

# spa business

## ASK AN EXPERT:

Understanding discount deals and using them effectively

## Touch of magic

Disney's new spa in Hawaii

## HOT NUMBERS

**ISPA 2011**

**US Spa Industry Study**

**Study**

*How's the market faring?*

## South Africa's Oyster Box Spa

The Princess of Monaco's honeymoon destination

## INTERVIEW

**Niamh O'Connell**

Hyatt's bespoke approach to spa expansion





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# Fine tuning deals for profit

**W**e've been busy investigating the daily deal website market for a series of features for *Spa Business* – the first runs in this issue on page 24 and we'll be following up with more coverage in future editions.

When websites like Groupon first launched, many senior figures in the industry railed against them, fearful of their impact on reputation, margins and profitability. However, things are changing and deal sites are becoming an increasingly popular, effective way for spas to improve yield, by shifting all but their most premium time.

The way consumers buy spa experiences is changing too and as with most areas of life, is moving online, with purchases increasingly being made on mobile devices. ISPA's latest research (see page 38) found that 95 per cent of spas now have a website and 28 per cent are already using deal of the day sites, while 8 per cent are using 'flash deal' sites.

The management information which can be generated from analysing the way consumers respond to deals is invaluable in guiding the development and fine-tuning of menus, pricing and marketing as well as guiding the development of deals.

Some operators have been using deal sites long enough to know which clients buy which packages at which rate and which are likely to become either regular customers or members or spend the most on retail. It's also a straightforward way to see how two deals stack up against each other.

One example of spas fine tuning their offer as a result of analysing deal-buying behaviour is the transition from 'buy one, get one free' – or BOGOF, as it was affectionately know



Using deal sites is a straightforward way of seeing how two deals stack up against each other and offers invaluable insights into how consumers respond to a spa's pricing and product development

– to the newer and reportedly far more effective 'two-for-one' offer, otherwise known as 'bring a friend'.

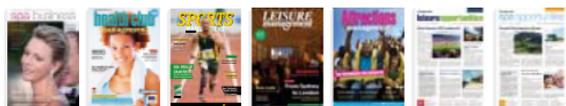
On the face of it, these two deals are identical, yet one works a treat (two-for-one) and the other (BOGOF) really didn't work at all, highlighting the importance of small differences.

The power of two for-one is that it immediately adds a social dimension – not only is it great value at a perceived 50 per cent discount, but you can take your partner/friend/relative along and suddenly it's a whole experience.

There are inevitable tensions between deal sites and spas because deal sites can – at worst – be ruthless and parasitic, but those that are in it for the long-term set fair rates, offer good advice on deal structure and spend time developing relationships and there are definite signs that many are developing symbiotic relationships.

Liz Terry, Editor twitter: @elizterry

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PHOTO: ISTOCK.COM/STIGER KARLSSON

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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ATTOM

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### Lisa

#### Starr

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### ON THE COVER

*The Princess of Monaco stays at the Oyster Box Hotel & Spa (p50) on her honeymoon*

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# Letters

Do you have a strong opinion, or disagree with somebody else's point of view on topics related to the spa industry? If so, *Spa Business* would love to hear from you. Email your letters, thoughts and suggestions to [theteam@spabusiness.com](mailto:theteam@spabusiness.com)

## At-home skincare devices: the next frontier in anti-ageing treatments

Karen Doskow, industry manager, Consumer Products Practice, Kline & Company

Spa operators take note. After years of tracking trends in the skincare market at research firm Kline & Company, I've recently discovered that the next 'big wave' in skincare treatment – do-it-yourself at-home skincare devices.

That women don't like to show their age or skin imperfections can be clearly seen by the US\$50bn (€37bn, £32bn) spent on skincare products each year. Yet new product activity is not in the traditional topical serums, creams, and lotions: it comes in the form of sophisticated hand-held power devices that are miniaturised versions of equipment you would expect to see in a dermatologist's office, spa, or beauty institute.

Considering high cost in-salon and in-office treatments, consumers have started to look for alternatives which will allow them to stretch out the time between services delivered by professionals, but still achieve tangible results.

The at-home skin care device market in the US is estimated to top nearly US\$1bn (€0.7bn £0.6bn) at the retail level in 2011. While manufacturers such as Clarisonic and Zeno actively introduce new devices, this dynamic can also provide a perfect opportunity to pair device and topical products together.



The endota franchise network boasts 64 day spas across Australia

## How to franchise in Australia

Melanie Gleeson, co-founder, endota spa

So much of the *Spa Business* article (see SB10/3 p22) on franchising rang true with me. Endota spa, which I co-founded with Belinda Fraser, has 64 locations and is Australia's largest day spa network.

When we started in 2001, we initially envisioned a chain of company-owned spas. But within a year, we shifted towards a franchise model, because we realised that business owners would be far more motivated and invested in running quality businesses than managers.

Our spas are renowned for their friendly, put-you-at-ease service in an eco-modern environment. As well as using Dermalogica, we produce our own certified-organic skincare range, a treatment-focused glycolic line and nail polishes.

For an endota spa client, a visit is a healthy regular habit, not a one-off treat and our menus – which include

over 20 treatments and eight day spa packages – are affordable. A one-hour relaxation massage costs between AU\$95-105 (US\$90-100, €68-76, £58-65) depending on location.

To ensure consistency in treatment and service delivery across the network, we have set up two endota spa training schools, and send in-house endota educators to more remote locations.

The key to franchising success, in our experience, has been to choose the right franchisees, and keep communicating with them about the company's greater vision. Disharmony among franchisees is perhaps the greatest potential drain on a franchise system. But a unified, like-minded and motivated franchisee cohort will fiercely champion your brand.

As we expand into new markets – such as new states in Australia, as well as moving to New Zealand and Bali – our greatest challenge will be to build a solid corporate structure which will facilitate those plans, while still providing strong support to our franchisees.

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## Kempinski expands into Azerbaijan with Baku hotel

Kempinski is to manage its first property in Azerbaijan – the 280-bedroom Kempinski Hotel Badamdar, in the capital of Baku.

Facilities include a 3,500sq m (37,674sq ft) spa with 20 treatment rooms – six of which are doubles – and a beauty centre. The product house is Elemental Herbology. A pool, relaxation area, sauna, hammam and fitness studio complete the offer.

The major five-star Badamdar Complex also features a 5,000sq m (53,820sq ft) entertainment and retail centre, a seasonal aqua park and 37 residential apartments.

Kempinski Hotel Badamdar is the Swiss group's second management agreement in Baku, with the opening of Kempinski Crescent Baku planned for 2015.



The baths are a UNESCO World Heritage site

## Budapest's Rác Hotel and Thermal Spa delayed

The opening of the new €35.5m (US\$47m, £31m) Rác Hotel and Thermal Spa in Budapest, Hungary, has been pushed back "towards the beginning of 2012".

Initially due to open during the third quarter of 2010, the 67-bedroom hotel is to feature an 8,000sq m (86,115sq ft) thermal spa. The spa will include refurbished parts of the Rác Thermal Bath – a UNESCO World Heritage site – that was once used by sultans and royalty. It will also feature a 19th century thermal (38°C) pool located under a 9m dome that has been rebuilt according to the original designs by the famous Hungarian architect Miklós Ybl.

Newer facilities comprise 13 dipping pools, a rooftop pool and 21 treatment rooms – with treatments and products by Hungarian thermal water skincare brand Omorovicza (see p46). There's also a sauna world with Finnish, bio and aroma saunas, two steam-rooms and a salt and snow cave.

## Medical complex for US resort

A cutting-edge medical complex is to be built at The Greenbrier – a luxury, health-focused resort in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, US.

The Greenbrier Medical Institute will be developed in phases in the 6,750-acre (2,732-hectare) grounds.

The initial stage, expected to cost US\$250m (€187m, £161m), will include a sports-medicine centre, a cosmetic surgery and lifestyle enhancement academy, a sports performance and training facility and a boutique hotel. It will also comprise the relocation and expansion of the Greenbrier Clinic – a facility that's been offering preventative healthcare programmes to the nation's top executives since 1948.

The concept for complex has been created by orthopedic surgeon Dr James Andrews and healthcare developer Jack T Diamond.



Greenbrier's complex will attract top physicians and healthcare experts

The resort, which boasts 710 bedrooms, already has a 40,000sq ft (3,716sq m) spa, a casino and three golf courses.

At the centre of the resort is a sulphur water spring which guests have sought out for medicinal purposes for more than 200 years.

## New look for France's Sofitel Quiberon

The 129-bedroom Sofitel Quiberon Thalassa Sea & Spa has been relaunched in north-west France, following a major refurbishment led by Parisian-based, hospitality architects Studio MHNA.

The complex specialises in slimming breaks focused on healthy eating and the thalassotherapy institute – a flagship 5,000sq m (53,280sq ft) facility that has been completely redesigned. A standout feature is a 25m, heated (29°C) seawater pool that's encased in glass and has ocean views.

This is joined by a sauna, a eucalyptus-scented hammam, a gym and three exercise studios.

There is also a brand new beauty centre, a hair salon (with Leonor Greyl products) and six single and one double treatment room.



The 25m seawater pool surrounded by glass is a standout feature

Product houses include SkinCeuticals, Carita, and Aquascience – a new in-house natural skincare line based on marine spring water.

Thalassa Sea & Spa is a part of the Accor hospitality group (see S810/p26).

## Ingo Schweder launches GOCO Hospitality

Ingo Schweder, the former CEO of spa management group Spatality, has launched a new firm called GOCO Hospitality.

GOCO has been created to offer a full range of consulting and management services to the international spa and hotel industry under

the banner 'wellness meets wanderlust'. It is already working on a combination of projects including hotel spas, destination resorts and mixed-use developments around the world.

Spatality, which has been running since 2001, no longer exists.

## Onyx to introduce two spa brands

Thai-based operator Onyx Hospitality Group will launch two new spa concepts early next year to support its four existing hotel brands.

Breeze will be a four-star spa offering that will, according to Onyx's corporate director of spa Kirsty MacCormick, be marketed as a fun concept to make the spa journey more approachable – especially to those who have never been to a spa.

The second brand, Maai, will be Onyx's full-service luxury offering and will target high-end, spa savvy customers.

The inaugural Maai spa will open in Bangkok in February and the first Breeze will follow in March at Onyx's Amari hotel in Hua Hin. Onyx plans to have 10 Breeze spas – including six rebrands of existing facilities – and one Maai spa operating by the end of 2012.



The four-star Breeze spa concept will have more of a light-hearted feel

MacCormick and her four-strong corporate spa team are currently finalising the treatment menus for both brands.

Products will include in-house ranges for each concept as well as Panpuri and Comfort Zone for Breeze spas and Ila and Darphin products for Maai spas.

## Mindy Terry appointed to Andurance Hospitality

Mindy Terry, president and founder of consulting firm Creative Spa Concepts (CSC) has been appointed managing director of development at Andurance Hospitality in Thailand.

In her new role, Terry will oversee the development of a Thai scheme that will include five

villas, a spa, a bar, restaurants and pools. The Andurance project will see Terry based in Surat Thani, south Thailand, for 18 months.

She will manage all existing CSC projects – including a new Rosewood Sense spa for the UAE – from there during this time.

## Spring start for Swiss thermal spa project

Construction on a high-end residential development in Leukerbad – a village in the Swiss Alps that's famous for its 51°C thermal springs – is scheduled to commence in the second quarter of 2012.

51° Spa Residences, backed by real-estate firm Swiss Development Group, will comprise two buildings featuring 30 spa apartments. Each apartment will boast whirlpools and outdoor 'moon bath' pools with an unlimited supply to the thermal waters.

There will also be 900sq m (9,688sq ft) Banyan Experience Spa with a Russian style steamroom or banya (see S810/4/p78) as a key feature. Other spa facilities will include two treatment rooms, a relaxation area, an indoor and outdoor pool and a fitness suite.



Spa apartments will have an unlimited supply to natural thermal waters

The residences have been designed by US architect firm Michael Graves & Associates and will be completed by late 2014.

The spa, created by hospitality and spa consultancy Under A Tree, will follow in 2015 along with a five-star hotel in collaboration with an unnamed world-class operator.

## Shamana Spa to be revealed at Grand Hyatt Goa

A new Shamana Spa covering more than 35,000sq ft (3,252sq m) is under development at the Grand Hyatt Goa, India which had its soft launch last month.

Overlooking Bambolim Bay, the new spa will feature 19 treatment suites – including 11 singles, six doubles and two VIP royal suites – and will offer south-east Asian therapies such as ayurveda and Thai and Balinese massage. Shamana takes its name from the Sanskrit word for 'balance' and spa programmes will focus on creating a "balance between wellbeing and lifestyle".

Suppliers include Spain's Natura Bisse; Irish organic seaweed brand Voya; Puri Alchemy from Thailand; and India-based Iraa.

For more on Hyatt Hotel Corporation's international spa openings, turn to p32.



The iconic hotel has the sixth-floor AWAY Spa

## Starwood's W London sold to Qatari-based investor

Northern Ireland-based development group McAleer & Rushe has sold the W London hotel, UK, for £200m (US\$311m, €232m) in one of the most high-profile hotel transactions of 2011.

The 192-bedroom flagship property, which is operated by Starwood Hotels & Resorts and located in Leicester Square, is now owned by a Qatari-based investor.

Designed by Jestico + Whiles, the iconic hotel opened in February and has an AWAY Spa with five treatment rooms and SWEAT fitness facility. There are also pre- and post-treatment relaxation lounges for men and women, as well as steamrooms and saunas (see S811/2 p54). REN and Aromatherapy Associates are the product houses.

Robert Millar, investment partner of Steerforth Partners – which advised on the sale – said the hotel "received a lot of interest from international investors and is evidence that the market for prime central London property remains very robust."

## Five-acre spa setting for Ritz-Carlton Reserve in Puerto Rico

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company is to open its first Reserve property in the Americas region with a new 115-guestroom resort at Dorado Beach, Puerto Rico, in late 2012.

The 50-acre (20-hectare) resort will feature a spa set in 5-acres (2-hectares) of landscaped grounds, which will include male and female 'purification gardens' with tropical pools, steamrooms and outdoor Vichy areas.

There will also be 10 glass-walled treatment pavilions with soaking tubs and massage tables and two double treehouse treatment platforms in the forest canopy. Organic spa products will be made from native plants grown onsite. A beauty salon, relaxation rooms and a 8,000sq ft (743sq m) fitness and wellness centre complete the offer.

Reserve is Ritz-Carlton's new ultra-luxury brand and its first property opened in early 2010 in Krabi, Thailand.



This is Hilton's sixth eforea spa opening

## Hilton opens new AU\$700m Surfers Paradise property

Hilton Worldwide has unveiled the AU\$700m (US\$675m, €505m, £434m) Hilton Surfers Paradise complex on Australia's Gold Coast.

The global hotel chain said the property is its first in Australia to offer both guestrooms (169) and holiday residences (250) with facilities also including the purpose-built eforea: spa at Hilton.

The spa has seven treatment rooms including one with a Vichy shower for wet treatments and two to host people spa-ing in pairs. Products are by Peter Thomas Roth, Li'tya, VitaMan and Kerstin Florian.

The spa is complemented by a 1,500sq m (16,146sq ft) deck with four pools, a sauna and a number of dining concepts.

This is the sixth eforea spa for Hilton, following the launch of the in-house branded concept in 2010 (see SB10/3 p28).

## Indian train deal for Orient Spa

Indian spa management company Orient Spa Ltd has secured an agreement to offer spa services on two of the country's luxury trains – the *Palace on Wheels* and the *Royal Rajasthan on Wheels*.

Both of the trains have a dedicated 'Royal Spa carriage' in which the services will be provided. Sanjana Gupta, the business head at Orient Spa says: "We have put together a plethora of Indian and international therapies that are compatible with the train movements, combined with beauty services. However, special thrust will be on ayurveda as foreigners are increasingly turning towards it for health and healing requirements."

Orient Spa Ltd is a spa and wellness division of the Neesa Group – a Indian hospitality-focused company. It operates seven



The trains will have carriages designed as treatment rooms

spas for Cambay Hotels & Resorts – Neesa's hotel brand – across India.

Meanwhile, Orient Spa has also confirmed its plan to open a fourth spa academy in the National Capital Region, to add to three existing schools in Kerala, Ahmedabad and Jaipur.

## Kieh'l's opens first branded spa

New York consumer skincare group Kieh'l's has revealed its first-ever spa facility on the Upper East Side of the US city.

Sited on the second floor of a new 'Kieh'l's Since 1851' retail store, Spa 1851 is to offer skin, body and hair treatments for both men and women.

The new spa has a separate entrance to the retail store and features a waiting lounge, three treatment rooms and a separate grooming station.

In a bid to "provide something extra", all scheduled treatments will be preceded by the Kieh'l's Signature Greeting – a neck, arm, hand and foot massage with lavender.

Meanwhile, signature facials will start with a personalised skin diagnosis to determine the course of treatment for each guest.



Spa 1851 boasts three treatment rooms and a separate grooming station

Kieh'l's is the latest consumer brand to move into spa operations, following others such as Nivea, Molton Brown, Sulwhasoo, Dove (see SB09/3 p24) and L'Occitane, which announced its India rollout proposals in July 2010.

## Leonia prepares for LeoJuventa spa rollout

India-based medical spa operator Leonia is preparing to launch the first of three new LeoJuventa-branded spas in November.

The new ₹2m (US\$3.1m, €2.3m) standalone spa in Jaipur will cover up to 10,000sq ft (929sq m) and incorporate eight therapy rooms.

Meanwhile, the next LeoJuventa-branded facility to open will be a similarly-sized spa in Visakhapatnam in December 2012.

A new 20,000sq ft (1,858sq m) spa with 15 therapy rooms in Mumbai will then follow, with its launch scheduled for October 2014.

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## Confusion and false claims for Asian natural cosmetics

The demand for natural cosmetics is increasing in Asia, but the market is blighted by false marketing claims, mislabelling of products and consumer confusion, says research company Organic Monitor.

Unlike Europe or North America (see SB09/1 p34), Asia has no private standards for natural and organic products, and using western certification can be expensive.

Some products are promoted as organic, even if they only contain trace organic elements; and other companies are using symbols and logos just of their certified ingredients to give the illusion that the overall finished product is certified.

There are some positive steps being made, however. A growing number of specialist retailers, such as organic food group Just Life, are demanding brands to substantiate their marketing claims by becoming certified.

In addition, other retailers are scrutinising ingredient lists to verify a product's 'chemical free' status.



MAKEL PHIL DAVESHUTTER/ISTOCK.COM

The collaboration focuses on Canadian spa-givers

## SpaFinder and WaySpa set up new marketing partnership

Spa marketing company SpaFinder has joined forces with Canada-based spa marketing enterprise, WaySpa.

Under the new partnership, the companies will offer one of the most comprehensive online selections of spas, fitness studios and wellness practitioners to consumers in Canada.

It is also hoped that the collaboration will increase the number of consumers that visit properties currently marketing with both SpaFinder and WaySpa.

At the heart of the venture is the new spafinder.ca website, which aims to establish itself as the leading internet-based resource for the Canadian spa industry.

## Caesars to expand into China

Las Vegas-based Caesars Entertainment Corporation (CEC) is to make its first move into Asia Pacific with a new resort in Hainan, China.

The Caesars Palace Longmu Bay project is the first major venture of Caesars Global Life – a new non-gaming division created to build and manage branded properties.

CEC aims to build 25 hotels and resorts in China over the next five years and has signed an agreement with Guoxin Longmu Bay Investment Holding (GLBIH) on its first project in the country.

GLBIH will be developing the area as a tourist destination, with the first phase to cover a 55q km (1.95q mile) area. The 1,000-bedroom resort represents a RMB3bn (US\$471m, €352m £303m) investment in the total RMB36bn (US\$5.6bn, €4.2bn, £3.6bn) scheme.



The RMB3bn resort will have a spa and is due to open in 2014

Due to open in 2014, the resort will have a spa, a championship golf course and a marina.

CEC president and CEO Gary Loveman said: "This will set a global luxury standard in China and build a foundation for Caesars' expansion throughout the Asia-Pacific region."

## New Chennai property to join ITC Hotels

ITC Hotels is to add a new 600-bedroom flagship hotel to its portfolio of 16 luxury properties that it owns and operates across India.

