11. Lugano
12. Arosa

(Source: Switzerland Tourism 2009)

Therme Vals' contemporary design is an example of how Swiss spas have the edge when it comes to architecture



Le Mirador Kempinski in Lake Geneva with its GivENCHY Spa (see below) and the Kempinski Grand Hotel des Bains in St Moritz with its High Alpine Spa. Three other examples of best practice spas, as suggested by Switzerland Tourism, include the Waldhaus Flims Mountain Resort & Spa and the Arosa Kulm Hotel & Alpine Spa (see case studies) as well as the Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa (SB06/3 p98).

Schmid says: "In the past five to 10 years, wellness hotels have invested heavily to improve their product offer. Architecture has been one of the true differentiators, especially in the premium market sector. Leading architects including Mario Botta [who was responsible for designing the Bergeoise spa at the Hotel Tschuggen in Arosa] and Peter Zumthor [who created Therme Vals]. Both have raised the bar considerably."

What's more, Schmid sees this trend continuing and highlights three new projects as evidence of this.

Firstly, is the CHF153.4m (US\$141.3m, £100m, £85.7m) revamp of the Grand Resort Bad Ragaz 'spa village' which re-opened in eastern Switzerland in June 2009. This included the restoration and new setting for Tamina Therme, the village's thermal spring baths which date back to 1871, the revamp of the 59,201sq ft (5,500sq m) To B Wellbeing and Spa and the addition of a new spa wing (comprising 57 spa suites) to the Grand Hotel Quellenhof.

Secondly, a CHF116m (US\$106.8m, €75.5m, £64.8m) spa resort is planned for the municipality of Adelboden in the Bernese Oberland (highlands region). The Alpine Bath resort, funded by real estate company Peel of Kuwait, will comprise a 91-bed, five-star hotel, a 61,354sq ft (5,670sq m) spa and an Alpine Wellness Academy. Construction is due to begin in early 2010 and the opening is scheduled for 2012.

Thirdly, Mario Botta (SB08/2 p36) has just announced his involvement in a new environmentally-sustainable and architecturally exciting regeneration project in Rigi Kaltbad in north east Switzerland. Operators for the development, scheduled for completion next year, include Aqua Spa Resorts and the facility will comprise a new spa resort beneath the village square.

All of these new schemes are expected to sit comfortably next to the existing product base and provide strong foundations for Switzerland to confidently maintain its title as one of the most successful spa destinations in the world. Looking forward, Schmid says Switzerland Tourism's focus will be on neighbouring markets. He maintains: "As people travel shorter distances, we will have to continue to drive quality and we must offer good value. We are recommending that our key destinations and our wellness hotels should not drop prices. Rather, they must differentiate through creativity, quality and added value." ●



LE MIRADOR KEMPINSKI

In Switzerland's Mont-Pèlerin wine region, this hotel reopened in July 2009 after a CHF50m (US\$46.1m €32.6m, £27.8m) renovation. Three new wings were built, which saw 45 new junior suites and 14 residences added to its existing 62 suites.

The 15,070sq ft (1,400sq m) GivENCHY Spa was also relocated to share a centralised reception with the Mirador Medical Center (which specialises in

anti-ageing solutions and biomolecular treatments). The spa has 11 treatment rooms which are illuminated by natural daylight and offer exceptional views over Lake Geneva and the Alps. Two extra new features include a 969sq ft (90sq m) Day Spa Suite and 3,444sq ft (320sq m) VIP Spa Suite. A Technogym fitness centre, swimming pool, male and female thermal and relaxation areas complete the offer.



VINE TUNING

The Lanzerac Spa in South Africa draws on its vineyard setting and local community to give it a competitive edge. We find out more

SARAH TODD • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS



Situated in the foothills of the Jonkershoek Mountains, surrounded by vineyards and giant oaks, the ZAR5m (US\$622,100, €437,300, £375,800) spa within the 300-year-old Lanzerac estate has a stunning location.

Opened back in October 2005, the 690sq m (10,750sq ft) spa was converted from a space within the country estate that was previously used as a conference suite. Since then the business has developed a strong community spirit, giving it a heart-warming edge, and despite being less than four years old it has already carved a niche in the luxury hotel and day spa market in South Africa.

RELATIVE VALUES

The key players in Sosumi Spas, the company that runs the Lanzerac Spa and

Wellness Centre, are relatively new to the industry. Prior to setting up Sosumi Spas, husband and wife team Max and Marna Lourens were far removed from wellness – both were practising lawyers: Max concentrating on the corporate sphere and Marna lecturing on maritime law.

Max Lourens, the CEO of spa operations says: "If you'd asked me 10 years ago whether I thought I'd be working on spas all over Africa I would have laughed."

The Lanzerac Spa, the flagship facility of Sosumi Spas, was established in 2005 to provide operators considering installing a spa with a range of services from management, construction and maintenance to a complete turnkey solution. It was born from a pure business rationale, says Max: "We saw our type of company was needed in the industry – Africa was ready for a

more holistic approach." Aside from Lanzerac, the couple helped build and set up the Oceana Spa in Camps Bay, Cape Town in 2007.

Operation of the estate's property is a family affair: Max's brother, Brandon, runs its 48-room hotel as the CEO of Gatsby International Hotels & Resorts Group, which leases the grounds from the owner, entrepreneur Christo Wiese. Meanwhile Max and his wife own the spa.

The Lourens' believe operators have to be hands-on to run a successful spa, especially if they own the property. They feel that no matter how good a manager is, owners should still be involved in the business. Max says: "We've created operational procedures which show every person involved in the spa what they must do and how." The Lourens' were also involved with all aspects of the development and construction of Lanzerac Spa.

Marna oversaw the design, which encourages guests to go back to their roots. She says: "We wanted guests to feel as if they were walking into their grandmother's house. It is beautiful to look at, but also full of soul."

The spa was built by local craftsmen using local suppliers. Wood is used wherever possible and great care has been taken to limit the impact of construction on the surrounding environment, especially the

Lanzerac Hotel & Spa by numbers

- The annual occupancy of the hotel is 78 per cent
- The average length of stay is two nights
- A standard double room in peak season costs ZAR2,400 (US\$300, €210, £180) per person, per night
- The domestic market makes up 70 per cent of hotel guests from April to July (off peak).
- In August to March (peak), international visitors make up 60 per cent of hotel guests. These are mostly Europeans
- A 100-minute VinAqua Vineyard Shower Ritual costs ZAR1,100 (US\$137, €96, £83)
- A Safari Rendezvous for Two lasts for two hours and costs ZAR1,400 (US\$174, €122, £105)



working vineyards. Natural and organic themes run throughout, from the spa's signature organic vanilla scented that all interior spaces are infused with, to its design and treatments.

Facilities on offer include eight treatment rooms, male and female saunas, a fitness studio, an indoor heated swimming pool and whirlpool, as well as a juice bar.

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

For all involved in Lanzerac Spa, there's a strong sense of community spirit, and a holistic ethos that goes to the very heart of the operation.

According to Max, it was important they involved the community in the launch of the spa, and continue to do so. "Without the community, you're nothing," he says.

To this end, a range of marketing initiatives are used, such as regulating bookings to ensure clientele from the nearby town aren't ever disappointed. If there's a sudden increase in demand, treatments can be given outdoors – the spectacular grounds already provide the setting for outdoor services called Spafari – or room can be made inside for a mobile massage table.

As the spa's capture rate sits at 20 per cent, the target market for Lanzerac Spa is day guests – predominantly from Stellenbosch and the surrounding community. There's also a mobile massage table that is

The Lanzerac estate has 50 hectares of vineyards and produces its own wine (opposite page, bottom), while the spa offers vinotherapy treatments; the spa (all other pictures) had a life changing effect on one woman who used the facilities for six months to help her overcome personal problems such as anxiety attacks and depression

regularly taken to local old people's homes, with the elderly then receiving free treatments and Lanzerac Spa gaining positive word-of-mouth with relatives.

In addition, Max is part of a senior management team involved in setting up the Multi-Skills Training Development Institute: a small-black owned company in Johannesburg which is aiming to provide business and enterprise development skills to disadvantaged women. In the long-term the Lourens' hope to create a spa training academy for the institute.

CARING FOR CUSTOMERS

Around 90 per cent of the spa's customers are 35- to 45-year-old women. The other 10 per cent are hotel guests and local families. The spa has a limited kids menu for children aged seven to 11, and teenage services for 12 to 16 year olds.

Signature treatments are by VinAqua – a trademarked range developed two years ago by the spa, which includes hydrotherapy and vinotherapy products. Vinotherapy body services and facials are

also available using TheraVine which is a brand owned by a Stellenbosch local, Lisa Smit, who consulted on Lanzerac Spa during the pre-opening period.

According to the Lourens' business plan, each treatment room should net a minimum of ZAR50,000 (US\$6,200, €4,400, £3,800) per month, which Lanzerac Spa comfortably achieves. Retail sales account for 25 per cent of revenue and therapists can earn up to 15 per cent commission on products sold. The most important priority, however, is to make clients feel valued and to give outstanding levels of service.

Marna says that all who work at the spa realise that, in the current economy, people are struggling, and need holistic havens such as Lanzerac Spa. She says: "A woman using our facilities had a number of personal problems including anxiety attacks and depression. She was at the lowest point of her life. She said that after six months of coming to Lanzerac Spa, she was cured. It changed her life. That's what we want for all of our guests."



The spa employs 23 people in total, but has yet to partner with South Africa's Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BEE) – created after apartheid to give previously disadvantaged groups greater economic opportunities – because the law doesn't apply until there are more than 50 members of staff. That said, already 30 per cent of staff at Lanzerac Spa are black or mixed race. Max says: "We employ local people, not because of the BEE laws, but because it's the future."

A MEDICAL FUTURE

The recent demand for medical spa services in South Africa has led the Lanzerac Spa team to introduce a new Skin Clinic, adding Botox, microdermabrasion and chemical peels to their offering. They're hoping this will appeal to the many guests who stay at the Lanzerac Hotel to recuperate after intensive surgery.

Next to be introduced will be Dr Fish™ Spa Therapy, a range which the Sosumi Spa team have trademarked and which they'll provide exclusively in South Africa, licens-

Lanzerac Spa was built by local craftsmen and uses wood wherever possible (above middle); the spa makes the most of its surroundings with large doors opening onto the surrounding ground (above left); and Spafari treatments (above right), which are administered outside in the shade of willow trees



ing the brand to other spas and salons.

Delivery has just been taken from Israel of the first batch of the omnivorous garra rufa obtuse fish, or 'doctor fish'. This is a species which feeds from human skin but which only eats dead cells, providing exfoliating 'fish therapy' which is particularly good for alleviating skin conditions such as psoriasis. The Lourens' will also be creating a range of treatment packages using fish therapy.

Meanwhile, Sosumi has three other projects in the pipeline that it is currently consulting on and planning to operate. The biggest, a 14-treatment room, ZAR7m (US\$877,250, €615,050, £528,450) spa, is scheduled to open at the Gatsby's Pepper Club & Spa in the Cape area early next year. Due to open in March 2010 is a ZAR4m (US\$501,550, €351,600, £302,050) spa with eight treatment rooms at the Abuja-owned Sandralia Hotel in Nigeria and in June 2010, an eight-treatment room spa costing ZAR3m (US\$376,150, €263,700, £226,450) is set to launch at Centurion Hotels' Swan's Rest hotel located in the Gauteng province.

While there remains a range of rival spas from the Stellenbosch region and further afield, the heritage of the estate which surrounds the Lanzerac Spa and the way staff look after customers gives it a strong foundation for future success.

Spa manager Lindi de Wet says: "Competition is always good. We want to have competition. Even a small salon in Stellenbosch can be competition if it takes your locals. But competition makes you stronger. It gives you the ability to continue to provide extra and different elements for your guests and makes sure you always offer a five-star service." ●

Lanzerac estate: a history

Stellenbosch in the Western Cape province of South Africa was founded in 1679 by the governor of the Cape Colony, Simon van der Stel, who named it after himself.

