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[comfort zone] was born out of my passion for beauty and science and the desire to offer effective professional spa and home care solutions. Enriched by the constant contribution of an international team of experts in medical disciplines and human sciences, we ardently work to bring a complete new meaning to the word "holistic" and to make the skin a true expression of health and joie de vivre.

David Bollet



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Cheval Blanc Randheli

The Maldives hideout
for Prince William
& Kate Middleton

Julien Patty &

Ghislain Waeyaert

On taking Deep Nature
to new heights

Super-luxe

Branded spa and wellness
concepts by Armani,
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Cover photo: US Olympic triple jumper Erica Ashley McLain



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3D printed product

Technology is available that will change the way spa and beauty suppliers formulate, make and distribute their products. If the leading brands stay ahead of the curve and protect their brands and the IPs relating to their formulations, exciting times lie ahead

This year's *Spa Foresight™* report from *Spa Business* magazine is just out, predicting the top 20 long-term trends we believe will have a big impact on the industry.

The list extends from robot therapists to clean air rooms, edible environments to the development of wellness cities.

One of the biggest potential opportunities and threats we see for the industry comes from 3D printing and the technologies associated with it.

Off-the-shelf sensors are now available which can 'read' a product and reveal its formulation – imagine these in the hands of customers and competitors. If you're claiming your products are organic, or contain certain ingredients and you're either lying or your quality control has allowed product to ship which doesn't meet these standards, that fact will be laid bare for all to see.

The second technology which will change the industry is the 3D printing of the actual products. As soon as you've used your sensor to figure out the formula of a face or body cream, scrub or oil mix, you'll be able to print it and bottle it for yourself, effectively dismantling the current business model of spa product suppliers.

I imagine a time in the not too distant future when spas can print any product on-site to order. That product will be fresher and cheaper, will save on pilferage and in some cases on storage, so the spa can allocate more space to revenue-generating activities.

It will enable customisation and the rapid adoption of new products, because suppliers will be able to remotely programme printers to make new formulations as soon as they're created, without the need for manufacturing,



Sensors are available which 'read' a product and reveal its formulation. Imagine this in the hands of customers or competitors

bottling or shipping. They'll also find entering new international markets easier, because products will be made to meet local regulations.

If suppliers take advantage of this tech, we'll see them robustly defending their formulations and brands and bringing 3D product printer packages to market to enable spas to print and bottle their official products.

But if they don't, they'll discover the market is ripe for disruption and in the same way the pharmaceuticals sector has been disrupted by the advent of generic drugs, so spa suppliers could find they have rivals in the form of generic product houses who will create ranges of near-identical products at a fraction of the cost.

Liz Terry, editor twitter: @elizterry

■ Read *Spa Foresight™* free online at spaforesight.com

What are your views on 3D printed product?

Comment on our blog at blog.spabusiness.com



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*Spa My Blend by Clarins
Velaa Private Island, Maldives*

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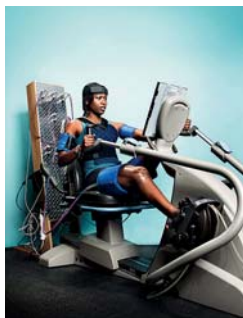
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p32 Julien Patty (left) and Ghislain Waeyaert at Deep Nature, the company behind the spa at the new Brando eco-resort in French Polynesia



p54 Super-luxe resorts in the Maldives are attracting royalty



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p100 Science-led fitness by Vasper

5 | Editor's letter

Liz Terry shares her thoughts

18 | Letters

Bill Bensley gives his opinion on where spa design is heading in the future

22 | News

Tompkins joins Hilton Head Health; Viceroy enters South America; a call to change massage therapy laws in Dubai

32 | Interview: Julien Patty & Ghislain Waeyaert

The men at the head of Deep Nature reveal their plans for the future

40 | Everyone's talking about: Staff exploitation

Are spa therapists given a fair wage and offered reasonable benefits? Katie Barnes canvasses industry opinion

46 | The high life

We take a look at the spa concepts of luxury brands such as Dior, Guerlain, Armani and Versace

54 | Country focus: The Maldives

Neena Dhillon takes a look around Cheval Blanc Randheli and Velaa Private Island – two of the hottest new spa destinations in the Maldives

62 | Q&A: Morgan Lefrançois

The spa business development manager at Clarins on working with Velaa Private Island; plus a first-person account of the resort by Liz Terry

66 | Therapy: Well seasoned

An underground salt mine offering subterranean therapy and herb spas feature in this report by Sophie Bengé

74 | Full steam ahead

The unique hydrothermal spa concept at Center Parcs UK attracts 300,000 guests a year and brings in £15m in revenue. Katie Barnes visits its latest site



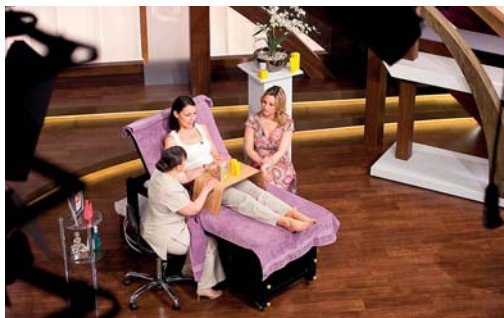
p92 Mission Hills Haikou, China



p66 Salt and herb therapies in spas



p46 Spa concepts by luxury brands



p84 Behind the scenes at TV shopping channel QVC

84|Marketing: Screen star

Professional spa brands are using TV shopping channel QVC to increase footfall in spas and can sell up to £4m of products in just one day

92|Mission accomplished

With 168 pools and 90 treatment rooms, Mission Hills Haikou has one of the world's largest spa and mineral springs. Jennifer Harbottle finds out more

100|Fitness: Cool customer

We explain the science behind Vasper, a high-tech fitness system that's being used by athletes and astronauts

102|Spa software:

Operator case studies – part 3

Businesses tell us how they're making the latest software work for them

106|Product focus: Multi-sensory

A round-up of some of the latest spa experiences which enhance what guests see, hear, smell and feel

110|Spa kit

Equipment and product launches

116|Research: Brain boosting

Meditation can actually heighten brain activity according to a new study

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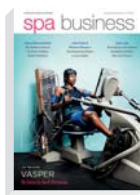
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Morgan Lefrançois

Morgan Lefrançois has 15 years of experience in the spa, wellness and skincare sector and is currently the corporate spa business development manager at Clarins. She oversees 130 Clarins spas in the EMEA region including the newly-opened Velas Private Island in the Maldives (see p54).
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On the cover: A cutting-edge fitness training system by Vaspar (p100)

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Sophie Benge is a journalist and author. Her latest book *Healing Sources – Spas and Wellbeing from the Baltic to the Black Sea* will be published in September. She regularly writes and blogs about her wellbeing and travel experiences on her website www.beingsophie.com.
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Letters

KATIE BARNES, MANAGING EDITOR, SPA BUSINESS

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

WHAT'S THE FUTURE OF SPA DESIGN?

Bill Bensley, owner,
Bensley Design Studios

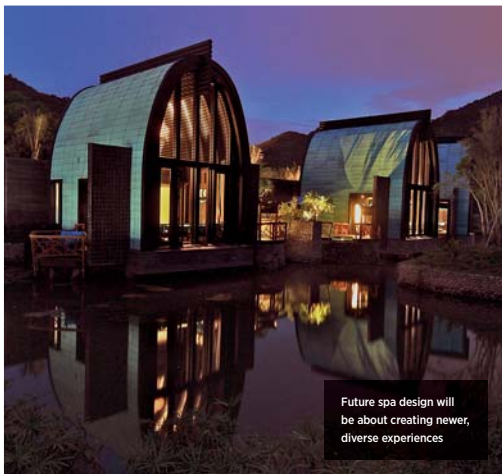
My company has designed more than 180 resorts (all of which have spas) in 30 countries but right now, for us, it's all about China. The fact that there are two billion affluent Chinese people who are going to travel and see everything new the hotel industry has to offer is exciting. And as more people around the world begin to travel internationally, I think that there will be an increasing need for spa staff to speak many languages.



Half of our work is happening in China – we're designing hotels and spas for Ritz-Carlton in Lijiang and Hainan, and for Capella in Guangzhou and the Himalayas, to name a few. Most of my projects have very healthy budgets and each of these resorts will have a spa more fabulous than the next.

The challenge for spa design, however, will be avoiding repetition – long gone are the days of scented candles and floating flowers and spas as we know them will fade away. Everyday, when I'm at home in Bangkok, I have a two-hour massage and use that time to think. I'm having a massage as I write this and I'm thinking that spas need to be designed more like home – with lots of collections of books, art and sculptures. The key will be to keep raising the bar and to create newer, more diverse experiences.

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Future spa design will be about creating newer, diverse experiences



Bensley designed
Coqoon Spa at Indigo
Pearl resort in Phuket

SPAS NEED TO TAKE BENCHMARKING MORE SERIOUSLY

Mary Darling, owner,
Mary Darling Consulting

I agree with Anne McCall Wilson's appeal to the global spa community to more fully embrace benchmarking (see SB14/2 p14). Spas cannot manage what they cannot measure and, regardless of their individual performance indicators, operators should commit to measuring key metrics such as revenue per available treatment hour (RevPATH) or the treatment room utilisation rate which are included in the Spa STAR system by Smith Travel Research.

Barriers to enrolling on benchmarking schemes may stem from the fact that spas are seen simply as an amenity without a profit purpose. Spa managers may not be interested in financial performance as long as guests are happy. Or maybe no one is willing to invest in training, so managers are left to learn themselves about what metrics matter most to upper management, owners and investors.

Perhaps hotel groups which take spa revenues seriously could pilot and lead regional spa benchmarking programmes with input from other operators in the area. Although, if they did this, they'd need to consider competitive set information, as what resort operators find valuable may not be helpful for day spas. Or those who already use the Spa STAR scheme could lead multiple training or familiarisation programmes in local markets so that other operators become more aware of spa data collection and the benefits.

Global spa businesses are overdue being taken seriously, so by fully embracing consistent benchmarking our businesses will be seen as more than just an amenity.

Contact Mary Darling
Twitter: @maryldarling



ARE SPA CONFERENCES BECOMING OBSOLETE?

Jeff Matthews, president, Steiner Spa Consulting

I love spa conferences! They're a fantastic way to catch up with colleagues, trade war stories and gather market intel. But with the cost of attending them and the sheer number of events each year, many are becoming outmoded.

Connections and information are at our fingertips thanks to a flatter world and a global industry that's matured significantly in the last decade. And yes, we have spa conferences to thank for that.

While there's still a need for exhibitions to connect brands with potential distributors and buyers, this is increasingly only relevant in emerging markets.

The content of conferences is debatable too. A decade ago, we never questioned the experts put in front of us. I pity guest speakers now as they're bound to be talking to an audience that's as knowledgeable, if not more informed, than they are.



We've become more discerning and demanding about information and connections. We only want to be dealing with the decision makers and more often than not, it's not a challenge for us to find out who they are and how to get to them. We want fresh insights that have never been heard, published or shared. We want to be entertained, inspired and moved.

The likes of Global Spa & Wellness Summit understand this acutely. That's why the organisers continually endeavour to introduce out-of-the-box thought leaders/speakers and transferable case studies to its annual summit.

Simply put, for conferences to be viable, they have to be several steps ahead of the industry. Ultimately, they have to not only connect, but challenge and change us.

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McCarthy on his new role at Mandarin Oriental

Jeremy McCarthy, the new group director of spa for the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, has spoken exclusively to *Spa Business*



about his new role based in Hong Kong and the ethos he'll embrace as he drives the business forward.

McCarthy revealed that Mandarin Oriental's (MO) reputation for having the best spa in any city was a major factor in his decision to leave his role at Starwood Hotel & Resorts as global spa development and operations director. At MO he's replaced Andrew Gibson who now heads up spas at FRHI (see SB14/2 p26).

"The company [MO] is growing," McCarthy said. "We have less than 30 hotels today, but another 12 in development. This growth provides a unique opportunity to innovate around our spa and wellness offering." For McCarthy, spa and wellness go hand in hand. "I've been seeing a shift in the way we view wellness. We're now realising that there are two other pieces to the puzzle: the importance of rest and the importance of positive emotions."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=M5H3r>

FRHI appoints new director of spa operations

Lindsay Madden-Nadeau has been appointed as director of spa integration and operations at FRHI.



Working alongside Andrew Gibson, FRHI's new vice president of spa and wellness, Madden-Nadeau will act as a support for the company's spas globally across the three hotel brands of Fairmont, Raffles and Swissôtel.

"We have many new exciting projects lined up for the next few years," Madden-Nadeau said. "I will play an integral part in the successful opening of each spa property."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=K6r5xs>



The UNESCO World Heritage site will be transformed into a US\$50m resort with two spas

Viceroy to redevelop historic convent in Colombia

The Viceroy Hotel Group and investment firm KIT Capital are to spend US\$50m (€37m, £29m) on redeveloping Obra Pía, a former 17th century convent in Colombia, into a luxury resort with two spas.

The site, in the city of Cartagena on the north coast, was the original capital of the Spanish Empire in the New World and is now a UNESCO World Heritage location.

Due to open in 2016, Convento Obra Pía, Viceroy Cartagena will be the group's

first property in South America. It will be transformed into a 102-bed hotel by architectural firm Barrera & Barrera. Historical features will be preserved, while modern amenities will include a 257sq m (2,960sq ft) courtyard pool, fitness centre and spa.

An affiliated resort on Rosario Islands will include 15 cabanas and an Asian-themed spa. Two luxury yachts will take guests to the site which is about 40 minutes away.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=P3h8R>

A call to change strict massage therapy laws in Dubai

Two spa industry representatives in Dubai – Anne Cook of the Healing Zone Academy and spa consultant Daniella Russell – are working with the government to change the country's rigorous medical healthcare laws which apply to massage therapists.

The Dubai Health Authority (DHA) implemented strict regulations for day spa/salon therapists in 2013 in attempt to close down unsavoury massage parlours. DHA regulates the medical profession and under its new rules, massage therapists need to undergo 500 hours of training and take a prometric test which was devised for medical massage/physiotherapists.

Spa therapists also need two years' of post-qualification experience which is what the DHA expects of doctors and nurses.

After much persuasion the DHA has stopped the mandatory prometric testing.

But Cook and Russell are pushing for broader considerations. As it stands,



Cook and Russell (above) want to see changes

massage therapists in Dubai can't gain post-qualification experience as they don't have a licence. Cook and Russell are suggesting the DHA allows them to work under a fully-qualified therapist if they already have some skills on the DHA list to gain the experience.

They're also proposing that some of the 500 hours of training – which is beyond most therapist educational requirements – can be made up of other recognised qualifications they've already obtained.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=5B5G4>

Malaysia to devise Islamic tourism benchmark

The Malaysian Islamic Development Department has been appointed to determine a sharia compliance benchmark for tourism services, including those for spas.

Sharia is the moral and religious code of Islam. Under the scheme, tourism businesses will be judged on how well they respect sharia principles aside from serving halal-certified food and abiding by Islamic banking rules – two systems already established in Malaysia. It's expected that Islamic-friendly resorts will forbid gambling, bars or nightclubs and ban alcohol. It's also likely that they'll focus on segregated beach, pool, fitness and spa facilities.

Minister Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom, who's in charge of the government's Islamic affairs, says the scheme is necessary as there's an increased demand for sharia-friendly service products.



Malaysian minister Jamil Khir says there's a growing demand for sharia-friendly services

Spa Business has also noticed a rise in Islamic-friendly developments.

Turkey's Caprice Gold Group, which specialises in Islamic tourism, already operates a thermal spa resort on the Aegean coast

and is set to open two more resorts in 2015 – a 1,300-bed hotel with seven spa centres in Istanbul, and a 673-bed, US\$170m (£123m, £102m) property in the Maldives.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=M5Q6F>



Set to open in November, the complex has been designed to host major political events

Private spas for presidents at Yanqi Lake Kempinski

Twelve boutique villas – with their own spa, lap pool and gym – are being designed as lodgings for heads of state and political figures at a Kempinski hotel that's being built north of Beijing in China.

Yanqi Lake Kempinski Hotel Beijing is a 14sq km (5 square mile) complex that's being lined up to possibly host events such as APEC 2014 and future G20 summits.

As well as the villas, there's a 306-bed hotel which will have a four-floor spa

facility with eight treatment rooms, a pool, gym and juice bar/tea area. Meanwhile, a spa in the 111-bed State Guest House will feature 11 luxury treatment suites – including a double VIP suite with a hammam – a thermal experience zone, relaxation area and foot massage rooms plus a gym.

The complex is scheduled to open in November and all spa facilities have been designed by Zurich-based Resense.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=p4E7B>



Tompkins left Miraval in June

Former Miraval CEO joins Hilton Head Health resort

Michael Tompkins, former CEO and president of Miraval Resort and Spa, is taking the reins at Hilton Head Health in South Carolina, USA.

Hilton Head Health has been a popular wellness destination since it opened in 1976, but until now, it hasn't featured a spa. An expansion is planned and new facilities will include a spa and 30-bed inn.

Tompkins signed on as CEO at Hilton Head Health after losing 9lbs on its week-long weight loss programme and being impressed with the business. He left Miraval in June when KSL Capital Partners bought a majority stake from Revolution.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=c8R5D>

Resense welcomes new COO David Long

International spa consultancy and management firm Resense has appointed David Long as its new chief operating officer.



Previously, Long worked for NStyle in the UAE as a business development consultant and has 25 years' experience in the wellness industry.

"David's experience and willingness to drive the performance of our spas make him a real asset," said Resense CEO Kasha Shillington.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=R6c4p>

Group spa director for MSpa Asia appointed

The operations director for MSpa International, Kathryn Moore, has been promoted to group spa director of MSpa in Asia where she'll oversee over 35 facilities and an expanding portfolio.



MSpa is the spa management arm of Minor Hotel Group and Moore was 'number two' to former general manager Lee David Stephens until he left late in 2013.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=k9N8p>

Strategic partnership for two spa consultancies

Helen Coulon (right), the managing director of Soul Spa Concepts has announced a tie-up with dR Global.



The businesses are synergistic: Soul Spa Concepts focuses on design and has bases in Romania, the UK and France, while dR Global covers EMEA and Asia and specialises in distribution, training and turnkey services. The duo have already had interest from the Maldives and Brussels.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=7D6K6>



Only guests and members can access the pool, but a one-day pass will still cost them €150

Iconic Paris lido transformed with hotel and spa

Molitor, the renowned 1930s swimming baths owned by Paris city council, reopened with a hotel, spa and health club in May following €80m (US\$109m, £64.8m) renovation.

The site, with its two pools and avant-garde ambience, famously hosted the 1946 Louis Réard fashion show which unveiled the modern bikini. Later on, it became a popular haunt for artists.

