

spa business



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Saverio and Andrea Quadrio Curzio are taking European bathing traditions to the world p50

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THE "WE"
IN WELL-BEING.

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PRODUCT APPLICATIONS WERE: FACE AT HOME AND FACE AT HOME.



Time to get playful

This period of great seriousness is depriving many people of the mental and physical health benefits of play, creativity and self-expression – something spas are ideally placed to deliver

Although many have drawn on their resilience to find light in the darkness, there's no denying it's been a serious, worrying, stressful and sometimes tragic time for the majority since 11 March 2020 – the day the World Health Organization declared the most serious global pandemic of the modern age.

As we approach the second anniversary, I've been reflecting on the bigger picture and talking to industry contacts, family and friends to try to establish what we've lost, what we've gained and where we're heading.

What I've found is that for many, life is lacking sparkle and has become more limited, more routine and a little grey. It seems we're missing playfulness, impulsiveness, spontaneity and the opportunity for the creative self-expression that, in part, defines who we are.

Most admit these are first world problems and are grateful to have weathered the storm so far, but it's clear that the sparks of joy that can make life more meaningful and experiences more memorable, have been in short supply.

As we limp wearily towards the end of the pandemic, with experts predicting two more winters of disruption before things start to stabilise in 2024, there will be a huge appetite among consumers for playful, joyful experiences.

As a result, we're predicting that play and playfulness will become a major growth area for the spa and wellness industry and in our next *Spa Business Foresight* report – due out in 2022 – this will be our number one trend.

For children, play is an essential part of development and for adults, it allows the recapturing of that spirit, with huge benefits for mental and physical health.

Right on cue, wellness community Serenbe, which is always so skilful at capturing the Zeitgeist, has announced its next development will be based on play,



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/BRANDIS

Play is beneficial to both physical and mental health and wellbeing

“If you're not already incorporating playfulness into your operation, there isn't a moment to lose”

creating opportunities for spontaneous fun through its masterplanning, architecture and programming (page 25).

In this issue of *Spa Business*, our editors have travelled the world to bring you insights into life-changing experiences and it's notable that the most vivid involve uninhibited playfulness – whether it's Andrew Gibson howling at the moon in Norway (page 97) or Jane Kitchen playing with mud in Iceland (page 84). It's clear that if you're not already incorporating playfulness into your operation, it's time to get creative and find ways to do so. ●

Liz Terry, editorial director @elizterry

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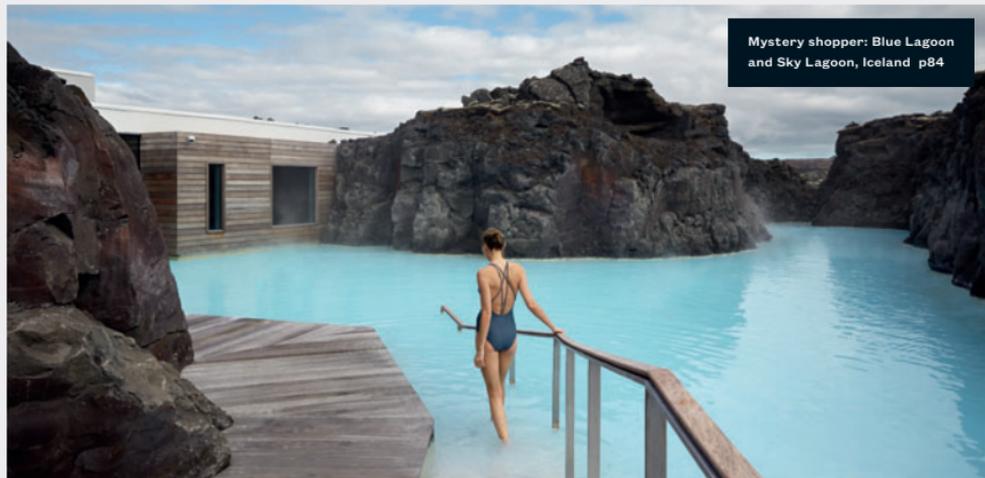


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PHOTO BY NIELL



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PHOTO BY SPASUBS.COM / ANDREW GIBSON



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A US study discovers why obese people are more at risk from COVID-19

PHOTO BY SPASUBS.COM



Chilled out at Farris Bad p96

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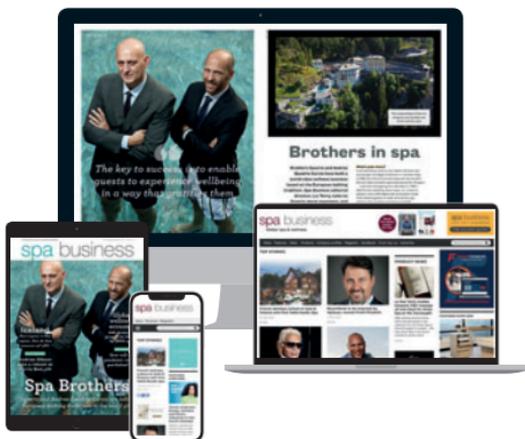
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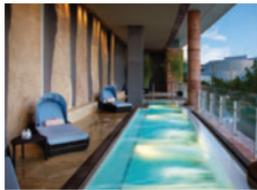
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spa people