The land that houses the Lanzerac estate, hotel and spa was bought by aristocrat Elizabeth Katharina English for £18,000 (US\$29,200, €21,000) in 1914.

The property then underwent extensive alterations, as well as a name-change from Schoongezicht to Lanzerac, and Mrs English went on to bottle the first Lanzerac

wine from grapes which were grown on the land.

After her death, the estate changed hands several times until 1958, when parts of the homestead and some of the outbuildings were converted into a luxury hotel by owners David and Graham Rawdon. These buildings were also designated as national monuments.

The estate was acquired by Cape businessman Christo Wiese and his family in 1991. The hotel was then extensively remodelled, the vineyard replanted and a

wine cellar established. The spa was also launched in October 2005, at a cost of ZAR5m (US\$622,100, €437,300, £375,800).

Today, Lanzerac is home to one of the Stellenbosch region's most distinguished examples of Cape Dutch architecture. The grounds spread over 150 hectares (371 acres); of these, 50 hectares (124 acres) consist of vineyards, which produce notable cultivars such as sauvignon blanc, chardonnay and the region's famous pinotage grapes.



meeting of minds

We highlight the key themes emerging from this year's Global Spa Summit

The impact of the global financial crisis on the spa industry was one of the main talking points at the third annual Global Spa Summit (GSS), which was held at the Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel and Spa in Interlaken, Switzerland this May.

An audience poll of delegates came up with some surprising results, with 48 per cent of attendees reporting revenue gains in 2008 compared to 2007 and only 18 per cent reported a decline. While these results shouldn't be taken as gospel (there was no official methodology in the gathering of data), the optimism from our industry leaders is promising. The general consensus was that recovery will be on the way from mid-2010.

Despite the economic climate and the threat from the looming swine flu pandemic, the summit – appropriately themed *The Power of Collaboration* – had a strong attendance from key figures. Numbers may have been down from last year, but 32 countries were represented – a record number. There was also a significantly higher proportion of attendees from Europe, due in part to this being the GSS's debut on the continent.

Delegates from Morocco, Croatia, Nicaragua and Ghana came to the summit for the first time – all these areas have been pinpointed as significant markets for growth in the international spa industry.

Dzibordi K Dosoo, CEO of Allure Africa, sparked much interest in the Industry Briefing session when she highlighted the potential markets within west Africa and her intention to rollout day spas in the region (see p27). Michael Navas, the legal advisor for Pro Nicaragua – a non-profit promotion agency for the country – also caught delegate's attention when he expressed his country's desire to become a wellness destination.

Eco-wellness initiative

This fits in with news elsewhere that Nicaraguan Ministry of Tourism's objective is to develop the country as an eco-wellness destination. The ministry has also applied for funding for a spa academy, which it aims to set up in collaboration with the International Hotel Spa Academy.

Another highlight was the acknowledgement of the growing importance of spa and wellness by keynote speaker Adolf Ogi, the former president of Switzerland.



Susie and Pete Ellis welcome delegates to the Victoria-Jungfrau at a gala dinner held in the hotels' sumptuous ballroom

This is emphasised in our report on tourism in Switzerland on p28. Interest was piqued by another Swiss keynote speaker, Reto Wittwer, president and CEO of Kempinski Hotels, announcing the launch of Resense: a spa brand focused on classical European spa traditions.

Resense was developed in collaboration with Swedish consultancy *Raison d'Etre*, but will not be exclusive to Kempinski-managed properties. While Kempinski has an investment stake in Resense, the two companies will operate separately.

Research has been a part of the GSS since its inception and this year was no exception, with three reports presented. The need to focus on methodology, however, was raised. Leonor Stanton, a contributing editor for *Spa Business*, who has worked in consulting

► and assessment roles in the leisure industry for over 20 years adds: "I think there's a debate to be had about research and methodology in the spa industry and what operators really want from research. It's important to warn about the pitfalls of studies and misleading data; many criticised the findings of the PKF Hospitality study Trends in the Hotel Spa Industry (SB08/3 p46), but the people at PKF told me that reviewing it and pinpointing problem areas would help them in their next study."

Health and medical tourism

Medical tourism was a hot topic at the summit and Renee-Marie Stephano, founder of the Medical Tourism Association, indicated that health/medical tourism is an industry spas should be tapping into. Key target groups included Americans, Canadians, Europeans, Latin Americans and those from the Middle East, while preventative health was the part of the market that 37 per cent of delegates said held the biggest opportunity for their future business.

Cathy Feliciano-Chon, MD and founder of CatchOn & Company, gave a high-energy presentation on the last day which focused on Luxury vs Necessity. The take-home message was that luxury is not going away, it's just being reinterpreted and simple lessons can be learned from 'lipstick, candy and Disney' - they all claim to be recession proof, all have roots in the Great Depression and all deliver a timeless feel-good factor to the consumer.

In our round-up of breakout sessions, we've asked moderators and chairs to outline the topics discussed and outcomes

Collaboration sessions.

"What can we accomplish together that we cannot accomplish alone?"

Design collaboration

"There's a miscommunication between owners, operators, consultants and wet area companies when it comes to the cost of wet area equipment, quality, maintenance and after-sales care and health and safety guidelines. The newly formed Global Hydrothermal Spa Standards Association is to create standards in these areas and present its first draft in September 2009."

Chairs: Anna Bjurstram, Raison d'Etre; Susan Harmsworth, ESPA International

Human capital collaboration

"Labour shortage has eased due to the recession, but there's still a need for experienced applicants with business/hospitality school-type training as well as technical training. There's a need for industry-sponsored internships to increase the labour pool in the future. And the general consensus is that online school curricula needs to be 'beefed-up.'"

Chair: Mary Tabacchi, Cornell University

Product houses collaboration

"There was a call for product houses to have a larger voice in the industry and to share their knowledge on topics such as retail, which they have first hand experience of in a variety of spas. There was also a desire to create an agreed reference document to help operators better understand product marketing claims and ingredients."

Chair: Geraldine Howard, Aromatherapy Associates

Medicine and spa collaboration

"Global spa brands now have the opportunity to become healthcare providers. Technology such as tele dermatology consultations and other remote diagnostics is enabling spas to seamlessly integrate medical services."

Chair: Dr Marc Cohen, RMIT University; Dr Geraldine Mitton, medical spa consultant

Spa associations collaboration

"There is no global consistency in terms of a definition of 'spa' and standards and practises and no common understanding as to what various therapies and services are. We came to the conclusion that it is helpful to form a new hub organisation to unite international spa associations."

Chair: Marion Schneider, British International Spa Association



Lunchtime collaborations enabled delegates to continue discussions over spa cuisine designed personally by host Emanuel Berger



Other breakout sessions

Galvanizing interest in and understanding of hydro/thermal spa experiences to increase profits

"We need to educate consumers in the usage of hydrotherapy facilities, particularly in cultures without bathing traditions. Successful operations charge for wet area access. Despite high investment costs, wet areas can drive volume and profitability for a spa through lower labour requirements and self-administered treatments."

Moderator: Ingo Schweder, Spatality

What are schools teaching? What do operators want? Do they match up?

"The needs of operators (business managers and technical talent) and educators (vocational institutions and hospitality-focused business schools) vary considerably and stakeholders need to understand the nuances of each so that the right talent can be sourced for the right positions in the right locations. One size certainly does not fit all."

Moderator: Mia Kyricos, Starwood US

How shining a spotlight on water can energise our industry

"The spa industry's image would greatly benefit from us all taking a strong stance on water, becoming more involved with conservation and serving as a guardian of the world's water resources."

Moderator: Dr Marc Cohen, RMIT University



CatchOn & Co's Cathy Feliciano-Chon

Branded vs non-branded spa. Which give the best ROI?

"The consumer doesn't understand or is confused by spa brands within hotels and resorts. However, branding may be important to non-hotel spa clientele: local or membership consumers, who are the lifeblood of hotel/resort spas during a downturn in travel. The consensus is that it depends on the goals, mission, concept and number of sub-brands within a hotel."

Moderator: Mary Tabacchi, Cornell University

What do the profit numbers look like for resort, hotel, day and medical spas around the world?

"Profitability is closely linked to staffing costs; it may vary greatly because of the very different wage levels between countries. We shouldn't forget, however,

Adolf Ogi, former Swiss president, awards students from IMHI France for their winning spa concept Chill House where bar tenders double up as therapists.

that the very presence of a spa in a hotel allows room rates to be increased, so even a marginally profitable spa can enhance hotel profitability."

Moderator: Woody Wade, Wade & Co

Beauty industry developments impacting spa and wellness

"Beauty treatments differ between spas and salons. Spas need to establish a benchmark to assess the quality and financial performance of their beauty offer. Such data would help spas to attract consumers and potential investors. A starting point to establish these benchmarks would be the longer-established beauty salon industry."

Chair: Jacqueline Clark, Diagonal Reports

Medical hydrology, balneology, thalassotherapy and spa therapy: understanding how research which validates spa therapies can greatly increase your bottom line

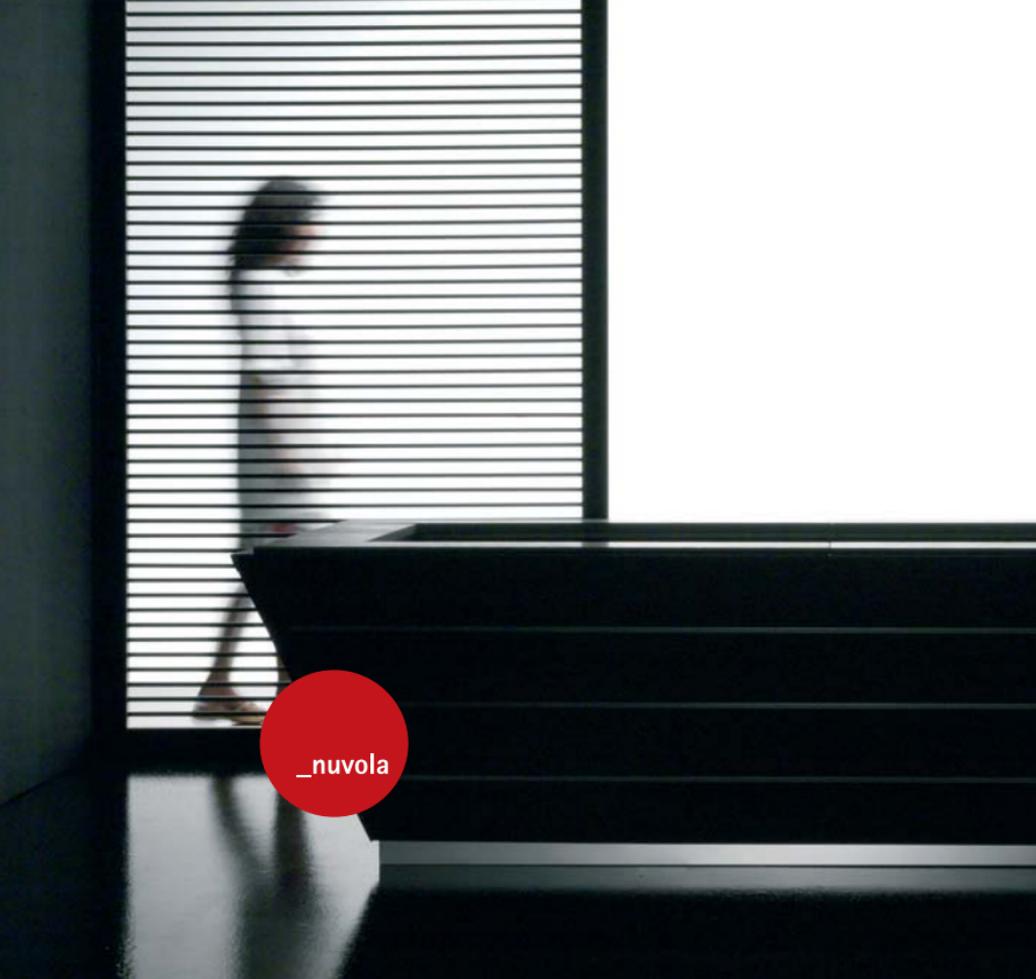
"Spas in Eastern Europe, as well as Italy, have medical doctors who advise and prescribe wet/thermal treatments. In Western countries hydro equipment, steambaths and saunas are installed without operators (and customers) being aware of the procedures and protocols which are associated with their use. Thus benefits are not obtained."