The ITC Grand Chola, which features a temple design inspired by the Chola dynasty, is due to open in Chennai in early 2012.

Among the facilities will be a 23,000sq ft (2,137sq m) Kaya Kalp Spa, which will have 12 suites for treatments. One suite is a double and will offer twin massage tables.

Meanwhile, two of the suites will be dedicated to ayurvedic massages and treatments using indigenous products.

ITC Grand Chola will adhere to the group's commitment to responsible luxury and will offer eco-friendly measures to attain 'positive statuses'



The flagship property will have a 12-treatment suite spa

in water, carbon and solid waste recycling. ITC claims that it is the "greenest hotel chain in the world" and recently confirmed that all of its hotels have now attained the LEED Platinum rating from the US Green Building Council.

## Rosewood reveals latest Sense spa in Vancouver

Rosewood Hotels & Resorts has opened its eighth Sense spa at the new Rosewood Hotel Georgia in Vancouver, Canada.

Located on the fourth floor of the 155-bedroom property, the spa comprises five treatment rooms, a manicure/pedicure lounge

and separate facilities for both men and women with sauna and steamrooms.

A wet treatment room with a Vichy shower is also on offer at the spa, which uses products from Puri, Beauty Through Balance, Spa Rituals and Tara Spa Therapy.



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*ELLE* editors were involved in designing the spa (right), heavily vetted products (above) and even created an *ELLE* Spa music playlist



## *ELLE* comes to life with new Miami Beach spa

One of the world's most iconic fashion magazines, *ELLE*, has unveiled a branded spa in partnership with the Eden Roc Renaissance Miami Beach, US.

It is the first venture of its kind for the publication, which has joined forces with the luxury resort in a bid to establish a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience for guests.

Opened in June, the development of the new 22,000sq ft (2,000sq m) *ELLE* Spa has formed part of a wider US\$200m (£152m, £130m) overhaul of the property.

Among the facilities are six treatment rooms and wet areas with whirlpools, cold plunge pools and heat experiences, while experience showers and relaxation space also feature.

The sauna and steam areas at the *ELLE* Spa were supplied by the US company, Steam Sauna Inc, while Pools By German Inc were responsible for fitting the whirlpools.

Elsewhere at the *ELLE* Spa, a boutique hair and nail salon, a 24-hour beachfront gym and a group exercise studio have been added to the comprehensive wellbeing offer.

For *ELLE* magazine, the opening of its first branded spa is designed to appeal to consumers in a new, key market away from New York and Los Angeles.

Liz Hodges, executive director of brand development at *ELLE*, says: "This partner-

ship gives consumers the opportunity to experience the brand outside the pages of *ELLE* magazine, with a unique spa experience created by *ELLE* editors."

Renowned US celebrity aesthetician Tammy Fender; Yael Alkalay of Red Flower; and nailcare company Essie are among those to have provided an exclusive range of products and treatments at the spa.

Organic seaweed range Voya is also used at the new *ELLE* Spa, which allows visitors

"Our music editors were even responsible for creating an *ELLE* playlist for the treatment rooms and fitness centre featuring artists that have been covered in the magazine."

Under the terms of the venture, the Eden Roc Renaissance Miami Beach owns the spa but is allowed to use the *ELLE* name through a licensing agreement.

In addition, Eden Roc also manages and operates the spa on a day-to-day basis, but worked closely with the magazine to ensure a unique concept was developed for the hotel.

David Siguaw, director of sales and marketing at Eden Roc, says: "We developed marketing and branding partnerships with *ELLE* in conjunction with delivering a lifestyle experience via the Renaissance brand. *ELLE* brings an enormous amount of health, beauty, service, lifestyle and elegant demeanour to the table."

With 6.4 million copies of *ELLE* magazine sold each month across the world, Siguaw is also confident that the spa venture will help fulfil the hotel's ambitions of offering an iconic global facility.

"We hope to cultivate a world-renowned spa that would drastically add to the overall guest experience at Eden Roc," he says.

"We found a partner that shared and pursued the same visions that we perceive the hotel to represent. *ELLE* was perfect." ●

"Consumers can experience the brand outside the pages of *ELLE*, with a unique spa created by *ELLE* editors"

to take advantage of a rooftop deck with VIP cabanas and a light dining service.

The spa also includes a retail area which showcases items that have been selected especially *ELLE*'s editors, who also had a say in every aspect of the development. Hodges explains: "*ELLE*'s beauty and fitness director, Emily Dougherty, was a consultant on the project and vetted every product line carried and treatment offered.

"*ELLE* also brings its fashion halo to the spa arena, with a selection of swimwear, jewellery and accessories picked by our fashion editors in the spa's retail boutique.



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Geraldine Howard (above) co-founded AA in 1985; a key feature of the new spa is a chandelier made out of aromatherapy bottles (right)



## First flagship for Aromatherapy Associates

*AA's products and treatments are available in more than 40 countries, but now the British company is launching its own branded retail boutique and treatment rooms on home ground*

**T**his month, British-based product house Aromatherapy Associates (AA) will unveil its very first branded spa in Knightsbridge, London, UK.

Just down the road from Harrods, the 150sqm (1,615sq ft) Aromatherapy Associates Boutique & Treatment Rooms is spread over two storeys. The first floor is dedicated to retail and showcases the company's 70-plus aromatherapy-based products and an 'ingredients bar' with products in their raw form. There is also one treatment suite on this level, while the lower ground floor will boast two treatment suites, a relaxation area and a vanity area.

Set against a background of warm grey tones, mirrored walls and quirky features – such as a chandelier made out of AA bath and shower oil bottles – the interiors have been designed by Martin Hubert who's worked on a number of other high-end UK spas such as those at The Dorchester and Coworth Park.

AA was founded in 1985 (see S108/13 p90) and today its products and treatments are available in over 40 countries, in high-end spas including facilities at the Mandarin Oriental and Fairmont. But the reason for putting its own name to a spa is two-fold, says company co-founder Geraldine Howard: "It's a flagship for our treatments, but it's also championing real aromatherapy

– getting the message out there about essential oils and how they work – which is very much at the heart of what we do.

"With air fresheners and fabric conditioners all claiming to contain essential oils, the true essence of aromatherapy has been lost. The sense of smell is so powerful, but it's typically ignored, so we'll be focusing on how it can help with psychological issues that can make a real difference to people's lives."

In the long-term, the goal is to roll out AA-branded retail and treatment spaces in selected cities around the world

For Howard, this means getting the diagnosis right, which is why AA has developed a detailed product and treatment consultation covering everything from lifestyle and diet to how a person is feeling, to be used by the five in-house therapists to prescribe retail products or treatments.

"Normally a company will only have one relaxation aromatherapy oil," says Howard. "We have five just for tackling relaxation and stress and we want to emphasise how we can help customers choose the right blend to help them day to day." For an even more bespoke approach, Howard, an expert in blending oils,

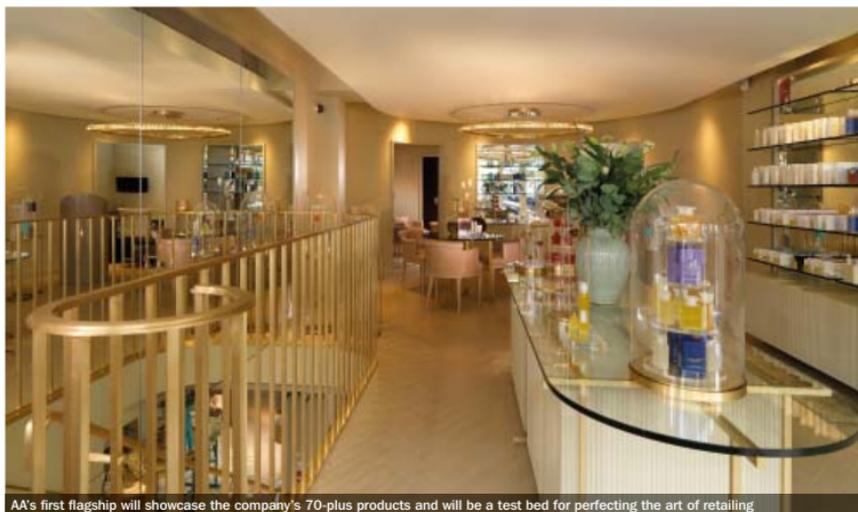
will be conducting one-to-one prescription sessions to mix personal oils specifically for individual customers.

The price point for both massages and facials will be £90 (US\$139, €105) for 60 minutes, which is comparable to other leading spas in the area.

With the flagship launch, Howard is also taking the opportunity to tackle the 'spa retail problem' head on. Five months ago, she took on two consumer retail experts – with backgrounds in companies like LVMH and La Prairie – to develop a winning strategy.

"I'm excited about the marketing and promotion plan we're developing for next year," she says. "And we'll use this as a test bed for our new retail training programme. We really want to help our spas get retail right." The basis for this, she explains, is to link body treatments to selling products, as well as to help therapists work out the client's needs and to ensure customers are aware the products and how they can be used at home.

In the long-term, the goal is to roll out AA-branded retail and treatment spaces in selected cities around the world. Howard concludes: "At this stage we're concentrating on making London perfect, but we will roll it out. It's just a dream come true to have our own platform to shout about." ●



AA's first flagship will showcase the company's 70-plus products and will be a test bed for perfecting the art of retailing



The consultation area on the ground floor



The lower ground floor features two treatment suites and a relaxation area



With so many oils, the key is to make sure customers are prescribed the right blend – for both treatment and homecare use

## ASK AN EXPERT...

## DISCOUNT DEALS

Deal sites like Groupon can bring in new business, filling off-peak time in spas which would otherwise languish unused.

But getting the right balance between the needs of your regular, full-rate clientele and deal customers is a fine art – done badly it can fatally undermine the business, while done well, it can send extra profit straight to the bottom line.

Because the deals industry is a new sector and is developing and changing rapidly, official terminology is thin on the ground, making it difficult to analyse, given the lack of categorisation of deal types. There's also a surprising lack of research being done on the deal sector.

However, it seems to be understood that there are two types of deals, deep discounts which can be up to 80 per cent and drive larger volumes – while also threatening to destabilise the business if not carefully handled – and sustainable voucher deals which are more likely to be value-added and run in the range of 30-50 per cent.

The basic transaction remains the same with both, in that a web consolidator, who's invested in capturing contact details for a specific clientele, markets an offer to them via the web/e-zine/email/SMS, takes payment upfront and splits the income with the spa.

## TRANSACTION

There are many issues to be resolved on the way to a successful deal – timing, profit margin, the cut negotiated by the deal site and most importantly, how you square any discounts you offer with regular customers.

So what are the pitfalls? Some of it's common sense – spas must ensure offers are sold at break-even at worst and ideally with a profit margin, because although it may feel good when a big cheque arrives from the deal site, if your final tally shows a loss, then you'll regret the day you signed up.

Done well, daily deals can introduce a whole new set of clients to your spa and if you impress them, you could turn them into regulars, but there's evidence that customers at the cheaper end of the deal spectrum are less likely to return, with return rates as low as 2 per cent being reported on clients who bought heavily discounted deals.

Daily deal sites have their roots in the dotcom boom but have come into their own over the last three years since the launch of Groupon. Today, businesses selling time-based experiences report that up to 40 per cent of their business is attracted this way

The volume of business generated by a deal is a key issue, because as soon as deal customers have signed up, they want to book and snare themselves a prime time slot for their treatment and this spike in phone traffic can be hard to handle.

As well as creating a bad first impression for new customers who are excited about their purchase, only to find frustration at their inability to book, this can also prevent regular, full-rate customers from getting through – the last thing a spa wants is to swap new, low-price customers for premium-paying customers simply because they can't handle the call volume.

Deals sites are now experienced enough to be able to predict the likely volume of traffic which any given deal will generate – it's in their best interests to understand these formulae too – so spas are advised to tailor their deal choices and phone-answering capacity accordingly.

## SOLUTIONS

The next challenge is calculating how many premium time slots to allocate. Although the agreement can be structured so deals are only offered at off-peak times, the advice from the experts is to include a proportion of premium time slots, so buyers aren't made to feel second rate. This will also increase the deal customer's perceived value of the deal.

Using online booking systems has very real advantages at this point, because as well

as cutting down phone traffic – or even eliminating it if the deal is marketed as an online-only offer – online booking enables the spa to straightforwardly block out times it doesn't want the deal to apply to. It also makes it easier to spread discount slots over the lifetime of the deal – usually six months – to make sure the spa continues to service a balance of discount and full-price customers.

When people buy deals, they're paying for a treatment in advance and trusting that they'll be able to use it before it expires – and at a reasonably convenient time. They're then relying on the spa to be fair in the delivery of the service that they've bought or gifted.

Social media sites are littered with complaints from customers who've bought deals but have been unable to use them satisfactorily and any shortcomings in delivery such as this will have a detrimental effect on a spa's reputation – and ultimately the value of the business.

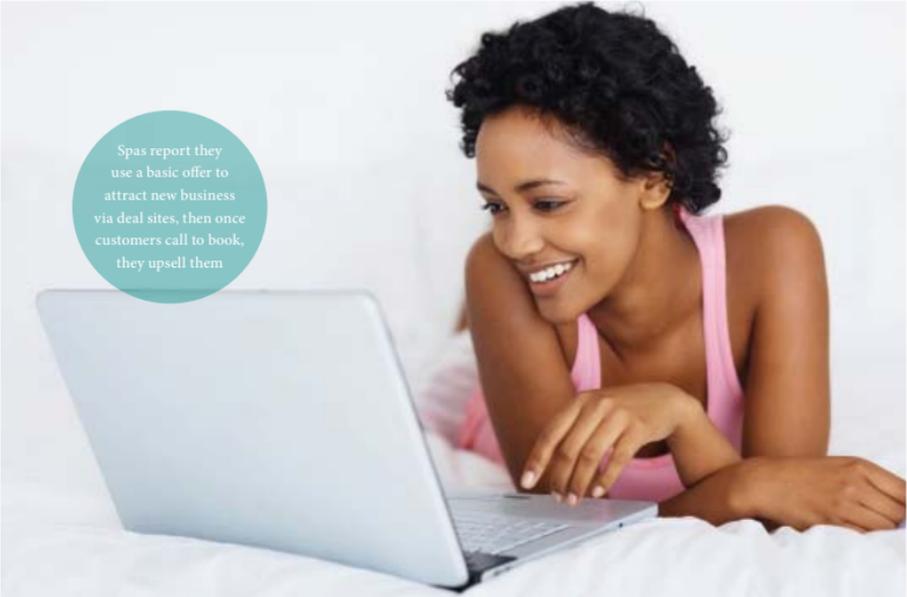
If a payment is paid for but not used, the treatment typically belongs to the spa, although in some US states, it can revert to the state legislature. The 'breakage' – or percentage of deals which are unused – varies from deal to deal, but operators report it running between 10-30 per cent, with higher rates of non-redemption for deals with longer shelf lives.

## OPPORTUNITIES

Crediting deals is both an art and a science. Some sell better than others and because the agreement between the spa and the deal site is effectively a profit share, there's a negotiation to be done to make an arrangement which works for both parties. Deal sites will refuse to take on deals they believe won't generate enough volume, because ultimately they have limited deal-marketing capacity and need to optimise this.

Industry feedback seems to indicate that Groupon favours doing deals with newer spas that want to kick start their businesses and that often these early deals are struck very much to Groupon's advantage as the new spas learn how the process works. The deal site has no vested interest in the financial health of the spa and effectively the cheaper





Spas report they use a basic offer to attract new business via deal sites, then once customers call to book, they upsell them

PHOTO:ISTOCK.COM/STICER KARLSSON

the deal the more volume will be generated, so the pressure is often to go for deep discounts, even if it means it drives the spa into a loss-making position – the deal site doesn't care, because it gets its cut regardless. The proportion due to the deal site ranges from 15 per cent for those on travel agency rates anywhere up to 80 per cent.

#### WHO 'OWNS' THE CUSTOMER?

Customer 'ownership' is a big issue and it all comes down to who owns the contact details and to whom the customer feels loyalty – the deal site or the spa?

There's anecdotal evidence that customers can sometimes feel more loyal to the deal site, with the spa element of the transaction being a commodity to be bought at the cheapest rate. This is a contentious point which goes to the heart of the relationship between the deal site and the spa operator.

'Ownership' revolves around the customer's email address, so this is subtly fought over, with the deal site limiting the information it passes over to the operator – typically just the name and booking number – and the operator looking for the first opportunity to capture the customer's email so they can set up a link to sell deals direct.

Some booking software tackles this by ensuring customer's email address and contacts are captured at checkout under the

credible guise of emailing a receipt. They can then be stored to the customer record.

Other operators report that they use a basic offer to attract customers via deal sites – a well-priced 30-minute massage, for example – and then once the customer calls to book, they upsell them to either a longer treatment or offer add-ons, such as facility use.

So how do you prevent existing customers being upset by seeing better deals popping up in deal sites? The advice is to email them personally the day before thanking them for their custom and offering them a deal which is as good or better than the one that's about to be pushed out through the deal site.

Although most deal sites would prefer this didn't happen, their contracts can't normally prevent it, although some will insist on exclusivity on deals. An alternative is to build in an extra discount for loyal customers and deliver this via the deal site.

#### CREATING GREAT DEALS

The key to structuring a successful deal is finding a formula which creates a margin for the spa and deal site while making a compelling offer for the consumer.

Popular options include two-for-one deals, which are reportedly more successful than buy one, get one free – indicating how small differences can have a big impact. Another option is to focus on adding value by bun-

dling in own-brand product lines: mark-ups on these are usually sufficient to allow a product to be combined with a treatment to make a package with high perceived value, while allowing a good margin for the spa.

This approach only works with own-label products, however, because retail brands have minimum pricing which prevent discounts. Well-known retail brands add a value of their own and operators report they can justify up to 10 per cent higher prices on a like for like treatment as part of a deal.

The use of deal sites by spas is a sign the industry's finally starting to get to grips with yield management – many years after the hotel and airline industries. These sectors, along with other areas of the travel trade, have educated consumers to expect premium pricing for peak times, discount for off-peak and special deals for loyalty.

When deal sites first started making an impact on the industry, some operators expressed their horror at what they saw as the devaluing of their offer and the undermining of margins. But things have moved on and our investigations for this feature reveal that many spa operators are using them with increasing effectiveness.

Turn the page to read our expert comments on how spas can exploit the opportunities presented by deal sites, while safeguarding their reputation and bottom line. ►



**I**n Europe, we have 5.5 million subscribers and 30-35 per cent of our merchants are spa operators, including companies such as Le Méridien Munich and Seaham Hall UK.

A typical complaint about deal sites is that the merchant doesn't break-even, let alone make money. But they're not thinking in the right way. Did they fill a treatment room that would have been empty otherwise? Then it's almost pure profit because they would've still had the same overheads, with the only extra cost being the products used. However, I would say that only 20 per cent of a spa's business should come from deals.

When choosing a deal site, a spa operator needs to focus on whether the demographic of its subscribers matches their target market. According to Alexa –

## RENE FRELING

General manager,  
Local Deals UK, Travelzoo



A £39-59 price point usually generates 1,000 sold deals in the UK and US; 500-600 in France, Germany and Spain; and lower in Asia because the business is new there.

the web traffic tracking firm – Groupon's customers are in their 20s and LivingSocial's in their 30s – a good fit for spas with a younger audience. Our UK and US subscribers would suit spas with older customers, because they're in their late 40s on average and 60 per cent are women.

Thinking about price point, how a deal is packaged and the volume of customers is also key. An hour treatment at £39-59 (US\$61-92, €45-68) won't overload a spa, but the cost is high enough to deter those only looking for the next cheap deal. Redemption can also be lower with cheaper prices – it's easier not to turn up to a deal you've only spent £20 (US\$31, €23) on.

Those deals will equate to around 42 extra people a week over the six months that it's valid for – although volume will be higher at the start and towards the end.

For £59-79 (US\$92-123, €68-91), we would include a 90-minute treatment, plus add-ons like the use of facilities or lunch. That would bring in 500-750 customers in the UK and US. It's crucial that spas have a strategy on how to handle this extra volume. Do they have enough space? Do receptionists know how to deal with the calls and – most importantly – have they been trained to upsell? Offering the use of facilities for £10 more, for example, is a great extra because it doesn't cost the operator anything.