“

Otium from Silversea Cruises will revolve around instant gratification. It's an opportunity to stop pretending wellness is all about sacrifice

Barbara Muckermann
CCO, Silversea Cruises

Muckermann has designed the wellness programme to focus on indulgence

“When you can have anything you like, you settle on what you really want,” says Barbara Muckermann, chief commercial officer of Silversea Cruises and the brains behind Otium, the luxury cruise line's new wellness concept. “As long as the quality is there, that's all you need.”

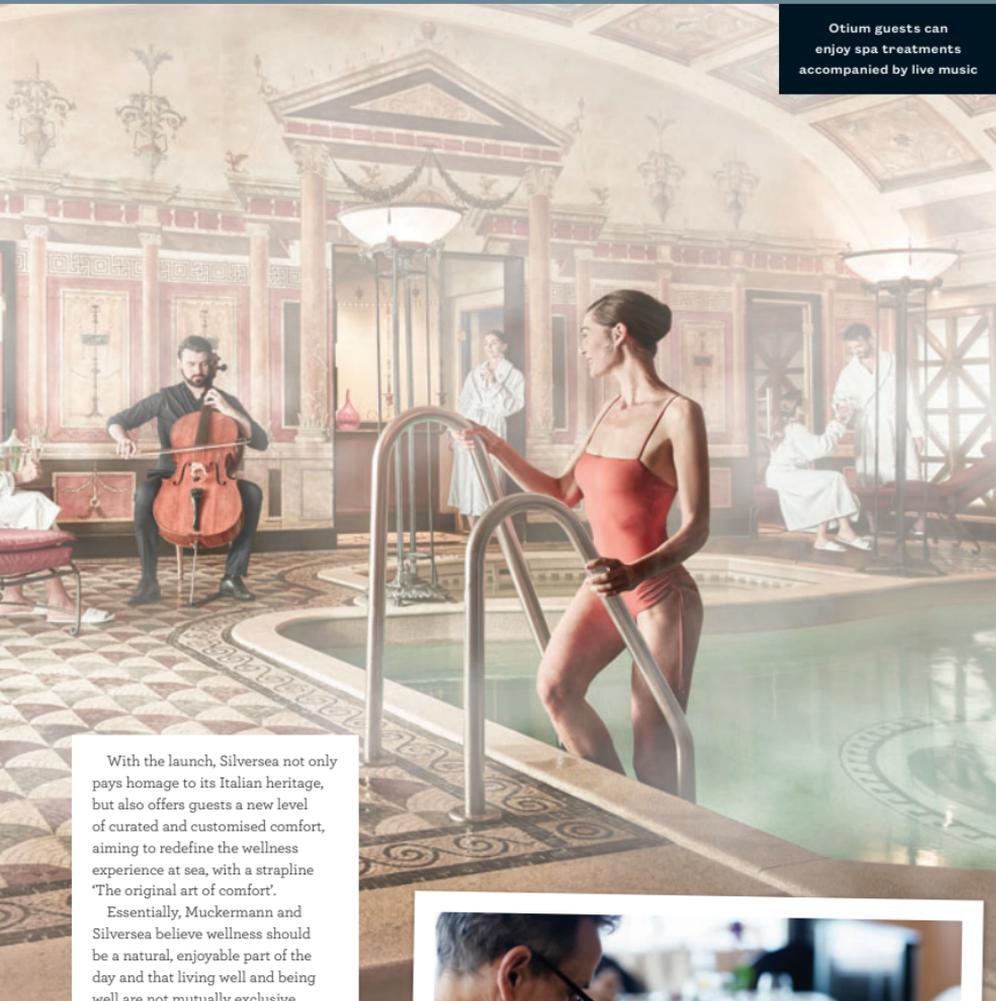
Quality is a trademark of Silversea, which prides itself on enabling guests to ‘travel deeper into luxury’. Now, the Monaco-based brand has managed to one-up itself with the introduction of Otium – its ambitious new wellness programme launching in March 2022 on *Silver Dawn*, its 10th and newest ship, with its sights set on indulging the very wealthy.

In Roman culture, Otium – the opposite of negotium, the nonexistence of pleasure – was a period of time dedicated to leisure, in which people bathed, conversed, sang, theorised, drank, ate, socialised and relaxed, explains Muckermann.



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Otium guests can enjoy spa treatments accompanied by live music



With the launch, Silversea not only pays homage to its Italian heritage, but also offers guests a new level of curated and customised comfort, aiming to redefine the wellness experience at sea, with a strapline “The original art of comfort”.