Geraldine Mitton, medical spa consultant

N U V O L A

• There is still something that keeps both the clients and owners of the best spas in the world dreaming • For the client, a half hour of sleep is worth eight hours; for the owner, it all happens without extra costs or the need for additional personnel • It has just one defect, if don't try it, you'll never understand • The advantage is that you can even use it fully dressed





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Dr John Ratey

We talk to the Harvard Medical School associate professor about his latest book, *SPARK*, which looks at the impact of exercise on the brain and mental wellbeing

Think of the benefits of exercise and beautiful, toned bodies spring to mind. Think of the advantages of physical activity in relation to health and you might make the link with healthier hearts and bones. Rarely would you connect it to how well our minds function, yet with an ageing population, brain health (see p43), or brain fitness, is an extremely potentially lucrative market.

Colin Milner, CEO of the International Council on Active Aging says: "What happens when the largest, richest and fastest growing segment of the population comes knocking on your door? You open it. And you open it wide. One such knock being heard around the world is the desire among older adults to maintain their cognitive abilities as they age."

Milner points out that this has led to a surge in cognitive solutions which are focused on keeping our minds healthy. In the US alone the brain fitness software market, comprising software products designed to keep the brain sharp and in-shape, was estimated to be US\$225m (€156.5m, £132.6m) by market research company SharpBrains in 2007, up from US\$100m (€69.5m, £58.9m) in 2005. Milner predicts that more brain fitness

solutions will soon start to come to the market, and brain fitness programmes will also be present in facilities such as spas.

While software packages are one route spas could take, a simpler solution to brain health already lies on the doorstep: exercise. One expert in this area is Dr John Ratey, a psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School. He has, for many years, focused on attention deficit disorder (ADD) and aggression but admits that he's always been fascinated by the effect exercise has on mental health. In his latest book, *SPARK*, he pulls together the huge amount of clinical and neuroscientific information on the effect of exercise on mental health.

Speaking to *Spa Business*, Ratey explains his findings and explains how spas can tap into the interest in brain health.

What topics does *SPARK* cover?

The first chapter is about a remarkable school in Naperville, US. For the last 18 years, it has moved its physical education (PE) offering away from traditional ball sports to a fitness-based daily PE programme. It's had amazing success: only 3 per cent of its kids are overweight, whereas the average in US schools is 37 per cent. Not only that but, in 1999, 98 per cent of the kids

Neuroscientific studies have shown that exercise at any age protects the brain and encourages longevity of cognitive abilities

took maths and science tests and according to TIMSS – the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study – they came top in the world in science achievements and sixth in maths, even though they were spending 45 minutes a day devoted to physical fitness.

Are there also benefits for older people?

Yes, most of our work has been done with middle-aged and elderly people and the impact that exercise has on keeping our brain's cognitive abilities alive as we age, and its ability to cut the incidence of Alzheimer's disease in half. Indeed, exercise has been shown to delay the decline by as much as 10 to 15 years. It was noticed in the early 1990s that exercise had a marvellous impact, over and above its effect on the cardiac system. That led to the first studies looking at what exercise did to help protect the brain and make it grow, resulting in many neuroscientific and clinical studies, which produced wonderful evidence of exercise's ability to preserve and even improve cognition.

Are there any other groups who particularly benefit?

There's a whole chapter on women because they get more out of exercise. During times of hormonal shift, especially during pregnancy, it's very important that women should be moving. It keeps them less depressed, more able to deal with stress, and has a very positive effect on the baby's



Dr John Ratey, of Harvard Medical School, is fascinated by the effect exercise has on mental health

Dr Ratey has found that a lot of people who have learning problems also have problems with balance

brain; studies show that the babies of mothers who exercise while pregnant are more responsive.

In the UK, there have also been studies into the effect of exercise on post-natal depression. This condition is mainly treated with medicine, but these studies added exercise too, and the mums in the exercise groups did better.

Are there any other areas where exercise impacts mental health?

The reason I started this project was a result of learning how exercise combats depression and poor mood. Now, there are a number of very significant studies looking at the benefits of exercise compared to anti-depressants, which have shown exercise to be just as effective (SB06/1 p110). When you exercise, you release neural transmitters in the brain, which is what many of our psychiatric drugs are designed to do. But you do it naturally, and eventually you build up stores of these chemicals, and receptors for them, which change the brain.

You say people become less anxious. Does exercise treat anxiety?

The chapter on anxiety and stress is the most important one in the book. It looks at how exercise reduces stress on many different levels, and how it affects the brain's response to stress – its ability to cope with it, rather than over-reacting when it's encountered. If our nerve cells become more resilient, our brain does too, meaning that we're able to withstand more.

What's the science behind all this?

There are many wonderful things released when you exercise. It would take a long time to explain it all, but one such thing is a protein called BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor), which has a lot to do with mood, learning and preserving the cells. I call it Miracle-Gro or 'brain fertiliser', as it enhances brain function by encouraging the growth of connections between individual brain cells.

Also, although you don't release much human growth hormone when you're older – it decreases after adolescence – when you do a couple of 30-second intervals of very intense exercise, you release human growth hormone, as well as nitrous

oxide which helps make the arteries young again. We also know that fat content in the body negatively correlates with cognitive performance, and a lot of studies are now showing that obesity really begins to kill brain cells, particularly in children and older adults. In fact, many of the people working on Alzheimer's are calling it 'type 3 diabetes', because it's so related to our sedentary lives and our over-fed state.

“The more thinking you have to do while you're moving, the better the effect on the brain. Running on the treadmill will get your heart rate up, but if you add in a cognitive challenge, you will experience even more benefits.”

Did anything surprise you?

The big surprise was the effect exercise has on women in pregnancy. In Germany they even have exercise bikes in their labour and delivery suites, as their studies have shown that exercise can reduce the need for pain medication.

Then there's the idea of exercise as stress inoculation. With 'good stress', you challenge your brain and then have a recovery period during which growth occurs. When you learn French, for example, you only stress one part of the brain – but when you exercise, you stress your whole brain because of everything your body's doing.

What sort of exercise brings about these brain-enhancing benefits?

The big thing is getting your heart rate up, so aerobic training is best – the really good stuff is sprinting – but there's

a very positive effect from anaerobic or weight training too. And it's not just about intensity. The amount of time is important as well – going as fast as you possibly can for 30 seconds. With deconditioned and overweight people, though, you won't be able to start there. You'll need to build them up, focusing on conditioning and building muscle to reduce fat.

Balance training is also important. We're learning more and more, for example, that balance has an effect especially on attention, memory and moods. It's therefore of benefit across the board – for older people and for children with conditions such as dyslexia or ADD. The Dore programme, for instance, involves a series of exercises that are basically balance and cerebellar exercises to help train the cerebellum and improve reading and attention. The Dore research was pretty good at first but has not been repeated much, which has caused much controversy in the field. Nevertheless, I think balance is important: a lot of people who have ADD and learning problems do also have co-ordination problems.

How can operators tap into all this?

Fitness instructors should not only build people up towards the ideal intense bursts of activity, but should also continually test people with different kinds of exercise tasks. Running on the treadmill will get your heart rate up, but if you add a cognitive challenge at the same time – such as moving in a certain way or having to run around obstacles – you will experience even more benefits. The more thinking you have to do while you're moving, the better the effect on the brain.

The momentum behind the use of exercise for mental, as well as physical, health is gathering pace. But my objective is to fundamentally change our culture, so we re-learn the benefits of exercise and work it in as part of our everyday lives. ●



PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/ALFRED FISHER LARSEN

SUSIE ELIIS • PRESIDENT • SPA FINDER, INC.

PHOTOS: ISTOCK.COM/LIV FERIS LARSEN/DAN WILTON/FALL/RAO



Heads up

A growing number of spas are introducing programmes to improve the functionality of the brain. Susie Ellis finds out why operators should pay attention



The Mind Spa Mental Fitness Center in Florida has state-of-the-art neurotechnology (above) and offers various mental fitness programmes

With well-publicised medical studies revealing that when it comes to brains you've got to 'use them or lose them', combined with a huge, ageing baby boomer population and Alzheimer's disease rapidly spreading around the globe, brain health is increasingly on people's minds. So it's not surprising that spas are beginning to add offerings relating to mental fitness or brain workouts that address the health of the brain, just as they have always helped people develop healthy and fit bodies.

In fact, 'brain health' and 'mind gyms' are two new buzzwords in the spa and wellness arena, and diverse approaches are frequently showing up on spa menus and literature. In its 2009 Trends Forecast SpaFinder (see p2) named brain health programming one of the top emerging trends. Much like the sleep health concept we identified back in 2006 (SB06/4 p72), the spa industry is just at the cusp of a trend that will gather significant momentum in the years to come, as brain health offerings not only become a new source of business for existing spa establishments, but also continue to spawn specialised centres.

FUELLING THE TREND

Why this new cultural preoccupation with brain functionality and health, and the related spa experimentation in this area? You would only pose that question if you were younger than the vast baby boomer population, aged between 45 to 63. Cognitive decline begins between 40 and 50 years-old and this is a generation that wants to live long and well – both mentally and physically. The world is also facing the possibility of an Alzheimer's and dementia pandemic. According to Alzheimer's Disease International, an estimated 30 million people globally are now suffering from Alzheimer's or dementia. By 2050 it's projected that this number will swell to more than 100 million. Recent studies have revealed that people are more fearful of getting Alzheimer's than they are of having heart disease, diabetes or strokes.

The emerging arena of brain health doesn't solely revolve around ageing or the aged: for instance, athletes train their brains to improve performance. It's not only scientists lead-



50FIFTY BODY-BRAIN GYM

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: SUSIE ELLIS

To more tangibly understand and experience this trend, I tried a brain/body workout at the 50fifty Body-Brain Gym in New York City.

In one corner of the brain gym was a small desk with a computer and two chairs. I was immediately struck by the vibrant colours used in the space. The walls had interesting designs, there were shiny red, yellow and blue kettlebells on the floor, lavender and cherry-coloured dumbbells on a rack and a colourful set of weight bars in one corner. I later learned that this was purposeful, as colour is said to stimulate the brain.

My training began with a circuit of alternating weight lifting exercises and one-minute PowerPlate segments. This was followed by what I soon began calling the 'dreaded kettlebells' which had me hoping for a reprieve after an exhausting



number of repetitions. After the intense 45-minute physical workout, it was time to tackle 15 minutes of brain exercises on the computer. I was led through various games

which would help test and then improve my brain in a variety of areas such as short term memory and brain flexibility. Each of the games/puzzles/video challenges were clever and fun – and increasingly difficult.

After my hour-long workout, I was convinced this trend will continue to evolve and grow. The brain exercises were performed after my physical body had warmed up and the blood flow to my brain increased. And it makes utter sense: everyone knows how sharp one feels at work if they worked out that morning.

I believe 'brain training' could become an important new spa franchise opportunity, like Exhale (14 locations in the US and growing) or even Curves (10,000 locations worldwide). We'll certainly see this dual mind-body workout popping up in spas and gyms across the globe.

ing the way with their understanding of the brain, however – the computer gaming industry is also aggressively getting into the mix: providing numerous, diverse game offerings specifically designed to challenge the brain.

SMART SPAS

Although some physicians argue that much of the medical research on brain health is still in the very early stages, there is ever-mounting evidence showing that the human brain is continually adapting and rewiring itself and that we can produce new neurons, even in old age.