Today, after two and a half years of refurbishment, it now also includes a 124-bed five-star hotel that's operating under the Accor MGallery brand, a health club, res-

taurant and a Clarins spa. The spa has 13 treatment rooms – with beds by Gharleni – a hammam, sauna, relaxation room, tea salon and hairdressers and barber shop.

The historically-classified pools, which have been meticulously restored, include an all-year 46m (151ft) outdoor pool and a 33m (108ft) pool sheltered by a glass roof. Both are now heated to 28°C.

Only hotel guests and health club members have access to the exclusive pools and even then, they'll need to pay €150 (US\$200, £120) for a one-day pass.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=E9e6B>

Spa-inclusive, affordable resort to open in the Maldives

Resort management firm The Small Maldives Island Company is one of the latest operators to offer daily complimentary spa treatments to entice guests.

Spa Business recently reported on the 'spa inclusive' trend (see SB14/1 p44) where resort prices automatically include the costs – electricity, product and therapist time – of treatments. This enables operators to effectively offer free treatments and the proposition is proving popular across Asia.

The company will take this approach with two of its new properties – Amilla Fushi which will open in November and the Finolhu that's due to launch in late 2015.

Tom McLoughlin, co-founder of The Small Maldives Island Company says: "We've been hankering to do something



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ANNA ONELCHENKO

The business model includes free treatments

to shake things up [in the Maldives]," and he feels that providing affordable holiday options, is a way to do this.

McLoughlin is well known in the Maldives hospitality sector, especially for setting up and running Per Aquum Resorts and Spas.

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

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CIDESCO to launch spa management diploma

September will see the first set of students enrolling on a new spa management diploma by global training organisation CIDESCO.

The International Beauty and Spa Management Diploma "will equip students with the specific tools required to manage beauty salons and spas, enabling them to make the most of business plans," says CIDESCO president Anna-Cari Gund, "It's been designed by trainers from every continent, combining skills for a world class spa."

The course will be taken by CIDESCO-qualified therapists and is available through the 241 CIDESCO-accredited schools globally.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=7s3K6>



43 The Spa is located on the coast

Ritz-Carlton relaunches in Barcelona with WTS

The Ritz-Carlton-operated Hotel Arts Barcelona has a new spa – '43 The Spa' – named for its location on the hotel's 43rd floor.

The operator changed the hotel's spa from a Six Senses wellness retreat to the in-house brand which was developed by WTS International. Products are by Spanish skincare brand Natura Bissé.

"When Ritz-Carlton decided not to renew its current lease with Six Senses Spa, it turned to WTS to assist with relaunching the spa," said Susie Hammer, vice president of spa at WTS. "After menu development, WTS assisted in hiring the new team of service professionals," Hammer added.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=e7p6G>



Each of the Spa Castle sites has a Sauna Valley, including this facility in Carrollton, Texas

38,000sq ft Spa Castle set for central Manhattan

C Castle Group, which owns the Spa Castle wellness centre brand, is to open its third facility in the USA.

The 38,000sq ft (3,530sq m) Spa Castle Premiere will be located in Midtown Manhattan on the site of a former gym and will boast three levels of saunas, pools, indoor waterfalls and a sundeck.

The opening date has not been disclosed, but the project will be designed, constructed and operated in-house.

The Spa Castle concept is based around Asian and European bath culture. The original facility opened in Queens, New York in 2007 and features an aqua bar, four pools – including a Japanese 'hinoki bath' which is lined with fragrant pine wood – as well as eight saunas, one of which features gold mosaics.

The second Spa Castle site was revealed in Carrollton, Texas in 2012.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=g8t4u>

CHF485m Swiss resort and spa to open in 2017

The CHF485m (US\$545m, €397m, £323m) Bürgenstock Resort at Lake Lucerne, Switzerland, is on track for an opening in Q2 of 2017.

The 400-bed resort is owned by Katara Hospitality, which is in turn owned by the state of Qatar. Katara Hospitality Switzerland AG – a subsidiary of Katara Hospitality – is the developer and operator.

The 10,000sq m (107,639sq ft) Alpine Spa will feature 15 treatment rooms and three suites. There will also be up to four pools, plus Alpine hot tubs, a large sauna and multiple wet and dry treatment areas.

While product suppliers have not yet been chosen, the therapies will include Ayurvedic massage and traditional Alpine treatments. "This is truly a spa and beauty centre of the first order," said Bruno H Schöpfer, the managing director of Katara Hospitality Switzerland. "It's a place to celebrate wellbeing in a place like no other."



It will offer Alpine and ayurvedic therapies

A competition of architects and interior designers was held and the winners, now in charge of overseeing the resort's completion are Patrik Dierks Norbert Sachs Architekten and London-based interior designers MKV Design.

The two companies are designing the resort with sustainability in mind.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=G6B6M>

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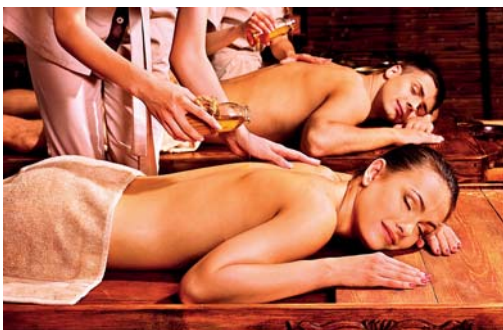
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The government will ban Malaysian operators from hiring foreign therapists in 2017

Malaysia to train 1,500 spa therapists by 2020

The Malaysian government is looking to train 1,500 new spa therapists over the next five years to support the country's ever-growing spa industry, which is expected to contribute MYR400m (US\$125m, €93.4m, £74.5m) to gross national income by 2020.

Malaysia's Tourism and Culture ministry (MOTAC) operates a spa therapy training programme, in conjunction with spa academy Beaubelle Aesthetics Academy, which is aiming to reduce dependence on spa therapists

coming from abroad, with a new edict effective from 1 January 2017 to stop the hiring of foreign spa therapists altogether.

"A total of 302 spa therapists have been commissioned via the spa therapy training programme introduced since 2012, while another 93 trainees are undergoing training at government-recognised centres of excellence up to April this year," according to a statement from MOTAC.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=z6h5S>

NZ\$500m McArthur Ridge resort plan scrapped

The dream of developing a NZ\$500m (US\$435m, €321m, £254m) lifestyle resort in Otago, New Zealand, is over, after a local council withdrew its approval for the venture in June.

The McArthur Ridge resort development, which had been in the works for six years, was to feature a five-star hotel, a 200-hectare (494-acre) Pinot Noir vineyard and up to 1,376 residential units. Leisure facilities were to include a golf course, chessery, equestrian centre and a health spa.

The development initially struggled to take off due to the global financial crisis in 2008 and subsequent property slump.

Most recently, Canterbury Mortgage Trust – the mortgagee for two companies which own 77 per cent of the land – told *The Southland Times* that it wanted to cut ties with the development. It said the land should be used for a rural residential project that would be a cheaper for the council.



SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ELADU YIZHAK

The McArthur Ridge development site is 6km north of the town of Alexandria

The McArthur Ridge Investment Group owns the remaining 23 per cent of the land. Warwick Goldsmith, a consultant of the group, has insisted that a slimmed down version of the project will still be feasible. But according to *The Otago Daily Times*, the group is insolvent.

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=h5C7U>

LIFE ENERGY

Crystal Spa & Lounge offers a multi-sensory and energising client experience. Investment firm New Spa Technologies is now looking to rollout this luxury concept across Russia

The importance of polysensory stimulation of all sensory organs (sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste) was considered when designing Crystal Spa & Lounge, and much attention was given to the energy and aesthetics of the place, the selection of spa products for professional and homecare use and the inclusion of nutritional foods on the menu.

The spa aims to achieve unique health effects by channelling technologies used by ancient civilisations such as the Egyptians in the construction of temples and pyramids. These methods improved the energy of the area where Crystal Spa & Lounge is located, while neutralising the city's flows of negative energy. Each room in the spa has been designed to be a natural source of energy that positively affects a person and increases their vitality. That is why all the procedures conducted at the spa, and the beauty products used, are associated with energy and health effects.

Contrasting with, but complementing, the ancient technologies, modern and complex engineering systems were also installed at Crystal Spa & Lounge. These include: air ionisation in all rooms, three-stage water purification and magnetic treatment; and sound quality provided by high-end acoustic equipment.

Spa rooms and a common area are equipped with subwoofers for bass reproduction and audio receivers to increase the sound wave range.

The background music for spa services is selected according to the purpose of the treatment and the customer's needs:

whether they want to relax after work- or home-related stress; or stimulate their powers and energy, while harmonising themselves in the life stream and developing their creative potential.

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Increasing the beta rhythm improves social skills and intelligence while concentrating attention. Researchers have found that people with an above-average IQ have increased beta wave production. This is not surprising, as these waves activate brain work and improve understanding of the information being studied. Beta

stimulation relieves feelings of tiredness.

The theta rhythm brings our bodies into a state of deep relaxation during which we dream. These waves represent a thin border between the conscious and the subconscious. Under the influence of these waves, our bodies restore themselves, and our physical and mental condition improves. Because of the deep relaxation achieved, our bodies are able to recover quickly after heavy physical activity. ●



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Julien Patty & Ghislain Waeyaert

Spa management company Deep Nature runs over 40 spas globally, including the newly-opened Brando eco-resort. Owner Julien Patty and Ghislain Waeyaert, the managing director of its new development division, explain how they plan to take the company to new heights

The Brando, a luxury resort on an atoll once owned by actor Marlon Brando, officially opened in French Polynesia in July. It's a breathtaking setting for the sustainable development and the Varua Polynesian Spa is a key ingredient for this slice of paradise (see p34). The holistic facility – with its tree top treatment rooms and Polynesian therapies – showcases the best of what Deep Nature, a French-based spa consultancy and operations firm, has to offer.

Since its launch 10 years ago, Deep Nature has secured management contracts for more than 40 high-end spas around the world for brands such as InterContinental, Sheraton and Clarins. Yet despite its sizeable portfolio (see p38), the company is still relatively unknown in the global hospitality and spa arena.

But this is about to change following the launch of Deep Nature Development, a new division of the company which will focus on consultancy and drumming up business to drive future growth.

Management potential

Frenchman Julien Patty, the president and founder of Deep Nature, married into the spa business in the early 2000s. An engineer by trade, his then wife was the daughter of Laurent Batteur – the chair of pharmaceutical and cosmetics manufacturer Groupe Batteur. As well as being behind the Algotharm spa brand, Batteur owned Thalasso Deauville in Normandy which is one of the biggest thalassotherapy centres in France.

"For three years, Laurent told me there was a business in spa management as he saw that Thalasso Deauville was not reaching its potential," says Patty. "People in the

hotel industry wanted to get rid of their spa because of they had so many staffing problems. There were already consultants, but none were operating spas. So I moved to Deauville and began managing the thalassotherapy centre and this was the start of Deep Nature."

It was a steep learning curve, admits Patty. He had to restructure the business and figure out how to successfully operate a spa with 33 treatment rooms without any accommodation. But he had the support of Batteur "a great entrepreneur" who still has a 25 per cent share in the business.

Impressed with his work, InterContinental enlisted Patty's help in opening and running the I-spa in its Paris hotel. "From there I had many contacts and one of the first spas I created from scratch was [InterContinental] Bora Bora," says Patty. "I travelled the world looking for business and gradually I had one spa, then two, four and now 40 operations!" ▶



Deep Nature created and now runs the Varua Polynesian Spa at The Brando resort in French Polynesia which opened in July



Deep Nature creates The Brando spa

A spa built on the shores of a tropical pool is a key feature of newly-opened The Brando eco-resort on Tetiaroa, a 12-island atoll in French Polynesia that used to be owned by actor Marlon Brando.

The Varua Polynesian Spa, which launched in July, has been developed by French spa management and consultancy company Deep Nature. It's situated along with the 35-villa resort on Onetahi, the Tetiaroa island most favoured by Tahitian royalty as a summer retreat.

The spa is located inland within a large plated area overlooking a tropical pool and with a waterfall backdrop. Deep Nature teamed up with French designers Lonsdale Western to create Varua Polynesian Spa which has village-style facilities. Two double treatment rooms, two steamrooms, a cold bath, relaxation area, yoga pavilion and tea lounge – housed in separate

bungalows that blend into the surroundings and have a sense of tranquility. A special couple's spa suite is also perched high up in the palm trees.

Treatments using Algotherrm products, and a range specially created by Deep Nature, include holistic therapies inspired by ancient Polynesian treatments coupled with modern techniques. And according to Julien Patty, the president and founder of Deep Nature, guests get one free spa treatment a day as part of the resort rate.

"The project has been a real adventure, with an inspired businessman," says Patty, referring to Richard Bailey, the owner of Pacific Beachcomber which developed the resort. Deep Nature designed, and continues to run, two other spas in the area with Pacific Beachcomber at the InterContinental Tahiti and Bora Bora.

Like the Bora Bora Resort & Thalasso Spa, The Brando has a strong focus on

environmental protection and it uses renewable sources like solar panels alongside coconut biofuel and an innovative seawater air conditioning system. There's also an EcoStation on the island for scientists and the overall goal is for it to become one of the first resorts to obtain Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification.

The green principles sit well with Marlon Brando's original idea for the island. The actor fell in love with Tetiaroa while scouting for locations for *Mutiny on the Bounty* and bought it in 1965 with the vision of it being a sanctuary for environmental research.

"He [Bailey] knew Marlon Brando and they talked for many years about what could be done on the island," says Patty. "Eventually when he passed away, Bailey was able to rescue the island and make it something for the Brando family to be proud of."

Read more: <http://lei.sr?a=s2k7C>



The Brando has a scientific EcoStation which fits in with the actor's dream of creating a sanctuary for environmental research

Timely meeting

It was when Deep Nature won the contract to operate a flagship spa for Clarins in Paris in 2011 that Patty first came into contact with Ghislain Waeyaert. Waeyaert, a well-known figure in the global spa industry, was the international boutique and spa director for Clarins. Over his five-year tenure, he repositioned Clarins in the luxury spa sector and grew the spa division's turnover from €45m (US\$60.6m, £35.5m) to €75m (US\$101m, £59.2m). Before that he had a similar role at Comfort Zone and, in total, he's worked in the

cosmetics sector for more than 20 years. It proved a timely meeting for both of them.

Patty says: "I'd had some success in France, a bit of Europe and also in French Polynesia. I knew our model could work and I saw that Ghislain had the potential [as well as the contacts] to develop international business."

Waeyaert says: "Clarins is a great company, but I've been an employee for the last 20 years helping other brands to develop their own business. With Deep Nature I had the opportunity to set up a partnership with someone I trust."

More importantly, the pair get along well. Talking to both of them together, the ease of conversation is clear and there's playful banter as they joke about what their respective roles and goals are in their new joint investment company Deep Nature Development.

Deep Nature Development launched in March as a division of the contract management business. Its complementary services focus on the set up of a spa – from feasibility and business planning along with spa concept, design and pre-opening services. While it doesn't have a fixed

INTERVIEW

The profitability of our spas is between 5 and 25 per cent which is very good in Europe or French Polynesia where staff costs are high

► Deep Nature Spa concept, it does have a standard set of operating procedures and branded marketing collateral in place that can be adapted to suit facilities and some owners simply choose to run with this and keep the name. Patty says: "We tailor-make the spas because they're never the same size or in the same location." Notably, Deep Nature categorises its spas by location type – whether they're in the mountains or sea-based sites to those in the nature (forests) and the city.

To this end, it's not restricting itself to working with just one product house. Because of its connection to Groupe Bateau, many spas have agreements with Algotherm, but other brands it works with include Clarins, Cinq Mondes and a number of others. Waeyaert says: "We offer several [skincare] partnerships and advise the spa on what cosmetic line is best for them, depending on if it's a destination or urban spa or where they want to position themselves in the luxury scale."

Negotiating contracts

While the consultancy side of Deep Nature is still in its infancy, the growth in its spa management contracts has accelerated over the last 10 years and Patty puts this down to running spas that make money. "The profitability of our spas is between 5 and 25 per cent which is very good in Europe or French Polynesia where staff costs are high," he says. "After paying the owner a fee, we are even able to earn



Patty learned all about spa management by running Thalasso Deauville, a 33 treatment room thalassotherapy centre in France

5 to 10 per cent ourselves. We also aim to deliver a return on investment within three years and often the first year – when the opening is new and there's a lot of interest – is the best." Patty says these numbers apply to all Deep Nature models, from the one treatment room facilities that it runs for luxury residence group Pierre & Vacances to Thalasso Deauville.

Part of the success for Deep Nature, he says, is down to negotiating the right contract with the owner. "We have to anticipate the business plan perfectly and set our fee based on that," says Patty, explaining that sometimes owners want them to pay something that's not viable. "Luckily the fee I've suggested has always been respected," he adds.

The company offers two contract models. If it's a straightforward management agreement, the deal is set for five to seven years. But if Deep Nature invests in the spa concept and contributes to décor and fit out, the partnership will be arranged for 12 to 18 years.

With 300 employees on its books, having the right systems and selecting the right workforce is also fundamental. Patty says: "We have set methods of management, accounting and reporting, so I think it's that and having a brand people like that makes it successful."

"It's a bit weak to say people need to be 'spa managers', they have to be entrepreneurs as well. It has to be their own business and you have to involve them in terms of salary, bonuses and so on. My long-term goal is to give them the opportunity to become partners of the business but it will take time to organise this." ►

Favourites

BOOK

JP: *Les chemins d'en haut by my father!* (René Patty)
GW: *The Corrections* by Jonathan Frenzen

FILM

JP: *The Indian Runner*
GW: Quentin Tarantino movies

SEASON

JP: Spring
GW: Autumn

LEISURE ACTIVITY

JP: Rock climbing and skiing
GW: Visiting spas of course

SPA

JP: Beach massage facilities in Thailand

GW: Miraval Life in Balance Spa with Clarins, US, because of its range of experiences

TREATMENT

JP: Deep Blue Massage at InterContinental Bora Bora which includes a hydromassage bath with chromatherapy, a body wrap and a massage
GW: Feet or neck massage

BEST ADVICE

JP: Whatever happens, keep a stiff upper lip
GW: Never give up

WHO YOU ADMIRE

JP: Einstein, for thinking the unthinkable and being independent
GW: Any successful business person who keeps things simple



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INTERVIEW

► EMEA focus

Waeyaert, who takes up the role of managing director at Deep Nature Development, says that given the background of the company, he's confident about the future. "They're one of the only ones to be running profitable spas in Europe," he says. "If we expand this business model in other parts of the world, we will be successful."