We take a 30-40 per cent cut on sold deals depending on the discount – the bigger the treatment discount, the less our cut is.

*Freling has worked for Travelzoo for nearly three years and took on his UK role in December 2010. Details: [www.travelzoo.com](http://www.travelzoo.com)*

Price point, how a deal is packaged and the volume of customers is key. An hour treatment at £39-59 won't overload a spa but will deter those looking for a cheap deal

**I**oversee 32 UK spas and look for deal companies that have national coverage. As some are still relatively new, they're only focused around major cities which doesn't work so well for us.

I've recently acquired a spa locked into a Groupon deal and while we're getting lots of customers, it's costing us £2 (US\$3, €2.3) a head. Operators shouldn't be seduced by high head counts unless there's profitability at the bottom line. The contract ends next month and we won't be renewing it. We've tried incentivising staff to get a percentage of retail sales or rebookings from daily deal customers, but they spend nothing and are only loyal to the deal (not the operator).

So, we prefer voucher deal companies and partner with 10 of them including SpaSeekers, Spabreaks, I Need Pampering, Treat Me, Buyagift, Wahanda, Last Minute and Activity Superstore, which is the deal company behind big UK retailers such as M&S and Boots. Their cuts range from 15-30 per cent, but we always look at breakage too. Typically 30 per cent of deals are never redeemed, but Wahanda and Last Minute pay up front so

## JUSTIN MUSGROVE

Group spa director,  
Bannatyne Fitness Ltd, UK



a gift as they feel it would be more of an experience. So, we've introduced a £120 (US\$187, €138) deal and three at £99 (US\$154, €114).

Around 30 per cent of our customers come through deal sites and there'll be a significant, ongoing need for them in the future. However, we're looking to grow our direct business and incentivise clients coming via voucher deals to return. But making up your own offers to undercut the deal companies is a big 'no no'. The logistics of handling deal customers shouldn't be underestimated. We partner with 10 deal companies, all of which have different ways of redeeming vouchers. We have 20 call centre staff who understand these mechanisms and how to book in clients on deals.

We've just installed SpaBooker, which allows us to offer our full menu via real-time, online booking. The next phase will be to link up to deal sites. Ultimately, we want the customer to be able to book their own slot, even with gift vouchers and online deals from a third party.

*Musgrove joined Bannatyne in 2007 from Center Parcs. Details: [www.bannatyne.co.uk](http://www.bannatyne.co.uk)*

any non-redemption of vouchers benefits ourselves. We take that into consideration when formulating the best packages.

We used to get the best results from Last Minute, but this year Buyagift is top.

The best packages are two-for-one deals, which are the mainstay of voucher deal sites. And our most successful is a £65 (US\$101, €75) two-for-one which includes a 45-minute Elemis treatment and full use of club facilities. Having well-known suppliers, such as Elemis, adds value to the deal – we can probably charge about 10 per cent more.

We change the deals annually according to feedback. We dropped a manicure two-for-one recently as people didn't view it as a spa experience. For individuals or odd-number groups, we've introduced a £35 (US\$55, €40) package, because not everyone comes to a spa in pairs. We've also found that some people prefer a higher price point – husbands like to spend £100-plus (US\$156, €115) on

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**W**ahanda has the largest listing for health, beauty and spa companies worldwide (230,000 businesses). As we're vertically focused, our subscribers are exclusively interested in health and beauty and approximately 75 per cent are women.

There's a lot of talk about the repeat rate of deal site customers, but this can be misleading. With most spas running with a utilisation rate of 50 per cent – and up to 75 per cent fixed costs – the issue's not just about loyal customers, but about getting more business in the first place. So unless businesses take the hit on low utilisation, many need to look at discounting to fill quiet times – but there are smart ways of doing this.

We offer three types of deals to support businesses depending on the objective: Evergreen, which are long-duration offers and which businesses control and upload themselves; MobDeals™, our daily deals option that we launched in January 2010; and a

## LOPO CHAMPALIMAUD

Co-founder, Wahanda



hotel platform, introduced nine months ago, for overnight and day spa breaks.

We don't prescribe one single solution, instead we have 16 account managers who are experts in the field, and work with businesses to maximise their deals and offers.

MobDeals are useful for operators who want to get a lot of customers through the door during particularly quiet periods. These short-duration deals are supported by placement on the homepage and in email. For businesses where a full price is crucial [for the rest of the year] we wouldn't recommend doing more than two MobDeals a year. We'd look for a 50 per cent discount on the service and take a 30 per cent cut.

We always advise operators to be aware of capacity, because, if they can't cope with

the numbers, that leads to bad reputation. We'll frequently cap a deal, so spas don't become overrun and we would refuse to work with operators who offer daily deal, after daily deal and therefore deliver a terrible customer experience and have poor reviews.

Although a powerful tool, daily deals aren't for everyone. Those who don't want to be seen discounting or are not seeking big volumes might prefer a value-add option such as a two-for-one or even a full-price promotion. One of our top 20 sellers is a £140 (US\$218, €161) spa day with 75-minute worth of treatments, use of facilities and lunch. We take a 15 per cent cut on this. This is easily manageable for operators when it comes to volume, as it may only result in a few orders per day.

Regardless of whether you're doing a MobDeal or an Evergreen offer, not all deals are alike. For example, if repeat custom is a key objective, some services such as hair and medi-spa services, are more conducive for repeat custom.

*Prior to setting up Wahanda, Champalimaud was responsible for developing LastMinute.com's non-travel business across Europe. Details: [www.wahanda.com](http://www.wahanda.com).*

Unless businesses take a hit on low utilisation, many need to look at discounting to fill quiet times – but there are smart ways of doing this

**D**eal sites have made the spa market accessible to more people, but customers no longer want to pay full price. So, it's important to have a balance in your strategy – running your whole business on deals doesn't make financial sense. Last year, 20 per cent of our customers came from deal sites, but every spa is different. If I only had two treatment rooms, I wouldn't consider it.

Our Scin Beauty Spa in central London, UK, has nine treatment rooms and five mani/pedi-stations. We use Dr Murad, Aromatherapy Associates and Dermalogica products.

We started offering online voucher deals with Buyagift and Activity Superstore in 2006 to generate customers. Our best seller for years was a 50 per cent discount on a mini treatment package with Buyagift. As the market was more buoyant, we could restrict use from Monday to Thursday, between 9am-3pm. This helped us to utilise our capacity during our quietest periods. Plus, voucher deals usually have a

## NICKY NOBLE

Co-founder, Scin Beauty Spa



bigger profit margin as you are not normally required to give as much discount.

Our most successful daily deal was a MobDeal with Wahanda – a £28 (US\$44, €32) mini package including a 30-minute facial, 30-minute massage and file and polish. We sold 1,200 and got 900 customers through the door. Gross profit was only £6,000 (US\$9,350, €6,900), but it was more about marketing. As we'd just opened our spa, we wanted to expose as many people to it as possible and we got a lot of reviews on Wahanda to help build our reputation.

This instant hit of customers and cash-flow was what we needed at the time, but we wouldn't run it again now the business is more established. Also the demand for daily deals is decreasing in the UK now the hype has died down. And you need to be realistic about upselling – if someone's only paid

£20 (US\$31, €23) for a massage, it's unlikely they'll pay full price for one again, no matter how great it was.

I'm really careful about structuring deals and always looking at how easy it will be to upsell, if I have the capacity and what the cost is. My advice to any operator looking to do an online deal is don't pay more than 30 per cent commission and don't get bullied into doing 'on-redemption'. The other day, a salesman tried to convince me that only 1 per cent of customers don't redeem their deals – I've tracked this on our software system and it's always between 10-30 per cent.

Before going with the bigger companies, why not test the water with smaller deal sites such as GoGroopie or Crowdify [in London, UK]? Each spa or salon is different and owners need to think about what they're trying to achieve and what will work for them.

*Nicky Noble set up Scin with her sister Anna in 2006 and specialises in customer service. Details: [www.scin.uk.com](http://www.scin.uk.com)*



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# Niamh O'Connell

Hyatt's vice-president of international spa operations oversees 80 sites worldwide and tells us about the key to cracking China, new markets and developing a three-tier therapist training programme



O'Connell grew up in Ireland and began her career as a therapist on cruise liners

“**E**very day when I hop out of bed, I think ‘good I’m off to work’ because I just really love what I do,” says Niamh O’Connell, vice-president of international spa operations for Hyatt Hotels Corporation.

Talk to O’Connell about spas and her enthusiasm shines through: she’ll reel off a number of projects she’s excited about – and with more than 40 in the pipeline there are plenty to choose from (see p34). “I’m involved with everything from feasibility and conceptual design to liaising with project managers and working with the pre-opening team,” she says.

On top of this, O’Connell oversees the running and performance of 80 existing spas – including 20 in China. And she’s also on the brink of introducing a therapist training programme to help cultivate and keep talent in the group’s spas to ensure that they remain at the top of their game.

So, just how did she get to where she is today and how does she manage to control this ever-increasing spa portfolio?

## A CRUISE SHIP LEARNING

The 37-year old from Limerick, in the Republic of Ireland, comes across as modest but it’s clear she’s got a strong inner drive. “I always knew I wanted to work in wellness, but spa didn’t exist when I was growing up,” she recalls. So, armed with a CIDESCO qualification in beauty therapy she set sail on Steiner cruise liners in 1994 to work in onboard spas. Four years later, O’Connell had already progressed through the ranks to become spa director and by the time she left in 2003 she was responsible for 27 therapists.

“Working on cruise ships is a great foundation for any therapist,” says O’Connell. “You quickly learn the importance of customer service and yield management. I was on commission and after two months I worked out how to manage my column and ensure I was busy at least 90 per cent of the time. That meant that I could then have a three-month break without worrying about money!”

In 2004, O’Connell got her start at Hyatt after being asked to help open the Plateau – the group’s first residential spa – and take



The Rayana Spa in Abu Dhabi will open in the next few months and it’s one of the projects that O’Connell is most excited about



Hyatt used to have branded Pure Spas – but now the group prefers a local, individual approach to spa concepts such as those in Bali (right) and the bathhouse-inspired group treatment suites in China (above)



on the role of spa director (see SB04/Q3 p26). The US\$10m (€7.3m, £6.4m) launch at the glitzy Grand Hyatt in Hong Kong offered a unique take on spa as its 80,000sq ft (7,432sq m) encompassed 23 guestrooms alongside a significant wellness offering. "It was all about maintaining calmness for guests in a city location, they could check in at the spa and everything was on that one level," she says.

It was when O'Connell moved on to become area spa director for Greater China at Hyatt, however, that she became involved in spa development. "It was really exciting because that was just when the spa scene was starting to take off in China," she says. "Even back then we had a lot of spas open and in development and I was learning all about the culture, people and traditions and the importance of respecting these nuances."

After a brief spell at ESPA, as vice-president for Asia-Pacific, O'Connell was tempted back to Hyatt last year to focus on the company's international spa business at its headquarters in Chicago, US. "It was an amazing opportunity," she says, "although after living in Hong Kong, I'm struggling with the cold winters here!"

## NEW MARKETS

Unlike other US hotel chains, such as Starwood Hotels & Resorts (see SB10/3 p24) and Hilton (see SB11/3, p28), Hyatt has opted out of creating an in-house spa concept. Its once branded Hyatt Pure Spas are no longer and instead its "core philosophy is that each spa will have a unique concept and represent the location it's in," says O'Connell. "We're sensitive to the fact that we're coming into a new environment and we don't want to say 'this is what we do and you should spa our way.'"

## FAVOURITES

**Book:** *Indian Wisdom 365 Days* by

Danielle & Olivier Follmi – "I read a quote from this book at the start of every day"

**Film:** *The Green Mile*

**Season:** summer – "I'm a warm weather person"

**Leisure activity:** stand-up paddle boarding

**Non-Hyatt spa:** ESPA at the Metropole Monte-Carlo

**Treatment:** ayurveda – "I especially love shirodhara and experienced the best I've ever had at the Hyatt Regency Mumbai"

**Best piece of advice:** "A general manager once said to me 'if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got' – this taught me that change is the best way to get a different outcome"

The strategy is a clever one given that international operators entering fast-emerging spa markets such as India and China often quote cultural differences as one of the biggest hurdles to overcome. And with both of these countries being major development locations for Hyatt – it has more than 10 sites planned in India and over 20 in China – extensive research is carried out on local wellness practices and care is given to pay homage to these when creating a spa's identity.

O'Connell says: "The Hyatt Regency is opening in Chennai by 2012 and we already had a couple of ayurvedic spas in India, so this time we dug deeper and found that siddha, a form of ayurvedic medicine is famous in Chennai. We're now working with a siddha doctor to create a treatment menu and ensure that what we're offering is authentic."

In China, the Hyatt spa concepts are (in part) a reflection of the traditional bathhouses – places where families and friends socialise – albeit much more luxurious than the often smoke-filled venues. "People are usually loud and boisterous but they're enjoying themselves and that's how they

relax," explains O'Connell. "So we have different design elements in our Chinese spas. There are individual suites, but we also have larger communal rooms – up to 180sq m (1,938sq ft) – for six to eight people who might want to play a game of mahjong together or have a foot massage [all local past times]. And we find that international guests actually enjoy having a local experience that they wouldn't get anywhere else."

There are standard operating procedures which are tweaked at each location, as well as a list of around 20 preferred vendors to match with any given concept. Product houses include June Jacobs, Kerstin Florian, Voya, Omorovicza (see p46), Carita, Obagi, Luzern, Hommage and Aromatherapy Associates (see p22) – favoured because of the integrity of the products, training programmes and business management that's provided.

## CONCIL OF EXPERTS

Another new territory for Hyatt is South America – the group has four confirmed sites for hotel and spa development there, including Costa Rica. "There's not an overly

► developed spa market in that region, so this is a good opportunity for us," says O'Connell who also adds that it's not a given that all new hotels will have a spa. Out of the group's 250 properties, just under 20 per cent have spas.

Deciding to include a spa, she says, depends on how many existing and planned hotels are in the area, as well as the social mix of the surrounding community. "We look at whether it's in the middle of a village or developing town that would generate a local clientele. If it's on an industrial estate where people only go on business, however, then we know the potential profitability will be low. After that we'll get into the nitty gritty of space planning and ROI."

This process can take up to four years, but once a facility is open, O'Connell turns to her 'spa council of experts' to ensure operations run smoothly. These are five individuals in Korea, Bali, Brazil, China and Thailand. "They have their own spas to operate, but they're the people other managers turn to for advice or examples of best practice," she says. "They'll help assist me in pre-opening and with training if we bring in a new manager – they're the 'go to people'."

"I hope to bring another two to three spa council of experts on board by the end of 2012 and I'll be looking for various skill sets – someone who's more of a business counsel, who's able to look at numbers; a marketing specialist; or someone who knows operations



Business is growing positively at Hyatt spas. Performance is up on last year and more people are coming for longer, wellness-focused treatments

inside out having started as a therapist. So far, I've been lucky because my team is super passionate and just as motivated as I am."

## UP ON 2010

Since starting back at Hyatt in 2010, O'Connell has been pleased with the way the spas have progressed financially. "We're

seeing positive growth in their performance this year." And while she can't disclose numbers, if the overall hotel figures are anything to go by – adjusted EBITDA was US\$151m (€111m, £97m) in the second quarter of 2011, up 11.9 per cent from the same period in 2010 – it's good news. O'Connell adds: "Consumer confidence is coming back, people are

## HYATT SPA DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has more than 40 spas that are due to open by 2016. Up to 16 of these are scheduled to launch by the end of 2012

### COMING SOON

#### Hyatt at Capital Gate, Abu Dhabi

The surrounding Arabian desert was the inspiration for the 823sq m (8,859sq ft) Rayana Spa at Hyatt Capital Gate that will open later this year. Treatments will incorporate indigenous ingredients such as mint, frankincense and argan oil, with June Jacobs as the international product house. Facilities will include four single and one double spa suite (each with whirlpools), a relaxation area overlooking an outdoor pool and a fitness centre.

#### Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel and Villas

Hyatt's other Middle Eastern property for 2011 will boast a 1,870sq m (20,129sq ft) spa with nine treatment suites, plus a hair and nail salon. Atarmia Spa will offer historic Arabian treatments such as hammam rituals.



Atarmia Spa at Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi

#### Grand Hyatt Goa

The 35,000sq ft (3,252sq m) Shamana Spa at Grand Hyatt Goa, due to open by 2012, will feature 19 treatment suites, a Life Fitness gym, a yoga studio, a 25m lap pool and separate outdoor pool. Shamana is the Sanskrit word for 'balance', and providing a wellbeing and lifestyle balance – through Balinese, Thai and ayurvedic rituals and health-focused lifestyle programmes – is the spa's philosophy. The product houses are Natura Bisse, Voya, Puri Alchemy (from Bangkok) and Iraya (from India).

### Other 2011 anticipated openings

#### India

- Hyatt Regency Chennai

#### China

- Andaz Shanghai
- Hyatt Regency Guiyang
- Hyatt Regency Jinan
- Park Hyatt Ningbo

#### Vietnam

- Hyatt Regency Danang Resort and Spa

### 2012 anticipated openings

#### India

- Park Hyatt Chennai
- Park Hyatt Hyderabad

#### China

- Hyatt Regency Chongqing
- Hyatt Regency Qingdao
- Hyatt Regency Suzhou
- Park Hyatt Sanya Sunny Bay Resort

#### The Netherlands

- Andaz Amsterdam



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# CLARINS



The service and performance training programme will roll out in Asia and the long-term aim is to secure accreditation from an international training body

► having packages and longer therapies, rather than just a 30-minute treatment and that's impacting positively on retail sales too."

Each spa, she says, has its own monthly performance targets which she closely monitors from Chicago – "it's my responsibility to make sure they achieve these". And monthly results are collated and reported in using TAC's Reservation Assistant.

She watches average treatment times/duration and therapist utilisation particularly closely she says: "We have spa suites (rather than treatment rooms and a separate lockers), so we need to factor in an extra 30 minutes in the average treatment duration to allow for customer changing times. So, we're not looking for people to have just a one-hour treatment. We aim for 1.5 hours in our city locations and between 2.5 to 2.7 hours in resorts."

Therapist utilisation is good indicator of how business is going too, she adds. If the rate is 80 per cent or above, an alert will be sent to the spa manager that it's time to start recruiting. If utilisation is below 50 per cent, however, then it's a pointer that something's wrong.

O'Connell also considers revenue management a crucial aspect for a spa director to control and is currently working closely with TAC to set up a lower pricing structure on spa booking systems for treatments in off-peak periods.

### **PUSHING THE ENVELOPE**

It's not only delivering on numbers that O'Connell is mindful of at Hyatt. With the company having already secured a string

**We only have spa suites, so we add an extra 30 minutes onto our average treatment duration. We're not looking for a one-hour treatment... we're aiming for at least a two-and-a-half-hour average in resorts**

of spa awards, there's pressure to keep producing high-quality experiences too. The winning formula "is down providing a local/cultural experience," she says. "But it's also thanks to consistency of service and the passion of the teams."

She pins the levels of service on the fact that there's generally quite a low turnover of staff in spa facilities – the highest movement is typically from the concierges who tend to leave after three to four years. Yet she openly admits that it's going to be a struggle to match this in developing spa markets. To meet this challenge head on she and the spa council of experts have created an internal training programme. The idea is that growing a therapist's skills and giving them a structured career path will encourage loyalty as well as ensuring high service standards are met and exceeded.

The programme is spread over three levels, with the first lasting six to eight weeks

and covering service protocols, the guest journey and around five basic treatments such as a massage, facial, wrap, scrub and foot treatment. After eight months, a therapist can progress to the second level of training which is carried out on the job and focuses on more specialist treatments such as electronic beauty services and lymphatic drainage. After another eight months it's predicted that they'll then be ready for level three which will cover advanced therapist skills including training new joiners, monitoring current staff and reviewing overall standards and procedures.

"We'll start using this in the countries that have developing spa markets because that's where we'll need it most," says O'Connell. "Initially therapists will receive a Hyatt certification, but we eventually hope to partner with an international training body."

On top of this, O'Connell's also working on a management programme to include familiarisation for new directors/managers which involves shadowing one of the council of experts for a week or more.

She concludes: "My overall goal is to continue to push the envelope in terms of creativity and conceptual development. And what I really want to see is existing therapists advance and develop their careers and to bring in new people and see them progress as well.