The more authoritative studies underscore that cardiovascular exercise (SB09/4 p40), mental exercise, relaxation techniques, healthy foods and sleep all improve brain function – and these are precisely the cornerstones of modern spa programming.

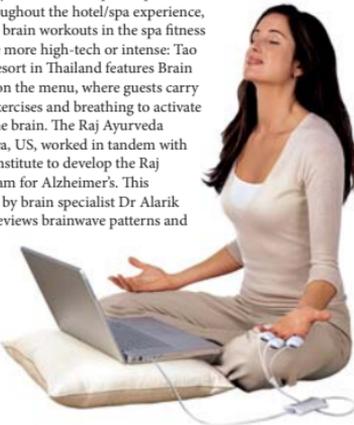
With new, compelling research validating this wider focus on brain health, combined with spa-goers often being early adopters of complementary wellness modalities, it makes sense that spas would begin putting into action what researchers are only just beginning to suggest.

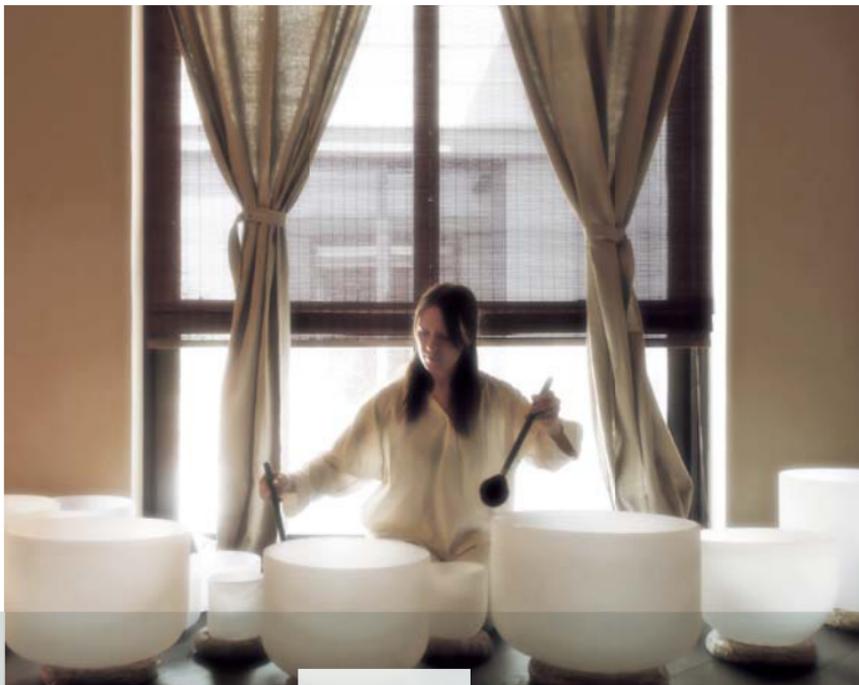
The examples of brain programming underway at spas are diverse. Some spas are integrating brain-boosting practices that challenge grey matter to tasks such as juggling, ballroom dancing, chess, t'ai chi, yoga or modelling clay. Meanwhile others, such as Canyon Ranch, are adding educational programmes directed by neuroscientists, designed to give guests the tools to make brain health a part of their wellness regimen. Elsewhere, spas such as the Mind Spa Mental Fitness Center in Florida are incorporat-

ing specific curricula like the one created by Lawrence C Katz, the late professor of neurobiology at Duke University, whose unique system called Neurobics™ is based on using the five physical senses in unexpected ways: whether that is dressing with your eyes closed, combining two senses like listening to music while smelling flowers, or eating with your non-dominant hand.

Some spa approaches are quite simple and intuitive: for instance, Westin Resorts recently unveiled a programme dubbed BrainBodyFitness that disperses puzzles and brain-teasers throughout the hotel/spa experience, as well as offering brain workouts in the spa fitness centre. Others are more high-tech or intense: Tao Garden Health Resort in Thailand features Brain Synchronization on the menu, where guests carry out pelvic floor exercises and breathing to activate more energy in the brain. The Raj Ayurveda Health Spa in Iowa, US, worked in tandem with a brain research institute to develop the Raj Prevention Program for Alzheimer's. This programme is led by brain specialist Dr Alarik Arenander who reviews brainwave patterns and

One US-based spa offers a 'mind massage' with an interactive computer programme





The Fonteverde spa resort in Italy uses music in its brain health programmes to encourage relaxation

then prescribes treatments based on a combination of transcendental meditation, herbal and mineral supplements and ayurvedic therapies to help to prevent the onset of age-related cognitive disorders.

The examples just keep multiplying. The cutting-edge Dolder Grand Spa in Zurich, Switzerland, has developed a comprehensive brain health programme in collaboration with the University of Zurich. The Spa at the Broadmoor in Colorado, US, offers a 'mind massage': a massage that incorporates Healing Rhythms, an interactive computer biofeedback programme (see picture opposite) with music modules to promote deep breathing, meditation and relaxation. Similarly, the Fonteverde spa resort in Italy features a Music of the Brain treatment where guests' brain functions are mapped and personalised music CDs to specifically relax/boost their brain are created. The California Health and Longevity Institute at the Four Seasons in California, US, (SB08/4 p46) uses clinical hypnotherapy (along with meditation and breathing therapies) to train the brain to concentrate, which is also aimed at improving moods and sleep.

DON'T BE NARROW-MINDED

My word of warning to the spa industry is to avoid narrowly associating brain health programmes with growing old. Rather than just targeting ageing baby boomers and people who are suffering from, or worried about, memory loss, brain health offerings should be made available to all generations. Brain health affects us at every age, and

in every aspect of life: from work, athletic and academic performance to helping to create healthy families, boost reproduction and maintain sexual health. In other words, we shouldn't make the mistake of exclusively applying the brain health issue to programmes for, or about, ageing.

I'm sounding the alarm because I see us heading down that road already, with facility and programme names such as 50-50 or Alive after 50 or Ultra Mind for the Senior Citizen. A few years ago when SpaFinder was studying the spa lifestyle real estate trend, we discovered that one reason people resonated with the term 'spa community' was because they were adverse to terms such as 'retirement community', 'active adults', 'ageing' or 'elderly'. It isn't a happy thought, or a good marketing strategy, to associate your offerings with images that conjure up an 80-year-old person not functioning well! Also, by exclusively associating brain health with ageing and memory loss, you're completely eliminating the potentially powerful interest from younger generations, who could benefit from brain health and fitness, and who uniquely understand the life-long pursuit of wellness.

While the industry needs to be rigorous, stay abreast of the developing medical research, and not make claims for that which hasn't been verified, the rise of focusing on the brain in spas is exciting and to be encouraged. Yes, the trend is still in its infancy - but don't be surprised to walk into a spa/gym in the future where everyone on exercise machines is playing brain-boosting video games. We're sure to see a whole spectrum of mind-body therapies unfold that we can now only imagine. ●

GAME PLAN

Attracting a new, younger audience is the aim of the team behind G Spa at Foxwoods, one of the biggest gaming properties in the world. But how are they doing this?

PETER SARGENT • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

There are many Native American gaming resorts but the most successful is owned by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation (MPTN) of south-east Connecticut. This tribe has lived in the location for 6,000 years, although their numbers and lands abruptly declined after fighting European colonists. The remaining poverty-stricken members eventually achieved US government tribal recognition in 1983 placing their 1,400 acres (567 hectares) of reservation into trust. In 1986 they opened a bingo hall on their land, but in 1992 went on to develop the Foxwoods Casino Resort, one of the largest casinos in the world.

Foxwoods consists of four hotels – Grand Pequot Tower, Great Cedar Hotel, Two Trees Inn and the US\$700m (€490.11m, £422.49m) MGM Grand, which opened in May 2008. Although it's called MGM Grand, it was funded and is managed entirely by MPTN. Off-site, MPTN also owns The Spa at Norwich Inn (see p48), the Hilton Mystic Hotel and the Lake of Isles Golf Courses.

Overall 340,000sq ft (31,600sq m), or 14 per cent, of the Foxwoods resort complex is dedicated to gaming (see p48 again). An emphasis is also placed on conference facilities, which account for 55,000sq ft (5,100sq m), or 8 per cent, of space. Recognising the potential for conference guests, a further 115,000sq ft (10,700sq m) of meeting facilities were factored into the new MGM Grand building.

So, just how does the spa fit into the mix and what's the secret to enticing leisure and corporate visitors over the threshold?

HIP AND TRENDY

Spa is by no means a new concept to Foxwoods: it has been operating its Grand Salon & Spa on the ninth floor of the Grand Pequot Tower for 17 years. This 25,000sq ft (2,300sq m) facility comprises a beautiful, top-lit swimming pool, with a large spa pool, 12 treatments rooms where therapies using Pevonia products are performed, a whirlpool, a steamroom, a sauna and a gym with Paramount equipment, as well as a hair salon.



Since opening, the spa has been managed in-house by Kathy Ormsby who controls 80 staff, the majority of whom have been with her for over 10 years – she puts this loyalty down to the generous MPTN employee benefits and her open 'yes, you can talk to me right now' policy. She estimates the spa capture rate to be between 30 to 40 per cent and adds that the early and mid-week slots, which are typically quiet for most businesses, are busy for them, as the 10,000 MPTN employees are encouraged to make use of spa discounts during these times.

Knowing the MGM Grand would attract a younger, conference crowd aged from 30 to 45 – in contrast to guests at Foxwoods Casino Resort, the majority of whom are 45 and over – MPTN wanted to create a fresh, new spa concept that would appeal to this target market. To do so, they turned to Gretta Monahan.

Monahan has a trendsetting profile in all things style and beauty in the New England area. The founder and CEO of Gretta Enterprises, she runs three trendy Grettacole salons – with 'energetic staff... offering the latest techniques in massage therapy, skincare, hairstyle and colour' – along with two Gretta Luxe fashion boutiques in Boston. Monahan also operates Grettastyle Studio, an invitation-only VIP beauty and style service in New York City and in 2003 she opened her first G Spa – G



Gretta Monahan's fashionable image and her trendy G Spa brand were the perfect match for MGM and its target market



Spa City – in Boston's upscale Back Bay neighbourhood. Monahan says: "I had three years running salons and clients would tell me their daughters would like to come too, but they wanted a different experience: they wanted the choice of an extended quiet treatment or an efficient spa service depending on their time slot."

She describes G Spa City as "an express spa for the young, hip and time-pressed" which offers quick 10-, 15- and 30-minute manicures and massages, but it still has a selection of longer therapies too. What's refreshing about her approach is that it's not just for the elite, but for every woman.

She says: "We carry a broad retail offering with a varied price point to accommodate both baby boomers, generation Xers and beyond. Savvy spa mothers, daughters and professionals are well versed in quality products and services. G Spa is state-of-the-art, yet minimalist, and that's what makes it desirable to both women of all ages and men."

A LATE ENTRY

The G Spa philosophy, along with Monahan's personal, in vogue image seemed a perfect fit with the new audience that Foxwoods wanted the MGM Grand to attract.

Monahan was approached in 2006 by a former Foxwoods CEO John O'Brien to expand her G Spa City offering and create a resort spa for MGM. She worked on this

for a year until a change in Foxwoods top management team halted development. Then, 60 days before the grand opening, MPTN contracted her company

G Group Consultants – which she set up with spa consultant and previous Gillette head honcho Bernie Condelli – to manage the spa once again.

Monahan credits Gillian Murphy, senior vice-president of resort operations for the Mashantucket Pequot Gaming Enterprises (MPGE) for getting the G Spa at MGM Grand opening back on track. She says: "Gillian is an amazing business partner: she took lead and focused on fast tracking the final construction phase, which enabled us to open on time and in perfect form."