Aside from The Brando, Deep Nature has just taken over management of the Spa My Blend by Clarins at the Majestic Barrière hotel in Cannes. And Patty talks about four other new openings – a Cinq Monde day spa in one of the tallest towers in Belgium and three spas in New Caledonia in the South Pacific. "The government there wants to boost leisure and tourism and has looked at what we've done in French Polynesia," says Patty.

For Waeyaert, the biggest areas of interest are in other parts of Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) where companies offering contract management services are limited and where spa development is also booming. "We've come in at the right time," says Waeyaert, "because hotel owners and investors want to have profitable spas and no longer want to lose money. And we can prove that this is possible. The intention is to use my know-how and my network to develop Deep Nature internationally by winning new contracts."

While Patty is mindful of not growing too fast, he anticipates things will move quickly now. "We don't want to grow industrially – it's a human business and we need to find the right people [to partner with]," he says. "But on the other hand, we now have Ghislain and we want to export our model. And things can happen fast in this business – at the beginning of the year we took over these spas we weren't expecting and one we had to take over in two weeks."

Waeyaert concludes: "We want to offer an amazing experience to guests and run a profitable spa for the owner. Although we'll be prioritising some regions, my goal is to put a Deep Nature flag in every country... and I'm ready to take Deep Nature to the next step of that development." ●



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Deep Nature runs over 40 spas globally and is now looking to expand in the EMEA

Deep Nature Portfolio

FRANCE

Deep Nature Spa, Center Parcs

Le Lac d'Ailette, Aisne

Deep Nature Spa, Hôtel

du Golf, Les Arcs

Deep Nature Spa, Les Alpagnes

de Chantel residence", Les Arcs

Deep Nature Spa, Village Arc

1950 residence", Les Arcs

Deep Nature Spa, L'amara

residence", Avoriaz

Spa My Blend by Clarins,

Majestic Barrière, Cannes

Deep Nature Spa, Les

Ferme du Soleil residence",

Les Carroz d'Arâches

Deep Nature Spa, Hôtel

Les Aiglons, Chamonix

Deep Nature Spa, Hôtel Le

Morgane, Chamonix

Deep Nature Spa, La Ginabelle

residence, Chamonix

Thalasso & Spa Algo-

therm, Deauville

Deep Nature Spa, Sheraton New

Caledonia Resort & Spa, Deva

Deep Nature Spa, Houlgate

residence", Houlgate

Spa by Clarins, InterContinental

Marseille Hôtel Dieu, Marseille

Spa des Sports, Palais

des Sports, Megève

Deep Nature Spa, Les Alpagnes

de Reberty residence", Les Ménuires

Deep Nature Spa, Les Fermes de

Méribel residence", Méribel

Deep Nature Spa, Center Parcs

Trois Forêts, Moselle Lorraine

Deep Nature Spa, Hôtel'Exedra, Nice

Deep Nature Spa, Center Parcs

Bois-Francis, Normandy

I-spa, InterContinental

Paris Le Grand, Paris

Saint James Albany spa, Hôtel

Saint James Albany, Paris

Deep Nature Spa, Les Hauts

Bois residence", La Plagne

Deep Nature Spa, Les Domaines de

Cramphore residence, Le Pouliguen

Deep Nature Spa, Center Parcs

Hauts de Bruyères, Sologne

Deep Nature Spa, Hôtel L'Aigle

des Neiges, Val d'Isère

INTERNATIONAL

Deep Ocean Spa, InterCon-

tinental Bora Bora Resort &

Thalasso Spa, Bora Bora

Deep Nature Spa, The M/S

Paul Gauguin cruise

Deep Nature Spa, The M/V

Tere Moana cruise

Deep Nature Spa, St Anne

holiday village, Guadeloupe

Varua Spa, The Brando,

Tetiaroa, French Polynesia

Deep Nature Spa, InterConti-

ental Tahiti Resort, Tahiti

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STAFF EXPLOITATION

In light of the inconsistency in therapist wages and pay packages,
is the industry taking unfair advantage of its workforce?

It's no secret that some spa operators find it hard to attract (and keep) high quality therapists. Many say the reason for this is because the sector is growing so quickly that there aren't enough staff for the number of new openings. But could part of the reason for these problems also be down to the lack of consistency in therapist pay and pay packages?

An informal survey conducted by consultant Lisa Starr in April this year highlighted the disparities in therapist salaries, benefits and pay packages around the world (see *Spa Business Handbook 2014* p88). The survey, which was based on 38 countries, showed that monthly salaries for therapists are as low as US\$116 in Vietnam and as high as US\$5,008 in Switzerland. Benefits differ greatly too. Beyond providing minimum wages, employers in most countries aren't required to offer any kind of benefit such as sick pay or paid holidays. As there's no single standard, does this give operators more power?

The variations are particularly noticeable in the US. The *2014 Spa & Wellness Compensation Trends Survey* by the US Day Spa Association shows that there are up to 10 different pay structures for therapists in the country. They range from a straight salary to an hourly variable or commission on services where workers get up to 50 per cent of the price of the treatments they perform. Commission can be 'creative', with employers controlling the structure and offering more or less to those who reach set benchmarks, such as high levels of repeat customers.

The recession led to increases in the number of part-time employees, especially in the US and the UK. In the US, there's been a marked shift from full-time employment, which is down 7.2 per cent, to part-time employment, which was up 13.2 per cent according to the *2013 ISPA US Spa Industry Study* (see SB13/4 p48). A large number of therapists in the country are independent contractors, on a 1099 contract, meaning



There are up to 10 different pay structures for therapists in the US

they pay full tax (rather than split this with an employer) and receive few benefits. Notably, the *2013 Trends* in the Hotel Spa Industry report by PKF* (see SB14/1 p62) showed that expenses/benefits for therapists in US hotels is 6.8 per cent less than other hotel employees.

In the UK, 1.4 million workers are employed on zero-hour contracts. Under these agreements, employees are obliged to be available for work on an on call basis with no guarantee of hours or other benefits. This is useful for spa operators who can have a pool of therapists on standby to help with last-minute bookings and some therapists prefer the flexibility. Yet for workers with mortgages and a family to support, unpredictable hours

and earnings offer little job security. It also makes it difficult for the operator to deliver a consistent service and does little to encourage staff loyalty, bringing the discussion back full circle.

We ask a number of industry representatives whether they think the non-structured way therapists are remunerated, and the rise in part-time/zero-hour employees, is cause for concern.



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There are two sides to the story here, as therapists do complain about wages, pay packages and working conditions – sometimes with validity, sometimes not.

There's no standard wage or way to pay therapists in the US and fluctuations may occur depending on where a spa is located, variations in prices, cost of living and demand. I'm not bothered by inconsistencies, just as I'm not bothered by the fact that it costs more to get a service in New York City or LA versus other cities.

However, this probably does leave the system open for abuse and I think this effects new therapists just out of training more. Most often a wage is paid in addition to commission/a percentage of the treatment price, in this case newbies may be at risk as consumers don't typically want an inexperienced therapist.

Some – but not all – cruise lines take on very young women right out of training and pay them little with the idea that they gain some experience and get to see the world. Few get to see the world as time off



MARY TABACCHI

Professor, Cornell University, USA

the ship is limited. Yet many spa directors have cut their teeth on cruise lines and interns in most fields – medicine, hospitality, food and beverage – are quite rightly paid less compared to a senior person who looks for better pay and benefits and moves on if the conditions are not good.

Few therapists are truly captive in a work situation. They're free to negotiate whether they want to be full-time or part-time employees, or whether they want to run their own business in addition to their full-time contract. Exact salary may not matter as much as proper benefits.

I've not seen the full PKF study which indicates that US hotel therapists receive poor benefits. In general, benefits may be low but I'd think that if a therapist takes home 40 per cent or more of the price a

treatment, plus gratuity, then it's hard to give them more – but you really need to hear the management side of this.

If employees sign a contract to work full-time and waive the right to run their own business, then they do deserve at least minimum healthcare and insurance. And if they're truly going to stay with the company for a number of years then stock options could be offered too.

Do the lack of standards mean that operators take advantage of staff? It's possible. But in all my years, I've never seen a good therapist who's not taken good care of.

Mary Tabacchi has been an active figure in the spa industry since the 1980s and created Cornell University's first spa-specific course. Details: www.cornell.edu

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This probably does leave the system open for abuse and I think this effects new therapists just out of training more

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For most therapists, zero-hour contracts do not offer financial security or commitment from the employer and there's little loyalty to ensure delivery of quality standards. They can, however, work for short-term cover provided it suits both parties.

On the rare occasion that we employ a person on a zero-hour contract – out of our 26 current therapists only one is on a zero-hour contract – it's offered when we don't have a guaranteed place in the team but want to give someone an opportunity to come on board. This can help the business in terms of sickness cover and last-minute bookings, but it's not something that works as a long-term commitment.

As soon as a new therapist has proven their value in the team, it's important they get all of our employee benefits and security of guaranteed hours.

We offer paid holiday, a pension where we match a therapists' 5 per cent contribution and statutory sick pay – monies for when people are off for lengths at a



LIZ HOLMES

Spa director, Rockliffe Hall, UK

time. We don't pay for sporadic sick days, instead we reward therapists up to £100 a month for good attendance.

In terms of guaranteed hours, 40 hours a week is standard, but we've found that some therapists prefer flexible or shorter hours – anything from 24 to 32 hours – so we fit in with what suits the individual.

I'm not aware of staff exploitation in UK spas, but it's interesting to look at it as part in terms of retention which is something that does need addressing. From an employers perspective, therapists tend to move round more than in other areas of hospitality. Our average therapist term is 15 months across both full-time and zero-hours and our strategy is to get that to two years. The goal is to focus on a

giving them a sense of achievement. We'll make sure they have the opportunity to train and will measure their progress so that we can give them recognition.

If employers want commitment, they need to commit themselves. Yes therapists are a transient group who only form a small part of the business, but if a company wants to be taken seriously, it needs a core group of dedicated people which it looks after too. It's a two-way relationship and unfortunately you're never going to get that with zero-hour contracts.

Liz Holmes manages a team of 60 staff at Rockliffe Hall. She's worked in the UK spa and fitness sector for 10 years. Details: www.rockliffehall.com

A recent *Entry Level Analysis Project* report shows that 40-50 per cent of massage school graduates leave the industry within two years of graduation. It says that: "Many factors contribute to this result including unrealistic expectations about the physical demands of massage work, compensation realities, and evolving life circumstances for 20-somethings"

Let's pick up on compensation realities. It's difficult to standardise pay in the US spa industry due to the broad scope of the spa category, the different price points and the experience of therapists required.

In addition, the way we pay therapists is all over the board. On the one extreme, employers may offer too little compensation and have a hard time retaining therapists, especially if the clientele is inconsistent. On the other hand, employers can actually commission themselves out of business by offering too much.

Historically, therapists have been independent contractors (on a 1099 contract) but in the last five years, some companies are converting them to employee status due to legal ramifications and IRS/tax



ERIC STEPHENSON

Director of education, imassage, USA

pressure. Advantages of independent contractors are autonomy, scheduling, pricing and specialisation. A big obstacle, however, is the ability to attract enough clientele to sustain a high enough income.

Overall, I think the lack of standards surrounding therapist pay does mean that operators can potentially take advantage of staff and lack of opportunities may force therapists into lower paid positions. But it's up to the individual practitioner to know their worth. A brand new therapist may not be able to command the same wage as a 10-year veteran. Yet a therapist with a long-view may choose to work in a spa at a lower compensation point if they're receiving training and experience and making connections that might further their career down the road.

In 2014, therapists who have a keen knowledge of the soft-skills required to be

a successful practitioner – in addition to excellent hands-on skills – will always be in high demand. Those who take an active role in attracting/retaining clientele will see increased financial compensation.

I do, however, think benefits need to be looked at in our country, because unless a therapist is working with a big corporation, most benefits are small-scale and only include things like free monthly spa services and product discounts. I'd like to see health/dental benefits, as well as a pension option, added. Currently, it's difficult for many therapists to support themselves, much less their families with the added costs of healthcare and childcare.

Imassage is a continuing education organisation. Stephenson has been an industry educator for 15 years. Details: www.imassageinc.com



I do think benefits need to be looked at in our country [the US]... I'd like to see health/dental benefits, as well as a pension option, added



Although we're now, sadly, in the closing phase of The Sanctuary, I feel I can provide some insight into employment standards – especially zero-hour contracts, having managed this famous UK destination spa and a team of up to 90 therapists for the last seven years.

At one stage we had around 30 therapists on zero-hour contracts. Having employees on call to come in only when necessary allows a spa to decrease salary to sales percentage and utilise therapist time effectively. It also gives therapists flexibility to work when it suits them, although we were also able to cancel shifts when bookings were lower than expected.

A year after I joined we began to phase out zero-hour contractors and opted for minimum contracts of at least one day a week. We did this for a number of reasons.

Firstly, we felt that as a number of staff would not book shifts for months at a time,



OLIVIA DAVIES

General manager at PZ Cussons – The Sanctuary, UK

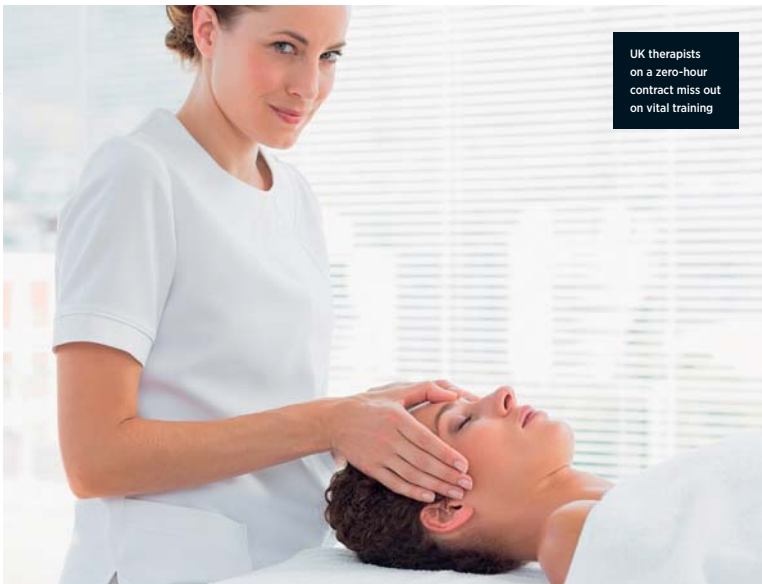
they were missing out on training offered and vital communication. This also meant that there was inconsistency in our own treatment standards which – because of the possible lack of contact with those on zero-hours – was challenging to address.

Secondly, having employees on zero-hour contracts affected loyalty. Over the period that we phased out zero-hour contracts, our annual staff turnover in the therapy team reduced by half. Although there were obviously additional factors and improvements that affected this.

Do I think there's a potential problem with staff exploitation in the UK concerning zero-hour contracts? Well, I think that

there are many businesses out there which are constantly looking for good therapists and that's the reason why there are alternative contracts. As long as businesses offer complete transparency on zero-hour terms of employment, therapists can make an informed decision on whether it's right for them. So I hope that exploitation would not be an issue.

Olivia Davies has been working in the UK spa industry for 20 years, including seven years at The Sanctuary, London. The Sanctuary closed in May, after 36 years in operation, to focus on its retail skincare business. Details: www.sanctuary.com



UK therapists
on a zero-hour
contract miss out
on vital training

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Moving therapists onto an independent employee contract means employers pay less labour costs... and are not eligible for taxes

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The inconsistency in therapist pay and pay structures, as highlighted in our 2014 *Spa & Wellness Compensation Survey*,

is cause for concern, especially since therapists move from facility to facility. What it comes down to is how does a spa owner pay fair and retain good people?

There are no written rules about fair pay, however, as it's determined by many factors such as market conditions, location – a therapist in Boston may be paid 10-30 per cent more than in Minneapolis, for example, and therapist experience – do they bring clients with them?

Is it fair to rely on commissions for pay? Sometimes life is not fair! I love commission structures and so do most spa owners. Great therapists sell a lot, make the most money and don't mind being paid a lower hourly fee as they get higher commission. Yet new team members can actually cost the business money until they build a customer following.



ALLAN SHARE

President, Day Spa Association, USA

I disagree that US therapists receive poor benefits. Our survey shows there are up to 13 types of benefits. More than 70 per cent of staff get free or discounted services and products, while 46.5 per cent get continuing education. Vacation/holiday benefit is received by 35.5 per cent of therapists and healthcare coverage by 31.2 per cent.

The biggest area for concern in light of the Obama Care programme – which impacts on healthcare costs and taxes – is that some companies are moving therapists off the payroll onto an independent employee contract (1099). This means they pay less labour costs as they only compensate employees for what they do. It

also means they're not eligible for taxes, as the therapist is effectively self-employed.

This can help facilities control costs but it doesn't make sense in the long-term as they'll lose loyalty to their business. The companies that pay a fair wage, have benefits and offer commission will have a healthier business in the long-run.

Share has been the president of the US Day Spa Association since 2010 and had been in the industry for more than 23 years. Details: www.dayspaassociation.com

● To view a copy of the 2014 *Spa & Wellness Compensation Survey* visit <http://lei.sr?a=s1V4O>

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the high life

From Armani to Versace, luxury brands are showing a growing interest in the spa sector. We showcase some of their top-class facilities

For luxury goods companies looking to extend their brands, creating a spa concept is an appealing move. Opening a branded wellness-focused facility is a tangible way for them to showcase what they have to offer to new audiences, and to provide existing customers with a lifestyle choice beyond their products.

Leisure Management, the sister magazine to *Spa Business*, recently highlighted how luxury brands are taking the hospitality arena by storm (see <http://lei.sr?a=j0j5j>). Here, we take a look at some of the most exclusive spa offers to date.

Guerlain

Maison Guerlain, the 100-year-old flagship store of the perfume, make-up and skincare brand, re-opened its doors in November 2013 following an extensive, nine-month renovation. Located on Champs-Élysées, Paris, the iconic Art Deco building has been home to L'Institut Guerlain spa since 1939 and it was here that the Guerlain massage method was born.

The refurbished spa is on the first floor and its interiors have been restyled by contemporary US architect Peter Marino using warm, light shades. The nine treatment rooms, featuring marble and onyx, all have beds by Gharieni and fabrics by RKF Luxury Linen. The spa is situated above a large skincare, make-up and perfume retail shop, a consultation area and a restaurant.

Guerlain has 18 spas worldwide in gateway cities such as New York and Tokyo. In 2012, it entered into a partnership with the Oetker Collection hotel group to develop its future spas. Guerlain-branded spas have also opened in four Waldorf Astoria hotels in Edinburgh, Berlin, Amsterdam and New York in the last two years.

The Guerlain company was founded in 1828 and ran as a family business up until 1994 when it was acquired by the luxury goods conglomerate M&S Hennessy Louis Vuitton (LVMH).