"This will enable us to maintain consistency and ensure the brand integrity remains intact, even while we're expanding so much and so rapidly." ●



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# KEEPING THE PACE

**THE ISPA 2011 US SPA INDUSTRY STUDY REVEALS THAT THE SECTOR IS EXPERIENCING MODERATE GROWTH AND INCREASED EMPLOYMENT**

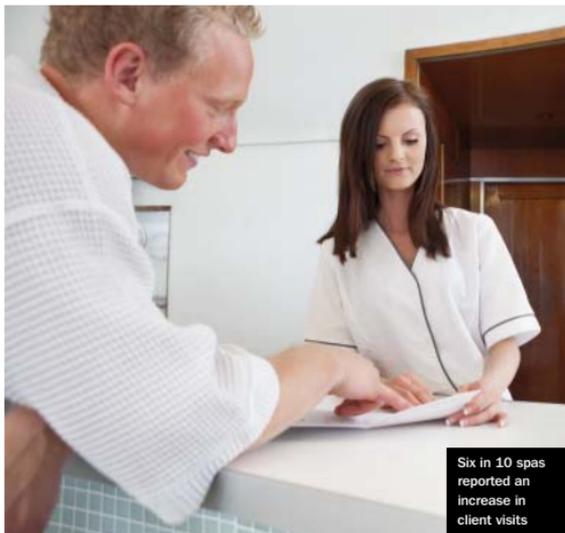
Spa operators across the US are holding their own in the modest economic recovery; hiring new staff and adapting to meet changing consumer needs, according to the International SPA Association (ISPA) 2011 *US Spa Industry Study*.

This report, based on a survey of 905 US spa operators, provides a snapshot of the industry during 2010 and the first half of 2011. The study places particular emphasis on the industry's performance as the US economy emerged from the recession. Its aim was to measure the extent to which the spa industry has proceeded along the road to recovery, by examining the change in revenues, spa visits, number of locations, floor space and staffing levels. In addition, the report looks at the key factors driving recovery and the challenges facing spas during this phase and beyond.

## ROAD TO RECOVERY

In 2009, the spa industry felt the full impact of the 2008-09 recession. For the first time since the inaugural 2000 ISPA industry survey, the spa industry registered declines across all major indicators: falling revenues and visits, a drop in locations and reduced staffing levels (see SB10/4 p34).

In 2010, the US economy recovered to grow at a 3 per cent pace. The evidence from the latest ISPA study is that the spa indus-



Six in 10 spas reported an increase in client visits

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/TYLER OLSON

## ISPA 2011 US SPA INDUSTRY STUDY

	2009 (YEAR END)	2010 (YEAR END)	PER CENT CHANGE
Revenue	US\$12.3 billion	US\$12.8 billion	+4.3%
Spa visits	143 million	150 million	+4.7%
Locations	20,600	19,900	-3.3%
	2010 (MAY)	2011 (MAY)	PER CENT CHANGE
Total employees	332,000	338,600	+2.0%
Full-time	138,100	149,200	+8.0%
Part-time	137,200	134,200	-2.2%
Contract	56,800	55,200	-2.8%
Square footage*	76 million sq ft	76 million sq ft	-0.3%

The full *ISPA 2011 US Spa Industry Study*, prepared by PriceWaterhouseCoopers covers in detail: industry size and its road to recovery; the nation's spa industry profile; size and geography by type of spa; facilities including indoor square footage; services and products on offer; prices and the competition of revenue; and spa staff.

ISPA members may download a complimentary copy of the study and nonmembers can purchase it at [www.experiencespa.com](http://www.experiencespa.com).

\* Square footage is rounded to the nearest million



Prices for primary services have held steady, which reflects the moderate uplift in consumer demand

try has kept up with the moderate rate of expansion, reversing recessionary declines in revenues, visits and staffing numbers.

In 2010, total spa industry revenues rose by an estimated 4.3 per cent, or 2.6 per cent after adjusting for inflation, bringing the total to US\$12.8bn (£9.4bn, £8.2bn), up US\$0.5bn (£0.37bn, £0.32bn) from 2009's US\$12.3bn (£9.2bn £8bn). The average revenue was up by 8 per cent, equal to US\$642,000 (£470,900, £410,300). With average spend per visit remaining unchanged at US\$85 (£62, £54), the main factor driving the increase was a 5 per cent rise in total visits, from 143 million by year end 2009 to 150 million by year end 2010. Though not back to the pre-recession peak of 160 million recorded in 2008, this still marks an important step towards recovery.

Further encouraging signs include total square footage holding steady and an estimated 2 per cent rise in employment. As of May 2011, a total of 338,600 people were working in the US spa industry, with the number of full-time employees up by 8 per cent compared to 2010. This expansion in full-time staffing has been the driver of employment increase and indicates that there is a measure of confidence as spas bounce back.

However, the recovery has not been enough to prevent a further fall in the number of spa locations (down 3 per cent), which dipped for the second year running. This is partly due to the fact that the rate of new spa openings fell sharply in 2010. Of the spas surveyed, only 2.5 per cent had opened in 2010, compared to an opening rate of 6-8

per cent in previous years. Also, an estimated 5.8 per cent of spas closed in 2010 – a figure that is likely to be elevated due to the lingering effects of the recession. The fall in the number of spa locations may also represent a consolidation in the industry following rapid expansion between 1998-2008.

By the end of 2010, the total number of locations stood at 19,900. The composition of the industry remains broadly unchanged. Day spas are still in the majority (78 per cent), followed by resort/hotel spas accounting for 9 per cent of the total; medical spas (8.7 per cent); club spas (2.8 per cent); destination spas offering seven-day wellness

programmes (0.4 per cent); and mineral spring spas (0.3 per cent).

Overall, the spa industry recovery reflects the national picture and similar experiences in comparable leisure industry sectors such as health clubs, theme parks and cruise lines.

#### STRATEGIES FOR GROWTH

National economic developments have been the single most important factor shaping the pace of growth in the spa industry, through the recession and into the recovery phase. In response, spas have adopted a range of strategies to manage the effects of the downturn and position themselves for future growth. ▶



In 2010, total industry revenues rose by 4.3 per cent, or 2.6 per cent after adjusting for inflation, bringing the total to US\$12.8bn...  
49 per cent of spas reported improvements in profits

Ninety-five per cent of spas have their own website and say this had the greatest impact on sales over any other online service

► The spa activities – and the economic factors – that have led to the current upturn in fortunes can be summed up as the ‘four ps’ – pick-up in demand, promotions and marketing, pricing and profitability.

■ **Demand on the up.** Most operators reported increased visits and revenue in the six-month period from September 2010 to March 2011, compared to the same period one year previously. Six in 10 spas reported an increase in spa visits by their clients. A similar proportion (61 per cent) said revenues had risen over the preceding six-month period. Spas were less likely to have noted increased client spending per visit (45 per cent), indicating that the rise in demand has been driven more by an increase in client visits.

Across all spa types, trends in revenues showed a distinct improvement on the 2009-2010 period. In the earlier 2009-2010 period, 46 per cent of spas said revenues were climbing, compared to 61 per cent for the period of September 2010 to March 2011. Spas were also more likely to say they were increasing staffing levels, marking a sharp turnaround in the employment trend.

■ **Creative promotion and marketing.** Spas have adopted imaginative and proactive approaches to sustain and grow business, seeking to attract new clients, build loyalty and increase revenue among their existing clientele. Their strategies show a keen awareness that consumer disposable income remains tight – clients are increasingly conscious of value and sensible use of their money.

A key aim of the current marketing approach is to counter perceptions of spa treatments as indulgent pampering experiences. Many spas are now positioning their services as part of a healthy lifestyle, promoting wellbeing and marketing their treatments as beneficial to people living busy, stressful lives.

Almost all spas (97 per cent) use online services to reach and motivate consumers, while 95 per cent have their own websites and 81 per cent use social media. Online reviews (used by 52 per cent of spas) and directories (used by 51 per cent) also play an important role. Deal of the day websites (28 per cent) and flash sale websites (8 per cent) are used to a much lesser extent.



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/UTURN ANCHORS

To reach customers, spas use online reviews (52 per cent) and directories (51 per cent). Daily deal websites (28 per cent) and flash sale websites (8 per cent) aren't so popular

Operators said their own website had the greatest impact on sales over other online services. Almost three in four spas (73 per cent) reported a ‘major’ impact on revenues from their own website. Less than half of spas, however, saw a major impact on revenues from any other online service. Of those spas that use social media to generate sales, for example, most (72 per cent) were likely to describe the impact on revenue as ‘minor’.

Rewards and promotions continue to feature in attracting spa-goers. In 2010, 72 per cent of spas said they offered gift card promotions, ranging from 58 per cent of resort/hotel spas to 73 per cent of day spas and 75 per cent of medical spas. While innovative promotion ideas were popular, many spas were reluctant to go down the deep discount route, believing it devalued the brand and made it difficult to maintain standards. They also felt this tactic did not generate customer loyalty. Discounting too, is likely to restrain growth in prices.

Almost all spas (96 per cent) are also connecting more with their local communities in various ways: donating products and services (85 per cent), hosting events such as open house days (69 per cent) and charity benefit evenings (62 per cent). Such activities are likely to have an indirect effect on building business, by providing profile-raising opportunities and educating customers on the benefits of the spa experience.

The rise in spa visits would suggest this mix of marketing is paying dividends.

■ **Pricing holds steady.** Prices for primary services held steady or declined slightly in 2010. This reflects the moderate uplift in consumer demand, and the use of rewards and some discounting to encourage visits.

■ **Profitability.** Boosted by increasing demand due to economic recovery, many spas have reported an improvement in profits (49 per cent). However, a substantial proportion has yet to see profits recover. Nearly one in four spas said their profitability decreased from September 2010 to March 2011, compared to the previous year. Improving profitability will remain a key challenge for many spas, against a backdrop of flat trends in prices and average client spend.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The ISPA research reveals that the spa industry continues to face a number of important challenges as it moves towards recovery and beyond, not least because it's dependent on the pace of growth in the wider economy.

Further recovery will come down to finding the right balance between quality and pricing (including the use of discounting) to build demand. There's also a need to educate consumers to appreciate the health and wellbeing benefits from spa treatments and steer them away from the belief that they're merely luxury indulgences.

In addition, there's the ongoing obstacle of recruiting and retaining qualified, committed and professional staff. ●



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# ALOHA DISNEY

A palm-fringed lagoon with a mountainous backdrop, is the impressive setting for Disney's latest venture, its first beach resort not to be anchored by a theme park

KATH HUDSON \* JOURNALIST \* SPA BUSINESS

**A**ulani, which welcomed its first guests on 29 August, promises to be something special. It's the combination of Disney's unique brand of magic and exacting standards, along with a jaw-droppingly beautiful setting – the 21-acre (8.5-hectare) resort is on the shore of a 9-acre (3.6 hectare), crystal-blue lagoon, surrounded by a white-sand beach.

Rooting the resort in its Hawaiian heritage has been critical during the design process. One of the world's largest private collections of contemporary Hawaiian art is displayed throughout the resort. During the design, Walt Disney Imagineering – the creative arm of the company – worked closely with local Hawaiian cultural advisors. Indigenous building traditions are used, including the Hawaiian art of lashing, which uses braided or twisted cord instead of nails.

Accommodation will have sea or mountain views and is being built in phases – when the last stage is completed in 2012/2013, there will be a total of 359 rooms and 481 villas. As well as a world-class 18,000sq ft (1,672sq m) spa, there is also a 7-acre (2.8-hectare) waterplay area, two restaurants, a snorkel lagoon and convenient access to a championship golf course and 330-slip marina. The Disney magic has been sprinkled here too, since the Imagineering team have steered the creative process.



The spa has been sprinkled with Disney magic, since the company's Imagineering team steered the creative process

## FAMILY FRIENDLY

Wellness industry veteran, Lucia Rodriguez Amasio, who has worked in spas on the island for 15 years, was brought in as spa director, in charge of the set up. She says it was an exciting project to be involved with: "It appealed to me on many levels, but three things stood out the most: celebrating the culture of Hawaii with our guests, a family resort with wellness experiences and the magic of the Disney organisation. It weaves the best of Hawaii with what Disney does best: story telling and service"

Where many spas are designed to be child-free havens, this one is quite the opposite. The Laniwai spa – as with the majority of other Disney spas – welcomes even small children and Rodriguez Amasio tips family spas as a growing trend.

There's a family suite, catering for up to six people, located away from the main spa area, and in the spa's salon children from five-years-old are offered manicures, pedi-

cures and haircuts. The Keiki Hula experience is pitched at girls from three-years-old and involves painting the nails with floral art, decorating the hair with fresh flowers, sprinkling them in pixie dust and even dressing them in a hula dress and teaching them to hula.

New parents can take it in turns to have massages while their partner learns baby massage from a certified practitioner.

Teenagers get their own 1,500sq ft (140sq m) spa, Painted Sky, which is separate from Laniwai. Here they can hang out at a yogurt bar, a relaxation area, a computer station, and a mixology bar to blend personalised Hawaiian body polishes, perfume and face masques. There is a treatment room for manicures, pedicures, facials and massages, including those aimed at young men.

## CELEBRATING HAWAII

Water is very much an inspiration. The name, Laniwai, means freshwater heaven and centrepiece to the spa is the outdoor hydrotherapy garden – the Kula Wai – which boasts herbal pools, a reflexology path, rain showers, hot and cold whirlpools and vitality baths for a soak in water infused with flowers, fruits, herbs and oils. The 15 treatment rooms are named after rainbows, such



“Three things stood out the most: celebrating the culture of Hawaii with our guests, a family resort with wellness experiences and the magic of the Disney organisation”



The centrepiece to the spa is the outdoor hydrotherapy garden



▶ as Luahoana, a rainbow around the sun or moon. "The design embraces the cultural, and even the spiritual significance of rainbows, by elegantly combining reflected light, brilliant colour and healing water features," says Rodriguez Amasio.

In keeping with the Hawaiian tradition of being in harmony with the environment, many green technologies were used. These include recycling and waste generation: the construction team recycled more than half of the construction waste materials generated.

A cool roof technology reflects the infrared light to reduce the roof temperature and keep buildings cool. Aulani also features organic green roofs above the fitness centre and kitchen. Wood was used from certified sources and heat pumps capture waste heat from air-conditioning chillers and repurpose it for hot water throughout the resort. This, combined with other technologies, means that Aulani exceeds the mandatory energy performance standards.

Celebrating Hawaiian culture, as well as creating family experiences, are the two core aims of the 150-strong treatment spa menu. Therefore, it calls on the Hawaiian healing traditions, including lomi lomi massage,

Signature treatments in the Kilikili rainwater suite take place under streaming jets of warm water

which is a signature treatment and incorporates pressure point sticks and warm river stones. Another signature treatment, Kilikili (which means fine, light rain) takes place in the private rainwater suite, Lilinoe, and involves exfoliation and massage with coconut oil, under streaming jets of warm waters. Waiwai also takes place under warm misting rain and guests can create their own signature exfoliation out of ingredients, such as mango, ginger and hibiscus.

The wellness area also includes a eucalyptus-infused steamroom, a sauna, relaxation rooms and a 2,000sq ft (185sq m) gym.

Now the spa is open, Rodriguez Amasio is looking forward to getting it running at full capacity and ensuring it plays its key role in the wider resort. "I truly have to say this has been an incredible journey as each milestone was reached. I'm so proud of all of it," she says. "Now I'm going to enjoy directing a spectacular cast." ●



Disney Dream's Senses Spa & Salon

## NEW SPA TO SET SAIL

Disney's new cruise liner, the *Disney Fantasy*, will provide spa treatments for adults and teenagers when it starts sailing around the Caribbean in March 2012.

The spa facility on the 4,000-capacity ship will be located over two decks.

Senses Spa & Salon will be the ship's main, adults-only spa which will boast 17 treatment rooms and two VIP spa villas.

Facilities will include a beauty salon, barber shop and a teeth whitening Smile Spa. There will also be a pre- and post-treatment relaxation room and a rainforest-themed thermal suite comprising a hammam, caldarium and laconium.

The ship's Chill Spa is a separate space for teenagers located inside Senses Spa & Salon. Services designed for a younger audience will include facials, massages and manicures.

In January, the *Disney Dream* cruise liner launched with similar spa facilities, while spas also feature onboard the company's other two liners *Disney Magic* and *Disney Wonder*.

All Disney spas at sea are managed by The Onboard Spa company – the maritime division of Steiner Leisure.

Three more Disney spas in Florida, as well as six massage and fitness centres, are managed by Niki Bryan Spas.

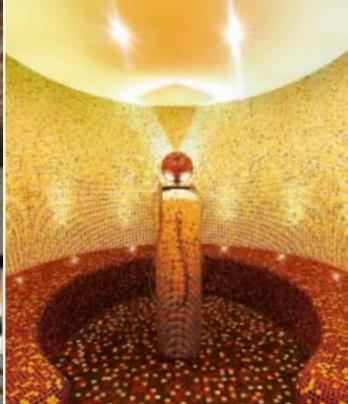
## THE REST OF THE RESORT

Beachside restaurant, AMA'AMA, uses fresh local ingredients to create island flavours, while the buffet-style, Makahiki, is decorated with hand painted murals by local artists.

There's also a 7-acre (2.8-hectare) waterplay area, Waikolohe Valley with two tube slides, interactive water features and a climbing play structure. Rainbow Reef is a 3,800sq ft (353sq m) snorkel lagoon and there's a

conservation pool where guests can stroke stingrays. Adults have their own quiet pool and for romantic trysts, there are sunset-facing whirlpool spas.

Activities are available off-site through Adventures by Disney, which offer hikes in the surrounding mountains and tropical forests, sailing on catamarans, swimming with dolphins, horse riding in the nearby Kualoa valley, catamaran excursions with musical entertainment, a surf school and Hawaiian cooking classes.



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MY SAUNA AND SPA



After meeting in the spa city of Budapest, Stephen and Margaret de Heinrich Omorovicza went on to create a global skincare brand that draws on the powerful mineral benefits of Hungary's thermal waters

# the Omoroviczas

JULIE CRAMER • JOURNALIST • SPA BUSINESS

In a little over five years, husband and wife team Stephen and Margaret de Heinrich Omorovicza have established a global skincare brand, with a growing number of upmarket retail stores, hotels and spas – think Four Seasons, St Regis and Oberoi – stocking their products and offering their treatments worldwide.

Harnessing the natural mineral powers of Budapest's thermal waters, the Omorovicza brand turns over a healthy £5m (US\$7.7m, €5.9m). And the couple want to grow the business in the US and Asia, while also chipping away at the UK market.

The story behind Omorovicza is a very personal – not least because it grew from the fortuitous meeting of a female US diplomat on a posting to Budapest, and a descendant of a noble Hungarian family who had returned to the capital to explore his roots.

The then American diplomat Margaret Dickerson was introduced to Stephen, a London-trained lawyer turned businessman, by the US ambassador in 2001. It was a meeting that the pair later realised was 'a set-up'.

Margaret recalls: "Stephen started telling me the history of the thermal waters and how Romans used them to heal soldiers' wounds. He also told of how his great, great grandfather had commissioned one of the first and largest thermal baths in the city – the Rácz in Buda in the 19th century.

"As an American, thermal baths were a new concept to me and I naturally found all these stories completely charming."

## SKIN BENEFITS

But what really sparked her curiosity was when Stephen first took her to experience the thermal waters and she found it had a profound effect on her skin. She says: "After



Budapest's Rácz Hotel & Thermal Spa will use Omorovicza products when it reopens in 2012

just a few visits the difference to the quality of my skin was amazing."

With Margaret's discovery, Stephen's desire to explore his heritage and an instant attraction, not only were the seeds of romance sown (the pair married in 2005), but also the beginnings of an exciting new business.

Stephen says: "Surprisingly, no one in Hungary was using the mineral properties of the water in skincare products.

Through her diplomatic work, Margaret came into contact with leaders in Hungary's medical and health fields, so when the pair started researching the possibility of a skincare range she knew exactly where to turn.

The Nobel prize-winning Laboratory of Dermatology and Allergology at the city's Albert St George University discovered vitamin C in the 1930s. Working with scientists there, the couple trademarked a technique called Mineral Cosmetology, which Margaret says makes the thermal minerals more bio-available and readily absorbed by the skin (see p48).