Previous involvement in the project meant G Group made only minor changes at the late stage. They brought in the Kerastase haircare and Peter Thomas Roth and June Jacobs skincare lines and hired all the staff, using their contacts in the area.

MPTN and its architects, HKS Architects, which worked on projects such as The Palazzo at the Las Vegas Venetian, and interior designers, Wilson & Associates, the company behind the Atlantis resort in the Bahamas, have all hit the spot when it comes to the design of G Spa at MGM Grand. The 21,000sq ft (1,950sq m)

G Spa at MGM Grand has a clean and contemporary look and is in complete contrast to the more conventional Grand Salon & Spa also on-site

facility, which had a fit-out cost of US\$14.7m (€10.29m, £8.87m), has a clean and contemporary look; there are almost no decorative flourishes, just very

high-quality finishes and restrained lighting. It's a big contrast to the decorative panels and columns of the more conventional Grand Salon & Spa.

The facilities comprise 12 generous treatment rooms, including one for couples, hydrotherapy and two for Vichy showers; a hair and nail salon; and a health and fitness club with a gym equipped by Life Fitness, a lap pool, three hot tubs and men's and women's changing rooms featuring steam, sauna and relaxation areas.

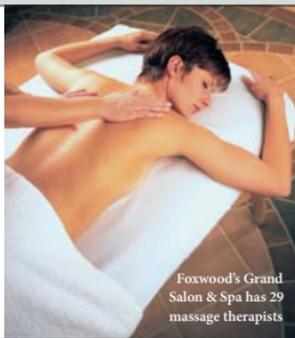
TARGET MARKETS

The modern feel of the G Spa at MGM Grand seems to be doing the trick for all visitors, as treatment room occupancy ranges from 70 to 90 per cent. However, Condelli says capture rates are difficult to pinpoint: "It all depends on the type of guest we have: some conferences work their delegates too hard." Newly appointed spa manager, Charisse Duroure, agrees: "We have a large conference right now with delegates who are all young, fit ideal spa users, but they have sessions early morning to late afternoon and only have time for a

FOXWOODS BY NUMBERS

- Foxwoods boasts 2,250 bedrooms
- Gaming facilities consist of six casinos, 7,200 slots and 380 tables
- There are also 30 restaurants, 24 retail shops and five entertainment venues
- Meeting spaces at Foxwoods comprise a 25,000sq ft (2,300sq m) ballroom and 25 conference rooms, while the new MGM includes a 50,000sq ft (4,650sq m) ballroom and a 4,000-seat theatre
- The average stay is 1.8 days
- From April to August 2009 occupancy was 98 per cent
- International guests account for only 1 per cent of custom

- The Grand Salon & Spa has 29 massage therapists, 14 receptionists, 11 stylists, six facial therapists and 10 nail technicians plus 11 pool and locker room attendants
- The most popular treatments at the Grand Salon & Spa are pedicures, which start at US\$70 (£49, £42) for 60 minutes
- G Spa at MGM Grand has 19 massage therapists, five aestheticians, five nail technicians and four hair stylists
- The most frequently requested treatment at G Spa at MGM Grand is a massage, which costs US\$130 (£91, £78) for 50 minutes



Foxwood's Grand Salon & Spa has 29 massage therapists

quick gym session in the evening." For this reason, spa services are available until 8pm and the fitness area stays open until 9pm.

On top of this, the menu boasts a selection of 'mini-services' such as the 15-minute G Whiz Chair Massage for US\$35 (£25, £21) or a Blackberry thumbs and wrist massage. For those who can afford more time out, there are a range of more indulgent facials, body therapies and customised treatments.

Moving forwards, the team at G Spa at MGM Grand would like to tap into local custom. The surrounding, affluent catchment boasts more than 27 million potential customers within a 200-mile radius (including New York City and Boston). Marketing will be carried out in collaboration with Foxwoods public relations department, which targets local press including newspapers and TV stations such as Fox 61 in Hartford.

Despite its modern approach, the spa pays homage to the MPTN with Native American-inspired therapies which use traditional tribal ingredients such as clay, maize and various herbs.

While the most popular treatment is massage, which 70 per cent of guests opt for, Duroure also sees couples treatments

being a growth area: "We're telling gaming spouses (male and female) that we can look after them in our spa and salons all day. Couples rooms are popular and we have a very generous size room for them."

The majority (90 per cent) of spa revenue comes from treatments, yet Duroure and Condelli are also pleased with retail performance in the first year. Next on the list is a comprehensive retail plan, which may include new and customised product lines.

The real key to future success, however, lies within the spa's employees. Condelli says: "The present generation of spa-goes is different to their mothers who spent US\$60 (£52, £36) a month on hair and make-up. The daughters spend that every week and know about spa culture and what they like. You don't have to sell the concept to them but the market is saturated and so you have to give them excellent personal service. Which, of course, we do!"

ADDED VALUE

The financial success of Foxwoods Casino Resort, which has an annual turnover of US\$1.2bn (£840.45m, £724.31m), is no surprise when you see how the MPTN plans developments, manages its staff and property and how it markets to its exten-

sive repeat guests, most of whom visit four times a year. The marketing department has an email database of 70,000 former guests and an important marketing tool is the Dream Card. Guests sign-up for a card which earns gaming points to be spent at the resort. Both spa managers say Dream Card points are frequently exchanged for treatments and products.

The Grand Salon & Spa is very successful: treatment rooms are 60 per cent full during the week and usually sold out at weekends. G Spa, although still developing, is rapidly bringing new ideas and a new type of guest to the MPTN culture.

Lori Potter, director of PR for MPGE emphasises that resort's overall goal is to be the pre-eminent destination in New England and that the aim of the spa team is to make each guest feel valued, pampered and renewed. She says: "Visitors to our spa include day guests as well as overnight travellers. In today's economic climate, Foxwoods attracts a variety of 'staycationers'; patrons within a reasonable driving distance who want to get away to for a day or perhaps an extended weekend. Whatever the length of stay, we find our clients appreciate our spas as amenities that they can afford to frequently indulge in." ●



The Spa at Norwich Inn

OTHER MPTN PROPERTIES

The Spa at Norwich Inn, the third wellness facility for the MPTN, is situated on a 42-acre (17-hectare) site 10 miles from Foxwoods. This Georgian colonial mansion dates back to the 1920s and has always been a haven for the rich and famous. A free-standing spa was added when the Edward J Safdie Group, owners of the Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa in California, bought it in 1983. The MPTN acquired the property in 1994 and in 2000 spent US\$15m (£10.51m, £9.05m) on renovating the 100 guestrooms and doubling the size of the spa to 20,000sq ft (1,850sq m). The spa now offers 36 treatment rooms, a fitness centre, one indoor and two outdoor swimming pools, male and female changing facilities with a whirlpool, sauna and steamroom, a relaxation area and a small salon.

The 182-guest room Hilton Mystic Hotel in south Connecticut and the 36-hole Lake of Isles Golf Courses adjacent to Foxwoods, complete MPTN's property portfolio.



Dr Paulo Malo has spent his life pioneering dental surgery techniques, helping older adults and victims of serious accidents

Dr Paulo Malo

Dr Paulo Malo is a man who knows about teeth. Since graduating from the Faculty of Dental Medicine at the University of Lisbon, in Portugal in 1989, he has gained an enviable reputation in his field, co-authoring textbooks and writing scientific papers. He has dedicated his life to pioneering dental surgery techniques – 14 of which are patented – treating older adults and victims of serious accidents. Most notably, he developed All-on-4, a simple, yet revolutionary, rehabilitation procedure which allows fixed teeth to be placed in one operation, without cuts or stitches, in just 30 minutes. In addition to this, Dr Malo has created a company which employs 1,500 staff worldwide and which is expected to generate a €50m (US\$71.39m, £43.04m) turnover in 2009.

Dr Malo's business ventures began in 1995 with the opening of the first Malo Clinic for implantology and fixed oral

The dental surgeon behind the Malo Clinic Spa talks about developing a medical spa concept, his latest launch in Sardinia and his vision for an international rollout

rehabilitation, in Lisbon and the launch of health management and consultancy company the Malo Clinic Health & Wellness Group. The 60,000sq m (645,850q ft) headquarters offer 96 dental offices, 18 operating rooms and recovery suites and an education centre which trains 3,500 dental professionals a year.

Since its inception, the Malo Clinic philosophy has been to provide patients with a full check-up and complete health diagnosis, to supply professional maintenance, to administer high-quality treatments and to encourage recuperation

in a relaxing environment. With the latter in mind, it's no surprise that the company has developed a wellness element – Malo Clinic Spa – where patients can take time out to recover. Other specialties it has branched out into include assisted fertilisation, gynaecology and paediatrics, dermatology and aesthetic plastic surgery, psychology, and gastroenterology, obesity treatment, nutrition and physical therapy.

Following a €100m (US\$142.78m, £86.09m) personal capital investment, the Malo Clinic brand has gradually expanded onto five continents via standalone clinics or partnerships with international hotel groups. Today there are 22 clinics, including six run via partnerships, 13 of which have spas.

Speaking to *Spa Business*, Dr Malo reveals the details of his latest clinic and spa which launched on the Italian island of Sardinia this May, the group's US\$46m (€42m, £36.15m) debut in Asia and his global expansion plans.

When and where did the first Malo Clinic Spa open?

Our headquarters in Lisbon was the first to offer our medical spa concept in 2007. This only consisted of a small aesthetic area, but we're now in the process of building a new 3,000sq m (32,300sq ft) wellness area which will feature medical, aesthetic, fitness and water facilities.

Would you classify Malo Clinic Spa as a dental spa?

No, Malo Clinic Spa is a medi-spa. In my opinion there is no such thing as a dental spa because spa means 'health through water' and I don't think that dental treatments can take place in a wet environment. However, we find that the spa element certainly has an advantageous effect on the client during their healing process.

What does a typical Malo Clinic Spa include?

In order to meet the needs of patients who attend our rehabilitation clinics – some of whom may have been involved in serious accidents and need to regain their self-esteem alongside their physical wellness – our spas offer customised health, wellness and beauty treatments. They provide comfort to our patients before and after dental and other medical procedures.

Our spas offer body and facial treatments, holistic therapies and wraps along with basic beauty services such as manicures, pedicures and waxing. They also usually feature swimming pools, thermal suites and fitness centres where personal training and group exercise classes can help to relieve stress.

In each spa, a medical team receives and follows every patient's case to ensure a complete diagnosis service and advise the wellness therapists on the type of treatment that will best aid their recovery.

We have a network of clinics and spas in international resorts, which allow patients to choose where they want to have their treatment and recuperate, whether at a mountain, safari, thermal or casino resort.

Who is your target audience?

English, French and German nationals are our most regular patients, but of course this base is expanding into the US,



China, Australia, Africa and the Middle East as we strengthen the brand.

I'm normally based at the Malo Clinic in Lisbon, where we treat an average of 25,000 patients a month, although I only focus on complicated cases as my know-how is also required in research.

What's the average cost of a treatment?

An All-on-4 can vary from €5,000 (US\$7,150, £4,300) to €20,000, (US\$28,550, £17,200) depending on the complexity of the case. A basic, 50-minute relaxation massage costs €60 (US\$86, £52).

What's on offer at your first Asian spa?

The soft opening of our clinic and spa at The Venetian Casino Resort in Macau was this June. This site in an excellent example of how we link our health and wellness

Most spas have the same look and services such as relaxation areas (above)

disciplines. The US\$46m (€42m, £36.15m) clinic is staffed by over 50 medical doctors and 100 spa therapists and covers 894,400sq ft (7,850sq m). Therapists include physiotherapists as well as beauty specialists trained in Oriental, traditional and therapeutic massage.

The clinic consists of six operating theatres and diagnostic technology such as MRI scans used in radiology, eye lasers and digital mammography. The services include general, physical and plastic surgery, ophthalmology and aesthetics.

The spa comprises 58 treatment rooms, hydrotherapy facilities and a hair salon. The patients also have access to the hotel's extensive leisure amenities, including a golf course, during their stay.