Givenchy and Cheval Blanc, two other LVMH subsidiaries, also have luxury branded spa facilities around the world. See p54 to read more about the latest Cheval Blanc Spa opening in the Maldives. ▶

L'Institut Guerlain spa, the birthplace of the Guerlain massage method, first opened in 1939. The new-look Parisian flagship relaunched in November





The interiors have been restyled using warm, light shades by Peter Marino, a modern US architect

Armani

Fashion house Armani has lent its name to three spas and Neil Howard, of UK-based Howard Consulting, helped to develop the concept, treatment menu and functional design of all of them.

The original Armani Spa opened in late 2007 at the 12-storey Armani megastore in Tokyo's Ginza Tower. This spa, Howard explains was the smallest. It had three unique domed treatments rooms which were built to accommodate Armani's signature 'east meets west' ceremony – comprising elements of shiatsu, Thai and acupressure therapies – and its facial and massage rituals.

In 2010, Armani's first spa, hotel and residences opened at the Burj Khalifa – the world's tallest building in Dubai's shopping district. The 160-bed hotel occupies 10 levels of the building and was created in a joint agreement between fashion designer Giorgio Armani and developer Emaar Properties. The 12,000sq ft (1,115sq m) Armani/Spa has a sleek, modern design and a monochromatic colour palette, perfectly emulating the haute couture clothing line.

It includes a reception and retail area, manicure room, two thermal suites and relaxation lounges for men and women, eight treatment rooms, an outdoor pool and a gym.

The long, ship-like space of the spa presented some challenges. "It was tricky, but Emaar looked at all the possible layouts to get the best – and most sensible – outcome," says Howard. The consultant worked with suppliers to create bespoke items



The Dubai spa is in the Burj Khalifa

including a shower walk with warm and cool mists by Thermarium; and a large treatment couch by Oakworks. Armani teamed up with L'Oréal to make its own-branded products.

For those who want to live the Armani lifestyle full time, 144 luxury residential apartments sit alongside the hotel.

The second Armani hotel opened in the fashion designer's home town of Milan in 2011. The Armani Hotel Milano has 95 bedrooms, two restaurants and a Armani/Spa with six treatment rooms, a double suite, a fitness room and a pool.

Howard concludes: "Meeting and presenting to a legend such as Giorgio Armani has been a highlight of my career. It was a privilege and I found him to be a gentleman and very agreeable."

To read our undercover report on the Armani/Spa in Dubai, see Spa Business, issue 3, 2011, p70.



“With Starwood Capital as the driving force, Baccarat is to open six hotels/residences with branded spa facilities created by Raison d'Etre”

Baccarat

Luxury crystal glassware manufacturer Baccarat is one of the latest high-end brands to enter the spa market.


Baccarat dates back to 1764, when King Louis XV of France authorised a glassworks business in the village of the same name. The company is a favourite of international royals and has collaborated with contemporary designers such as Philippe Starck. It was bought by investment firm Starwood Capital in 2005.

With Starwood as the driving force, Baccarat is to open six hotels/residences with branded spa facilities which have been created by spa consultancy Raison d'Etre. Baccarat has become famous for its innovative, beautiful crystal designs and attention to detail – and its commitment to perfection in both design and service will underpin the Baccarat Spa concept.

Two of the most significant spas will open in Morocco, Africa. The first, the 135-bed Baccarat Hotel Rabat, is due to open in 2016 and expected to boast one of the largest spas in the area. It will target local clients, via an exclusive membership, as well as hotel guests. Key facilities will include six Moroccan hammams (three for women, three for men) using semi precious stones – two cooler 35°C jade rooms, two warm 45°C amethyst rooms and two hot 55°C crystal chromotherapy rooms. There will also be eight treatment rooms, two VIP suites, an alchemy area, two pools, a beauty and hair salon, a spa retail area, and fitness and yoga studios.

The Baccarat Spa Resort in Marrakech will offer a destination spa on a 5-acre (2-hectare) estate with 60 villas. It's due to launch in 2016 and the spa "will stand out because of its all-encompassing wellness offering and results-orientated programmes". It will offer glamour, socialising, fun and relaxation.

Also in the pipeline are Baccarat Hotel & Residences New York (2014), Baccarat Resort & Residences Marrakech (2016) Baccarat Hotel & Residences Dubai Pearl (2018) and Baccarat Residences Shanghai (TBC).



Baccarat is famous for its beautiful crystal jewellery and chandeliers; it's teamed up with Raison d'Etre to create a spa concept (below)



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Dior

"I'm often disappointed with the quality of anti-ageing services and products [in spas]," said Caroline Baucher-Bouhlal, director of spas and marketing at the Es Saadi Gardens & Resort in Marrakech, Morocco in an interview with *Spa Business* (see SB11/2 p64). "When I created our new spa, I chose a leading anti-ageing brand. Having a [beauty] institute in a spa is quite new and it was an idea that seduced me."

The Dior Institut opened as part of the Es Saadi Palace Spa in 2010. An extension of the Christian Dior fashion brand, the beauty institute has three core elements: 3D massage, a massage said to be based on an in-depth knowledge of muscle fibres and energy circuits; micro-dermabrasion

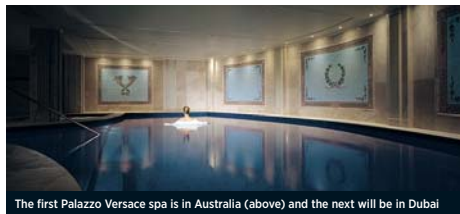


There are over 10 Dior beauty institutes, including one at the Es Saadi spa in Marrakech

with sapphire particles; and Dior anti-ageing skincare products. It has its own reception, two treatment rooms, a make up studio and an outdoor relaxation terrace.

One of the first Dior Instituts was unveiled in the historic Hotel Plaza Athénée in Paris in 2008 following a long association between the hotel and Christian Dior. The Maison Dior opened on the same street as the hotel in 1947 and the French designer was a big fan – he took his clients there for lunch and used the location for his photo shoots.

Dior Institut at Hotel Plaza Athénée has five treatment rooms, a fitness centre and a sauna and steamroom. Its pale, calming and luxurious interior echoes the design of Dior stores, with lots of white accented with hints of pale pink and grey.



The first Palazzo Versace spa is in Australia (above) and the next will be in Dubai

Versace

The widely anticipated opening of Dubai Palazzo Versace resort has been scheduled for the end of 2014.

The Italian design house revealed its first Palazzo Versace on Australia's Gold Coast in 2000, which it claimed was the world's first fashion-branded hotel.

The second Versace-branded resort in Dubai was due to follow in 2009, but has faced a number of set backs – despite being 80 per cent complete since 2010. In recent reports, however, developer Enshaa Services Group confirmed the AED2.3bn (US\$626m, €475m, £405m) Dubai Palazzo Versace will be ready by 2015.

Located in Dubai Creek, the resort will have 214 suites, 168 condominiums and a spa for

women and men, as well as a fitness studio, steamroom, sauna and pool.

The spa design will be influenced by the style of the fashion house and Italian furnishings will be used to create a "an ambience of pure glamour". The company's corporate logo – the Greek mythological figure Medusa – is expected to feature throughout, while a hotel boutique will offer Versace clothes, accessories and cosmetics.

There will also be an outdoor lagoon pool, beach and a marina-edge promenade.

Enshaa took control of the project in 2011 in a swap deal that saw Emirates Sunland Group take full ownership of the Gold Coast Versace hotel (it was previously only part-owner of the Australian facility).

Bulgari

In 2001, Italian jeweller Bulgari teamed up with Marriott International's Luxury Group to launch Bulgari Hotels & Resorts.

The first hotel opened in Milan in 2004 in a renovated 18th century palazzo. Guests in the 58 rooms and suites can visit the spa which offers ESPA treatments and has five treatment rooms, a gold-tiled pool and an emerald glass hammam.

This was followed in 2006 with a 59-villa resort in Bali, which also has a spa with ESPA treatments.

French luxury conglomerate LVMH acquired Bulgari in 2011 and became the owner of its hospitality arm. In 2012, Bulgari Hotel London was third five-star hotel to join the ranks. It features 85 rooms and suites, plus a two-story Bulgari Spa with 11 treatment rooms and one suite, plus a 25m mosaic tiled pool. ESPA was selected as the product house once more.

Two more Bulgari hotels are in the pipeline. A 120-bed property – featuring a 2,000sq m spa – by Foster + Partners is due to open in Shanghai in 2015, while another is planned for Dubai in 2018.

No stranger to working with luxury brands, ESPA also teamed up with Italian designer Gianfranco Ferré in 2003 to create a boutique spa – with three treatment rooms – for his flagship store in Milan.

To read our mystery shop features on both the Bulgari and Gianfranco Ferré spas in Milan, see *Spa Business*, issue 1, 2005, p46.



Bulgari, another luxury brand owned by LVMH, has hotels with spas in Bali (above) and the UK (below). Two more sites are also in the pipeline





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GAME CHANGER

A flurry of resort openings has bolstered the super-luxury end of the Maldivian tourism market – even attracting the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. We see how the newest destinations are setting the bar ever higher with their spas

When it comes to picture-postcard getaways, the Maldives instantly springs to mind. The stomping ground for royalty, affluent travellers, honeymooners and the sybaritically inclined, this nation of low-lying atolls spans 90,000sq m and beckons alluringly from the Indian Ocean. The 26 atolls comprise 1,196 islands, only 200 of which are inhabited. Just over half of these are home to resorts, the majority of which boast a spa.

Tourism is the largest industry here. In 2012 it accounted for 38 per cent of government revenue, clocking up receipts worth US\$1.9bn (€1.4bn, £1.1bn), according to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture. Tourist arrivals reached the million-plus milestone in 2013, representing an increase of 17.4 per cent over 2012. Forecasts suggest that 1.2 million people will visit in 2014, with Europe the largest regional feeder market. China is the single-biggest source country, however, generating 29.5 per cent of visitors. Still, speaking to tourism insiders, it's clear the Maldives is less concerned about growing numbers exponentially and more intent on targeting high-net-worth individuals.

Since resort guests represent a captive audience – most excursions are local, water-based activities and island hopping isn't common – operators expect a spa capture of at least 20 per cent. Yet this doesn't mean that there's not competition to boast the most refined spa. Heading to Noonu Atoll where two resorts have ushered in a new era of outsized luxury, we find out what makes them distinctive.



Service culture rules at Velaa Private Island, the most expensive resort in the Maldives

The neutral interiors of the spa help to emphasise the stunning outside setting



The site was chosen four months into its opening by Prince William and Kate Middleton for a quiet escape

Cheval Blanc Randheli

Cheval Blanc is the hospitality concept of Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton (LVMH), one of the biggest luxury goods conglomerates in the world. Its second site – chosen four months into its opening by the UK's Prince William and Kate Middleton for a quiet escape – has partly been responsible for the current buzz surrounding the Maldives. Along with its sister property in Courchevel, France, the new island complex is driven by the core values of LVMH and Cheval Blanc is evolving into a collection of intimate, exclusive and contemporary maisons. Additional hotels are already in development in Paris, Oman, Mexico and St Barth.

LVMH is a master of branding. Certain unifying elements therefore – including white décor, craftsmanship, the inclusion of a fine dining French restaurant (Le 1947), a personal service approach known as Art de Recevoir and a signature spa – form part of Cheval Blanc's DNA. It's a carefully considered proposition conceived largely with the European and Middle Eastern clientele in mind – the same group of people who already purchase their fashion, accessories and wines from LVMH. European flair certainly



Cheval Blanc is the hospitality concept of LVMH – one of the biggest luxury goods conglomerates in the world

runs through the silky, sleek design of the 45-villa Cheval Blanc Randheli – the work of architect Jean-Michel Gathy (see SB12/2 p64). Yet in some of the curvaceous lines, pops of colour and local decorative materials, the property does incorporate a touch of the exotic.

Set on its own dedicated island, the Cheval Blanc Spa combines six treatment villas overlooking a lagoon, plus generously proportioned changing rooms, steamrooms and plunge pools, a hair studio using Leonor Greyl products, a barber, yoga pavilion, Thai massage pavilion and an arrival building with its own pool and healthy spa bar. Light and airy, with high-vaulted ceilings, the spa's white and taupe colour aesthetic turns the attention outwards. Guests are welcome to while away time on this island retreat, ▶



- lounging in beach hammocks or by the pool and sampling the cuisine.

Leveraging a partnership with another of LVMH's brands, Guerlain treatments dominate the spa menu and include rituals exclusive to the property. The US\$300++ (€224, £178) Randheli Sun Ritual for example, comprises a scrub and enveloping oil massage to prepare the skin for tanning. General manager Renato W Chizzola says staff aim to personalise a sequence of events for guests – if they've been diving in the morning, staff suggest the After Diving Experience in the afternoon because it's designed to relieve muscle tension and improve circulation. Other ways in which the resort supports spa awareness

The spa has a Thai massage and yoga pavilion (top), plus six treatment rooms, while there are 45 resort villas (above)



is through the offer of a complimentary 20-minute Jet Lag Recovery massage to all guests at the start of their stay.

As with most luxury spas in the Maldives, there's no policy of discounting but staff, at their own discretion, can look after loyal guests by extending their treatment time. The two double Orchidée villas are reserved exclusively for visitors who wish to elevate their experience by paying slightly more for a treatment – US\$210++

(€157, £124) for a 60-minute massage versus US\$190++ (€142, £113) – in return for a hand and foot massage to top and tail the selected therapy.

Brand partnerships are at the heart of Cheval Blanc Randheli's proposition – Pucci and Hublot are two of the names stocked in the island's concept store – but there is the possibility to work outside the LVMH stable. The spa, for example, is looking to add an organic treatment line in keeping with the naturalness of the destination. "We do have the freedom to leverage brands within the LVMH group but also with other brands that we feel fit our values and our island destination," Chizzola concludes. ►

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Drawn from as far afield as Peru, the 16-strong Velaa spa team has been handpicked for its variety of treatment specialisms

Velaa Private Island

Developed around the core philosophy of providing the ultimate in privacy and variety, you could say that Velaa is an island of firsts. It claims to feature the biggest wine and champagne collection in east Asia, the only 'snow room' in the Maldives, a semi-submarine and the first four-storey tower constructed on a resort island. Guests are invited to ascend Tavaru tower's open-air elevator to privately dine on the top floor and drink in the views.

Owned by Czech entrepreneur Jiří Šmejce and his wife Radka, Velaa is the realisation of the couple's dream to develop a palatial home away from home in a destination they've often visited and fallen in love with. Persuaded by local hospitality specialist Mohamed Nihaj to transform their personal venture into an exclusive resort business instead, the Šmejces have gathered their own operational team to run the 45-villa, US\$215m (€157m, £128m) island. While ensuring an array of gastronomic and leisure diversions,

The customisable Spa My Blend By Clarins range is in keeping with the resort's focus on personalisation and uniqueness

the Šmejces have also placed emphasis on service culture. A total of 300 staff includes a small army of butlers assigned to each villa. All this, in combination with a bold, witty and coolly assertive design by Czech architect Petr Kolar, means that Velaa has opened with the highest rates in the Maldives: US\$1,500-US\$3,100 (€1,100-€2,260, £890-£1,890) for an entry-level pool villa, per night, dependent on season.

Velaa is also home to the first Spa My Blend By Clarins in Asia. The concept – selected by Radka – aligns with the resort-wide philosophy of personalisation and uniqueness. In addition to the customised facial therapies for which My Blend is renowned, the spa also offers seven My Blend wellness programmes designed around goals such as detox, vitality or relaxation. Spa director Becky

Wyton explains that her team is also primed to "entirely tailor programmes in line with the needs of individual guests."

Velaa receives many of its visitors from eastern Europe, Russia, China and the Middle East, typically staying at least a week. Recognising that travellers to the Maldives are also likely to be interested in holistic treatments, the spa menu incorporates rituals from Bali, Thailand, the Philippines and India.

Drawn internationally from as far afield as Peru, Australia and South Africa, the 16-strong spa team, including 10 therapists, has been handpicked for its variety of treatment specialisms. All members of the team were on-site four months prior to the resort opening in December 2013, and between January and March they collectively completed 1,100 hours of training. Wyton and other key members of the Velaa management team previously worked at Huvafen Fushi, the Maldivian hotel where the Šmejces holidayed for years. As such, there's notable camaraderie.

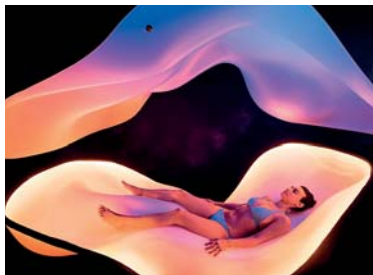
The spa already has a capture rate of 37 per cent and one well-known musician made 11 repeat visits to it during his two-week stay



The revenue per occupied treatment room is US\$200, a figure which is considerably higher than the local average



Velaa's snow room – the first in the Maldives – is part of the wellness offering at the resort and is effective in cooling sunburn



► Flanked by a juice bar and boutique, the entrance walkway, decorated with Asian bells marks the start of the spa journey, leading to six treatment villas – two singles, four doubles – all with dressing rooms and showers. Meranti wood and Jordanian stone offer a cooling respite from the heat but for those who desire a connection to the outdoors, the villas have floor to ceiling glass doors with two extending out to external terraces. Additionally portholes beneath the Gharienti treatment beds afford a direct line of sight to the lagoon below. The two single villas are equipped with internal wet facilities – a Klafs Sanospa massage tub in one and Klafs Sanotherm heated water treatment tub in the other.

The spa's two-storey oceanfront experience zone, including an open-air whirlpool, comprises some more unusual relaxation spaces. The sauna and steamrooms, for instance, can be coupled

There are six treatment villas in total (top); Klafs supplied the snow room (left) as well as the Cloud 9 multi-sensory pod (right)



with time in the Maldives' first snow cabin where drinking water is cooled to -15°C. For an altogether different therapy, the spa is also equipped with Klafs' Wolke 7 Cloud 9 – a multi-sensory cloud-like pod which uses vibration, colour and sound therapies to induce deep relaxation.

The resort's butlers are effective in highlighting the spa, dropping guests off for a tour and arranging treatments. Capture rate statistics are certainly healthy. In March, 37 per cent of resort guests had a treatment and Wyton also notes that the "spa's revenue per occupied room – well over US\$200 (£146, £119) – is considerably higher than the local average."

Velaa's reservations and revenue manager Sandeep Thekkil says the focus in year one is "less on driving resort occupancy, rather on perfecting the product and delivery of experiences." The spa seems to be playing its part – one gentleman who's well known in the music industry made 11 repeat visits during his two-week stay. In order to meet the discerning tastes of the travellers whose pockets are deep enough to afford a stay here, Velaa will need to continue setting these highest of standards. ●

To read a first-person experience of Velaa, and an interview with Clarins' spa development manager Morgan Lefrançois, see p62.