## MINERAL-RICH

All Omorovicza products are made up of 60 per cent thermal water, she says, and in Budapest the waters are said to be even more potent because the earth's crust is thinner there, allowing more minerals to enter.

These waters are not only very healing (some potent spa waters in Hungary even require a doctor's prescription), but are believed to help strengthen the skin's elasticity and stimulate collagen production.

Margaret describes her husband as "extremely knowledgeable" about the product formulation part of the business. For his part, Stephen confesses to being fascinated by the chemistry side of their skincare range. "It was incredibly difficult to stabilise the natural minerals and it took about a year before we perfected our first product," he says.

The couple say that their products contain no inert substances, which makes them richer. Margaret says: "Many high-end skincare products usually contain 30 per cent





Salubritati publicae  
balnea haec erexit  
1865  
D<sup>N</sup> NEP. HEINRICH  
ómorovitzá

Stephen and Margaret were 'set up' on a date by Hungary's US ambassador in 2001

top quality ingredients, 10 per cent synthetic fillers while the remaining 60 per cent is plain water, which does not add any benefits. Our products contain around 40 per cent (or 38 per cent excluding preservatives) active ingredients, as well as 60 per cent active mineral water, so the effect is much more powerful."

Omorovicza products are described as natural, but Stephen says it was impossible not to include a small percentage of other ingredients – namely phenoxyethanol as a preservative and carbomer as an emulsifier.

#### POPULAR PRODUCTS

There are almost 30 products in the Omorovicza range, and up to four new ones will come to market in the next 12 months

Some of the top sellers include: the Thermal Cleansing Balm, priced at £46 (US\$71, €54) for 50ml; and the Instant Plumping Cream, which costs £96 (US\$148, €112) for 100ml. While, the products that include gold

#### FAVOURITES

##### Margaret

**Book:** *Sentimental Education*, by Flaubert

**Film:** *Bullet's Over Broadway*

**Song:** *Here's to Life*, Shirley Horn

**Season:** spring

**Place:** Venice

**Food:** grilled fish, sea salt, lemon and excellent olive oil

**Leisure activity:** sailing

##### Stephen

**Book:** *Eastern Approaches*

by Fitzroy Maclean

**Film:** *Les Enfants du Paradis*

**Song:** *Anything* by Al Bowly

**Season:** summer

**Place:** London

**Food:** layered cabbage (lots of sour cream)

**Leisure activity:** sailing

– such as the Gold Shimmer Oil: £52 (US\$80, €61) for 100ml – are also very popular. Margaret says: "Gold is a very healing mineral, and is particularly good for skin after surgery."

Omorovicza treatments are developed and trialled at the couple's own day spa in Budapest, which was launched alongside the inaugural skincare range in 2006. It comprises a large retail space in front and a treatment room behind.

Hungarian therapists, who have to train for three to five years to become qualified, work alongside the couple on treatment development and are also on hand to train Omorovicza clients in techniques.

"The Hungarians really have a unique style of facial massage, which is a powerful workout for the skin," says Margaret.

She seems equally impressed with the general beauty culture in Hungary, which she ▶

## FAMILY MATTERS

says is ingrained through the female generations. "If a young daughter starts to have skin problems her mother will take her to a facialist rather than a dermatologist," she says. "There are excellent, local spas everywhere which are not cost-prohibitive."

So far, Omorovicza treatments are offered in more than 30 spas worldwide and the company has trained around 200-300 therapists. Some of them are flown in to immerse themselves more in Hungarian beauty culture, although the vast majority are trained on-site at the retail outlets and hotel spas.

Currently, there are four facials and five body treatments in the Omorovicza range, and Stephen says they're also happy to create bespoke treatments to suit a site.

### BUILDING THE BRAND

After six years of business, and a similar amount of time as husband and wife, the couple also have to juggle their hectic business schedules with bringing up their two daughters, aged five and three.

They relocated to London a year ago so the girls could attend school, and maintain a staff of around 30 people spread between their headquarters in Budapest and their new base in London.

At the time of the interview, Margaret had just returned from a demanding two-week trip that saw her in a different US city each night. And Stephen will shortly be leaving to visit hotel clients in India.

Margaret's role in the business is very much on the PR and marketing side, as well as training and bringing in new business. Stephen says: "She's a fantastic public speaker and brilliant at anything to do with PR. She projects a great image for the brand."

Margaret describes her husband as "very creative, with great knowledge, drive and enthusiasm". He says: "I deal with the day to day running of the business, and as a former



The couple's own spa in Budapest launched in 2006 and has one treatment room

*So far, Omorovicza treatments are offered in more than 30 spas worldwide and the company has trained around 200-300 therapists*

lawyer I suppose I have good organisational skills. I can plough through endless to-do lists. But anything linked to brand development we do together."

Omorovicza products are sold in the 30-plus spas they supply, as well as in 27 other stores worldwide – and retail accounts for around 80 per cent of the business. The pair are happy to grow the business steadily and organically, and say that while they would eventually like the Omorovicza brand in more spas, they want to focus on building strong client relations as they progress.

"It's really important that our store facialists and spa therapists are properly supported, and that they understand the product so they can give customers the right skincare information," says Margaret.

The future focus of the Omorovicza brand is to expand more across the US and also

further into Asia, and continue with product research and development.

"I really enjoy dealing with our clients in Hong Kong and Taiwan and we're looking forward to getting the brand into South Korea," says Stephen.

With skincare products, there are inevitably many administration challenges along the way, he says. For instance, India just changed its rules on the registration of foreign beauty products, and Stephen says they are awaiting clarity on how much more red tape this is may mean for the business.

Now with a firm base in London, it also seems natural that the pair may turn their attention to the UK market.

In London, the brand is in the spa at Four Seasons Park Lane; the Urban Retreat at Harrods; and retailed in other high-end department stores such as Harvey Nichols and Liberty. "There are some great spas in the UK and we'd like to work with more, but up until now progress has been slower than we'd expected," Stephen says.

As for Omorovicza's home market of Hungary – things are apparently about to come full circle. The famous Rácz spa first commissioned by Stephen's great, great grandfather, and built by the renowned Hungarian architect Miklós Ybl (who also built Budapest's Basilica and Opera House) in 1865, is undergoing an extensive €35.5m (US\$47m, £31m) refurbishment which combines new facilities and historical spa architecture (see p14).

The Rácz Hotel & Thermal Spa is due to re-open in early 2012 and will feature – naturally – the Omorovicza brand. ●

### MINERAL COSMETOLOGY

**The skincare process trademarked by Omorovicza works on three levels:**

- 1) The topical application of minerals to the skin – the thermal water in all products contain zinc, copper, calcium, magnesium, manganese and selenium
- 2) The delivery of bio-available mineral compounds to the epidermis – this bio-availability results from the



cellular transformation of minerals in the thermal water. The company says this occurs naturally during a long bio-fermentation process, enhancing absorption into the skin

- 3) Delivery of minerals to

the dermis – phospholipid liposomes carry the bio-available compounds deeper into the dermis. Overtime the skin becomes smoother and more supple as the minerals penetrate more deeply

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# Oyster Box Hotel & Spa, South Africa

**T**he fact that Prince Albert II of Monaco and his bride, Princess Charlene, chose to stay at The Oyster Box following their lavish wedding this July, gives an indication of how high-end this hotel and spa offering is. Beautifully situated in the Umhlanga area of Durban on the Indian Ocean coastline, the historic property began life as a lighthouse cottage in 1869 and was converted into a hotel in 1947. It re-opened in 2009 following an extensive, ZAR450m (US\$59m, €42m, £37m), two-year restoration. The rebuilt 86-bedroom hotel is a mix of colonial elegance – original features include hand-painted tiles and wrought-iron



This hotel and spa in Durban recently hosted the Prince of Monaco on his honeymoon. Lisa Starr sees if it really is suitable for royalty

LISA STARR • SENIOR CONSULTANT • WYNNE BUSINESS

balustrades – and plush, modern finishes. Facilities include six restaurants, meeting and banquet rooms and two pools.

There's also a new purpose-built, three-storey spa and fitness centre, which was voted the Best Luxury Wellness Spa in South Africa in this year's World Luxury Spa Awards; as well as Best Hotel Spa 2010 by *Les Nouvelles Esthetique South Africa*.

The Oyster Box is part of the Red Carnation Hotel Collection, which has two more properties in South Africa – Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve and Wellness Retreat, Cederberg; and Cape Town's Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa – as well as other four- and five-star boutique hotels in the UK, Guernsey, Switzerland and the US.

## THE VISIT

### The offer

The Oyster Box Spa covers 578sq m (6,225 ft) and has seven treatment rooms – including one with a hydrotherapy bath and another with a Nuvoila dry floatation and colour therapy bed by Technodesign. There's also a plunge pool, grooming lounge, locker rooms, pre- and post-treatment lounges, a small spa café, an authentic hammam and well-equipped fitness room supplied by Matrix.

The product houses are Africology, Dermalogica, Elemis, Mama Mia and in-house range B|Africa and there are around 40 treatments with notable differences including the Ionithermie slimming treatment, a good range of beauty services, a small selection dedicated to men and hammam rituals. The five signature experiences are very creative and in a nod to the local culture incorporate tools such as African rungu (a traditional wooden baton), bamboo cane and lava shells. Price points are among the highest in the area – an entry-level 60-minute massage costs ZAR495 (US\$63, €46, £40) – but are consistent with what you'd expect from similar world-class facilities.



The hotel and spa are beautifully situated on the Indian Ocean coastline

## VITAL STATISTICS

Address: Oyster Box Hotel & Spa, 2 Lighthouse Road, Umhlanga Rocks 4319, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa  
Contact: Spa manager Jackie  
Avis, javis@oysterbox.co.za  
Times: 8am to 8pm daily  
To book: +27 (0) 31 514 5070



The whole spa has a white colour scheme and still looks pristine despite being two years old

Packages are available and an interesting option includes 'the SPARTie' for groups of four to six which allows the creation of a customised package and use of the hammam.

### Booking:

My email spa booking was managed very well and confirmation included recommendations on when to arrive at the spa, what to expect, how to make best use of it, as well as a healthy spa lunch menu.

### Location and access:

The spa and fitness building is located near the front of the hotel and convenient access for day spa guests is via an external entrance from the car park. Overnight guests can get to it from within the hotel, although you need to be good at following signage through the circuitous hallways – it took me a couple of attempts to find.

Disabled people can use an elevator to reach each floor of the spa and one of the treatment rooms is designed with full wheelchair access and features an adjustable treatment bed for the elderly or infirm.

### Design:

The entire facility is white, with marble and pearly finishes in keeping with the 'oyster' theme. These finishes, which can make a spa look hard-edged, were somewhat softened by the use of upholstered wicker, chocolate accents and mosaic designs of swirling plant-like shapes in gold, silver and chocolate. The main attraction is the enormous hammam – the largest I've seen in a resort spa – featuring an outer room with two heated slabs and the hammam itself with a large central stone and a shower and seating niches.

A three-story building is never ideal from a spa design standpoint as the guest is required to transit two to three floors from check-in to lounge and treatments. However, the building was well-marked and a centrally located stairway makes navigation fairly easy, and once you are on the desired floor, you never have far to go.

### Cleanliness:

The entire building is very clean and the locker rooms, lounges and refreshment areas

were pristine. It is also very well-maintained – it looks brand new despite being two years old, which can't be an easy task given the white colour scheme.

### The staff:

Staff were well-presented, spoke excellent English and were all dressed in identical grey and white uniforms, from support staff to therapists and manager, which made an excellent first impression.

### The experience:

After finding the spa, I was greeted by two smiling customer service staff, who quickly showed me to a well-sized locker with two types of slippers and robes; a really nice touch to ensure maximum comfort.

In the pre-treatment area, I filled out my personal consultation form and met my therapist, Charlene, who was beautifully turned-out in the uniform and a string of pearls. She proceeded to bathe my feet in a lovely copper bowl while discussing the particulars of my service. I was presented with a selection of stones, ▶

## MYSTERY SHOPPER

### WHAT'S THE SCORE?

Ease of booking	8
Facilities	8
Cleanliness/maintenance	9
Staff	9
Experience/treatment	9
Value for money	9
Overall experience	9

- each imprinted with a thoughtful word such as 'serenity' or 'energy', and invited to choose the one that best signified my intent for my treatment. The ritual was a nice way to get to know my therapist before the intimacy of the treatment room, but I just slipped the stone into my robe pocket and forgot about it.

My ZAR1,125 (US\$144, €106, £92) Changing of Season Ritual lasted 120 minutes and combined a hammam session, exfoliation, wrap, and 45-minute African back massage. Charlene escorted me upstairs to the hammam suite, where she'd prepared the stone with towels and a pillow. At 40.7°C, it was quite hot and I would have been unable to lie on the stone without the towels. As it was, I didn't even want my toes to touch it, and I got up a few times to use the cooling hand-held shower. After 20 minutes, I'd had enough and escaped to the cooler outer room for a gentle exfoliating, all-over body scrub which I found invigorating.

I showered in the hammam and went back outside to be coated in a remineralising mud mask. I was tightly wrapped and left to relax for 15 minutes, but at this point even the outer chamber felt too hot and although I



The main attraction is a big hammam, which can be used for individual or group treatments

produced a deep cleansing sweat, it was not necessarily relaxing. After showering once again, Charlene led me downstairs for my massage. Although my skin felt very smooth and clean, I would have enjoyed this type of treatment better on a Vichy table, where you don't have to get on and off repeatedly.

A standout feature in the well-sized treatment room was the curtained window that looked over a large, beautiful tree. At that hour, the tree was filled with chattering birds which were a welcome sound compared to the annoying repetitive music. Charlene gave a very capable and relaxing massage, taking her cues from me and keeping quiet while she worked. The massage incorporated heated Himalayan salt crystals, which are used like hot stones, but from the table I couldn't tell

the difference between the two modalities, nor was it explained to me. Overall, I was left with very soft skin and a relaxed mental state.

### Aftercare:

In the pre-treatment area, I was presented with a variety of fresh juices, fruits and nuts as well as homemade healthy snack bars – an unusual touch – before heading back upstairs to the tranquility lounge. The room consisted of white wicker chaises longues (even a double-sized one for couples), with comfortable pillows and throws, separated by layers of sheer organza to create a cozy feel. A large window overlooking the pool area, also provided a nice sense of light and space. From a well-stocked book shelf, I picked a title on minerals and gemstones, which I became engrossed in as I settled down.

My experience ended with a seamless check-out. Unfortunately for the spa and its product partners, at no time during my visit were home-care products mentioned or recommended. Random products were dotted throughout, but retail is clearly not a focus, as is the wish of the owners, for whatever reason!

### Summary:

A wonderful, relaxing spa experience in a very well-run and equipped spa, where your needs are well-anticipated. The quality of care was high and the facility superb: it's easy to see what attracted the royal couple. ●

### RIGHT TO REPLY

Jackie Avis, spa manager, Oyster Box

**W**e're more than happy with the review from your mystery shopper, thank you, and we only have two comments that we'd like to address. Firstly, the warmth of the hammam treatment experienced by the reviewer is obviously a personal thing and guests have varying tolerance levels for temperature. Her comments are well-taken though and we will make a concerted effort to monitor this aspect with every treatment. The second point I'd like to address is retail. Since the reviewer visited the Spa at The Oyster Box, we have launched our own-branded product range called B|Africa. With this launch, the retail offering has been re-merchandised and now enjoys greater prominence as part of the overall spa offering.



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# JUST DESERTS

David Minton tells us what he got served up on his tour of three resort spas in the sandy landscapes between Oman and Abu Dhabi

DAVID MINTON • DIRECTOR • THE LEISURE DATABASE COMPANY



I'm an avid fan of Formula 1 and recently took myself off to Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, to watch one of the races there.

With my background in leisure, however, I also have a love for spa and following the buzz of the race, decided to take a two-week busman's holiday with my wife to relax at three properties in the desert – starting at the Musandam Peninsula in Oman, driving down into the UAE and stopping off in Ras Al Khaimah and the outskirts of Dubai. I picked a Six Senses, Jumeirah and Banyan Tree resort – all brands I hadn't experienced before, but had great expectations of.

## 1 Six Senses Zighy Bay, Oman

I'm surprised that Zighy Bay on the Musandam Peninsula is not on a protected list, as it's totally surrounded by mountains and until recently was home to just a few fishermen. The coastal area is famous for its fjords and the dhow – a traditional fishing boat powered only by the wind and which is now used by tourists to admire the plentiful wildlife including dolphins and turtles. So far Six Senses Resort & Spa got a thumbs up for location from me.

From the resort gateway, there was a choice of three dramatic arrivals. For the more adventurous, this included a paraglide tandem jump from the mountain top. There was also a very scenic boat trip or a 4x4 drive over 6km of white-knuckle mountain roads. I tried all of them and I'm not at all surprised that this resort clinched the award

for Amazing Arrival Experiences by *Travel and Leisure* magazine in 2010.

The whole design of the resort has been very well thought through. Wherever possible the 82 local-style villas and spa had views of the 1.6km sandy beach and yoga sessions were held on one of the spa rooftops while the sun set – stunning! People were positively encouraged to walk barefoot on the sandy pathways, or cycle, which emphasised the connection with nature and was a pointer to the resort and spa's unwavering commitment to the environment. Other simple touches included using local ingredients, building with natural materials, banning plastics – giving out free re-usable glass bottles instead – and having its own water plant.

The resort reception had a welcome feel and I immediately felt at home and relaxed. Likewise, at the spa I was greeted by someone as soon as I walked through the door who –





David Minton received one of the best massages he's ever had at the Six Senses resort (this picture and below)

despite the gentle hum of customers – knew exactly who I was and what treatment I'd booked. The spa, with nine treatment rooms and two hammams, offered a full menu of local and signature treatments from an international spa team. It focused on holistic wellness and rejuvenation programmes and I opted for a 60-minute OMR45 (US\$117, €86, £74) massage – a medium to light pressure treatment with long, flowing movements. It's been six years since I've had a treatment of such high quality. My therapist, Bikash, was just so intuitive and knew exactly what to do to make me relax. I came straight out of the session and booked him for extra treatments over the next three days.

Without doubt, Six Senses was my favourite spa on the trip and I'd go back there again tomorrow if I could. It was a wrench to leave, but with more to explore it was time to head back over that mountain.

#### WHAT'S THE SCORE?

Ease of booking	9
Facilities	10
Cleanliness	10
Staff	10
Experience/treatment	10
Value for money	9
<b>Overall experience</b>	<b>10</b>



Bab Al Shams had a traditional style and was popular with Dubai day trippers

## 2 Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa, Dubai

The Bab Al Shams Desert Resort & Spa was more like old-fashioned oasis-style developments I had imagined, compared to the other two properties. It was operated by Jumeirah when I visited, but is now run by Meydan LLC.

Nestled in the rolling dunes and natural desert landscape the low-rise resort – with its 115 bedrooms – was designed to resemble a rural Arab village and it had certainly made the most of its situation. Like every oasis, it had a focal point, a beating heart, a meeting place, built around a wonderful collection of outdoor pools, water jets and showers.

Designed with both the family and young holiday makers in mind, this was the largest of the three resorts and the busiest (although not overcrowded). The resort manager told me that it's particularly popular with day trippers from Dubai.

The Satori Spa featured four indoor and one outdoor treatment room, as well as a steamroom and sauna. Signature treatments, rituals, massages, face and body add-ons and a mix of half-day and full-day packages were all very good value – an all-day AED1,200 (US\$327, €240, £209) programme will get you a body exfoliation, aromatherapy massage, facial and a healthy lunch.

I had a facial one day and a massage the next and the whole time I was at the spa it seemed busy and the packages



did indeed seem popular with guests from neighbouring emirates. Overall, I thought the staff was really nice and spoke very good English.

With an early evening temperature of 23°C, a warm breeze and time to relax in the outdoor rest areas, the spa takes full advantage of the desert views. Pick your timing and position and you can enjoy a treatment followed by a magnificent setting sun. It was a Satori ritual I could have got used to.

#### WHAT'S THE SCORE?

Ease of booking	9
Facilities	10
Cleanliness	10
Staff	9
Experience/treatment	8
Value for money	8
<b>Overall experience</b>	<b>9</b>



Banyan Tree Al Wadi was in a stunning setting and had an amazing hydrothermal offering, but the overall experience was disappointing

### 3 Banyan Tree Al Wadi, Ras Al Khaimah

Driving between resorts was a challenge as there seemed to be little relationship between road signs and directions once off the main road. But my expectations began to rise as I got closer to my tented villa – one of 101 – at Banyan Tree Al Wadi, which has also since been acquired by the Ras Al Khaimah Hotels and Tourism Development Authority (in June).