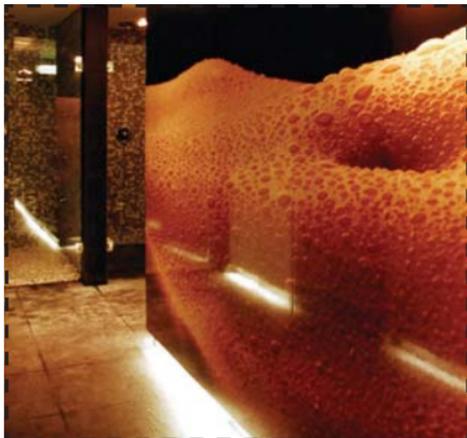
Why did you open a clinic at GeoVillage in Sardinia?

When we do business we not only do it well, we do it big. We chose GeoVillage in Olbia because of its unique location, its extensive sports facilities and to further cement our relationship with the Sol Meliá international hotel group. Our partnership was officially announced in March 2009 with the opening of the Malo Clinic Spa in the Meliá Madeira Mare, Portugal.

Set in 14 hectares (35 acres) of Mediterranean gardens, GeoVillage boasts extensive outdoor and indoor sports facilities, that can accommodate up to 2,500 spectators. A 253-bedroom Sol Meliá hotel offers conference facilities, a separate bar and restaurant piazza, an outdoor leisure pool and a fitness suite with kit by Technogym, a Kinesio pilates studio and an exercise studio.



The tisanaria in Sardinia offers a wide variety of herbal teas and infusions



"A medical team receives and follows each spa guest to ensure a complete diagnosis service and to advise wellness therapists on the type of treatment that will best aid their recovery"

How did you set up the operation?

After we agreed terms with Sol Meliá, we moved into the complex's existing spa area, formerly the Maurice Massage Wellness Centre, in May this year. Malo Productions, headed up by my sister, designed the international spa concept and converted the spa in just 15 days, which involved 20 people doing 24-hour shifts. Most of these changes focused on rebranding the interior and adding fixtures, fittings and equipment sent over from Lisbon.

We kept some treatments on the original menu, but have also added new ones such as Malo Sensations, a 90-minute sensory massage where heated herbal pouches are placed over the body.

What's on offer at the facility?

The spa covers 2,325sq m (25,050sq ft) and its medical area features 14 rooms for aesthetics, anti-ageing and sports-related treatments. An aesthetics area offers 13 therapy rooms for body and facial treatments as well as manicure, pedicure and waxing treatments. Relaxation facilities within the aqua area include a sauna, a Turkish steamroom, an aromatic Mediterranean steamroom, a sounding pool with colour and music therapy, a planter pool which has a stones at the bottom

Malo Clinic Spa opened in Sardinia this May (above left and right); the spas sit alongside dental operating theatres (above right)

to stimulate the feet, a firming and toning circuit pool, experience showers and massage beds and armchairs. A chill out lounge is also available and a 'tisanaria' or tearoom offers a wide variety of specially-prepared herbal teas and infusions.

What spa products do you use?

We work with Terraké and Clarins and we're also developing our own brand of products.

The Malo Clinic Spa treatment menu is standard to the brand, but will evolve according to the specific needs of patients in each location. I would imagine that sports-related therapies will become particularly popular at GeoVillage because of the many sports clients that it will attract.

How did you recruit staff?

We recruited many of our fully-qualified doctors and therapists from mainland



Italy or from other Malo Clinic Spas. The majority of beauty therapists, however, used to work at the previous spa here and we're now training them in-house on our specific treatments and on our high-standard of customer service.

What are your future plans?

We hope to upgrade some of our existing spas. At the Meliá Madeira Mare, for example, we plan to offer more medical spa facilities due to the high number of medical tourists in the country.

By the end of 2010, we hope to open eight more brand new Malo Clinic Spas. ●

feet first

It's surprising what pleasure can be derived from so simple an activity as removing your socks and shoes. Anyone who has exposed their bare feet to the warmth of a sandy beach on holiday or stepped unshod onto cool, springy grass will be able to attest to the delicious feeling of exhilaration as they free their feet from the confines of footwear and reconnect with nature.

The benefits of walking barefoot have long been recognised in Asia, where reflexology paths are widely available and used daily to enhance health and wellbeing. In Europe, the Bavarian priest Sebastian Kneipp was one of the earliest proponents of the prac-



PHOTOS: LIENSEN PARK, GERMANY

Barefoot paths are growing in popularity. We explore the different types, their health benefits and what they could add to a spa operation

tice, encouraging his charges to take long walks barefoot across fields and woodlands as they subscribed to his particular system of hydrotherapy – Kneipp therapy – to ease their complaints. In his book, *My Water Cure*, published in 1886, Kneipp said: "Walking barefoot on a wet meadow is unsurpassed in its calming effect."

Kneipp's practices attracted widespread attention during his lifetime and continue to hold favour today, particularly in Germany, where barefoot walking remains a popular activity. In the UK, the first barefoot trail launched in Wales in March 2009 at the family attraction Greenwood Forest Park. So, just what are the health benefits involved?

BAREFOOT BENEFITS

Advocates of barefoot walking say there are many reasons why we should regularly kick off our shoes and connect with nature.

Dr Elizabeth Marazita, a US-based reflexologist who provides consultancy and design services to spas in Europe and North America, says barefoot walking encourages natural gait and movement of the body. "The way our foot reacts with the ground determines how the rest of our body is positioned. Shoes change our natural posture, therefore, possibly altering the structure and function of the body's natural systems."

She cites research by Fuzong Li in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* in 2005, which found that walking on reflexology paths can lower blood pressure and improve balance. Those who regularly walk a reflexology path barefoot can also experience some of the benefits associated with traditional reflexology treatments, she says. These include, but are not limited to, reduced anxiety, stress management, increased bladder control, reduced pain from surgery and relief from constipation and depression.

Marazita co-founded Paths of Health with her husband Michael Spano, a licensed acupuncturist and a professor of Chinese medicine. Together they work with a range of clients to design and install tailored reflexology paths and provide training as well as instructional videos to ensure optimum use of the paths. In Washington, US, they worked closely with architects to install a reflexology path at Spa Agio and also with the King County Parks System to create three of the very first reflexology paths in public parks in the US.

Marazita says there are differences between reflexology paths and natural barefoot trails. "Reflexology paths are





designed to allow the user to focus on specific reflex areas, as well as walking for his or her general health benefit. Various reflex zones are stimulated, depending on the path surface structure and design. Natural barefoot paths are not therapeutically designed with specific health benefits in mind," she explains.

Nonetheless, natural barefoot paths are a wonderful way of getting back to the basics of outdoor barefoot walking she says. "For many people, this is a shock in itself."

GERMAN INFLUENCE

Willie Reitz, a German spa operator and the man responsible for England's only barefoot path at Trentham Estate in Stoke-on-Trent, regularly walks barefoot trails and considers them an important part of his health regime. He would like to include a path at his Calypso spa in Saarbrücken if only he had the space.

A shareholder in the Trentham Estate, Reitz took some of the staff to visit his local barefoot paths in the Black Forest before introducing the concept to the 750-acre (304-hectare) estate. Michael Walker, garden and estate manager at Trentham, took part in the trip and says the English version is somewhat milder than those he experienced in Germany. "Ours is shorter than a typical German walk, which left my feet scratched and bruised after a 2-mile (3.2-km) hike over some very rough surfaces.

The Trentham barefoot Park path is 1km long and boasts a total of 24 different terrains, from mud and mulch to sand and shingle

The Trentham Barfuss [barefoot] Park path is much more gentle."

Approximately 3.2ft (1m) wide and 1km (1,000m) in length, the trail is modelled on the principles of Kneipp and encompasses a total of 24 different terrains from soft grass, mulch and

mud to cold water, smooth pebbles and shingle.

Trentham's own staff designed and built the path following their experiences in Germany. Walker estimates that £50,000 (US\$83,150, €58,550) was invested in the venture with the additional cost of labour. "It's important for us that the garden attracts a broad audience and that the Barfuss Park is an entirely appropriate complement to the rest of the existing garden," he says.

"Certainly, tens of thousands of visitors have used the walk. It's great fun and a really good family activity. Children love it – even toddlers walk it two or three times. Older visitors find it more challenging, but that's half the attraction."

The cost of the Barfuss Park at Trentham is included in the garden's admission price of £7 (US\$12, €8), but most barefoot walks in Germany charge a nominal fee – perhaps for parking – if anything at all. Anecdotal evidence suggests there are more than 60 barefoot walks scattered throughout Germany.

Sensory zone

Elsewhere in Europe they can be found, of varying lengths, in France, Austria, Denmark, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

SOLE ATTRACTION

There are many ways to design a barefoot walk, but each one should include a variety of textures to awaken the senses in the feet. These can vary from soft massaging surfaces like grass and sand to more challenging textures such as shingle and coarse gravel. The different surfaces are believed to stimulate the cardiovascular system, regulate blood pressure and thereby improve circulation. Advocates of barefoot walking also believe it can strengthen the body's immune system, as minerals and elements from the ground can be absorbed through the soles of the feet.

Many trails start and end with a Kneipp cold water basin to enliven the feet, like the barefoot walk in Lienen, which advises users to tread water for three minutes before embarking on the 2.5km trail. Located on the edge of the Teutoburger Forest, Germany, the path was developed in 2002 to boost tourism. It worked. Around 5,000 visitors used the trail in its first year, and this grew to 90,000 in 2008.

In addition to a Kneipp water basin, many of the barefoot trails in Germany have developed over the years to include sound, scent and touch for a fuller sensory experience. Others incorporate balancing and climbing exercises or wading through streams. And some like the one in Lienen, play host to special events such as guided torch walks on nights of a full moon.

One of Germany's longest barefoot trails is found in Bad Orb in Hessa. The result of a volunteer project, the 4.5km long path lies next to the Kurshaus Hotel Bad Orb, which is owned and operated by Toscanaworld. Run by a husband and wife team, Klaus Dieter Bohm and Marion Schneider (the chair of the British International Spa Association), the site is currently being transformed into the Toskana Terme Bad Orb spa and hotel – scheduled for completion by mid-2010 – to complement the existing barefoot trail.



PHOTO: BAD ORB GERMANY

There are many different ways to design a barefoot walk, but each should include a variety of textures and mediums to stimulate the feet and the senses

PRACTICAL POINTERS

Regardless of their design, all natural barefoot trails require regular maintenance. Staff at the Trentham Estate conduct checks twice a day, while up to five volunteers spend half-a-day each week keeping the path in Lienen clean. Tasks include raking over sand, keeping the area free of litter and ensuring surfaces are safe.

Most walks provide lockers for shoes – Lienen invests the money it makes from locker hire back into the trail – as well as washing facilities for after the walk.

Tour guides can often be hired to conduct walks along the trails and many barefoot paths feature information boards instructing visitors how to use them. "We've found that readily available support and instruction are one of the primary reasons people continue to use the paths" says Marazita.

"In King County, we would often reach out to different groups on behalf of the parks department to instruct the local population on how best to use a path, and in spas where we have built paths, we train staff and provide DVDs and literature to support the training," Marazita concludes.

Barefoot walking appears to be enjoying a revival. The do-it-yourself reflexology allows users to enjoy a series of sensory experiences in a natural setting. It may be some time until barefoot paths become as prevalent in the rest of the world as they are in Asia, but with growing evidence to support their health benefits, they are worthy of consideration in a spa offering. ●

Barfuss Park, Trentham Estate

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: VICKY KIERNANDER

I've always considered myself an outdoors type, but the prospect of walking the Barfuss Park at the Italian Gardens of the Trentham Estate in Staffordshire in the pouring rain was not one I was relishing.

My guide Clive was sympathetic, but stoutly refused to join me in removing socks and shoes – "I've done it loads of times" – and a walker sheltering from the rain nearby looked on in amusement as I rolled up my jeans and prepared to log my experience in my soggy notebook.