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MORGAN LEFRANÇOIS

Clarins' spa business development manager talks about Spa MyBlend at Velaa Private Island

Tell us about Clarins and Velaa

"The team at Velaa approached us during the construction phase to discuss Clarins' potential involvement with the resort.

"Velaa is a new business with no brand profile, so the owners, Jifi Šmejč and his wife Radka, were keen to partner with global brands such as Clarins and Troon/ Jose Maria Olazabal (who did the golf course) to ensure they give a clear message about their world class intentions."

What's the agreement?

"Clarins has signed an initial five-year contract with Velaa. The resort has exclusive rights to the Spa MyBlend by Clarins brand and this means no other spa in the Maldives can carry that line.

"We believe in long-term partnerships: we want to find the right spa partners and work closely with them and that kind of exclusivity enables them to benefit from the strength of our brand – if spa-goers can find us everywhere, our brand ceases to be a point of differentiation for them."



The over-water spa is open sky, with wooden walkways between treatment rooms



Lefrançois: The customisable Spa MyBlend line fitted Velaa's theme of 'Private Moments'

What role did you play?

"We were on-site 16 months before opening to work with the architect on treatment room design and functionality, develop treatment protocols and design the retail areas. Clarins is also providing assistance with management and hired and trained the team."

What's special about Velaa?

"The beauty of the island is breathtaking. You could spend hours gazing at the interplay of light between the sky and the sea – it's spectacular, even for the Maldives.

"The property has been exceptionally well designed, it's luxurious and fabulously appointed, yet not ostentatious – and it feels like a home away from home.

"It's also rare to find such a high quality of finishes in a resort in the Maldives, it's been meticulously constructed."

What are the standout elements?

"The genuine welcome and caring service provided by the staff: they're truly proud to be part of the team and look forward to doing their best. As a guest, you can

actually feel it [the caring approach].

I believe this is because Velaa is the product of one man's clear vision of how guests should feel at this level of service. Also, he's given the management the resources to be able to care for their staff, to respect them and motivate them in such a way that they do their best for guests. Respecting and caring for your people is a shared value between Clarins and Velaa."

What were the main challenges?

"Apart from logistics and construction challenges due to distance, the main one was finding the perfect spa director.

"The Maldives is a paradise to guests but not an easy life day to day. We needed someone with both island life experience and professional skills. Thanks to a strong network, we found them and are proud to have such an amazing team on board."

Why was Spa MyBlend chosen?

"Velaa's philosophy centres around creating 'Private Moments' for guests. Nothing is standardised, all can be customised.

"Spa MyBlend by Clarins is a great fit, as each treatment begins with a consultation, during which a personalised product is created to meet clients' individual needs.

"Velaa also wanted to leverage Clarins' powerful PR machine and we're working with them to bring travel, spa and beauty editors on familiarisation trips from target markets such as Russia, the Middle East, Asia and the UK, to get it on people's radar."

What's Clarins' strategy for MyBlend?

"MyBlend is an exclusive, elite concept. We believe guests going to Velaa might also go to other properties with MyBlend spas, such as the Royal Monceau in Paris, Ritz-Carlton in Toronto and Majestic Barrière in Cannes.

"We're working to develop a following for Spa MyBlend – a global club, if you like."



Velaa Private Island is one of a new breed of super-luxe resorts catering for guests who enjoy quality combined with informality

VELAA PRIVATE ISLAND

First-person: Liz Terry, editor, *Spa Business*

The sea plane circles before it lands, so you can see Velaa sitting like a jewel in the aquamarine ocean, fringed with white sand – as all tropical islands should be.

And as you step onto the jetty, with the sun setting in a golden ball behind you and the stingrays lazily drifting by, you abandon all thoughts of the outside world, closely followed by your shoes – the island's soft white sand paths and laid-back vibe make it easy to go barefoot for the entire visit.

The most relaxing thing about Velaa is how well things are done – the informality is juxtaposed with the highest standard in everything from the architectural finishes to the service: there's simply nothing that jars.

The resort is the most expensive in the Maldives and tips are given as a percentage, making it a magnet for those who want to earn well and are at the top of their game. As a result, Velaa has attracted some of the highest calibre people in the region.

Such is the luxuriousness of the island that our 'entry level' accommodation – at



US\$1,500-US\$3,100 (€1,100-€2,260, £890-£1,890) a night – has its own beach, infinity pool, outdoor dining cabana, indoor and outdoor bathrooms, private gardens, indoor and outdoor lounges, mini kitchen, vast bedroom and on-call butler.

Splash out on the next price band and you'll enjoy a private house with its own spa and gym, while top of the range is an over-water villa, accessed by boat, at US\$40,000 a night, with live-in butler and its own diving reef, complete with tropical fish.

Clearly, creating a spa to live up to an offer at this level was going to require careful thought and Velaa's owners, Czech banker Jiří Šmejc and his wife Radka, have wisely opted for a global brand with a high-end product line, choosing Spa MyBlend by Clarins – the customisable range. Clarins also helps to manage the spa.

The spa is housed in an over-water building with treatment rooms off wooden walkways. It has a beautiful Clarins shop and a juice bar, as well as a steamroom and a snow room, which turned out to be a

fabulous addition. Although I was sceptical at first, it's very healing and enjoyable to step into extreme cold in such a hot climate.

Challenges are few – the spa's Cloud 9 is housed in a rather plain room and would benefit from the addition of some theming and aromas to complete the experience, while the open-air design of the spa will present a few operational headaches in rare bad weather, but these are small matters.

The staff are relaxed and happy and you feel they're confident to let their personalities shine through. We had some very good treatments and a stiff wrist which had been troubling me for weeks was swiftly unlocked by the resident bodywork expert.

One room has an outdoor deck which has been so popular that when the resort closes for its low-season maintenance overhaul, more will be added, so each room has its own private over-water space.

With its Michelin starred restaurants, amazing wine cellar, immaculate Troon/Olazabal golf course, world class water-sports centre and Clarins spa, Velaa is one of a new breed of super-luxe resorts which are taking the industry to another level. ●

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The Thalasso Spa Lepa Vida in Sečovelje Salina Nature Park in Slovenia is an open air spa with a contemporary design



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTIAN BANTLED AND HELEN ABRAHAM

WELL SEASONED

natural resources
PART
2
natural resources

Sophie Bengé looks at how salt and herbs are used in spas in eastern and central Europe, a region that's attracting a growing number of wellness tourists

Natural resources have been pivotal to health culture in central and eastern Europe ever since they were discovered to have curative benefits – often by chance – over the centuries. A combination of aural knowledge, observation and rigorous study by scientists has led to a spectrum of treatments that both enhance a sense of wellbeing and cure chronic conditions.

This is appealing to the growing number of wellness tourists who show increasing scepticism for the drugs-and-knives approach of allopathic medicine in favour of more holistic options.

Last issue, *Spa Business* (see SB14/4 p22) looked at the role of naturally occurring gases in the region's health protocols. Here we give an overview of how salt and herbs are used for therapeutic purposes.

Pinch of salt

As the main food preservative in medieval Europe, salt literally kept people alive. More specific benefits were recorded in the 19th century when Polish physician Dr Feliks Boczkowski noted that miners in the world-famous Wieliczka salt mine near Kraków, Poland, never suffered lung complaints despite spending months below ground. Miners no longer work there, instead, the site has been converted into a tourist attraction and an underground health resort (see p72) which now welcomes up to 1 million visitors a year.

Because of its unique conditions, the salt mine has its own medical classification for 'subterraneanotherapy' which is acknowledged by the Polish Ministry of Health for the treatment of respiratory disorders.

Most evidence for the benefit of salt comes from studies carried out in the

1950s in the USSR. As a result, chambers which simulate the microclimate of natural salt caves are common in central and eastern European spas. Minuscule particles of salt are pumped into a chamber with a 40–60 per cent humidity and temperatures of 18–24°C. The rooms, with salt-encrusted walls and floors, feature reclining deckchairs. This therapy involves lying down and breathing deeply.

Inhaling saline moisture cleanses the airways by thinning the mucus and improving the function of cilia – microscopic hairs which filter out toxins like dust – in the respiratory tract. In addition, microelements from the salt clean the environment of airborne germs to also ease respiration.

Studies show that halotherapy ('halos' is Greek for salt) gives relief to people suffering from conditions such as asthma, bronchitis and chronic obstructive



Salt rooms, such as this one at Spa Vilnius in Lithuania, are a popular treatment for respiratory illnesses

THERAPY



Thalasso Spa Lepa Vida features a seawater pool, brine baths, massage salas and scrub cubicles

► pulmonary disease. A salt-rich atmosphere is also shown to soothe skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and acne and help with headaches, depression and stress, due to the release of negative ions.

A different kind of salt therapy forms the unique concept at Thalasso Spa Lepa Vida in Sečovlje Salina Nature Park in Slovenia. This open air spa, with a contemporary, minimal aesthetic, offers treatments using sea salt and its two by-products: fango (soft, salty clay) and a naturally occurring brine which is rich in sulphur, bromine, iodine and magnesium and 10 times denser than seawater.

The spa's seawater pool, Kneipp walks, brine baths, massage salas and scrub cubicles are spread over the salt pans in the Bay of Piran on the Adriatic, where salt-making dates back to the Middle Ages.

The mix of natural resources benefit a range of conditions. Bathing in thick, slimy brine makes the body buoyant and exerts pressure on the limbs which aids lymph drainage and encourages movement in the joints. The alkaline, sulphur-rich salt water and raw salt scrubs improve elasticity in the skin and boost metabolism, while the mineral, thermal and mechanical effects of the fango soothe inflammatory conditions and slow down degenerative change.



Salt water (above) and salt scrubs are used in many spas in central and eastern Europe

Medical herbalism in the region dates back to the Middle Ages and traditional knowledge is now be used in commercial ventures

Herb spa

Medical herbalism in Europe dates back to the Middle Ages when monks studied and grew medicinal herbs in monasteries. In central and eastern Europe, many people turn to herbs before allopathic medicine for anything from a tummy ache to a head-ache. Numerous self-styled herbalists use their intuition and knowledge of herbs to create a tincture for a cut, or a phyto-rich facemask for menopausal women, or to develop particular tea blends that people claim cure life-threatening conditions. ►

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A family herb garden in Slovenia where a knowledge of herbs for use in healthcare is still strong

► Today this knowledge is being used in commercial ventures. In the Baltics, where harsh winters and short, sun-filled summers make for powerful plant ingredients, Latvian skincare company Madara uses sap from local birch trees. The sap is rich in amino acids, proteins and enzymes that work like collagen to support the structure of the skin.

In rural Estonia, guests at Energia Farm, a herb spa, pick (according to the moon cycle), eat (a meal featuring 15 herbs) and use (in poultices in the sauna) the many species of herbs that are cultivated there. They stroll through relaxation- or aphrodisiac-themed herb trails and rest

A focus on the natural resources of central and eastern Europe forms part of an upcoming book, *Healing Sources, Spas and Wellbeing from the Baltic to the Black Sea*, which has been put together by writer Sophie Bengé and researcher Alla Sokolova. It will be published by Prestel in October. Details: www.thehealingsources.com



Lessons in tea blending: sage tea stops sweating, while thyme boosts sexual energy

on a bed of thyme. There are also lessons in tea blending and drinking: for example, the owners say sage tea stops sweating, while thyme tea stimulates sexual energy.

Smaller spas are creating treatments based on local produce. At the Etno Spa in Lithuania, beer baths are on the menu alongside wraps and scrubs incorporating poppy seeds, honey and ground amber. Further south, herbs that grow wild in the Rhodope mountains of Bulgaria are being picked, air-dried and blended by hand for Villa Gella Teas, a new brand that's being sold to the international spa market.

Wellness facilities & products

- Wieliczka Salt Mine Health Resort, Poland
www.kopalnia.pl
- Thalasso Spa Lepa Vida, Slovenia
www.thalassa-lepavida.si
- Energia Farm, Estonia
www.energiatalu.ee
- Villa Gella, Bulgaria
www.villagella.com
- Etno Spa at Romantic Boutique Hotel
www.etnospa.lt
- Madara skincare, Latvia
www.madaracosmetics.com

Visitors to this part of Europe sense an authentic affinity among local people for their land, which may have something to do with decades of flatlining economies and their countries relative isolation. While the region may be moving towards a fully fledged market economy, its traditional approach to healthcare is ahead of its time. What's long been practiced here as a matter of course is now piquing the interest of holistic health seekers everywhere. In other words, treatments using herbs and salt – among other natural resources – are just what today's wellness tourist is looking for. ►

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A step machine session (left) and 'respiratory gymnastics' class (right) provided a workout for the lungs



FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE:

SOPHIE BENGE

Getting 'high' at a spa sounds inappropriate, but my experience at the Wieliczka Salt Mine Resort gave me the giggles, not only because this spa is situated 150m below ground, but also because it's been developed within an old salt mine, where the air is so clean and naturally high in humidity and microelements – which stimulate the respiratory system – that I felt light-headed for the 11 hour duration of my stay.

During the travels for our book (see p70), photographer Christian, researcher Alla and I took a picnic and warm pyjamas for overnight therapy at the Polish health resort near Kraków. Essentially it was a sleepover in a rock salt chamber which felt like a 'natural inhaler in 3D'. We joined an exercise class, took part in a 20-minute step machine session, relaxed by a brine pool and ate our picnic before settling down for the night.

At first, the surroundings felt cavernously dark and eerily silent but, surprisingly, not claustrophobic because the atmosphere in the salt mine made breathing easier than normal. Most visitors to the resort come to relieve some kind of bronchial condition but we, being free from respiratory issues, felt supercharged by the natural conditions: a double hit for physical and mental harmony.

The 'respiratory gymnastics' class was a first for me. The 30-minute session involved blowing a fluffy pink feather between participants to keep it afloat; then we tried to keep a pinwheel spinning in the air with our breath. Once our lungs were working like bellows, we did group exercises with balls.

Following the exercise, we relaxed by the salty water fountain, wrapped up in blankets, to inhale the salty spray and climbed under several more blankets to sleep in the group dormitory, partitioned into cubicles. Interestingly, our sleeping quarters were converted stables once used by the horses that worked in the mine.

I don't know what the exact temperature was, but it was certainly a little nippy down there. But this didn't detract from a deep

sleep and memorable experience. The next morning, once back up on the surface, we felt clear-headed and full of energy.

Millions of tourists visit the actual mine each year – but those who come specifically for health purposes descend to the part of the site that's designated as a health resort. It is usual to spend several hours per day down there as part of a three-week treatment programme, prescribed by doctors. I can only imagine the results from these longer programmes given our sense of wellbeing after just 11 hours.



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Full steam ahead

The new Aqua Sana at Center Parcs Woburn Forest, UK, has 25 multi-sensory heat and wet experiences at the core of its offering and is reaping the benefits of its unique spa model. Katie Barnes finds out more



Don Camilleri was the construction director of the new £250m Center Parcs site

When I spoke with Don Camilleri, construction director for Center Parcs UK, in February, he said he'd be spending £1m a day for the four months running up to the opening of the company's new holiday village in Woburn Forest. It gives an indication of the scale of the project.

Ten years in the making, Center Parcs Woburn Forest opened in June after a £250m (US\$427.8m, €316.2m) investment from US owner, Blackstone and other banks. At full capacity the 625 lodges and 75-bed hotel, situated in a 362-acre (146-hectare) forest setting, will be able to accommodate 3,000 people.

The Woburn site is Center Parcs' fifth holiday village in the UK and all are popular

with families and groups of friends alike: last year average occupancy across the four sites was an astonishing 97.2 per cent. The new Woburn village features a whole roster of leisure activities - over 100 in fact - from pony trekking and watersports to a state of the art pool complex, and every type of sport. For those who want to escape the hubbub, however, there's the Aqua Sana spa.

Hot spot

Around £17.5m (US\$29.9m, €22.1m) was carved out of the budget for the Aqua Sana which spans 7,200sq m (77,500sq ft), but according to Camilleri the amount was never questioned, as spas are considered a valuable asset. Altogether, the four existing spas welcome more than 300,000 guests a year and contribute £15m



The 3,000sq m World of Spa hydrothermal area is the stand out feature of the new Aqua Sana. It has a large pool (far left) and 25 multi-sensory experiences which are brought to life with the latest technology and design



Altogether, the four existing [Center Parcs] spas welcome more than 300,000 guests a year and contribute £15m annually to the group's £300m revenue. Significantly, the turnover of the spas account for half of the monies generated from all leisure activities



spa business uniting the world of wellness



► (US\$25.6m, €19m) annually to the group's £300m (US\$509.1m, €378.7m) revenues. Significantly, the turnover of the spas accounts for half the monies generated from all leisure activities.

Spread over three floors, the Aqua Sana facilities at Woburn Forest include a bright airy reception with retail and manicure stations, a Vitalé Café Bar and 22 treatment rooms. For dedicated spa-goers, there are also six luxury spa suites with their own private lift to the spa. These – a first for Center Parcs – were designed by Sparstudio, the company responsible for the interiors of the hotel and the spa's dry areas.

The standout feature, however, is the World of Spa wet and thermal zone which boasts 25 multi-sensory experiences and a large outdoor pool. It's what Camilleri is most proud of because, quite simply, "there's nothing else like it" in the country.

The vast majority of spas are designed with a focus on revenue generating areas. Priority is usually given to treatment rooms, with a handful of heat experiences and a pool squeezed into the remaining space. Not so at Center Parcs. The company has turned this model on its head – and with phenomenal success.

Having a cutting-edge hydrothermal zone has been a key part of Center Parcs' Aqua Sana concept since the early 90s.

Aqua Sana Woburn Forest suppliers

Products: Elemis, Bliss, Decléor, CND and Mii tanning and make-up
Outdoor pool system: Barr + Wray
Heat experiences and wet spa design: Schletterer Consult
Interior design: Sparstudio (spa suites, hotel and dry spa areas)
Linens: Jermyn Street Designs (uniforms) and BC Software (robes and towels)
Lockers and wristbands: Ojmar and Salto
Software: ESP Leisure

Camilleri, who's worked for the company for 28 years, recalls: "Center Parcs was famous for its Sub-Tropical Swimming Paradise, but it wanted to continue evolving and the directors felt the growth of spa was going to be an important one. I was given the challenge to come up with the 'next big thing': to design an Aqua Sana that was going to be the best in Europe.

"My idea was to split it in two – to have the treatment rooms, and a new part, which is what we now call the World of Spa. The inspiration came from visiting the Epcot

The World of Spa is a social space which can accommodate up to 150 people. It's split up into six mini spa zones so there's always a quiet corner for those seeking solace

theme park in Florida with my kids. It showcased different cultural experiences – you can go to Morocco or France and walk around a lake. I thought I could do something like that in a spa with cultural flavours and a pool instead of a lake."