The resort and spa were in a stunning setting – with a backdrop of sculpted sand dunes and grazing desert animals – but the layout and design was poor. Many of the buildings, including the spa, were closed off from the beautiful views and while the animals were free to roam, guests were not. In stark contrast to Six Senses, electric buggies whisked you around the site for breakfast, lunch and dinner, to the spa and even if you tried to go for an afternoon ‘walk’. But when I did get to walk from the spa reception to the treatment room, the path was at least 50m long and although it wasn’t overly hot when I visited, I could imagine that guests in the summer – when temperatures reach up to 50°C – could get seriously dehydrated before or after treatments.

Having read about the top notch service at Banyan Tree in *Spa Business* (see S811/2 p26), I was surprised at the disparity of staff. There were lots of impeccable American-trained staff at the hotel, but unfortunately this didn’t

#### WHAT'S THE SCORE?

Ease of booking	8
Facilities	10
Cleanliness	10
Staff	7
Experience/treatment	6
Value for money	5
Overall experience	5

translate to the spa, where there was lack of communication and a language barrier.

The Asian-inspired, 10-treatment room pavilion spa was certainly the biggest facility on my tour – it covered 42,625sq ft (4,000sq m) – and offered an indulgent array of therapies including a 90-minute, AED420 (US\$114, €84, £73) Essence of Earth massage. Yet after my treatment, I was left reflecting on the theatre of the process as the Chinese therapists – who were very good at pouring the herbal refreshments – were bad at communicating as the sadly spoke very little English. It didn’t inspire me to book another session.

If I’d known about the Rainforest Experience – the most incredible and biggest hydrothermal facility I’ve ever seen at a resort – I would have saved on the expensive spa treatment and gone straight to that with its 16 various heat and wet experiences. I had no idea what I was going to encounter when I tried it, but I certainly didn’t expect to be the only guest there, overlooked by workmen running repairs! I also wondered

why they’d put a hydrothermal facility of this size, with only 13 male and female lockers, in the desert? I was unsure if there was even a business plan behind it, as the basic 60-minute hydrothermal circuit for AED150 (US\$41, €30, £26) was free to hotel guests.

It was difficult to tell if the resort was busy as it was so big and spread out. Also, the resort was ‘locked down’ overnight for a high-profile conference the next day. When speaker Condoleezza Rice moved into the villa next door – complete with security guards and CCTV – I knew it was time to move on.

Out of all of the resorts I visited, I had the greatest expectations for Banyan Tree. I thought it would be the star and I certainly paid far more (at least double) to stay there for just one night. Maybe I felt disappointed because my expectations were not met, or maybe it was because I really didn’t have a very enjoyable experience.

#### RIGHT TO REPLY

Ravi Chandran, senior vice-president and MD of spa operations, Banyan Tree

We thank the writer for his honest feedback. Service is of paramount importance to us as we strive to upkeep high standards. We would like to contact Mr Minton to discuss his experience in greater detail.



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# THE THUNDER DRAGON

ANDREW JACKA - CHAIRMAN - ASIA PACIFIC SPA & WELLNESS COALITION



The four-day spa study tour focused on learning about traditional healing practices

PHOTO: ©ANELINDA YONA

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ATTEM

**B**eautiful, heavenly, unique, tranquil, amazing, natural – or as most will know it – Bhutan. These were just some words used to describe the kingdom of Bhutan by the 32 spa directors and consultants on the Asia Pacific Spa & Wellness Coalition's (APSWC) Spa Study Tour 2011 in late July. The impetus behind the tour, now in its third year, was to learn about authentic, traditional therapies and healing practices to appreciate how important it is to protect the roots of our industry.

## THE LAST SHANGRI-LA

A 40,000sq km landlocked nation, Bhutan lies between Tibet, China and India at the eastern end of the Himalayas. It's a relatively unexplored destination and up until the 1970s, it had cut itself off from the outside world. While the country has slowly opened up to tourism, it was isolated and culturally pure for so long – television did not arrive until 1999 – that it's widely known as 'the last Shangri-La'.



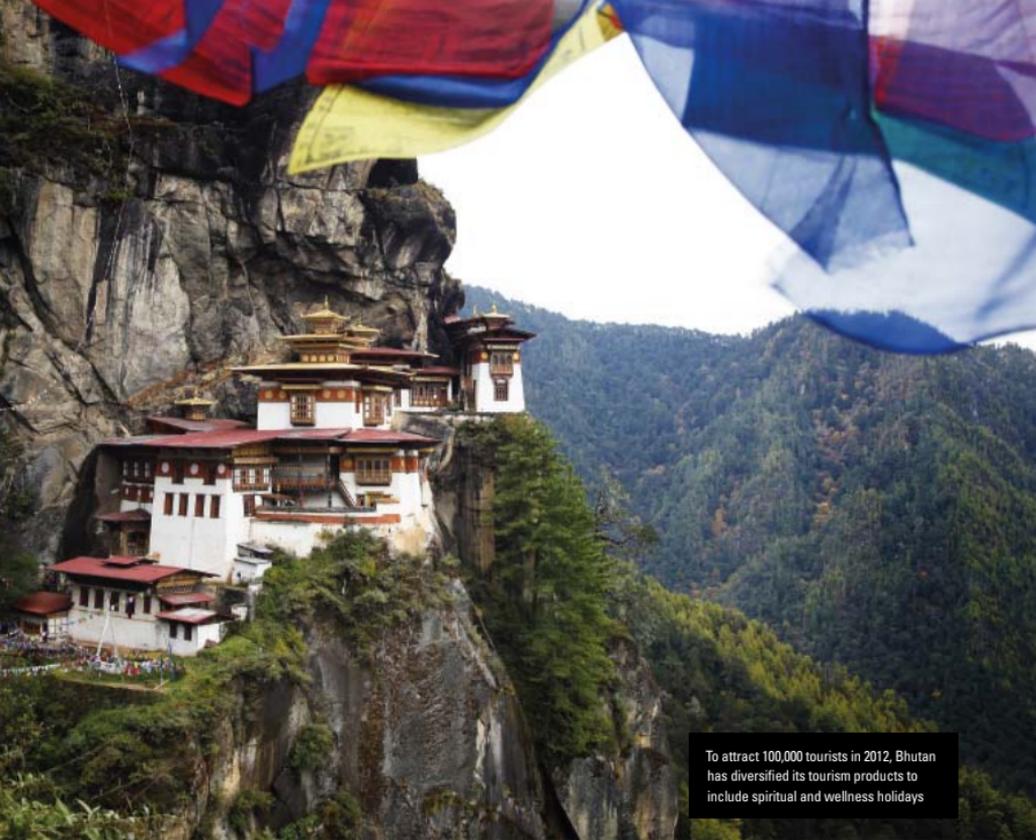
**More than 30 spa professionals have just returned from Bhutan, the land of the thunder dragon, following an APSWC study tour. Chairman Andrew Jacka tells us what they discovered**

It's a country that, with a population of only 700,000, has held onto its mythology and traditions. Locals refer to Bhutan as Druk Yul – the land of the thunder dragon – based on a myth about the dragon Druk who, using thunder as his voice, once proclaimed truths about Buddhist teachings. The national dress remains common place – men still wear the gho, a knee-length robe with a cloth belt; while women wear a kira, an ankle-length dress clipped at one shoulder and tied at the waist. Social status and class determine the texture, colour and decorations.

Ranging from subtropical plains in the south, to Himalayan peaks reaching up to 7,000m (23,000ft) in the north, Bhutan also boasts a land of unspoiled, natural beauty.

## HIGH-VALUE TOURISM

Fiercely protective of its culture and traditions, the Bhutanese have so far been wary of mass tourism and have controlled entries by a strict visa system. Under the system, visitors must travel as part of a pre-arranged group package or guided tour – from an officially approved tour operator – and commit to a minimum daily tariff of US\$200 (€146, £128), which is set to rise to US\$250 (€183, £159) next year. The tariff guarantees at least a three-star hotel and is inclusive of food and local transport, although to discourage back-packers in search of a cheap holiday, there is a surcharge of US\$40 (€29, £26) per night for individuals, or US\$30 (€22, £19) per night each for groups of two.



To attract 100,000 tourists in 2012, Bhutan has diversified its tourism products to include spiritual and wellness holidays

The system does not apply to regional visitors from India, Bangladesh and the Maldives due to bilateral agreements.

Yet the number of tourists, drawn by an opportunity to glimpse another way of living, has steadily increased from 5,500 in 2002 to over 40,000 in 2010 (see Tables 1 and 2). According to the 2010 *Bhutan Tourism Monitor* report by the Bhutan Tourism Council (TCB) tourism is a valuable earner in the country – generating an estimated us\$80m (€59m, £51m) and between 17,800-19,600 jobs in 2010.

Significantly, last year, the prime minister Jigme Thinley outlined an expansion plan for tourism with a goal of attracting 100,000 visitors by 2012. Kesang Wangdi, TCB's director general told APSWC delegates: "It's already looking like Bhutan will exceed its projection of 65,000 visitors in 2011. We need 56 per cent of growth to achieve this and we're actually running at a 67 per cent growth."

As visitor numbers grow, the TCB will remain very passionate about its 'high-value, low-impact' tourism concept: opting

TABLE 1: International Visitors 2010\*

Country	Number of visitors	% International Visitors
USA	5,189	19.08
Japan	2,963	10.89
Germany	2,250	8.27
UK	1,772	6.52
China	1,494	5.49

for top quality developments over mass-market, low-end products that add little value to the economy. The goal is to protect traditions and culture in line with its Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index – where quality of life and social progress are closely monitored and valued over the economic indicator of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

#### SPA AND WELLNESS SCENE

For those who think package tours are all about cheap, all-inclusive hotels, plenty of alcohol and lots of hidden extra charges,

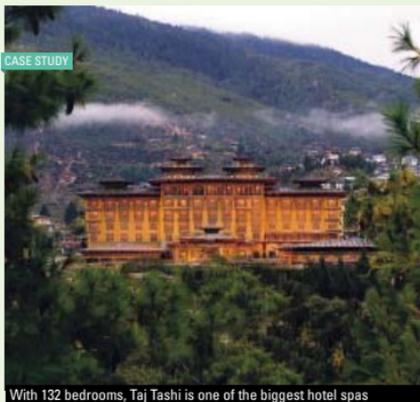
TABLE 2: Regional Visitors 2010\*

Country	Number of visitors	% Regional Visitors
India	22,986	82.57
Bangladesh	4,849	17.41
Maldives	2	00.02

\* Source: 2010 Bhutan Tourism Monitor report, produced by the Tourism Council of Bhutan

think again. Bhutan is all about quality (in an understated way) and the main tourism products are tailored, but considerably flexible, nature and culture tours. In 2010, the TCB reported that around 65 per cent of international travellers came in tour groups of 10 or less, while individuals or groups of two accounted for 30 per cent.

However, the tours are highly seasonal. The vast majority are held in spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) when the weather is mild and the festivals take place. As such, annual hotel



With 132 bedrooms, Taj Tashi is one of the biggest hotel spas

### TAJ TASHI & JIVA SPA FACTS AND FIGURES

**Location:** Thimphu, west Bhutan  
**Number of bedrooms:** 132  
**Guest demographic:** 65 per cent leisure, 35 per cent business (but corporate guests are steadily growing)  
**Average occupancy:** 50 per cent  
**Room rates:** US\$375-400 (€275-293, £239-255)  
**Number of treatment rooms:** two doubles (with hot stone baths) and in-room treatments  
**Other spa facilities:** indoor pool, gym and changing rooms with steamrooms  
**Spa staff:** four female and one male therapist  
**Treatment prices\*:** a 60-minute signature Pehlwan Malish massage costs BTN5,000 (US\$102, €75, £65); a 60-minute facial is priced at BTN3,100 (US\$63, €46, £40); a 90-minute hot stone bath plus massage costs BTN5,600 (US\$114, €84, £73)  
**Details:** www.tajhotels.com

\* All treatment prices are subject to a 10 per cent government tax and 10 per cent service charge

► occupancy rates recorded by the TCB range from only 17-24 per cent.

In a bid to address seasonality, the TCB introduced a low season discount (for January, June and July) of US\$165 (€121, £105) just two months ago and is now looking to diversify its tourism products to include spiritual and wellness holidays. The holidays are themed around traditional herbal medicine known as sowa rigpa and include a trip to, plus free medical advice from, the Institute of Traditional Medicine Services; visits to various therapeutic hot springs, or 'shachus' around the country; and meditation in the many small retreat centres next to temples and monasteries.

Bhutan has an estimated 25 hotel spas, says Wangdi, including Terma Linca Resort & Spa, Taj Tashi, COMO's Uma Paro and Zhiwa Ling. And they're in high-demand – they have a "snob value" because not many people have been to the country and the destination has connotations of luxury," it was reported by the AFP this September.

With so few spas yet available – and none offering over a handful of treatment rooms – guests should not expect to spend their whole time being pampered. But they will have access to more authentic Bhutanese spa practices such as 'menchus' – baths infused with healing herbs that heat up when scorching hot stones are placed in the bottom. Traditionally taken in family groups (still in their clothes) outside, menchus are becoming more refined in spas where people usually bathe alone and indoors. Although the herbs and the intensity of the experience are unchanged.

Most notably, the spas focus on the body, mind and spirit. While our industry has a good grasp of the body and understands the

Opportunities for entrepreneurs include free land (for a period of time) and business matching with local investors. Terms favour higher-end [tourism] projects

mind reasonably well in its offering, we often miss out 'spirit' – an essential element of true holistic health. In comparison, Bhutan by its very nature has strong link to spirituality from its commitment to heritage and cultural pureness, to its connection with nature. It pervades everything: including spas.

#### FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Given there are only 212 rooms available in the five-star hotel category and 150 in the four-star category, the Bhutanese government is actively seeking to promote investment in this area and is welcoming of private entrepreneurs. Opportunities include free land (for a period of time) and business matching with local investors. Terms favour higher-end projects – foreign companies are allowed to fully own five-star properties, while they will be restricted to a 74 per cent stake in four-star developments, with local companies making up the remaining 26 per cent.

In a seminar attended by the APSWC Study Tour delegates and TCB members – and reported by travel agent Bhutan Jewel Travel – Wangdi said that Bhutan has immense potential to develop spa centres, which would suit the country's peaceful environment. The next step will be for national hotel operators to collaborate with interna-

tional spa professionals to explore possible joint ventures. Promoting such services overseas will also be paramount, he added.

Challenges facing wellness tourism development include accessibility and infrastructure. At present Druk Air is the only national carrier and there's only one international airport in Paro. There is no rail network and while roads have improved – according to APSWC delegates who had previously visited Bhutan a few years ago – once outside the main towns they can quickly deteriorate into pot-holed tracks.

Yet Bhutanese people are looking to firmly place themselves in the modern world, albeit in their own way that's mindful and respectful of culture, traditions and the country's untouched environment. And both compromises and progress are being made – Dzongkha may be the local languages but school tuition is in English; television may only have arrived 12 years ago but mobile telephones rule the communication channels.

As the number of foreign visitors increases, more flights and better infrastructure is needed to accommodate them. However, with the charm, culture, tradition and heritage that surrounds you at every turn, what are a few pot-holes and a truck that's only slightly faster than walking pace by comparison? ●

*The APSWC greatly acknowledges the support of Druk Air, the Tourism Council of Bhutan and Transcend Travellers for their help in making this study tour such a success.*

#### Websites

www.drukair.com.bt  
 www.tourism.gov.bt  
 www.bhutantranscend.com

**CASE STUDY**

The spa reception at Zhiwa Ling

**ZHIWA LING & MENLHA SPA FACTS AND FIGURES**

**Location:** Paro, west Bhutan  
**Hotel and spa opened:** 2005  
**Number of bedrooms:** 45  
**Guest demographics:** 50 per cent from the US, with most other guests coming from Japan and China  
**Average length of stay:** three nights  
**Room rates:** from US\$230 (€168, £147)  
**Number of treatment rooms:** three, including two doubles  
**Other spa facilities:** two steamrooms, a sauna, a gym and an outdoor hot stone bath  
**Spa staff:** four female therapists  
**Treatment prices\*:** signature 60-minute Menlha massage costs US\$50 (€37, £32); a 60-minute facial is priced at US\$30 (€22, £19); a 60-minute hot stone bath costs US\$60 (€44, £38)  
**Spa capture rate:** 20-30 per cent  
**Details:** www.zhiwaling.com  
*\* All treatment prices are subject to a 10 per cent government tax and 10 per cent service charge*

**CASE STUDY**

COMO Shambhala is due to launch a second property in April 2012

**COMO SHAMBHALA'S UMA PARO FACTS AND FIGURES**

**Location:** Paro, west Bhutan  
**Hotel acquired:** 2004, spa opened in the same year  
**Number of bedrooms:** 29  
**Guest demographics:** 50 per cent from the US with most others from Europe; 90 per cent come for leisure purposes, 10 per cent are diplomats  
**Average occupancy:** 65 per cent  
**Average length of stay:** three nights  
**Room rates:** US\$330-450 (€242-329, £210-287)  
**Number of treatment rooms:** four, including two with hot stone baths  
**Other spa facilities:** a large indoor pool with outdoor sundeck, gym, yoga studio and changing rooms with steamrooms  
**Spa staff:** nine, including four female and one male therapist

**Treatment prices\*:** a 60-minute COMO Shambhala massage costs US\$130 (€95, £83); 60-minute facials start at US\$110 (€81, £70); a 90-minute hot stone bath is priced at US\$140 (€102, £89)  
**Spa capture rate:** 40-50 per cent

**Other news:** COMO Shambhala is due to open Uma Punakha, a second property towards north-west Bhutan next April. The resort will offer 11 bedrooms and a spa with two treatment rooms – one single and with a hot stone bath and one double. The target audience is adventure seekers, so treatments include more body-focused therapies.  
**Details:** www.uma.com.bz  
*\* All treatment prices are subject to a 10 per cent government tax and 10 per cent service charge*

**TERMA LINCA RESORT & SPA FACTS AND FIGURES**

**Location:** Thimphu, west Bhutan  
**Hotel opened:** 2008, spa followed in 2009  
**Number of bedrooms:** 30  
**Guest demographic:** all guests are from tour operator groups, primarily coming for leisure packages focused on culture and trekking, but now also looking for spa and wellness  
**Average occupancy:** 30 per cent  
**Average length of stay:** three nights  
**Room rates:** US\$300-400 (€220-293, £191-255)  
**Number of treatment rooms:** five  
**Other spa facilities:** a beauty salon, a

gym, two hot stone 'menchu' baths, two steamrooms and one sauna  
**Spa staff:** 10, including five female and one male therapist  
**Treatment prices\*:** a 60-minute signature massage costs BTN1,550 (US\$52, €23, £20); 60-minute facials range from BTN450-650 (US\$9-13, €7-10, £6-8); a hot stone bath for up to six is priced at BTN2,500 (US\$51, €37, £33)  
**Spa capture rate:** 20-30 per cent  
**Details:** www.termalinca.com  
*\* All treatment prices are subject to a 10 per cent government tax and 10 per cent service charge*

**CASE STUDY**

The Terma Linca spa has five treatment rooms

# MOVE MORE

*As new evidence emerges underlining the benefits of exercise for cancer sufferers and survivors, we take a look at the role fitness can play*

**W**ith the wellness movement growing stronger, the need for spa operators to ensure they're capable of serving customers who are suffering or recovering from illnesses such as cancer is increasing. In the last two issues of *Spa Business*, we've highlighted examples of best practice including the Inspiritas cancer care spa in Texas, US (see SB11/2 p46) and looked at issues such the lack of oncology massage training in most therapist courses (see SB11/3 p12).

Now research that's just come to light suggests that exercise has benefits that shouldn't be ignored. So, could spas also look at their fitness offering – or think about partnering with fitness clubs – to add to their cancer treatment programmes?

## EXERCISE IS MEDICINE

Hitting national headlines in the UK this August, the launch of the Move More campaign by Macmillan Cancer Support – one of the country's biggest charities

– revolved around a report that highlighted physical activity as a hidden 'wonder drug' for people living with cancer.