The walk started gently with a series of surfaces that were pleasing to my feet.



The grass was soft and cool, the lumpy mulch strangely agreeable and the bridge of wooden logs was wonderful for massaging the arches of my feet. So far, so good.

The trouble started with the mud bath. Ordinarily, I would savour the sensation of squelching mud between my toes, but the freezing water that filled the bath took my breath away. I bit my lip and tried to concentrate on Clive's conversation as I waded through, but the experience was hideous. Other textures that fell into this category included the coarse concrete and shingle, which dug painfully into the soles of my feet, and the

cold water pools fed by the brook – my feeble feet appear to have zero tolerance to cold. Thankfully, these were interspersed with such surfaces as hay (lovely and soft), smooth round stones (firm and massaging) and sand (satisfyingly crunchy).

Back in my trainers after a quick wash in the cold foot showers, my feet felt unexpectedly light. A few hours later they throbbed and I felt exhausted. This overwhelming tiredness lasted all of the following day, but my feet felt great – strong and polished and well – used! It's a novel sensation, but one that I enjoyed very much and, as a result, I'd recommend Trentham Park – although I might wait for better weather before trying it again.



Armathwaite Hall, UK

Our journalist has nothing but praise for this new spa, so what makes it stand out from the crowd?

SARAH TODD - JOURNALIST - SPA BUSINESS

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Described by the novelist Sir Hugh Walpole as "a house of perfect and irresistible charm", the elegant Armathwaite Hall Country House Hotel certainly harks back to a gentler era.

Bordered by Bassenthwaite Lake, Armathwaite Hall is one of the original stately homes of England dating back to 1548. Currently privately owned by the resident Graves family, the property is surrounded by 400 acres (162 hectares) of park and woodland.

The hotel offers 42 bedrooms as well as wood-paneled public rooms with log fires and a conference centre.

In 2007, plans were unveiled to add a £5m (US\$8.31m, €5.81m) spa to the hotel. The interiors were created by designers Douglas Wallace and the spa consultant was Gill Haines. The spa opened in late January 2009.

THE EXPERIENCE

My visit to Armathwaite Hall Country House Hotel & Spa was exceptional – most notably for the excellent staff.

On arrival, the receptionist was friendly and polite, I was taken to the changing room and told that for my facial I could remove my bra, or keep it on, which I appreciated.

I was left in the relaxation area with a herbal tea and asked to fill in a consultation form. Jenna, my therapist, then escorted me to the treatment room and gave me a thorough appraisal to find out which type of facial would suit me. She explained each part of the 60-minute process and chose a combination of sensitive products and some with more active ingredients.

The treatment room was soundproofed, tidy and clean, and felt spacious. The temperature was perfect. The room had a row of wall-mounted, colour-changing light boxes and during my treatment, the lights were visible, even through closed eyelids, greatly encouraging relaxation.

Midway through my facial I had a reaction to one of the products. Jenna swiftly removed the cream and applied a calming tonic, before finding a gentler alternative and continuing. Throughout my facial, firm, Esalen-style strokes (which are intended to help harmonise the body) were used.

Following my treatment, I was given after-care advice and a couple of minutes to gather my thoughts. Slippers were placed at the side of my bed, and essential oils were thoughtfully sprinkled on the neck of my robe.

I was escorted to a Hush Room, where silence was encouraged. I was left in one of the chaises longues, tucked in with a duvet, a faux fur throw, and a glass of water.

The Hush Room is set up to welcome both men and women, with men's magazines such as *Esquire* sitting alongside the women's titles and more general publications such as *Condé Nast Traveller*.

The spa in general is male-friendly. The overall décor appeals to both sexes and other essential elements of the experience – such as the robes and slippers – were large enough for the average man.

I felt the spa lacked cross-promotion within the adjoining hotel: traffic could be boosted if the spa's product houses, Terraké and Comfort Zone, had a stronger presence both in the spa itself – in the changing room and swimming pool showers – and also, more importantly, if they were used as bedroom amenities, instead of the current brand.

In spite of this, there was lots of positive marketing and highlighting of the spa – it was even promoted on the back of the breakfast menus in the hotel – but there's the potential for more cross-marketing to build business even further.

Before the spa opened, operations manager Jenni Paling told her staff that the spa was a beautiful building, but that was all it was. Creating the rest of the experience for visitors was up to her team. From my stay, it was clear that The Spa at Armathwaite has transcended the bricks and mortar and is well on its way to becoming a successful and high-level wellness offering.



The spa has 10 treatment rooms, one of them is a double for couples' treatments



The outdoor hot tub overlooks the grounds of Armathwaite Hall and can be used by both able bodied people and those with disabilities

FACILITIES

The main pool is 52.4ft (16m) long, heated to 30° and has a waterfall running from floor to ceiling, as well as a colour-changing underwater lighting system. All water facilities were supplied by Barr & Wray.

Children of any age are allowed in the spa, although they have limited swimming hours and must be supervised at all times. There's also a smaller pool in this area and both are supervised by the fitness team who make regular checks. The pools can also be watched via CCTV.

An outdoor hot tub overlooks the grounds and the gym – equipped by Life Fitness – has running machines with views over a sensory garden. Additional facilities include a thermal suite – installed by Klafs – and a hydro pool, with water heated to 36°.

One treatment room has a disabled shower, plus lifts. The main swimming pool isn't very accessible, but disabled guests can swim with aid. There's complete accessibility to the smaller pool and the hydrotherapy areas, including the whirlpool and thermal facilities. There's also an hearing loop for deaf people.

On the second floor are 10 treatment rooms, including one double, as well as the Hush Room and a dance studio.

Great use is made of natural light, with large windows creating a sense of space.

Ultimately, Armthwaite's spa operates equally well as a stand-alone offering, or when combined with all that the adjoining luxury hotel has to offer. ●



THE SCORE

Booking.....	9/10
Facilities.....	8/10
Treatment.....	9/10
Afterscare.....	10/10
Value for money.....	8/10
Overall total.....	9/10

VITAL STATISTICS

Armathwaite Hall Country House Hotel & Spa, Bassenthwaite Lake, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 4RE, UK
 Contact: +44 (0)1768 776551
 Opening hours: 7am-9pm Monday to Saturday, 8am-8pm Sunday
www.armthwaite-hall.com

SAMPLE TREATMENTS

Signature treatment: **Armathwaite Tranquil Lakes** lasts 90 minutes and costs £120 (US\$282, €197). Taking place in a candlelit treatment room, this ritual includes a full-body exfoliation, a hydrotherapy bath and finishes with a full-body and scalp massage.

Massage: **Comfort Touch Full Body Tranquility Massage** costs £55 (US\$91, €64) for 60 minutes and is designed to relax and rebalance energy levels. **Luxury pedicure**: lasts 45 minutes, costs £40 (US\$66, €46) and incorporates a nail and cuticle tidy, an exfoliation and massage, heated mitts, a neck rub and nail paint.

RIGHT TO REPLY Carolyn Graves, director

We would like to thank Sarah for visiting The Spa at Armthwaite Hall and appreciate her comments. Since Sarah's visit, we have opened two new function rooms and The Courtyard Bar and Brasserie Restaurant. Following completion we have refined our in-house marketing strategy and now fully promote all of the facilities to create a complete experience for guests.



Chianti & Cacao

The anti-ageing benefits of wine and dark chocolate are the selling points of a new Tuscan mind, body and soul retreat. But what does this bring to business? We find out more

KATH HUDSON • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

“**T**he hook of the retreat is anti-ageing,” says Mike Rhodes, Villa Lucia’s ebullient 68-year-old owner. Rhodes’ mainstay in business is luxury holiday accommodation. Yet with a 32-year-old Italian siren for a girlfriend, the energy to jog up Tuscan hills and an infectious zest for life, his take on ageing also seems to be worth paying attention to, especially as he was topping up my wine glass while he said it. “There are loads of spas out there, but not many of them are focused on anti-ageing,” he says.

The philosophy of Villa Lucia – the first of Rhodes’ properties to have a spa – is based on the research of Roger Gordon, author of *The Wine Diet*. “Corder researched the diet of communities where the people

live to great ages, with a good quality of life,” Rhodes explains. “He discovered that they eat food high in procyanidins [compounds that protect the blood vessels], that can be found in red wine from certain regions as well as cranberries, apples, cacao, dark chocolate and pomegranates.

“The use of the Red Wine Diet is unique at Villa Lucia as a basis for our menus and treatments,” says Rhodes. Indeed, wine is freely offered at dinners and lunches, while the spa boasts bowls of dark chocolate as well as ChocoTherapy, TruffleTherapy and VinoTherapy treatments by ISHI – an Italian brand which markets itself as a ‘gourmet skin food line’.

With this playful approach to spa, Villa Lucia certainly doesn’t seem to take itself as seriously as other wellness destinations.

So what was the rationale behind introducing a spa and what is the new retreat package expected to add to the business?

BRANCHING OUT

A US-born property developer, who has lived in Europe for 40 years, Rhodes has made his fortune through Luxury Destinations Ltd – a company which today owns three luxury holiday properties: one in Provence, France, one in Marrakech, Morocco and Villa Lucia in Italy.

Rhodes acquired the tumbling Villa Lucia in 2001 for €1m (US\$1.44m, £850,000) and spent an extra €5m (US\$7.2m, £4.25m) on authentically Italian fixtures, fittings and furnishings in its refurbishment.

Situated in the small village of Vorno, the site is made up of three villas set in 4 acres (2 hectares) of walled grounds, encircled by Tuscan hills. As a holiday rental business, the villas can be hired together or separately. Sleeping up to 40 people, the whole property is charged at €20,000 (US\$28,800, £17,000) per week.

With projected holiday bookings down in 2008, he turned to his personal interest in anti-ageing and the Red Wine Diet to boost business outside the peak season of July, August and late December.

Firstly, he invested €1m (US\$1.44m, £850,000) to convert a former stable block into a spa which opened in late 2008. The result is three light, airy treatment rooms, a hammam (which can be used for treatments), an aromatherapy shower, an ice shower and relaxation room. There’s also

WHY OFFER A YOGA RETREAT? ROBYN SAMPSON

Retreats can help spa operators to reach new audiences and boost revenue in the shoulder seasons.

Here are some examples of what other international spa operators are up to: **COMO Shambhala at Uma Paro in Bhutan** began running yoga retreats to create brand awareness and raise the profile of yoga in Bhutan. The retreats have been successful in boosting revenue in the quieter months.

The **Conrad Maldives Rangali Island** offers a range of retreats from different

wellness specialists. “We like to keep up with trends and offer something different to guests,” says Anita Foss, spa manager.

The Spa at the **Mandarin Oriental Riviera Maya** started hosting yoga retreats to boost its revenue in low season. “The retreats certainly give us an edge over a lot of our competitors, in terms of quality of teaching and facilities,” says spa director, Clive McNish. “They provide an excellent marketing focus and allow for a number of cross promotion opportunities in other Mandarin Oriental hotels.”



Villa Lucia's owner, Mike Rhodes, made his name in the luxury accommodation market

a small gym offering a range of CV machines and a DKN vibration training unit.

Rhodes then developed the Villa Lucia mind, body and soul retreat package. The retreat will be held quarterly, at off-peak times, so as not to interfere with the holiday rental business, which will remain Rhodes' primary focus.

HAND-PICKED THERAPISTS

Rhodes took the unusual decision of using hand-picked therapists and creating his own retreat, rather than relying on a package created by an external company.

He has selected three therapists from the UK, who will schedule the retreats into their working diaries. Rhodes was aided in

the recruitment process by his PR, Jayne Alexander, MD of the UK-based Dovetail Agency. Alexander personally recommended three therapists, whose reputation could add credibility to the spa, and who also had clients who might be potential customers for the retreats.