After many dead ends, Camilleri eventually found an Austrian-based wellness design and equipment manufacturer Schletterer Consult (see p78) to help turn his vision into a reality. The companies have worked together for the past 15 years and their latest World of Spa at Woburn Forest is the most impressive to date.

A world apart

Covering 3,000sq m (32,292sq ft) and spread over two floors, the World of Spa takes up just under half of the Aqua Sana building at Woburn Forest. Schletterer Consult designed the area and also supplied the 25 different multi-sensory experiences. The experiences have been grouped together in six different zones or 'mini spas' with four or five individual units – such as wet and dry heat experiences, rain walks and relaxation lounges. ►

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- In keeping with its setting overlooking the forest, each zone has been inspired by a different part of nature – Mineral & Gemstone, Salt and Sensory, Herbal, Blossom and Fire & Ice.

The latest technology and design has been used to bring the experiences alive. In the Sensory Experience, which makes its world debut at Woburn Forest, lighting effects, large screen projections and newly developed acoustic sequences and scents take customers through a journey of the four seasons (see p106). In autumn, for example, guests hear rustling leaves and feel a temperature change and damp mist on their skin while a sweet sharp scent of wild berries fills the room. In another first, the Mineral Room has crushed particles of healthy minerals – such as amethyst, magnesium, lithium and rose quartz – which infuse the air along with a refreshing lemongrass scent to energise the senses and calm the nerves.

"The one I really, really like is the [Himalayan] Salt Steam Room," says Camilleri. "We've had salt steamrooms before, but have never had actual salt crystals in them and I think it gives a much more intense feeling."



Half of the spa revenue comes from the World of Spa which features the Blossom Heat Room (below left); Aqua Meditation Room (left) and the Sensory Experiences (right)

CREATING THE WORLD OF SPA

"The challenge from Don [Camilleri] was to make the best spa in Europe," says Heinz Schletterer, owner of Schletterer Consult – the company which designed and equipped the hydrothermal area at the new Aqua Sana in Center Parcs Woburn Forest, UK. The area, called the World of Spa, features 25 multi-sensory heat and wet experiences.

"We sat down with our team of therapists, doctors, scientists, engineers and strategic planners/futurologists with the idea of creating new experiences to help people's health and prevent disease," says Schletterer, "as we saw that people wanted something more than just a pampering experience."

What the team came up with was a number of bespoke heat and sensory experiences including two world firsts – the Sensory Experience (see p106) and the



Heinz Schletterer

Mineral Room. Of the latter, Schletterer says: "Every six minutes a special mineral will be released – lithium is good for people who are run down, magnesium is good for the hair and the skin, for example, and we've combined these with aromatherapy and colour therapy while

screens in the room explain how all these elements help people with their health."

In total, it took two years to create and install the experiences, he says, adding: "We create new equipment for clients all of the time because if you always go for the traditional steam and sauna room then it's not unique. If you have something outstanding, the success is guaranteed."

"Center Parcs now has the latest level of healthiness [in the World of Spa]. From the ergonomic seats to the colours, everything is new and what they have is amazing."

The spa zones are accompanied by reflexology footbaths and an 18m outdoor pool with a terrace and Zen garden.

To help guests navigate the number of experiences, spa hosts greet people when they enter the World of Spa and talk them through the journey options. "The more you use it, the more you understand the ingredients and how to apply them to yourself," says Camilleri. "If you want something that's energetic you can try something that will really blast you out. If you're feeling tired and want to relax, then maybe you'll try the Sensory Experience and gently absorb the atmosphere before using the pool and the massage jets."

This is the first time the World of Spa has featured mini spa zones – at the other sites the heat and wet experiences sit around the perimeter of a large central area. Camilleri says: "I wondered whether splitting up the relaxation areas into small cocoons was the right thing to do. No matter how good your team is at sorting the [communal] guest area, it's difficult to manage a big space. Other more recent spas I'd seen on my travels had these pockets [groups of experiences], with anything from six, but no more than 15 people, in them and I thought it worked really well."

Splitting up the spa has another added bonus of delivering a more intimate spa.



Go to the cinema and have a snack and you spend £30, or go to a football match for two hours and you spend the same amount. We're charging £37 for a three hour World of Spa session so, by comparison, it sits very well and we're providing a much more exclusive product

The World of Spa is a social space which can accommodate up to 150 people at a time and groups of friends who go there may use the time to catch up, talk and relax together. But as there's a physical limit to how many people can use the mini spa zones, there's always a tranquil area for people in need of quieter corners.

New market generator

Of course, all of the equipment, water systems and technical requirements of the World of Spa, not to mention the sheer size of it, make it an expensive addition to the Aqua Sana. In total, it cost around £10m (US\$17.1m, €12.6m). But Camilleri says the

A stand in the Herbal Spa lets people smell and touch different herbs (top); Camilleri finds the Himalayan Salt Steam Room the most therapeutic experience (above)

figures stack up: "Half of our spa revenue comes from the World of Spa," adding that it's open to day spa visitors as well as on-site guests (see p80). Interestingly, a World of Spa session enables Center Parcs to add extra value to a spa day package too instead of offering a complimentary or discounted treatment.

"The World of Spa is also less labour intensive," says Camilleri. "Overall the Aqua Sana employs around 90 staff and

only a small percentage of them are required to run the World of Spa."

The World of Spa is more than just a revenue generator, however. It's a key differentiator for Center Parcs and it's opening the spa up to a number of new markets. The price of a spa treatment can be a barrier to entry, but the affordability of the World of Spa means it's attracting spa virgins - around half of the customers have never been to a spa before says Camilleri. "Go to the cinema and have a snack and you spend £30, or go to a football match for two hours and you spend the same amount. We're charging £37 [at entry level] for a three hour session so, by comparison, it



► sits very well and we're providing a much more exclusive and exotic product."

It's also helping to attract men, who make up 40 per cent of World of Spa customers. "I don't know whether it was a stroke of luck, but it's the single most successful ingredient we have to bring men into the business," says Camilleri. "They don't see it as a ladies-only place, they see it as an adult swimming area for men – almost a wet playground if you want to call it that. After a while they try out the saunas and the steamrooms and they love it. They then start getting curious about the smell or the temperature and

Forty per cent of spa-goers are male and Camilleri says the main reason they visit is because of the World of Spa

start asking questions. Once people ask questions, they're involved."

He adds that the World of Spa is even helping to drum up extra business for the resort itself. "The day spa visitors come in groups and many of them haven't been to a Center Parcs village before. They come because a friend's told them we have the best spa, but that's another opportunity for us to get people to cross the threshold and come to Center Parcs."

Never stop trying

Although the Aqua Sana has only just opened, Camilleri is already thinking about the future. As part of the second phase of development there's permission to build six more spa suites. "It's a very exciting move to bring in spa accommodation," he says. "I'm pleased that the spa suites have direct access to the spa, but I feel there's an opportunity for the hotel rooms to have a direct link too. Whatever product you have, you should never stop trying. You should continuously test it and make sure you are your best critic."

He adds: "We can't relax as we're always looking for new markets," and points to the steadily increasing corporate business as another potential avenue.

There's also a possibility to expand the spa into the adjacent woodland to include an outdoor spa, possibly with barefoot walkways. Camilleri concludes: "The overall goal is to keep innovating and making the spa better. But for now, we can say quite unashamedly that we have the best spa in the UK." ●

Read an interview with Center Parcs managing director Martin Dalby in our sister publication *Leisure Management*: <http://lei.sr?a=7Czh7>

SPA PRICES

ON-SITE GUESTS

Fifty-eight per cent of customers at Aqua Sana spas are on-site guests. They can book any à la carte treatment, where a 55-minute massage starts at £65 (US\$111, €82). Or they can experience the World of Spa through a number of packages.

The cheapest offer is a three-hour World of Spa week day session which costs £37 (US\$63, €47) per person and goes up to £42 (US\$72, €53) each at the weekend.

A full Spa Day for two people, from 9am-6pm, which includes lunch, costs £110 (US\$188, €139 in total).

DAY SPA VISITORS

Forty-two per cent of Aqua Sana spa customers are day spa visitors who currently have a choice of 15 spa packages. Once on-site they can book à la carte treatments too depending on availability.

The entry level package is the Spa Day which includes access

to the World of Spa from 9am-6pm, plus lunch, for £69 (US\$118, €87) per person.

For those who want to push the boat out, the Luxury Spa Break costs £249 (US\$424, €315) per person and includes an overnight stay in a spa suite, two full days' access to the World of Spa from 9am-9pm, a 55-minute face or body treatment each, lunch, breakfast and a £20 (US\$34, €25) evening meal voucher per person.



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There are over 20 professional skincare brands on QVC including ESPA, Décléor, Murad, Elemis (left) and Gatineau (right)

SCREEN STAR

Global TV shopping channel QVC is proving an effective way for professional product houses to boost revenue and increase footfall in spas. Katie Barnes takes a look behind the scenes

Selling professional products outside of a spa – whether in a department store, online or via the TV – has traditionally been frowned on. It's believed that customers don't get the necessary advice about the higher grade skincare and that retail is being taken away from operators.

However, brands which have made the leap into the world of TV shopping would argue otherwise. In an hour's slot, qualified therapists educate viewers about products and give treatment advice and guidance, with techniques demonstrated on a model. Customers can even call in with queries to be answered live on air.

Shopping channels can give a product brand exposure to a new audience – QVC is broadcast in six countries and 296 million homes – and can increase spa footfall by up to 20 per cent. Today there are over 20 professional brands on QVC including ESPA, Murad, Décléor, Jurlique, Perricone, Elemis, L'Occitane and Gatineau.

These companies are realising that consumers need to trust the brands they purchase, particularly products that are put on the face. Confidence is built through raising awareness and giving exposure via multiple platforms.

ABOUT QVC

QVC, a subsidiary of US media conglomerate Liberty Interactive, launched in North America in 1986 and expanded to the UK seven years later. Today shows are also aired in Germany, Italy, Japan and China, while France and is next on the list.

Each country is run as a separate entity, but in total QVC broadcasts to 296 million homes worldwide. Traditionally, purchases have been made via calls, but items can now also be bought via its website and smartphone apps and it has a presence on numerous social media platforms. In 2013, worldwide revenue stood at US\$8.6bn (€6.3bn, £5bn), up 1 per cent from the previous year, and US\$2.8bn (€2bn, £1.6bn) of that revenue came from its combined international territories.

Demographics of viewers are hard to pin down says Sarah Adam, a skincare buyer at QVC UK, but "they're a really savvy bunch, because QVC educates them about the products." She says they often ask "questions you need a therapist to answer" because they have sophisticated skincare routines, using a mix of separate cleansers, toners, serums, moisturisers and boosters for day and night, rather than just one or two products.

A brand will have around five to seven live shows a month (plus pre-recorded sessions) and these are scheduled for different days of the week at various times to ensure they're connecting with a cross section of people. According to Adam: "There's absolutely no science behind who watches what and when. Pay day [at the end of the month] doesn't make a difference and we're just as busy in January as we are at Christmas. It also depends what else is on TV – in the past, beauty brands have been up against Andy Murray's final at Wimbledon and the birth of the royal baby. Having a compelling product is what makes the biggest difference."

A live show comprises 57 selling minutes where a brand will feature three main, 20-minute offers. This fits in with typical viewing patterns, as people tend to switch channels on the hour and at 15-minute intervals.

The star of a show will be Today's Special Value (TSV) – a product or collection that's been created for QVC and sold at a very low price for one day. The TSV will still be sold after launch but at a higher price. Brands usually launch three to five TSVs a year. ●
Read on to find out how three leading spa product suppliers are using QVC.



A brand will have up to seven live shows a month and therapists are used to give advice



QVC is available in 296 million homes globally and revenues in 2013 stood at US\$8.6bn

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Guiding consumers on how to use products is key and QVC sees a spike in calls when it educates customers

ELEMIS

On 17 November last year, Elemis sold £4m (US\$6.9m, €5m) on its TSV over 28 hours, including eight hours of live shows. It's the best result Elemis has had in its 20 years on the channel. The six Piece Face & Body Indulgence Collection included a full size (290ml) Jasmine & Rose Milk Bath, a product launch for that day, along with five other Elemis hero items. The collection was sold for £39.96 (US\$67, €50) and was worth £120 (US\$201, €151) at full value. In total, 105,000 units were sold.

"We plan our TSVs up to 12 months in advance to maximise exposure and to economise on buying ingredients, packaging, freight and posting," says Kate Minty, Elemis' head of global TV commerce. "To be successful on QVC, you have to invest in personnel and stock and really plan for the long term."

But just how can Elemis afford to offer a deal with a such a big discount? "It's the volume of sale," says Minty. "QVC will commit to selling a certain number of units and it has the buying power to purchase thousands of products at a time."

Minty says here's no science in picking what product to include "because if you start doing that you'll [always] deliver the same thing and become predictable".



Elemis sold £4m on a special value deal in 2013 – its best result. Elemis presenter therapist Keeley Aydin (above) has a strong following

But QVC does expect vendors to deliver something unique. "Sometimes we'll develop special sizes or put a different combination of products in a collection," says Minty. Plus, there's usually only one full size product, so that customers are enticed to buy more when items run out.

Keeley Aydin, who's been presenting Elemis on QVC for 13 years – and a therapist for 21 years – says guiding viewers on how to use the products is key to selling. "We see a spike in calls when we educate customers," she says.

While there isn't a script, Aydin repeats key words and phrases throughout the

show including: 'British', 'spa brand', 'finest ingredients combined with the latest technology' and 'results driven'.

She may mention the opening of a new spa, or a map will indicate where Elemis facilities are – all of which helps to drive custom to bricks and mortar businesses too. There's clear evidence that footfall and sales at Elemis rise by 20 per cent whenever there's a show on QVC. "I have my own day spa in the UK and 80 per cent of my customers have come to me via QVC," says Aydin. "Sixty per cent of my turnover is from retail products. If I know there's a TSV coming up, I'll offer treatments that use products that weren't included in it to encourage more sales. There's no reason why other operators couldn't use QVC as a tool to increase revenue too."



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After the shows, the volume of customer calls trebles, with clients requesting the location of spas and salons and more product information



L'OCCITANE

"QVC allows for a great relationship between the buyer and the brand," says Shimon Kalichman, director of marketing and communications at L'Occitane. The consumer and professional product company (see SB12/4 p30) launched on QVC UK in 1999 and on QVC US just a year later. "The multi-channel operation gets our products onto the screens in 26.1 million UK homes and we benefit from its loyal, 1 million active customs [viewers who bought something in the last year]."

Kalichman adds that after a show, L'Occitane has more customers in its stores and website traffic goes up. "Viewers are curious about the featured products and want to physically try them or learn more about certain ranges online before making their purchase."

"Having worked with QVC for 15 years, we've built up a good understanding of what our customers like and that includes great service, good value offers and getting hold of new and exclusive products. They particularly love our hand creams – we've sold over 1 million 150ml Shea Butter Hand Creams alone on QVC."

Of course TSV collections, which always feature best-selling products and are great value for money, are a big hit for L'Occitane. One of its most successful was the Christmas 2013 kit containing eight products, one of which was a super-sized (500ml) shower product, in a QVC tote bag. L'Occitane offered three options of the TSV which sold for £44.97 (US\$75, €57) at a discount of 50 per cent. "One kit

L'Occitane reports more clients in its stores and an increase in web traffic after a QVC show (left); Andrew Bagley, head of Gatineau UK, is a regular presenter for the brand (right)

sold out at 11am, another at 2pm and the final one at 5pm," says Alexis Murdoch, who's been L'Occitane's presenter on QVC in the UK since it first aired.

She was broadcasting on the day of the Christmas special and says she stuck to her usual selling techniques. "L'Occitane is a joy to sell on air, as we have so many true stories. I tend to talk about my own personal experience with the products too."

"It's very important for us to show textures, demonstrate how the products behave on the skin and to describe the beautiful smells. It's quite tricky to do justice to our lovely fragrances on TV, so we also use a graphic of fragrance pyramids with images of ingredients which help to 'paint a scented picture'."

GATINEAU

"As a professional French skincare brand, we're understood and in demand in the UK and Italy which is why we have shows on QVC in those countries," says Kate John, the senior account director for Gatineau UK. The company's had shows on QVC UK for 18 years and the Christmas TSV alone accounts for 15-20 per cent of the company's total annual retail sales.

Last year, the 2013 TSV included two super sizes of an anti-ageing night elixir and handcream, plus a regenerating lift cream and lip care product in a large

bag. The total value of the products was £263.28 (US\$451, €330) and QVC sold it for just £59.88 (US\$103, €75).

Gatineau offers five TSVs a year on QVC, each of which include four or five items that have been specifically chosen to work as part of a skincare routine or to address a certain skincare need.

John adds: "QVC drives awareness of the brand. After the shows, the volume of customer calls trebles, with clients requesting the location of spas and salons and more product information."

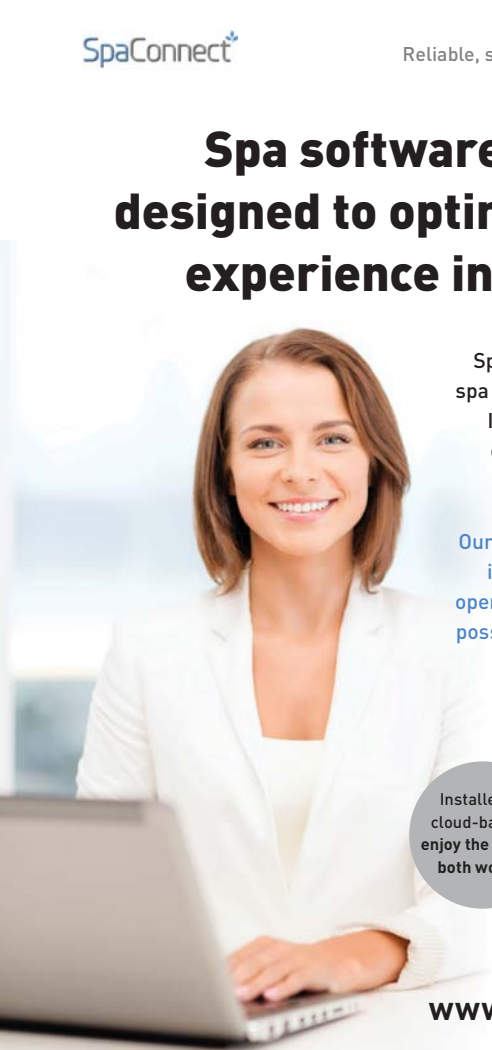
Show presenters include Andrew Bagley, head of Gatineau UK, and training director Michaela Taylor. "They position the story and heritage of our brand, explain our products, research, technology and ingredients," says John. "They demonstrate how to use the products and their effects on the skin, and also offer professional advice."