Moving one step beyond accepted scientific wisdom that has already shown how adopting a healthy lifestyle can reduce the risks of developing cancer, the new report suggests that not only can regular exercise – around 150 minutes a week – prove beneficial for people during treatment, but that it can also help to reduce recurrence.

Professor Robert Thomas – author of *Lifestyle After Cancer* and chair of Macmillan Cancer Support's Physical Activity Expert Advisory Group – collaborated on the report, having conducted a comprehensive evidence review of world studies. He explains that thousands of existing controlled trials underline how exercise can improve wellbeing among sufferers, reducing associated problems such as fatigue, obesity, anxiety, constipation, osteoporosis and blood clots.

Supported mainly by cohort studies, evidence is also emerging that physical activity

Regular exercise – about 150 minutes a week – helps to reduce cancer recurrence it's been found

can have an anti-cancer effect, improving long-term outcomes and preventing relapse. Figures quoted in Macmillan's report suggest that breast and prostate cancer patients can reduce their risk of dying by 30 to 40 per cent if they achieve recommended levels of activity, compared to those doing less than one hour a week, while bowel cancer sufferers achieving six hours a week could reduce their risk of dying by up to 50 per cent.

Meanwhile, a US study involving 816 colon cancer patients whose disease had been removed but showed indications of spreading to the local lymph nodes, noted that increased physical activity during and after additional chemotherapy was associated with a lower chance of the disease returning. In practical terms, this equated to a 35 per cent difference in relapse rate for individuals in the highest quintile of regular exercise compared with the lowest. "This improvement in survival is likely to be a result of a combination of weight control, reduction in insulin-like growth factors and improved psychological outlook," adds Thomas.

## ACTIVITY PRESCRIPTION

Other professionals agree with points made in the Macmillan report. Last year, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) stated that exercise is safe during and after most types of treatment and that survivors should avoid inactivity – a recommendation



Could and should spas add exercise as part of cancer treatment programmes?



now mirrored by the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES).

Dr Eric Asher, medical director at The Third Space Medicine – the medical offering at premium health club The Third Space, in London – believes the new advice is remarkably sensible and can also help psychological wellbeing: “When you exercise you breathe better, use muscle, promote blood flow, build up the immune system – all of which is important during a fight against cancer. The decision to exercise is also reflective of a health-giving mindset.”

The call to exercise may seem logical, but until now those in treatment have often been encouraged to put their feet up. A recent Macmillan survey of 400 UK health professionals showed that one in 10 doctors and nurses still believe it is more important to encourage patients to rest rather than undertake physical activity. The same survey indicated that more than half know little or nothing about the benefits of exercise, while only 6 per cent talk to their cancer patients about being more active. Then there are the scientists who argue that it's impossible to prove that exercise could be a major under-

lying cause behind improved recovery rates. There are certainly going to be challenges in communicating the message that sufferers need to move more during treatment, building up to two-and-a-half to three hours of vigorous exercise a week.

Not surprisingly, opinion varies as to which type of exercise is suitable, especially as cancers create strains on different parts of the body. “Whole body, aerobic exercise such as brisk walking, jogging, cycling or swimming is good for individuals because of the metabolic and psychological effects, while gentle resistance training and stretching is also helpful,” says Dr Sarah Dauncey, medical director at Nuffield Health Wellbeing – a UK group which runs 14 integrated medical and wellness facilities on top of 50-plus health clubs.

“The type of cancer and previous medical interventions may affect the exercise prescription given, however. For example, radiotherapy and chemotherapy can affect the way the heart and lungs work, while other interventions can compromise the immune system or bone health, all of which needs to be factored in.”



Nuffield Health in the UK is creating an exercise programme for cancer sufferers

Asher points out that vigorous, not violent, exercise should be recommended to avoid jarring of the body: “Pilates, swimming, cycling, tai chi are all activities that are unlikely to cause injuries, while improving wellbeing, helping to modulate pain pathways and counteracting the wasting of muscles. Certain individuals need to be cautious about placing unhealthy stresses on bones.”

The Cancer Wellfit programme in the US (right) has been running successfully for 17 years



### ▶ SPECIALIST SKILLS

Dr Anna Campbell, director of CanRehab – which provides cancer rehab training for UK fitness professionals – led a study which followed 200 breast cancer patients during and after treatment. Half of the women participated in group exercise; half did not. She says: “Group exercise clearly addressed the side-effects, with the active group feeling less tired, less depressed and more willing to return to active life.”

The study, which was published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2007, has led to the establishment of the ActiveABC referral scheme in Glasgow, UK. Under the local authority-funded scheme, doctors, oncologists and surgeons assess breast cancer patients for a 12-week group exercise programme that’s held in leisure centres across the city.

Campbell has trained the staff in each of the four leisure centres which are running the programme. The exercise includes circuit-based strength training twice a week and participants are also encouraged to use other facilities simultaneously, such as swimming pools and yoga classes.

She believes exercise instructors require specialist training when working with individuals during and after treatment because there are side-effects specific to cancer types that can affect mobility – for example, swelling associated with lymphoedema. Other doctors confirm the lack of a suitable qualification in the past has reduced the number of patients they could safely refer.

CanRehab is one of the first UK training providers to offer a Level 4 Cancer Rehabilitation qualification by the Register of Exercise Professionals – which regulates fitness qualifications in the country and also has branches in Europe, Australia and New Zealand also. The qualification includes 35 hours of training over four months covering cancers, treatments, side-effects, contra-indications and guidelines.

The Wright Foundation, an referral specialist in the UK, Europe and Australia, is also due to gain endorsement for its Level 4 cancer qualification imminently.

Instructors require specialist training for individuals during and after treatment because there are side-effects specific to cancer types that can affect mobility

### NEW MARKETS

Funding for patient-referral programmes remains a complex issue in the UK and there’s a need for it to be addressed by the country’s government. But it’s clear that commercial health clubs with a holistic approach are open to becoming part of the process, so, could spas with in-house fitness facilities also consider offering an inclusive approach – not just in the UK, but globally?

Asher says he would be comfortable for The Third Space’s personal trainers to prescribe remedial exercise if there was initial and ongoing communication with the individual’s healthcare professional.

And at Nuffield Health Fitness & Wellbeing Centres, there are embryonic plans to initiate a wellbeing programme that would be suitable for cancer survivors and others suffering health problems, involving tailor-made prescriptions for individuals.

In the US, an inspiring case study – for both health club and spa operators – can be found at West Coast Athletic Clubs (WCAC). Its over-subscribed Cancer Wellfit programme for individuals in treatment or within nine months of diagnosis is run in Santa Barbara and Goleta in California. Providing free, full membership to the club for 10 weeks, the programme is built around two strength-training sessions each week, supervised by Wellfit-certified trainers.

“We experimented with other exercises, but found that for a group of between 10

and 14 participants, strength training in a standard weight room worked best because it allowed trainers to safely take members through a routine, personalising workouts from the outset, and introducing new equipment as progress is made,” says Cancer Wellfit director Paula Lilly.

Funded by WCAC and Santa Barbara Cancer Center, the 17-year-old programme is a powerful way of giving back to the community. There have also been some associated benefits, however, with 40 per cent of participants becoming fee-paying members, taking advantage of the special, follow-up, one-year Wellfit membership rate.

And this is something that health clubs – and spa offering memberships inclusive of fitness – should take into account when considering whether to offer their facilities for cancer patient referral schemes or invest in specialist staff training.

Thomas concludes: “Organisations such as The Wright Foundation have been carrying out research to assess the conversion rate of people who, after completing an initial 12-week programme, end up taking a membership at the same facility. At the same time, some survivors will be looking to pay for personalised sessions with qualified personal trainers. These are groups who have never exercised before and never attended a gym, but who are committed to staying fit because they feel as though they have been given a new lease of life.” ●



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# SPA WARE

It's been quite a year for the spa software industry, with new launches, the roll-out of mobile functionality to exploit the booming smartphone and tablet markets and the continued integration of social media. We complete our review of system profiles and catch up with the news

LIZ TERRY • EDITOR • SPA BUSINESS

**M**illennium is installed software which comes in two editions that are relevant for spas, depending on size. Day spas can choose the company's SpaSalon product, while bigger spas have the SpaFolio option. The company also offers MedSpa and HealthFitness editions.

The software's functionality is presented to the user in categories which match workflow, starting with a Front Desk screen showing daily and weekly activities, including the appointment book, employee schedules and daily transaction summaries.

The Inventory screen pulls together real-time information about value, purchasing, ordering and product retention. It also makes clear which lines are moving quickly and which are slower, to guide ordering.

The Growth screen has been designed to help spas analyse their performance and translate this into growth. This offers six-growth indicators such as frequency of visit, which have been identified as being impor-

## Millennium by Harms

USA

tant to driving business. Other functionality includes tracking pre-booking trends, client retention summaries, daily membership numbers and sales statistics. The system also has a 'What If?' forecasting option to enable straightforward planning and projection.

Millennium's Administration screen enables spa managers to control and monitor system security, transactions and refunds, while the Accounting screen allows operators to view their financial results without running reports. It also serves up standard snapshots including transactions by card type, payment details and histories and

summaries of liabilities. This element of the system can be synced to QuickBooks.

Reports come in two types – customised and off-the-shelf, such as the End of Day report which (as the name implies) automatically prints at the end of every day.

The system's Reservation Book enables single and group bookings and has built-in yield-management tools, while the Register/POS can manage split commissions and links to the PMS, as well as offering credit/debit card processing functionality

Other screens include a tanning bed interface, membership billing, class booking and a remote business option, which enables key parts of the system to be seen remotely online in real-time.

Prices range from US\$99-\$299/month with VIP support available for US\$89/month from 9am-8pm EST Monday to Friday and 9am-5:30pm EST on Saturday.

[www.harms-software.com](http://www.harms-software.com)  
+1 973 402 9500

**C**oncept Software Systems, which has been offering spa, golf and leisure software since 1992, is a global partner of Micros/Micros-Fidelio, the company behind the Opera hotel management system.

Together they've developed a version of Concept called the Opera Activity Scheduler, which is part of the Concept Spa System (CSS). It offers booking, scheduling, point of sale (POS) and management reporting.

The system offers two levels of integration – the first allows Concept and Opera to share customer profiles, enabling the creation of a single guest itinerary on check-in. The second allows staff to perform room, golf, spa and leisure reservations from one screen within Opera.

The final piece of the interface is the Micros POS to CSS Membership Posting Interface that enables charges to be made

## Concept

UK, PORTUGAL & THAILAND

from Micros to the Concept Membership application. The POS interface also enables stock control and inventory management.

The system has extensive reporting systems built in: CSS Business Intelligence (CSS BI) is a browser-based solution which allows users to access and analyse information anytime, anywhere, with apps for iPhone, iPad and Blackberry.

CSS BI is tailored to the needs of each business and can cater for multi-property

environments, allowing data to be consolidated, even in remote locations where bandwidth is an issue. CSS BI is available in multiple languages and currencies. For example, spas can see the productivity of any service, as well as viewing projected profits or losses if cost-saving measures, staffing, and special offers are altered.

Concept offers a comprehensive training package, as well as 24/7 support in over 50 countries. Customers also get key upgrades. The company has a network of multi-lingual support staff who speak English, Portuguese, Spanish, German, French, Chinese, Thai, Korean, Greek, Arabic and Russian.

Concept's clients include Marriott, Starwood, Shangri-La, Canyon Ranch, Peninsula, Banyan Tree, De Vere and Fairmont Raffles.

[www.csscorporate.com](http://www.csscorporate.com)  
Tel: +351 289 351 200

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANDREAS



Spa software is increasingly integrated with hotel, fitness and resort booking systems for seamless transactions

SpaSoft's yield management module includes setting up activity prices and capacity according to forecasted demand... plus wait-list management and turnaway tracking

The SpaSoft Spa and Activity Management System is installed software which has been designed to allow operators to manage their spa and provide staff with a user-friendly system.

SpaSoft can control resource management, activity scheduling and both internet and group booking. It also offers financial reporting and analysis. SpaSoft is built on a PA-DSS-validated platform.

Guest-facing staff members can check guests in and out using SpaSoft Mobile on an iPad or tablet – it also allows staff to easily manage guest profiles on the move, including lifestyle consultation forms.

SpaSoft links with a number of property management systems and other applications to create an automatic flow of guest information throughout the business.

Springer Miller, the company behind SpaSoft, is a member of HTNG – Hotel Technology Next Generation – and provides solutions to HTNG specifications,

## SpaSoft

USA

including the back office interface, single guest itinerary and guest self-service.

When it comes to retailing, SpaSoft offers an inventory and point of sale (POS) system to help spas manage their merchandise, while the software is set up to help spas establish, define and manage a wide range of membership programmes, including multiple membership types, locker management, member check-in, POS integration and member-profiling reports.

SpaSoft's yield management module helps spas maximise revenue and cus-

tomers service by setting activity prices and capacity according to forecasted demand. Revenue can be boosted with wait-list management and turnaway tracking.

With automatic email confirmations and an appointment reminder feature, SpaSoft can enhance communication and reduce cancellations and no-shows. The email content is customisable, supporting a spa's branding and enabling staff to control when confirmations go out.

With customers in over 50 countries, invoices and itineraries can be printed in dual language, English or any other language, including double-byte characters.

The company offers application and technical support and hardware/network consulting as part of an annual contract. Global technical support is provided by offices in the UK, Canada and Malaysia.

[www.spasoft.com](http://www.spasoft.com)  
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## Software news update

A whistle-stop tour of the latest upgrades and system developments



PHOTO: SUITESTOCK.COM/HUTLON

### SpaBooker gets a makeover

Following the launch of its 'in-Facebook' booking application, SpaBooker has announced the release of version 7.4, which includes a new look and feel. The software has been restyled from the ground up to introduce a more modern design and the new version has extra functionality, including pre-set booking times and a 'lock staff to room' option.

There have also been significant changes in the equipment used to host SpaBooker, as COO, Daniel Lizio-Katzen, explains: "Over the last month we've upgraded all our hardware – the new equipment has increased the speed and capacity of the SpaBooker platform. We've also worked with experts in database architecture to fine-tune our systems for better performance. In simple terms, our aim is not only to be the most dependable spa software, but also the fastest."

■ [www.spa-booker.com](http://www.spa-booker.com)



### Book4Time adds retail and social media

Book4Time has signed two deals to bring third party software alongside its platform. The first, with Shopify, will enable spas using its software to retail products through Shopify's online platform. The second, with Sprout Social, brings social media controls to the Book4Time package. The company has chosen to partner for these elements rather than writing them itself, so there are extra charges associated with using them.

Shopify provides a number of ecommerce tools including a storefront with a variety of themes to choose from, a shopping cart and checkout, its own Shopify iPhone app and more than 70 payment options. Visually the storefront is customisable using HTML and CSS. Shopify hosts 15,000 online retailers. "We selected Shopify as it has built a simple,

intuitive product for our independent locations, while being 100 per cent customisable for clients with more extensive requirements," says John McDonald, COO of Book4Time.

Book4Time's deal with Sprout Social sees it integrating with a suite of social media management tools to enable spa operators to control their social media presence from one platform and find new, targeted customers with local search functionality. The system also enables spas to monitor their brand across social media and the web.

Social Sprout integrates with Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Foursquare and in addition to communication tools, it offers contact management, competitive insight, lead generation and analytics.

■ [www.book4time.com](http://www.book4time.com)



### ResortSuite goes mobile

ResortSuite is the latest company to announce the launch of mobile functionality to provide spas with the ability to provide guests with real-time itineraries for individual and group activities and interactive information around available amenities. Members can review statements right down to itemised bills.

"ResortSuite Mobile pushes our guest-centric vision to the palm of a guest's hand", says Frank Pitsikalis, ResortSuite CEO. "Spa operators now have the ability to provide dynamic content such as dining and spa menus, as well as real-time access to guests' reservations and group events. We're leveraging the power of mobile computing, like the iPhone, to deliver a richer, more engaged guest experience."

■ [www.resortsuite.com](http://www.resortsuite.com)

### Premier launches yapps.com

Premier Software has announced its new venture – yapps.com, an online spa directory designed to drive clients to the spa's appointment book. The real-time service is free for Premier clients.

Over 65,000 UK spas and salons have already been listed on the site. Customers can do keyword and postcode searches and are then directed to a list of businesses that match their criteria. Each spa has its own page within the directory containing a profile, location map, images, details of opening hours, client feedback and links to their website and social media feeds. Premier's web booking clients can take online bookings directly from their listing.

Premier's MD, Robert Miles, says: "We're excited about introducing this service and the benefits it will bring to the industry. The yapps.com directory is all about raising brand awareness and generating new business."

■ [www.premiersoftware.co.uk](http://www.premiersoftware.co.uk)



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# spa business 2012 handbook

## What's in the handbook?

### { Operator information }

- Industry movers and shakers
- Key industry statistics and research
- A 2012 diary highlighting events, shows and networking opportunities
- Predictions and trends for 2012
- A development pipeline
- Trends and research
- Fitness

### { Supplier information }

- Company profiles including key information, contact details, images of products and a picture of a key contact
- A-Z listing of trade associations

The *Spa Business Handbook* is the ultimate reference guide for the international spa market. Published in 2012 as a comprehensive resource for operators and suppliers worldwide, it will be distributed to key decision makers including leading hotel and spa operators, suppliers, developers, consultants and other experts. It will also be distributed at key spa events, making it a must to be seen in.



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We uncover more treatment and relaxation bed launches and other offers

# Treatment & relaxation beds

**2011 ARRIVAL**

**The Parisien CC800, Carlton Professional**

The bed: Paris = chic and that's precisely the style that Carlton Professional is aiming for with its new Parisien CC800 couch that was unveiled in August.

**What makes it stand out?** The couch combines function and aesthetics and the result is a versatile

solution. A spacious storage base, for example, makes it easy to de-clutter a room. The base is accessible from either side of the couch via two separate doors. In addition, each end includes a detachable storage box with a shelf for products or other small items required during treatment. The 30-inch wide couch is also covered in an extra deep foam mattress for client comfort.



**Other key features:** There is an electric system which lifts the couch only from the top section and not the base. The electric motor provides smooth and silent adjustments of the couch height and angle of the backrest and seat for a variety of treatments. The system is controlled from a handset for ease of use by the therapist.

**SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS:** CARLTON PROFESSIONAL



**2011 ARRIVAL**

**Makura Modern, Living Earth Crafts**

The bed: Living Earth Crafts (LEC) has turned to Asia for inspiration for its latest treatment table Makura. Introduced in June, at the IECSC trade show in Las Vegas, this is a multi-purpose hydraulic treatment table within LEC's flagship Pro Salon series. It's distributed in the US by SpaEquip.

**What makes it stand out?** The Makura Modern features Japanese style rice paper inlays and soji-like sliding doors which give access to a hot towel cabi storage area in the base. There are a variety of customisable bases and print inlays to choose from.

**Other key features:** The Pro Salon series is a favourite of five-star spa destinations and standard features include the 4-inch Strata™ memory foam mattress, a four-section adjustable electric top, nearly silent hydraulic lift actuators and PowerPort™ electrical outlets.

**SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS:** LIVING EARTH

**SHOWCASE**

**Sosul 2000, Pevonia**

The bed: Since its launch in 2006, the multi-functional Sosul 2000 has been a hit with spa operators who like its durability and comfortableness.

**What makes it stand out?** The table comes with a choice of electric or hydraulic height control system as well as optional armrests, and interchangeable head/face rest and four adjustable sections so it can be used for a range of treatments including waxing, facials and body massages. Designed in Italy, it features poly-filled cushions for guest comfort.

**Other key features:** A sturdy metal frame is designed to ensure long-lasting durability, even against intense massage treatments.

**SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD:** PEVONIA



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Grand Hotel Kempinski\*\*\*\*\* Strba-Strbské Pleso, Slovakia  
Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, Palm Island\*\*\*\*\* Dubai, UAE  
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**2011 ARRIVAL**

**T-MUD, Technodesign**

**The bed:** The prototype of Technodesign's t-MUD bed was revealed at the Cosmoprof trade show in Bologna, Italy, in March and is now ready for distribution to high-end spas worldwide. The dry-floatation and massage bed has been created for mud treatments or wraps that can reduce the appearance of cellulite and help with general aches and pains. The aim is to turn these traditional curative treatments, where people typically step into a whole bath of mud, into a more pleasant pampering experience but with the same benefits.