The chosen three, who have a great deal of input with the retreats, include life coach, Gloria Budd, who works with Formula One drivers and tennis players; yoga teacher, sports masseuse and personal trainer, Lisa Bond; and holistic therapist Keely Wright. "Gloria, Lisa and Keely complement each other brilliantly," says Rhodes. "There is the possibility of using some local therapists in order to

boost the number of people we can have at the retreats, because at the moment we're limited to 10 participants."

The retreat costs €1,900 (US\$2,750, £1,600) per person and lasts for five days. During this time, guests receive two personal treatments from each therapist, as well as a daily yoga class. Rhodes admits it costs more to use the three self-employed therapists, but says an obvious advantage is that they give a service that is second to none. So far, this attention to detail seems to be paying off, as the first retreat scheduled for September is already full.

Almost all of the clients are professional women from the UK and US who are in their late 30s or 40s as well as children



The southern façade of Villa Lucia, whose owner invested €1m to convert a former stable block into a spa in 2008

who are old enough to be independent. The retreats are being sold via Rhodes' established client base, as well as through high-end travel agencies and articles and adverts in a selection of consumer spa, travel and lifestyle magazines.

VEDIC SPA VISION

While the new spa and retreats are a big priority for Rhodes, they aren't the end of his vision for using wellness to breathe new life into his holiday rental business.

Another possible new venture is a seven-day justice retreat. If this goes ahead, it will debut in October and run in conjunction with the UK-based justice detox company Raw and Juicy – another one of Jayne Alexander's clients. The Red Wine Diet will be jettisoned and instead a range of juices will be served, along with colonic irrigation, treatments and yoga.

Rhodes' overall aim, however, is to launch Villa Lucia as a Vedic Spa Resort – a new spa concept he's created. On top of the two retreats, the Vedic Spa Resort will offer 10 other spa packages. These range from the three-night Valentines Spa Gift which starts at €2,300 (US\$3,300, £1,950) per couple, to the seven-night Detox Week which begins at €1,950 (US\$2,800, £1,650) per person, sharing a double room. Unlike the retreats, these packages can be booked at any time of the year. While there are no full-time therapists employed at the spa, Rhodes has had a selection of local

MIND, BODY AND SOUL RETREAT, VILLA LUCIA, TUSCANY

FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE: KATH HUDSON

I've never seen wine flowing quite so freely at a spa, but since I'd been assured it was good for me, I was more than happy to go with the flow. It felt slightly strange to have wine at lunch, before a yoga class, but luckily it didn't affect my balance. The rebel in me also liked the fact that wine and chocolate weren't off limits.

Like myself, many of my fellow guests were feeling a bit beaten up by life, but the mix of treatments, the general happy vibe and the attentiveness of the staff soon had everyone shedding their burdens.

My three therapists transformed the break into a life-changing experience. Ninety minutes of NLP and hypnotherapy with Budd in a blissful garden spot took me to the root of my post-natal depression and enabled me to bin my anti-depressants.



Bond, a motivational teacher, led us through hot yoga – Villa Lucia's take on bikram – in the apple orchard in the late afternoon sunshine. Her encouragement made me try that little bit harder when my muscles were trembling.

My time with Wright, comprised a full-body massage and reflexology which I didn't want to end. Unlike most therapists who give up on the knots in my back, Wright tackled them with gusto.

The vibe at Villa Lucia is more fun-loving than the slightly insular atmosphere I've previously experienced at spas. What I really liked was the healthy balance of food, wine, exercise and time out. I came back with new habits and two months on I've kept up a regular yoga practise, as well as a guilt-free glass of wine with dinner. Best of all, I still don't need the anti-depressants.

therapists trained to administer treatments when bookings come in. These services are also available on an ad-hoc basis.

If the mind, body and soul retreat package and the Vedic Spa Resort concept is successful at Villa Lucia, Rhodes will introduce

them to one of his other properties, Dar Liqama, in Marrakech, Morocco in March 2010. So, while Rhodes may be adding some unusual spa ingredients to his businesses, it looks as if this unique approach could well prove to be an enduring recipe for success. ●

Spa Products



Orthopaedic sandals for spa workers

A new range of footwear products, aimed at salon professionals, has been launched by SOLE. Based around insole technology, the orthopaedic footwear becomes custom-moulded to the contours of an individual's foot, creating a personalised fit with the addition of improved alignment, balance and comfort. Ideal for providing a boost for those who spend many hours on their feet, the podiatrist-approved Platinum Sandal Sport Flip range features SOLE's signature Wear-Mouldable footbed, which gently lifts the user's arch to its optimal position, promoting the wearer's natural gait and the foot's shock absorbing ability.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **SOLE UK**

Walking Barefoot

Barefoot has revealed a new type of therapeutic flooring for use in spas. Entitled Hot Rocks, the surface comes with a seamless stone carpet finish, designed to massage the feet of whomever walks upon it. The floor is composed of marble pebbles overlaid with a clear resin finish and can be fitted along with underfloor heating to further enhance the experience of any wet area user. Silver, said to harness antibacterial qualities, is also incorporated into the surface of the flooring.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **BAREFOOT LIVING**



Showering in style courtesy of Bossini

Bossini of Italy has unveiled two shower columns for outdoor or indoor pools and spas. Ideal for a pre- or post-swim shower, the AquaBambú and ArchColumn showers are minimalist in design, made from high quality stainless steel and have the option of a subtle matt finish. A choice of floor or external water inlets is available when the columns are installed and the temperature and flow controls are both conveniently positioned and easy to use. A low level foot shower is fitted as standard.

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



Dermalogica® launches teen range and treatments

A new teen-focused range called Clean Start is to be introduced within the Dermalogica brand. Featuring eight products, including a skin wash, a mist and a masque, the range is intended to set an early foundation for intelligent skincare. According to Dermalogica founder Jane Wurwand, Clean Start has been created to give young consumers an alternative to products already on the market "which is aspirational, desirable, hip and cool, yet safe and effective". Clean Start will launch with two treatments – Clean StartING and Breakout/Freak-Out – in the UK, Canada and Australia in September. There will also be a website and a viral marketing campaign to support the launch. Other global Dermalogica distributors will follow into 2010.

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



Scottish seaweed-based products from Blue Spa

A range of environmentally-sourced seaweed from waters around Scotland, UK, is to be made available from suppliers Blue Spa & Leisure from September. The seaweed is sourced from certified good water areas and is quality tested by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency. Harvested by hand, so it will grow back, and then dried undercover, the seaweed is then packaged in its dry form. It is ideal for thalasso-based treatments and can last up to 12 months. At the same time, Blue Spas will also be launching a range of other products for treatments, including a selection of pre-blended rasul muds, salts and organic body chocolate.

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

Let there be light

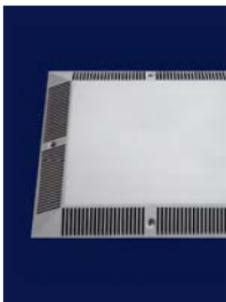
The Corin Mellor Stainless Steel Candelabrum is the newest addition within a series of decorative metalwork by David Mellor Design. The 2m-high structure has been created to be table- or floor-standing and features 32 slim vertical bars and 380 separate handmade components overall. The candelabrum is available as six table-standing and six floor-standing pieces, in a number of different colours.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **DAVID MELLOR**

AEGIS shield introduced

The US-based supplier Neptune-Benson has introduced the AEGIS Anti-Entrapment Shield, for use in swimming pools and wet areas. Made from solid fibreglass, the 30in x 30in cover can be fitted over any main drain up to a maximum of 24in x 24in in size, either on the floor or attached to a wall. AEGIS is also certified under the Virginia Graeme Baker Act, which requires all US public swimming pools and spas to have safety drain covers and, in certain circumstances, an anti-entrapment system.



spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **NEPTUNE-BENSON**



Serralunga's stackable vase

Italian furnishing company Serralunga has launched Swing Up, a stackable vase that can be used in a variety of ways both indoors and outside. Part of the company's 2009 Serralunga Collection, it can primarily be used as a vase, with the individual 32cm pieces placed on top of one another to create a taller structure. Additionally, the Swing Up can have a lid placed on top, enabling it to be used as a side table or container. Furthermore, a cushion can be added to transform the Swing Up into a pouffe or a stool.

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



Tylö combines steam and dry sauna

Manufacturer Tylö has developed a combination shower, offering three experiences in one unit. Called Impression, the range of products neatly circumnavigates the problem of mixing dry sauna and steam bathing in one unit, by providing a sealed separating sliding door between the dry sauna and wet shower areas. The shower is used as part of the bathing experience for each options – sauna and shower; steam and shower and sauna, steam and shower – and bathers can also select their preferred temperature.

spa-kit.net KEYWORDS: **GOLDEN COAST**

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TOUCH AND GO

Greater insights into the short-term and long-term effects of shiatsu have been revealed in a new pan-European study

Shiatsu massage, dating back to the early 20th century, is a staple of spa menus. Despite its long history, however, there's limited evidence of the benefits of the practice in Western countries.

In Japan, where it originated, shiatsu has been officially recognised as a paramedic practice since 1952. While the practice is tolerated under common law in the UK and Ireland, it is not properly acknowledged, and in the rest of Europe; there's no integration of shiatsu into national healthcare systems.

With a view to working towards a legal right to practice shiatsu, the European Shiatsu Federation (ESF) – comprising professional associations from eight countries – commissioned the University of Leeds, UK, to carry out a study into the short- and long-term effects and experience of the massage.

GATHERING DATA

The report, which was published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* last year, was based on 633 shiatsu clients picked at random from Austria, Spain and the UK.

Each of the clients were followed for six months and filled in a questionnaire about their treatment at four time-points: after the first treatment, four to six days after that, and three and six months later. The questionnaire was developed during

a previous ESF-funded exploratory study which looked at the same subject.

THE RESULTS

In this study a typical shiatsu client was female, in her 40s and employed. Eighty-four to 88 per cent of participants had used shiatsu before and described their health as being "good" or better.

The dominant reason for the first-ever use of shiatsu by clients was curiosity; at "today's session" it was "to maintain or improve health". The top reason for having shiatsu, in terms of symptoms, was "problems with muscles, joints or body structure", followed by "tension or stress" and "low energy or fatigue".

The effects of shiatsu were measured in five areas. First was symptom severity, which was assessed on a five-point scale: zero being "not severe at all" and four being "very severe". The scores significantly improved over the six months for Austria and in the UK within all symptom groups, but only in the "problems with muscles, joints or body structure" and "tension or stress" symptoms in Spain. Typically, symptom severity decreased over the first three months and was then maintained over the next three months.

The second measurement was in shiatsu-specific effects. At the end of six

months a high proportion of clients agreed that shiatsu had helped to improve their overall health, been effective in treating symptoms and helped to improve self-awareness and positive attitudes.

Thirdly, researchers looked at the client's uptake of advice from practitioners. In all three countries 74 to 76 per cent of clients said their practitioners offered recommendations to help with symptoms. After six months 77 to 80 per cent indicated they'd made changes to their lifestyle – particularly increased amounts of "rest and relaxation" and "exercise" and changing of "diet".

The fourth assessment focused on healthcare use. Here 15 to 34 per cent of clients reported a reduction in their use of conventional medicine in the symptoms they went to a practitioner for.

The final area homed in on clients' expectation and satisfaction levels. Across all countries, an overwhelming number of clients (90 per cent) indicated that their expectations were either "met" or "exceeded" at six months. Around one half (47 per cent in Spain) to three-quarters (74 per cent in Austria) of clients were "completely satisfied" with their shiatsu treatment.

Only nine clients recorded a negative response such as worsening of pain in the affected area and a distressful emotional reaction, which lasted a week or more.

Limitations to the study included the small sample size from Spain (accounting for only 15 per cent of clients), the high proportion of clients who had already had shiatsu and variations in treatment style.

Researchers are now investigating the economic implications of the study, in terms of reductions in the use of conventional medicine by shiatsu users. ●



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