"QVC allows us to educate a really knowledgeable and savvy customer and to give a level of service and information that's not traditionally viable in retail. The QVC customer is very engaged, meaning that we get frequent feedback which allows us to focus on their needs and, in turn, helps us to plan for future success." ●



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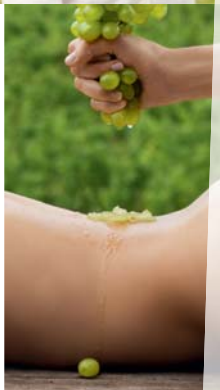
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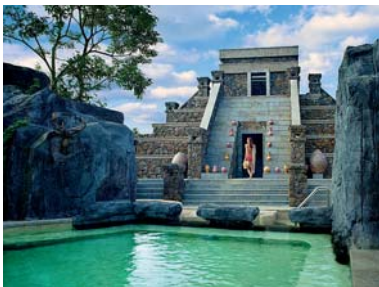
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MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Are golf and wellness the perfect partners? Jennifer Harbottle visits China's Mission Hills Haikou, which has one of the world's largest golf club facilities and biggest spa and mineral springs, to find out how the two are clubbing together





There are 168 hot and cold mineral spring pools which feature natural volcanic waters (left); the springs are themed around five continents including America with its Amazonian Mayan architecture (top left) and Asia and with Cambodia's Angkor Watt temple complex (top right)

Mission Hills Haikou in south China has 10 golf courses and is part of the largest golf club facility in the world. Tiger Woods competes there, it hosted the 2014 World Ladies Championship and stars like Matthew McConaughey and footballer Ronaldo stay to play in celebrity matches.

If golf's not your thing, chances are you haven't heard of it, yet Mission Hills Haikou also boasts one of the world's largest spa and mineral springs. With 168 natural, mineral pools and a staggering 90 treatment rooms, including 29 in-villa spa treatment suites, the 88,000sq m (947,222sq ft) wellness component is quite astonishing. Despite the challenges of operating something so big, the spa team delivers a personable experience and also reports healthy profits. So how does it do it?

TEERING OFF

The Mission Hills Group is a family-owned hospitality business with three integrated leisure and wellness resorts in China. Each of its developments in Shenzhen, Dongguan

and Haikou share the same model; a five-star resort, a spa, a number of golf courses and high-end luxury housing.

Originally from Hong Kong, the Chu family that owns the Mission Hills Group made its money in the paper carton business, before investing in golf courses in Shenzhen and Dongguan in 1992, which they developed into leisure destination resorts. In 2008, they bought cheap volcanic land in Haikou on the southern Chinese island of Hainan to create a resort. Two things happened next which turned Mission Hills Haikou from another golf leisure property, into a behemoth world-class wellness facility unlike anything else in China.

Firstly, surveyors discovered previously undetected volcanic mineral springs 800m below ground. The Beijing Health Lab tested the water and declared its high quality of minerals excellent for bathing. At this point, Mission Hills Group decided to make the volcanic springs a major feature of the resort.



Peggy Liong, group executive director

At the same time, the chairman of the company became ill and he grew increasingly interested in alternative ways to combat his bad health. He became great champion of the wellness component of Haikou and embraced the ambitious plans of Peggy Liong, the group executive director for all three

Mission Hills properties, to develop the volcanic springs into its own attraction. Tragically, the chairman passed away before the property was complete but his son has taken over and remains equally committed to offering world-class wellness facilities at the heart of the resort.

STAND-OUT SPA DESIGN

Aside from the top notch golf facilities, Mission Hills Haikou has a 539-bed hotel on-site. Included in the guestrooms are 28 spa villas and one four-bedroom spa mansion complete with its own treatment room and spa butler service.

Next door to the hotel in its own building, is the 24,000sq m (258,334sq ft) ▶

MINERAL SPA: MISSION HILLS HAIKOU



Mission Hills Haikou covers 40sq km and its mineral springs attract up to 20,000 in Chinese New Year holiday alone



spa business uniting the world of wellness



EDSA and SB Architects, both from the USA, are responsible for the impressive spa design (top); hotel guests can use the volcanic mineral springs (above) for free, while day visitors who mostly come at the weekend pay between US\$32-US\$64

► Mission Hills Spa which aims to attract people of all demographics – as well as sports massages and pampering treatments for golf enthusiasts and their partners, there's a menu for 10 to 15-year-olds. Spa facilities include a café, hair and nail salon, reading lounge, boutique, hydrotherapy zone, a mind-body exercise pavilion and a spa ritual garden. In the garden, you can take a lava springs journey, which is included in the cost of your treatment and get a taster of the mineral waters. The journey takes approximately 1.5 hours and includes sessions in a mineral mud amphitheatre, steam dome, a mist shower, aromatic scented tunnel and a mineral springs bath. The journey ends at the Elements Bar, where you can chill out with a selection of organic drinks.

One of the stand-out things about this spa is its design, which is a joint effort between EDSA and SB Architects, based in the USA. Its high ceiling is resplendent in hand-crafted bamboo and despite the three floors of winged corridors needed to house its 39 single and 22 double

Mission Hills Haikou

Facts & figures

- The hotel and spa are run in-house by Mission Hills.
- Aromatherapy Associates (UK), Algoterm (France), Aqua Spa and I plus Q (Thailand) are the product houses used at Mission Hills
- A ratio of 70:30 hotel to day guests use the spa and 65 per cent of all guests who stay in the hotel book a spa treatment
- By contrast, the mineral springs are 50:50 hotel to day guests, although at weekend locals make up 70 per cent of the visitors

treatment rooms, the spa is cosy and welcoming – thanks mainly to Liong's keen eye for vintage Chinese trinkets and homely furniture. Stylish, traditionally-painted lamps create snug nooks, yet big open doorways at the spa's entrance let

in fresh air – the spa is intimate without being intimidating. From a business perspective, Liong says this fresh outside-in design also means there's no need for air conditioning in summer.

There are over 25 treatments at the spa. Liong says some local Chinese elements such as a bamboo massage are deliberately included, "because the Chinese have generally lost touch with their spa culture." She hopes to bring it back in a unique way, avoiding the temptation to copy menus by international brands: "It's so easy to replicate here in China so this [local element] sets us apart."

The volcanic mineral springs, which are themed around five continents of the world, are reached by taking a buggy to the far side of the property. Hotel guests can use the springs for free, whereas day visitors pay CNY198 (US\$32, €23, £19) to enter one continent or CNY398 (US\$64, €46, £38) to use all five. The 168 hot and cold pools and adjoining aquatic park feel more like a theme park than a wellness facility. But it's not gimmicky. ►



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CLARINS

spa business uniting the world of wellness

Hotel occupancy is at 60 per cent and since 2010, spa revenue has increased by 100 per cent as more Chinese people become educated about the benefits of wellness

- ▶ Each part of the springs is designed around a different culture – Europe, Asia, Oceania, America and Africa – with associated therapeutic herbs, spices and colours used in the pools. In Asia, the spice-infused springs are surrounded by rockwork that's themed to look like Cambodia's Angkor Watt, while in Africa, The Great Sphinx of Giza creates an impressive entrance to a Turkish hammam. There are fun things for children too, such as a mineral play pool and wave machine in the European Roman bath house. Liong explains that doing things as a family is extremely important to Chinese people and many come after work to bathe as the springs are open from 1pm to 1am.

FROM THE HEART

The springs attract up to 20,000 visitors during the Chinese New Year holidays and running a busy facility has its challenges, not least because most Chinese people – who make up 80 per cent of business – aren't familiar with public bathing and consider it normal to eat and let children urinate in the pools. "We've created theme park-inspired signage



Chinese people, who make up 80 per cent of business, are very family orientated

throughout to educate people on how to use the pools," explains Liong. "We also have 120 service attendants at the springs to make sure they're used properly and cleaned regularly." Liong, who oversees the 300 staff at the spa and springs facility, says the chairman and his board expect nothing less than exceptional standards. "We're very much a Chinese company, but we operate as an international brand with international standards."

Currently, hotel occupancy is at 60 per cent and since 2010, revenue at the spa has increased by 100 per cent. Liong believes this is because people from China are becoming more educated about the benefits of wellness, as are people from

Korea, Singapore and Australia who make up the majority of international visitors.

Another USP is that as Mission Hills Group is a family run business, decisions get made quickly and come from the heart. And it's perfected the art of running a big operation as though it's a boutique hotel. Liong recalls the day last year when they found out retired Chinese basketball player Yao Ming was coming to play a celebrity golf match. To accommodate his 7-foot, 6-inch frame, they modified a golf buggy, had longer clubs made and even installed a brand new lift tall enough to take him in his room with a custom-made extra long bed.

For her part, Liong is humble about her own achievements. However, her vision and passion shine through in everything she does, testament to the fact she's been in charge of the group's wellness for all three facilities since the start.

She also manages to combine a serious approach to offering a world-class wellness experience with a sense of family and fun at its heart. "The resort is designed to be enjoyed by the whole family," she explains. "It doesn't feel like a golf resort with things to do for the wife and family as an adjunct. We always say our competitor isn't another golf and spa resort, it's Disneyland and that's what we are trying to create; a place where the whole family can embrace fun and wellness together." ●

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New developments

In 2015, three new leisure developments covering 435 acres (176 hectares) will open next to Mission Hills Haikou. A low carbon footprint town is being built in collaboration with Marriott next to the existing site, while there will also be a leisure, shopping dining and cultural destination in partnership with entertainment brand Lan Kwai Fong.

Five minutes down the road, Mission Hills is creating a movie town with two of the biggest names in the Chinese film industry – director Feng Xiaogang and the Huayi Brothers Media Group. The project is set to include the world's largest movie studios alongside cinema, dining and 24-hour shopping attractions.



Three more elements will open next year

There will be six hotels across the developments including a Ritz-Carlton, a Renaissance and China's first Hard Rock Hotel. Liong says that although the Ritz-Carlton and Renaissance hotels will have small 1,000sq m spas, the increase in guests will feed into the Mission Hills spa and springs and will help it to grow its customer base.

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COOL CUSTOMER

Vasper, a hi-tech training system based on cooling and compression, has been designed to deliver the benefits of anaerobic exercise without the high intensity effort



PHOTO: CODY PICKENS

US Olympic triple jumper
Erica Ashley McLain used
Vasper for rehabilitation
following a serious injury

With more science coming into the world of exercise, and consumers tuning into the importance of lifestyle and health choices, savvy spa operators should make sure their fitness offering is up to date.

One of the latest pieces of cutting-edge equipment that's grabbing the attention of NASA and Olympic athletes is Vasper – the name stands for vascular performance – which uses cooling and compression systems to accelerate the activation of fast twitch muscles, placing them in an anaerobic state without the normal wear and tear associated with a longer workout.

But it's not just for astronauts and elite sportspeople. Vasper has been created to optimise the health of any user at any level of fitness. So just how does it do this?

HOW IT WORKS

Designed by Peter Wasowski, an entrepreneur from Hawaii, the Vasper workout consists of a 20-minute intensive interval fitness programme, tailored to people's abilities, on a recumbent bike. Sounds normal so far... but there are two hi-tech features that make all the difference.

● **Compression.** Patented Vasper technology includes compression cuffs filled with cool liquid. According to Wasowski: "The cuffs place gentle pressure on the muscles of the upper arms and thighs to activate the fast twitch muscles and place them in an anaerobic state which, in turn, increases lactic acid. The build-up of lactic acid pushes the brain into a rebuild and recovery state, so it cranks up the production of anabolic hormones such as human growth hormones (hGH) and testosterone."

These extra biochemicals help build muscle tissue, as well as being responsible for other benefits associated with intense anaerobic exercise, such as fat loss, increased muscle growth, restful sleep, greater energy and an enhanced sense of wellbeing.

● **Core body cooling.** As well as the cuffs, the Vasper system includes a cooling vest, copper footplates and helmet. These are filled with chilled liquid to keep the body's core temperature lower during exercise. Clients can push themselves a lot harder without sweating. It also means that fatigue is less likely to set in – as it does



Vasper inventor Peter Wasowski

Anaerobic exercise is only possible through weightlifting or high intensity interval training which many people either can't or don't want to do

when the body's temperature rises – and strength, endurance and cognitive functions don't deteriorate as rapidly, if at all.

After the exercise, users rest for 10 minutes on a liquid-cooled mat to flush out lactic acid, lessen fatigue and further maximise the benefits of the workout.

THE BENEFITS

Wasowski says the Vasper system has "been designed to reproduce the effect of a high-intensity anaerobic training session, but with less effort and physical damage."

He adds: "Anaerobic exercise is traditionally only possible through heavy weightlifting or high-intensity interval training, which many people either can't perform or don't want to."

Other media claim that the 20-minute programme gives the benefit of a two-hour workout, but Wasowski will not confirm this. What he does say is that: "Vasper provides easier access to these anaerobic benefits to anyone, regardless of their physical ability or age."

He adds that the system should be used to complement existing workouts rather than replacing them.

UPTAKE TO DATE

For the moment, members of the public can only try Vasper at its offices in Silicon Valley, California and Hawaii, USA. Prices for a 30-minute session start at US\$35 (£26, £21), but a number of different packages and memberships are available. Once funding has been raised, the idea is to roll out the system to rehabilitation centres and corporate clients.

The company's corporate clients include Google, which installed Vasper at its California headquarters in May. It's also being trialled by number of athletes who've written testimonials on the Vasper website.

Patrick Marleau, the star of the San Jose Sharks ice hockey team, says: "Within 20 minutes of my first use, I had the endorphin rush that you usually only achieve after a much longer workout. It helps with my recoveries after strenuous workouts... When I do Vasper before my workouts, I have some of the best workouts. I can maybe compare it to a runner's high."

Another advocate is US Olympic triple jumper Erica Ashley McLain (pictured), who used Vasper after a serious injury. She says: "I was told I'd never run again. A year later, I posted the top triple jump distance in the US. I feel confident that adding Vasper to my standard rehabilitation programme helped me beat the odds of my injury and helped me recover faster than any of my doctors expected."

In 2011, Vasper also signed a three-year agreement with NASA. Astronauts have to exercise for a least four hours a day in space to prevent muscle and bone loss, and NASA is interested in seeing how Vasper might reduce these workout time.

Dr Jeffrey Smith at the NASA Ames Research Center told *CBS San Francisco*: "We're not here to endorse them [Vasper], but we want to understand what they're doing, how it's scientifically possible, and what the potential of this technology might be for NASA." ●



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SPA SOFTWARE

OPERATOR CASE STUDIES PART THREE

We take a look at how spas around the world are using software to boost their business, and highlight some of the latest launches



Magcalas (left) picked ManageMySpa for its mobile functionality and management capabilities

High praise for ManageMySpa in the Philippines

A desire to work with a single software provider influenced Blue Water Capitol's decision to select ManageMySpa.

The day spa and medi-spa – which is located in Manila, the Philippines and caters to a high-end market – has been using the software since 2013. Owner Kristoffer Magcalas says that he picked ManageMySpa because of its mobile functionality, marketing tools and management capabilities.

Its booking app has been popular and Magcalas says more than 75 per cent of the spa's regular clientele now uses it to make appointments. He's also impressed with the marketing tools: "With more than 8,000 customers, I'm able to easily filter the database to create targeted promotions. I'm not limited to event-based or seasonal promotions any more and I no longer have to hire a marketing agency."

As a direct result, it's helped to "boost membership sales significantly" – spa memberships now account for 30 per cent of revenue.

ManageMySpa has also helped operations at Blue Water Capitol. "They went beyond scheduling and billing, with modules that integrated employee management, marketing and inventory," says Magcalas, adding that he no longer needs to use Excel for stock checks. That's because the inventory feature integrates with the rest of the software, so that stock levels are updated in real-time when retail and services are sold.

On top of that, ManageMySpa provides essential tracking tools for spa managers. "I personally find the mobile app for managers useful because it gives a straightforward view of what's happening in my spa on a day to day basis. So, even if I'm not at the facility, I know whether things are on track," says Magcalas.

Overall he feels that ManageMySpa is "critical to my spa operation and it helps me maintain high customer satisfaction and better utilise my staff."

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



The day spa has had particular success with Shortcuts' gift card system

Spa Leamington's SMART move with Shortcuts

When Mark Phillpot bought The Spa Leamington UK day spa four years ago he inherited Shortcuts software, but quickly saw its benefits.

As well as being a comprehensive point of sale solution, the Shortcuts system has a range of SMART online 'add on' products which Phillpot uses. The integrated products allow him to check client feedback, compare parts of the business against industry benchmarks and monitor online booking.

GiftME is one particular product that's driven new business says Phillpot. The fully-integrated, online gift card provides merchandisable cards which can be processed online, in real-time. The Shortcuts software enables cross-promotion of the cards in emails, and the spa had £15,000 (US\$25,520, €18,840) worth of gift card sales in December 2013. Being an integrated solution, Shortcuts can also track the sales of products such as GiftME, which is useful for reporting and security.

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



Mark Phillpot



Wellness Arena plans and manages a number of hotel spas in Japan

The company creates customised spa treatments, which frequently change... it needed a software system capable of dealing with complex and changeable services



Takako Kajikawa

Japanese consultancy selects Paradigm Shift

Wellness Arena, which deals with the planning and management of a number of hotel spas in Japan, selected Paradigm Shift's SpaConnect software because of the detailed insights it gives into spa operations.

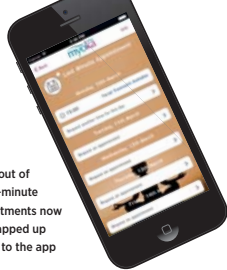
"SpaConnect is very efficient in handling the day-to-day spa operations," says Wellness Arena president Takako Kajikawa, adding that the software has helped it to improve revenue while also boosting business.

She explains that by using SpaConnect's multiple analytical tools, Wellness Arena has been able to identify its best-selling treatments and treatment room occupancy. Armed with this data and other comprehensive reports from SpaConnect, the company has been able to focus its operations and improve its service.

Wellness Arena manages hotel spas across Japan for independent operators and high-end companies such as InterContinental. Its planning and management team consists of experts in design, medical care, exercise, hospitality, food and agriculture. Together they create customised spa treatments and programmes, which frequently change according to seasons and trends. As such, the company needed a software system capable of dealing with complex and changeable services.

Kajikawa explains that SpaConnect marries up treatment room specifications and therapist skills to determine when and where to schedule some of the more in-depth services. She finds this function "is most helpful, especially during busy periods."

Spa-kit.net keyword: Paradigm



Seven out of 10 last-minute appointments now get snapped up thanks to the app

Filling in the Gappt at Myoka Spas

Myoka Spas, which runs spas in four luxury hotels in Malta, has signed a deal with mobile marketing specialist Gappt to help it fill spare time slots and deal with cancellations effectively.