**What makes it stand out?** With a layer of mud on their skin, customers lie on the t-MUD table which features a mattress with an internal water circulation

system. They gradually sink into, and are supported, by the water which is heated to a constant temperature throughout the treatment. The warmth means that the mud does not dry on the skin; and is also said to help improve the penetration of the mud's active ingredients and therapeutic oligoelements. The LUX version of the t-MUD incorporates a water massage system for the sole of the foot.

**Other key features:** No blankets are needed for t-MUD treatments and the bed is easy to clean. Operators will also appreciate the fact there is less mud to supply and waste compared to traditional mud treatments. In addition, the bed can be installed without modifying an existing treatment room because it doesn't require filling or drainage.

**SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD: TECHNODESIGN**

**SHOWCASE**

**Stone Treatment Bed, Healing Company**

**The bed:** Japan's Healing Company launched its stone treatment table in 2009 and even since it's received positive feedback from the owners of ryokans – traditional Japanese inns with onsens – hotel spas and day spas across the country.

**What makes it stand out?** Mildly heated stones form the surface of the table to warm a guest's body and encourage relaxation. The bio-positive stones are also said to produce negative ions and low-



level radiation with various health effects. The overall message is that it "uses nature to create an authentic healing experience".

**SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORDS:**

**HEALING COMPANY**



**2011 ARRIVAL**

**The Confortium, Lemi Group**

**The bed:** Launched in early 2011, this eco-friendly bed has been made from sustainable materials that combine design, comfort, technology and high-quality with a respect for the environment. The multi-functional unit, with optional armrests and headrest, can be used for facials and body treatments.

**What makes it stand out?** The wood used to make the Confortium has been certified as eco-friendly by the Forest Stewardship Council, while the upholstery is also said to be eco-compatible. Made in Italy, the bed has beautiful design elements including a hand-made, comfortable mattress with elegant and refined double stitching to enhance its strength and durability.

There's also a high level of customisation: the upholstery is available in 50 colours; and the base also comes in a choice of natural, wengé (dark) or bleached wood.

To help create a relaxing atmosphere, there are LED strips around the bed – the colour of which can be changed by the therapist according to the customer's mood or type of treatment. An built-in iPod music system is an optional extra.

**Other key features:** Practical advantages of the Confortium include a mattress that's easy to clean and a compartment for housing a hot towel cabi as well as other accessories to ensure everything needed for treatments is close to hand. The minimum height of the bed is 67cm, but the height can be adjusted thanks to three electric motors (controlled by a foot pedal) to allow the customer to get on or off the bed with ease.

**SPA-KIT.NET KEYWORD: LEMI**



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**SHOWCASE**

**PRO3 treatment couch, Plinth 2000**

**The bed:** The PRO3 is a best seller for Plinth 2000, which supplies around 1,000 of them to spa and salon operators across the world each year. Designed and manufactured in the UK, the original model was launched in 2005 and since then has been the choice of operators such as Hilton.

**What makes it stand out?** According to Plinth, the number one comment from operators is that the PRO3 is a durable treatment couch, which has been designed to withstand up to 20 years of continuous use. Its comfort and versatility are also key selling points.

[SPA-KIT.NET](http://SPA-KIT.NET) KEYWORD: **PLINTH 2000**



**SHOWCASE**

**Jouvence, Unbescheiden**

**The bed:** Arriving on the scene in 2006, the Jouvence from Unbescheiden is popular with operators because it can be used both as massage table and a dry floatation system for body wraps. As with all equipment from Unbescheiden, the Jouvence has been built with high-tech specification and has an elegant design.

**What makes it stand out?** The surface of Jouvence can be adjusted to suit different treatments. For massages or body wraps, the user lies on a solid cushion of air. During the relaxation phase, the cushion

slowly releases air to lower the user lightly onto a heated water cushion.

The feeling of floating helps to calm and relax the body, while the heat is intended to enhance blood circulation and open the skin's pores to allow the wraps to deliver an optimal effect.

When the user is lifted again, the legs are supported and raised first to stabilise and stimulate circulation.

**Other key features:** The Jouvence bed features optional height adjustments to accommodate a range of treatments. The maximum height it goes up to is 90cm.

[SPA-KIT.NET](http://SPA-KIT.NET) KEYWORD: **UNBESCHIEDEN**



**2011 ARRIVAL**

**Wet Table, Nilo**

**The bed:** The Wet Table by Italian-based manufacturer, Nilo, made a fashionable entrance this April at Milan Design Week.

**What makes it stand out?** The electronically adjustable table is ideal for a variety of treatments including wraps and scrubs – where products can be washed off with the incorporated shower hose – as well as oil and water based therapies. Lights around the edge of the table top create a chromotherapy effect and steam can be produced by attaching a hood. It comes with a specially designed, hygienic surface and choice of hard/soft mats.

**Other key features:** Nilo embraces eco-friendly production and strives to produce equipment with a low environmental impact.

[SPA-KIT.NET](http://SPA-KIT.NET) KEYWORD: **NIL0**

**2011 ARRIVAL**

**The Multiflex range, Avalon Couches**

**The bed:** Brought to market in March, the 2 Section treatment table is the latest addition to the Multiflex range.

The range, which also includes 3 and 5 Section tables, first launched in 2007 and prioritises a comfortable guest and therapist position for all treatments. The tables are manufactured in the UK – and have been selected by some of the country's most well known spas such as The Sanctuary and Pennyhill Park – but are available internationally.

**What makes it stand out?** Avalon builds its equipment around the services and requirements of operators. The size/depth of the table can be altered according to the treatment and space in the room, while ample room is always provided for a therapists' knees, legs and feet underneath. Using an electric system, the table can be lowered to 45cm for customers who may find it difficult to



climb, or raised to 99cm for the comfort of taller therapists while massaging.

Each section features cushions which are available in different sizes and up to 30 colours. Memory foam cushions can also be provided.

**Other key features:** According to Avalon, operator feedback on the Multiflex range is that the tables are "strong, sturdy and comfortable... of high-quality and easy to operate". It's also been acknowledged for its aftercare services, where spare parts can be dispatched on the day of request.

[SPA-KIT.NET](http://SPA-KIT.NET) KEYWORD: **AVALON**

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### Snow business at Thermarium

Prepare to get cold this January as Thermarium introduces its new Snow-Shower. The experience – controlled by a touch screen – offers a choice of light snowfall, moderate snowfall or blizzard. The flakes gently melt on contact with the skin, stimulating circulation and invigorating the senses. It can be used as a standalone treatment or mixed with a steam/sauna session to really optimise thermal benefits.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **thermarium**



### Thalgo gets age specific

Thalgo has launched three anti-ageing skin-care ranges for different age groups. The Collagen products, featuring marine collagen, are for ages 25-plus and have a smoothing and preventative effect; those in the Hyaluronic range, use marine hyaluronic acid to smooth and fill and are aimed at the 35-plus group; and products in the Silicium line, target 40-plus users and contain marine silicium to plump and lift the skin.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **thalgo**



### Breast comfort from Ladypilllo

Made from 100 per cent memory foam, the Ladypilllo is an innovative new product that can fit onto any treatment bed to provide extra comfort and support to women when lying face down. The contoured shape takes away the pressure on the breasts, as well as providing total support for the upper body. The company has four other products that all enhance customer comfort during treatments.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **ladypilllo**



### Elemis' Pro-Collagen body cream

The Pro-Collagen Marine Cream for the face has been an anti-ageing hero product of Elemis' for a number of years – and now it's developed a body cream version. Formulated with exotic babassu, castanha and bilberry seed oils, together with marine algae and Elemis' micro-lattice technology – to help firm loose skin – the new cream is designed to deeply hydrate, nourish and visibly tone the body.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **elemis**



### Heated bamboo revealed

Spa Revolutions has launched Lava Bambu™, a naturally self-heating bamboo massage tool. Made with sustainably harvested black natural and speckled bamboo, it incorporates Lava Gel™ – the same self-heating technology used in the ever-popular lava shells. The gel consists of a mix of minerals, black lava, dried sea kelp and algae, which chemically react when combined to create the heat.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **spa revolutions**



### Sothys unveils Hydradvantage

Featuring a new fungus-derived active ingredient called 1055 boletus extract, Hydradvantage is Sothys' latest skin hydration programme. Suitable for all skin types, it comprises an intensive five-phase salon treatment and four products for home use. At home products include Hydradvantage Intensive Serum, Hydradvantage Light Cream, Hydradvantage Comfort Cream and Hydradvantage Hydra-Nourishing Mask.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **sothys**

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, visit [www.spa-kit.net](http://www.spa-kit.net)



### L.Raphael defies gravity

L.RAPHAEL has unveiled the ultrasound Anti-Gravity II machine to push ingredients deeper into the skin to provide a 'facial lift'. The heat from the ultrasound is also said to stimulate collagen production, while its vibrations act like a micro-massage on facial muscles and improve blood circulation. Two Ultra-Gravity treatments – for the face and neck; and for the eyes – plus products complete the launch.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **l raphael**



### Repêchage brightens up

The Biolight Collection from Repêchage has been formulated using peptide and marine bio-technology, to help reduce the appearance of uneven skin tone while tackling hyper-pigmentation due to the effects of the sun, acne scars and hormonal changes. The Biolight range includes six brightening products – a cleanser, toner, day cream, skin correct serum, overnight cream and mask.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **repêchage**



### Jane Iredale shows off

A new Best Seller Display has been created to help stockists show a key selection of Jane Iredale mineral make-up products. The unit showcases the most popular products and colours in tester format, together with the brand's top-selling brushes, helping spa businesses to maximise the return on their retail space. The unit is designed to sit on an existing work surface or on an optional pedestal.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **jane iredale**



### Essentially Caribbean

Caribbean Essentials is promising to spice up the European spa market with five zesty retail collections – Core, Facial, Bath Time, Lifestyle and Foot Ceremony. All of the products in the collections are based on aromatherapy and use natural, ethically-sourced ingredients such as brown sugar and honey. Caribbean Essentials started life as a professional spa product and treatment line in Jamaica five years ago.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **caribbean essentials**



### Iyashi meets Gharieni

The latest Iyashi Dôme slimming bed has been created in collaboration with massage table designer Gharieni. The bed emits infra-red rays that have detoxing, anti-ageing and weight-loss benefits – burning up to 600 calories in 30 minutes it claims. And the new Gharieni-designed model has improved build quality, enhanced comfort and a new electronic system for raising the dome.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **iyashi dome**



### Smokey eyes by Clarins

Ahead of the holiday season, Clarins has taken another look at 'smokey eyes' with Ombre Minerale 4 Couleurs Limited Edition, a new palette of pink, grey and silver pearl shades. The pearl texture of the highlighter has been designed to leave an ultra-shimmery sheen on the eyelid. Featuring a high concentration of mineral pigments, the three powder eye shadows help to light up the eyes.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **clarins**

For more information, or to contact any of these companies, visit [www.spa-kit.net](http://www.spa-kit.net)



### Shiseido extends Future Solution

Shiseido's Future Solution LX skincare range has been joined by Ultimate Regenerating Serum 30ml. Designed to reduce visible signs of ageing – such as loss of firmness, wrinkles, dullness and visible pores – it incorporates the company's Skingencell iP formula, together with natural ingredients to help prevent cellular damage, as well as Soft Glow Powder technology for an even skin tone.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **shiseido**



### Festive fancies from Orly

The new range of varnishes from Orly combines different colours and textures. Holiday Soiree by Orly sees traditional shades transformed with different finishes. The collection consists of Androgynia, a black with multicolour glitter; Ma Cherie, a red crème; Oui, an iridescent purple shimmer; Au Champagne, a white frosted matte; Le Chateau, a dark green crème; and Ingénue, a shimmering pink.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **orly**



### La Prairie goes inside out

Cellular Power Infusion from La Prairie has been designed as a new development in cosmetic science, which works on improving skin from the inside. It uses potent ingredients to re-ignite, hydrate, energise and nourish skin on a cellular level to rejuvenate its texture and give it a more luminous, vibrant appearance. Cellular Power Infusion has also been created to target fine lines and deep wrinkles.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **la prairie**



### Water music from GAP

GAP Music has just released the *Sea of Tranquility* album by pianist and musician Fraser Morris. It's been composed with the intention of helping listeners to relax and unwind, whatever the time of day. The album consists of six calming tracks – Mountainside, Dance of the Glistening Waters, Refreshments at the Seaside, Just Floating, Perfect Droplets and Distant Voices – which add up to an hour's running time in total.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **gap music**



### New cleanser from ARK

New from ARK Age Aware Skincare is the Remove Pre-Skin Cleanse which gently cleans the face of make-up, daily debris and excess sebum while softening and nourishing the skin. The multi-fruit lipid blend has also been developed to reduce dryness and deeply moisturise. High-potency active ingredients include zicao, an ayurvedic herb to soothe sensitive skin; as well as antibacterial margosa leaf.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keywords **ark age aware**



### Nilo's All In One

Italian-based spa equipment manufacturer Nilo has developed the All In One electrical massage table that can be converted into a pedi-spa chair with armrests and water basin. Great importance has been placed on hygiene and cleanliness, which is why new pipeless technology has been integrated into the water basin. Other features of the basin include an aero massage function and chromatherapy lights.

[spa-kit.net](http://spa-kit.net) keyword **nilo**

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THE  
FINISHING  
TOUCH

The study was based on thermal spring water at the Avène Hydrotherapy Center in France

## WATER WAY

Mainly practised in Europe, hydrotherapy can be used to treat diseases such as lower back pain and osteoarthritis. It also helps to combat skin disorders – which can have a major impact on the quality of life of sufferers (see below) – and the Avène Hydrotherapy Center in south France is a example of a facility that is dedicated to this.

Every year, more than 2,200 children and adults are referred to the centre, where natural 25.6°C thermal spring waters (TSW) are used to treat serious skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, atopic dermatitis and burns. The water at Avène is rich in silicate and trace elements which calm and soften the skin; has a low mineral salt content that doesn't dry out the skin; and has a pH of 7.5 that won't burn wounds.

Now a new study at the centre\*, the largest of its kind, proves just how efficacious dermatological hydrotherapy can be.

**An eight-year study on more than 10,000 people shows that hydrotherapy significantly reduces the severity of atopic dermatitis and psoriasis**

### THREE-WEEK PROGRAMME

The study analysed just over 10,000 patients who went to the Avène centre for a three-week treatment programme between 2001 and 2009. These included 5,916 atopic dermatitis sufferers and 4,887 with psoriasis.

The patients were representative of people in the general population who suffer from the diseases. The average age of those with atopic dermatitis was 18.7 years and there was an even gender split. Psoriasis patients had an average age of 55 years.

Hydrotherapy treatment was administered on six days of the week, with one day

of rest, for three weeks in total. The basic programme comprised 20-minute baths at 32°C, being sprayed with TSW and drinking it. More severe dermatosis lesions were also treated using TSW-based cream – Avène retails its skincare products around the world – localised TSW showers, compresses soaked in TSW and underwater massages.

### SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

The symptoms of atopic dermatitis and psoriasis was measured at the start and the end of the three-week programme using clinical tools: SCORAD and PASI, respectively.

At the end of the programme, the severity of symptoms was reduced significantly in both sets of patients – by 41.6 per cent in atopic dermatitis sufferers and by 54.4 per cent in people with psoriasis.

In fact, dryness and redness of the skin – which were the most acute problems for atopic dermatitis patients at the start – had decreased significantly by 42.9 per cent and 56.3 per cent, respectively, following the three-week hydrotherapy programme.

In addition, 64.3 per cent of psoriasis patients showed a 50 per cent improvement of the dermatosis at the end of hydrotherapy treatment and 19.5 per cent had a impressive 75 per cent improvement. ●

\*Merial-Kienvy, C et al. *Clinical efficacy of Avène hydrotherapy measured in a large cohort of more than 10,000 atopic or psoriatic patients.* JEAD (February 2011).

### QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PATIENTS WITH SKIN DISEASES

Itching, burning sensations, the appearance of lesions, treatment odour and complexity, and the time spent seeing doctors are all characteristics of skin diseases that can impact patients' quality of life (QoL).

However, a 2010 study on 174 adults and 212 children with atopic dermatitis and psoriasis shows that hydrotherapy

can help. They all went on a three-week programme at Avène, France (see above); and a QoL questionnaire focused on patient symptoms, daily activities, personal relationships and treatment.

The QoL had "significantly improved" in all patients both three and six months after the treatment.



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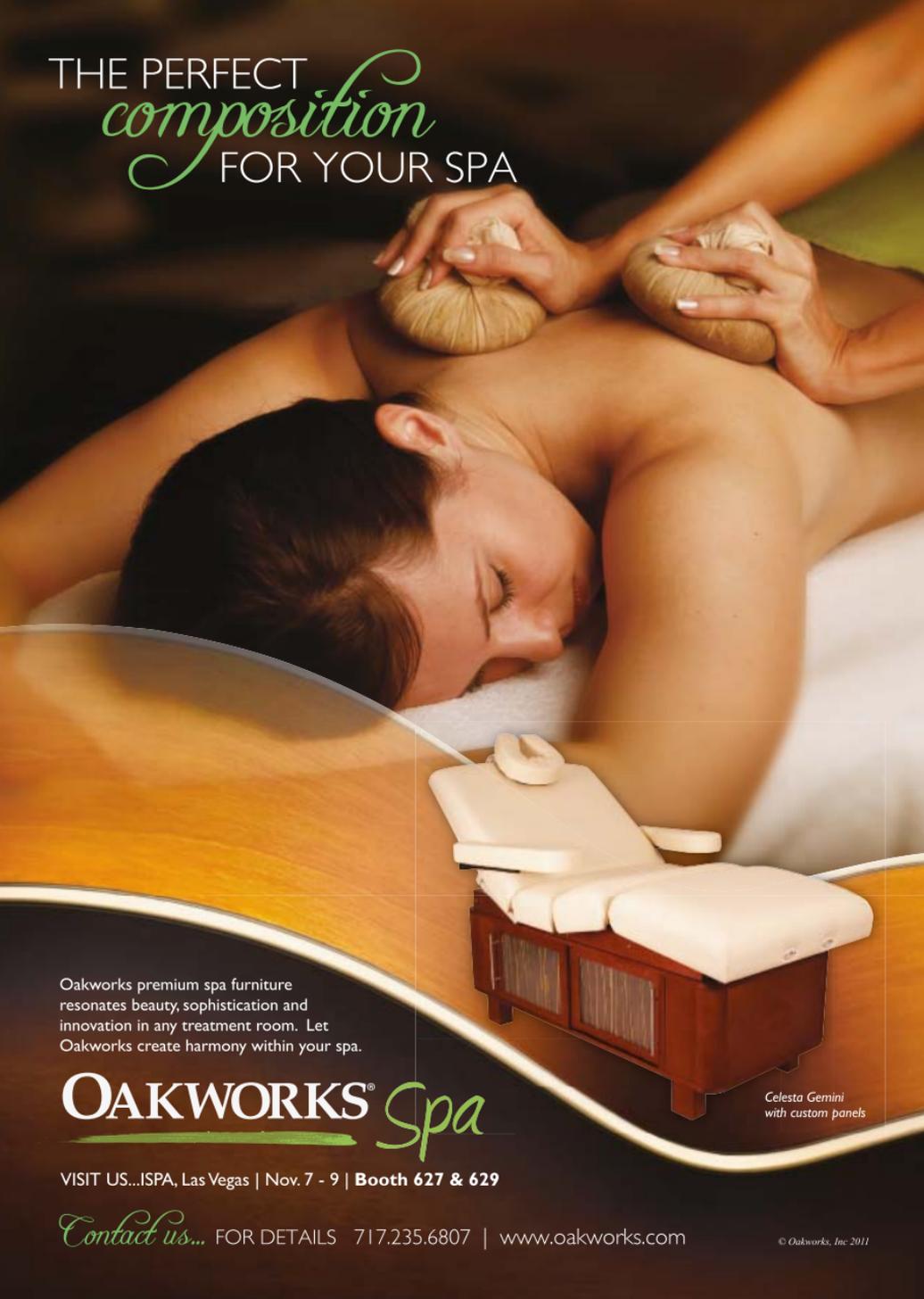
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