Gappt's service gives operators access to a cloud-based publishing and communication platform which they can use to send out details about last-minute appointments and promotions directly to their customers via the Myoka-branded mobile app, rather than third-party channels.

"The app is visually attractive, practical and spa customers – due to their busy lifestyle – can use it to see any last-minute availability or deals," says Anna Hanmore, marketing manager at Myoka Spas. "It's a great way to attract more hotel and non-hotel guests to our spas."

Hanmore sees Gappt as a way of communicating with Myoka's target audience "cheaply and effectively", and notes that it also avoids over exposing special deals. As a result, Myoka can focus "all its energies on our existing database and marketing to high repeat customers".

She's particularly impressed with Gappt's push notifications feature, which updates customers with information that they have opted in for. "This is very useful in our line of business as we often have last minute offers which need to be advertised that same day," says Hanmore.

After two months, Myoka has already seen a direct result from implementing the app. Seven out of 10 last-minute availability gaps it publishes on Gappt now get snapped up.

Hanmore says customers find it easy to use and also feel the spa delivers a higher level of service because of it. "If they're in their hotel room and wondering if there are any last-minute treatments available, they can simply check the app or subscribe to push notifications for particular treatments, and request an appointment."

Spa-kit.net keyword: Gappt

TECH TALK

The latest spa software innovations, deals and developments



Improvements free-up storage and help speed-up the system

Database and invoicing upgrades for SpaSoft

The latest version of SpaSoft (3.5.0.0) now has an historical database structure for booking and point of sale modules. This enables properties with large databases to move old information from the main system to free up storage and speed up the system. However, the data will still be readily accessible.

Another new feature is a multi-business centre invoice numbering module. This allows spas with mixed ownership or remote locations to separately track point of sale documents.

The 3.5.0.0 release also includes new interfaces including RunIT POS Inventory Control and an inventory interface from Adaco.

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



Bliss is one of the first spa operators to use Book4Time's booking app

Book4Time launches mobile booking app

Book4Time has created a booking app for iPhones and plans to launch an Android version this month. Bliss Spas is one of the first operators to sign up for it.

The app can be customised with logos, images and wording and Roger Sholanki, the CEO and founder of Book4Time feels this will help to create a lasting connection.

The app pulls from a spa's existing client database, which gives customers access to their purchase history and preferred therapists. In addition, the app includes an integrated content management system so spas can send quick updates and push promotions directly to their clients.

Spa-kit.net keyword: **Book4Time**

ResortSuite launches tablet-based check-in app

ResortSuite has released a tablet-based check-in application. Called ResortSuite SPA Check-In, it's designed to streamline the first step of the spa journey for both guest and staff. It enables staff members to check a guest in efficiently from an arrivals list and view details about them and their services. It then

The aim is to streamline the first step of the spa journey for both guests and staff

allows staff to switch to a Guest Mode and hand the tablet over to the guest where they can complete an intake form and questionnaire. Itinerary and

service details can also be viewed. The app, which is part of the ResortSuite Operations framework, synchronises with the SPA (Services, Programs, Activities) module for up-to-date schedules and guest preferences and alerts.

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



Infor will integrate with SpaBooker software

SpaBooker partners with hospitality software vendor

SpaBooker, the spa management software company, has announced a tie-up with hospitality system supplier Infor.

Under the agreement, Infor will integrate SpaBooker software into its Hospitality Management Solution (HMS), which is aimed at hotels and has more than 70,000 customers. The integrated solution is purchased directly from Infor.

SpaBooker's cloud-based platform offers online booking using desktop, mobile and tablet devices. It also features scheduling, reporting and other spa management tools.

In other news, SpaBooker has signed strategic deals with search and mapping websites Yelp and MapQuest. Both deals are designed to enable spa operators using the SpaBooker system to be more 'discoverable' and bookable by consumers.

Spa-kit.net keywords: **Spa Booker**

Shiji to sell CSS in China

Concept Software Systems' (CSS) products are to be sold across China following an agreement with the Shiji Corporation.

Under the contract, Shiji Information Technology will market and sell CSS' software - which includes the Concept Spa & Leisure System - in the country.

CSS and Shiji have previously worked together to supply Chinese hotel chains such as Peninsula, Shangri-La and Langham. Additionally, CSS products are already translated into the Chinese language.

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



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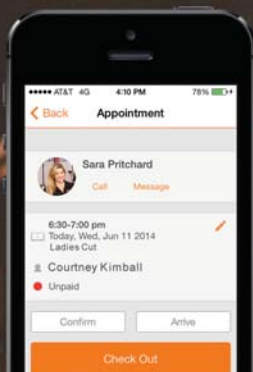
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spa business uniting the world of wellness

MULTI SENSORY

We take a look at companies which offer sensory spa experiences to enhance what we see, hear, smell and feel

INVIION® BY SCHLETTERER CONSULT

The brand new Inviion® Sensory Experience spa cabin by Schletterer Consult focuses on sounds, colours, scents and temperature which portray a "journey through the seasons".

It utilises lighting effects, large screen projections, newly developed 3D acoustic sequences and fragrances to create the experience, while humidity and heat is varied to reflect each season.

The 20-30 minute programme starts with a refreshing winter spell with whistling winds, followed by a warmer, awakening spring with singing birds. Then comes the heat of summer which dries the skin and heats up the body accompanied by sounds of humming bees and the intense scent of summer pastures, before the programme changes to autumn where guests hear rustling leaves and feel the temperature change and the damp mist on their skin while the sweet sharp scent of wild berries fills the room.

The sequences have been designed to heighten the senses and provide multiple health benefits and improve relaxation.

Schletterer Consult created the Sensory Experience for the Woburn Forest Center Parc holiday village, which opened in the



The new experience has a large screen projection and 3D acoustic sequences

UK in June (see p74). It's installed in the village's Aqua Sana spa, but will now also be available to other operators.

Another first at the Aqua Sana spa is the Inviion Mineral Room, where amethyst

and crushed rose quartz, along with a refreshing lemongrass scent, infuse the air to energise the senses and calm the nerves.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Schletterer

AQUAMENTAL SPA

Aquamental Spa has created seven multi-sensory room concepts offering interpretations of water elements, brought to life by light and acoustics.

Developed by Daniel Lathan, head of the innovation group in the German Wellness Association, the scalable room concepts feature new technologies, creating relaxing and contemplative spaces. In three of the concepts – Circles, Flux and Torus (pictured) – entire rooms are



Entire rooms can be encased in water

encased in water. The Torus room, for example, is fully or partially made from transparent Plexiglas. In the middle of the room and outside, a whirlpool is created and illuminated from above and below so that light reflections of the swirling water are projected around the room. Meanwhile sounds of the vortex are transferred inside by speakers.

The other themed concepts are Columns, Deep Sea, Swing and Stonefly.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Aquamental



The video domes enhance relaxation at spas

LIVINGLOBE

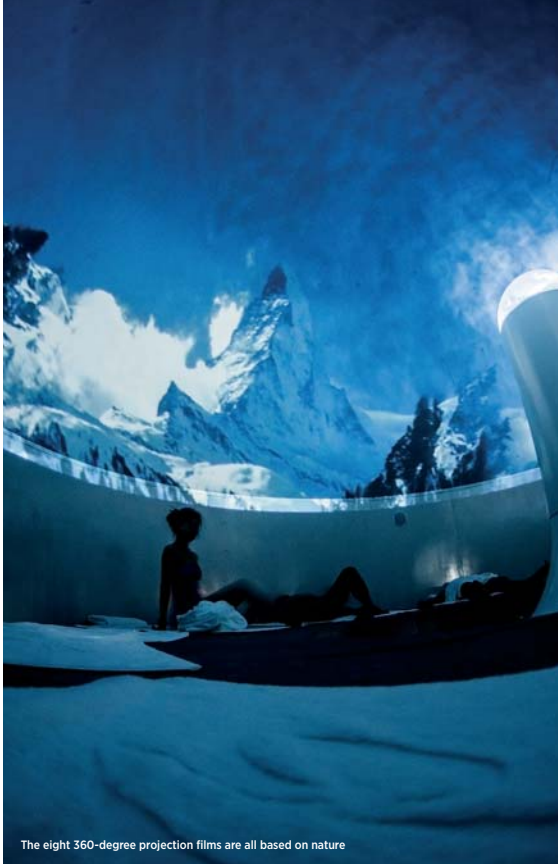
Domes offering 360-degree video projection can bring a new level of relaxation to spas, according to a German developer.

Munich-based *LivingGlobe* – which installed two of its *Vidarium* wellness domes in the OCT Hot Springs Waterpark in China this January – says tranquil films can be projected on the dome's entire ceiling. One *Vidarium* houses a hot shale bath, while another features a pool for water treatments. However, other spas could also use the *Vidarium* as a chillout lounge or even a massage room.

Harald Singer, owner and creative director at *LivingGlobe*, says visitors can view one of eight soothing nature films from a sitting or face up position, immersing themselves in the moving images of the projected worlds. One film shows the mountains in Swiss Alps (pictured) while another is an underwater fantasy film shot in Borneo, Malaysia by a diver surrounded by fish.

The aim is to create a new environment where relaxation can be achieved with eyes open rather than closed. And Singer bills the *Vidarium* as a "brand new attraction for existing or new spas" that can help engage, awe and retain customers.

Spa-kit.net keyword: *LivingGlobe*



The eight 360-degree projection films are all based on nature

MOVING ART

US film director Louis Schwartzberg is the curator of *Moving Art*, a collection of 2D and 3D moving images for digital screens.

The company has teamed up with *Organic Spa Magazine* to create a series of visual meditation films using the *Moving Art* work set to a relaxing soundtrack.

This immersive Visual Meditation Room concept has already been tested at the Miraval resort and spa in Arizona, US, leading to a proposed permanent room installation. Installations at other high-end hospitality venues are expected soon.

The Visual Meditation Room concept uses time-lapse cinematography of natural images projected on ceiling-to-floor screens that present viewers with a new way to look at the world that surrounds them. There are eight films, capturing scenarios such as the rolling waves of the ocean, unfurling flowers and untouched forests, which can be used to create moods according to the use of space.

Moving Art is also developing an interface to let spa guests choose the mood of their treatment room.

Spa-kit.net keywords: *Moving Art*



A US film director is behind the concept

The different settings take experience showers to a new level



DORNBRACHT

Dornbracht's Sensory Sky shower has been inspired by weather phenomena and nature's cycles. It has three pre-programmed choreographies of rain, mist and light which also feature complementary fragrances.

The Readjust programme has a warm, light mist and rain with a soft and dry forest floor scent, and is designed to sharpen the senses.

The Release setting incorporates an intense summer rain, ranging from warm to cool temperatures, accompanied by a fresh tropical-like fragrance.

It's been designed to leave the body feeling cleansed and refreshed.

Finally, Rejoice comprises a warm rain curtain where droplets glisten in the colours of the rainbow (pictured) to harmonise the senses.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Dornbracht



ZEN-SATIONS

Spanish-based Zen-sations Arboreum specialises in photographing elements of nature that are high in energy, with a particular focus on trees.

The still art designs can be used as decorative pictures, such as at the Mandarin Oriental Barcelona. But for a more sensory experience, they're matched with coloured lighting, sound and scent in the Evolutive Wellness room concept.

The aim of Evolutive Wellness is to help guests connect with nature in a new way as they relax. The designs can be customised to a range of spaces and are suitable for use in spas, hotels,



museums, sports and leisure facilities. The concept has been developed by environmental scientist Sergi Nogués and artist Albert Cuevas.

The next temporary installation will be at the World Spa & Well-being Congress in Thailand in September.

Spa-kit keyword: Zensations

MOTION WAVES

Augmented music/sound spaces could be the next game-changer in the spa industry in the near future, according to Motion Waves founder Jean-Marie Adrien.

The company uses sophisticated sensor technology to track a user's movement and, based on this, an acoustic system plays complementary soothing sounds and noises at different pitches, tones, volumes and rhythms. The slower someone moves, the more leisurely the sound is.

According to Adrien, Motion Waves could be used to add an extra dimension to the customer experience in any part of a spa – from a reception or retail area to a treatment room or relaxation lounge.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Motion



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Smart move from Fashionizer Spa

Fashionizer Spa has created a new jacket specifically for spa use. Designed to be worn by reception staff and managers, the Azla jacket is made from the company's flexible cotton performance fabric. The clothing supplier designed the Azla in response to client requests, citing a growing trend for therapists to greet clients in jackets before starting a treatment. It features a simple tie-front and can be purchased in navy as a stock garment.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Fashionizer



A glass act from Küng Sauna

Switzerland-based sauna manufacturer Küng Sauna has unveiled Ovola, a newly patented sauna with a rounded, profile-free glass front. The curve has been designed to contrast with the sauna's mitred corners, horizontal slat panelling and squared stainless steel parts. Matching trim and covers can be manufactured to allow the sauna to occupy any space, opening up bespoke design possibilities. Küng Sauna offers a number of other stylish spa solutions for steamrooms, whirlpools, solariums, showers and basins and relaxation areas.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Küng



Living Earth Craft's treatment table heightens the senses

Total immersion is the concept behind the design of Nuage Vector – a new all-electric treatment table from Living Earth Crafts. The iPad-controlled Total Immersion Experience System features chromatherapy lighting, a table warmer, an aromatherapy system and embedded Bluetooth-enabled stereo speakers.

It also offers acoustic resonance technology from So Sound Solutions, which specialises in vibration and music therapy, that emits frequencies which are intended to help wellbeing.

Spa-kit.net keywords: Living Earth



Italian design duo create Klafs special editions

Italian designers Matteo Thun and Antonio Rodriguez have created a sauna and steamroom for Klafs, which complement one another (see above).

The front and anterior side walls of the sauna are made from floor-to-ceiling glass to flood the inside with natural light.

Meanwhile, the designers' vision for the steamroom was to "create heaven on earth" and white is used

throughout to represent innocence (right). The front is made from matt glass and features large, opaline panes and slender viewing panels, while the rear side walls are designed with a waterproof quartz agglomerate and continue the graphic design of the glass front. Lights in the ceiling create the impression of sun rays flooding into the space.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **Klafs**



Regenerative skin treatment from AW Lake



Singapore-based spa firm AW Lake has teamed up with a number of specialists to create a non-invasive machine for regenerative skin treatments. Pure TDA treatments are designed to create protein-rich deposits in the skin's deepest layers, in order to stimulate cell division and provide the building blocks to repair damaged structures of the skin. Over time, this smooths the skin and reduces deep and fine wrinkles. The TDA machine was developed by Germany's MedDRop Technology, while Switzerland-based Arivine Pharma developed the patented substance used in the treatments.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keywords: **AW Lake**



Useful hair ties that don't leave a dent

Designed in London, and already used by operators such as Ritz-Carlton, Popbands are soft stretchy hair ties that don't leave a kink in the hair. They come in a variety of colours, with or without Swarovski beads, and can be retailed in spas or used as locker room amenities.

[Spa-kit.net](#) keyword: **Popband**

Spa treatments go mobile with Coola Cart

Spa consultants WTS International, equipment company Living Earth Crafts and sun skincare brand Coola have teamed up to design a mobile point-of-sale display that creates a platform to bring spa treatments poolside as well as to bounce business back to the spa and drive retail.

The cart has an easy access locking storage compartment, a product stability tray for secure mobility and presentation and a UV protective umbrella. There's also a freezer compartment for iced towels and chilled sunscreens in addition to a cart cover for storage and protection.

"The purpose of this venture was to extend the luxury services of the spa to the outdoors in a distinctive, attractive and mobile way to drive sales," said Melissa Mao, vice president of sales for Coola.

The products include creams for the face, body, and lips in lotions and spray form in addition to soothing after-sun treatments.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Coola



Eastern influence for Amala

The skincare Purify Collection by natural/organic company Amala is inspired by the healing plants and flowers of east Asia. The formulae include blue lotus, which is sourced from the company's partner farm in India and which infuses skin with all-natural vitamins, minerals and amino acids.

The range includes a mattifier containing algae extract and white tea, a gel moisturiser that includes goji berry and rice silk, a gel cleanser featuring green tea and ginger, a face polish with bamboo and willow bark and a clay mask containing algae extract and tiger grass.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Amala



Book focuses on retail in spas

How can you improve your spa retail sales? The answer to this question is one which baffles most spa operators and which is the subject of a new book. *Driving Retail* is designed to give leaders motivation, inspiration and checklists/reminders of what they can do on a daily basis to help raise retail revenues. It's been written by Dubai-based Sally Howerdine, owner of the Spotlight On Spa & Wellness training and recruitment company.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Spotlight



HydroPeptide unveils clarifying collection

US-based HydroPeptide has launched a range of skincare products designed to fight the effects of ageing and acne. The Anti-Wrinkle + Clarify collection features a blend of acne-fighting, anti-inflammation and anti-ageing peptides. HydroPeptide says it has also replaced synthetic preservatives with a proprietary peptide preservative that provides "broad spectrum antimicrobial protection" for clearer skin.

Spa-kit.net keyword: Hydropeptide



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BRAIN BOOSTING

A new study has shown that meditation actually
heightens brain activity instead of emptying the mind



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Brain activity is greater during meditation than during periods of idle rest, refuting the idea that meditation is used to empty the mind – according to a study by neuroscientists from Norway and Australia*.

Scientists from The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, The University of Oslo and The University of Sydney used functional magnetic resonance image scanning to see what goes on in the brain during Acem Meditation – a mindful relaxation technique based on modern psychology and research.

Acem is a non-directive meditation technique which involves the mental repetition of a soothing, yet meaningless sound combining vowels and consonants. At the same time it allows spontaneously-occurring thoughts, images, sensations, memories and emotions to pass freely through the mind.

The study was based on 14 practitioners who specialise in a specific meditation technique which is known as Acem Meditation

The method is thought to facilitate mental processing of emotional experiences, thereby contributing to wellness and stress management. Fourteen experienced practitioners of the Acem Meditation technique took part in the study.

The predominant resting system in the brain is called the 'default mode network' which is responsible for our wandering mind. Interestingly, the research found that this wandering mind mode is activated on a greater level during meditation than when the mind is resting normally.

The study highlighted that the brain simply activates different networks when it rests, compared to when someone concentrates or attends to an external task.

The default mode network is considerably less active when the spontaneous

flow of wandering thoughts is restricted by a more concentrated focus of attention during concentrative meditation – not common to non-directive Acem Meditation. The areas of the brain which are less active during meditation include those which are involved in processing memories and emotions.

The results were published in the journal *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*. * Xu J and Davanger S et al. *Nondirective Meditation Activates Default Mode Network and Areas Associated with Memory Retrieval and Emotional Processing*. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 2014



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