Essentially, Muckermann and Silversea believe wellness should be a natural, enjoyable part of the day and that living well and being well are not mutually exclusive.

“Otium is unlike any other wellness programme; it aligns perfectly with our brand positioning,” explains Muckermann. “Otium was an opportunity to stop pretending that wellness is all about sacrifice and delayed gratification – instead it will revolve around instant gratification, extending the luxurious pampering for which Silversea is best known to different areas of the ship, from guests’ suites to the redesigned spa, and beyond,” she says.

Encouraging wellness through ‘balanced indulgence’, Otium is

The spa will be actively marketed to cruise passengers



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- built around five pillars – which include the spa, as well as new bathing, sleeping and dining experiences and a novel ‘balcony experience’ to enhance time spent outside – with each offering a number of customisable elements.

“Otium will guide guests on a journey of wellness, starting in their suites, extending to the spa, and continuing into other public venues,” says Muckermann. “They’ll be able to unwind and socialise in the spa’s thermal areas with a glass of Champagne and snacks prepared with ingredients such

In Roman culture, Otium was a period of time dedicated to leisure, where people bathed, conversed, relaxed

”

SILVERSEAS TACKLES EMISSIONS

Silverseas has announced it will launch its first hybrid cruise ship in 2023 in a bid to mitigate its environmental impact – as cruise ships are major polluters.

The new launch, *Silver Nova*, is currently under construction and when complete will be the first hybrid, luxury cruise ship free of local emissions while in port, through the use of fuel cells and batteries.

The ship will also use liquified natural gas as its main fuel, enabling a 40 per cent overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions per double suite when

compared to Silverseas’ previous class of ships.

Other sustainable features will include the installation of a system to reduce onboard waste volume, resulting in lower incineration emissions.

Silver Nova will be one of the most spacious cruise ships ever built and offer passengers a space-to-guest ratio of 75 GRT (gross registered tonnage) per passenger and a 1:1.3 crew-to-guest ratio, as well as butler service for all suites. The ship will be able to accommodate 728 guests and have a full service spa.

The ‘balcony experience’ will take in the energising sea view

PHOTO: SILVERSEAS CRUISES



PHOTO: SILVERSEAS CRUISES

Silverseas’s wellness concept launches on *Silver Dawn*, its 10th and newest ship

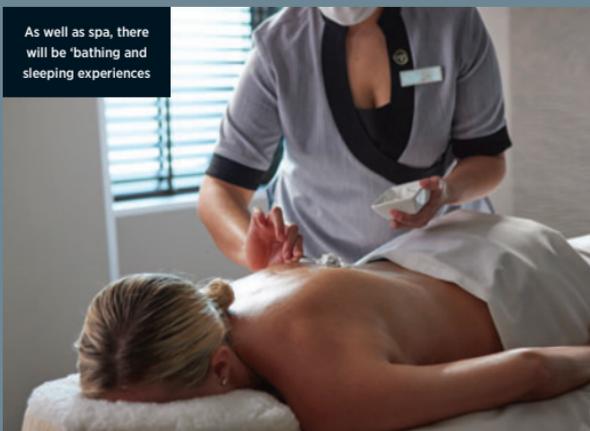
as caviar and truffles or have a couples' massage to live music."

The *Silver Dawn* wellness offering will have four new areas of programming in addition to the spa, including the Otium Bathing Experience which will be delivered in passengers' private bathrooms - these will have both a walk-in shower and a bath, making them some of the most spacious bathrooms at sea.

The custom bathing experience, prepared by Silversea's butlers, will enable guests to indulge in a multi-sensory soak, while listening to the playlist of their choice and enjoying a range of delicacies.

The Otium sleeping experience will be tailored to individual preferences. Cabins will have a special Otium mattress, while the pillow menu will include customisable down and feather

As well as spa, there will be 'bathing and sleeping experiences



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blends, memory foam, firm down, and improved down.

The Otium balcony experience will see travellers encouraged to slow down and enjoy the breathtaking views that stretch to the horizon and make the most of their personal space.

In cool weather conditions, Silversea will deliver luxurious cashmere blankets, a selection of appetisers, and an indulgent hot chocolate menu.

In warmer climates, guests will be able to order body mists, sun creams, cocktails, and gourmet bites.

Perhaps the most indulgent aspect of this programme, says Muckermann, is the addition of an in-suite Otium comfort food menu which will be available 24/7 and designed to enhance guests' moments of leisure.

Signature dishes will range from gourmet popcorn to lobster and caviar in a brioche, justifying Muckermann's comment that "enjoyment and indulgence lie at the heart of Otium's sensuous experience". ●



6

The Well's expansion plans includes a property in the UK, a second location in Central America and four more in the US

Vivianne Garcia-Tunon VP, The Well



The Well VP, Vivianne Garcia-Tunon

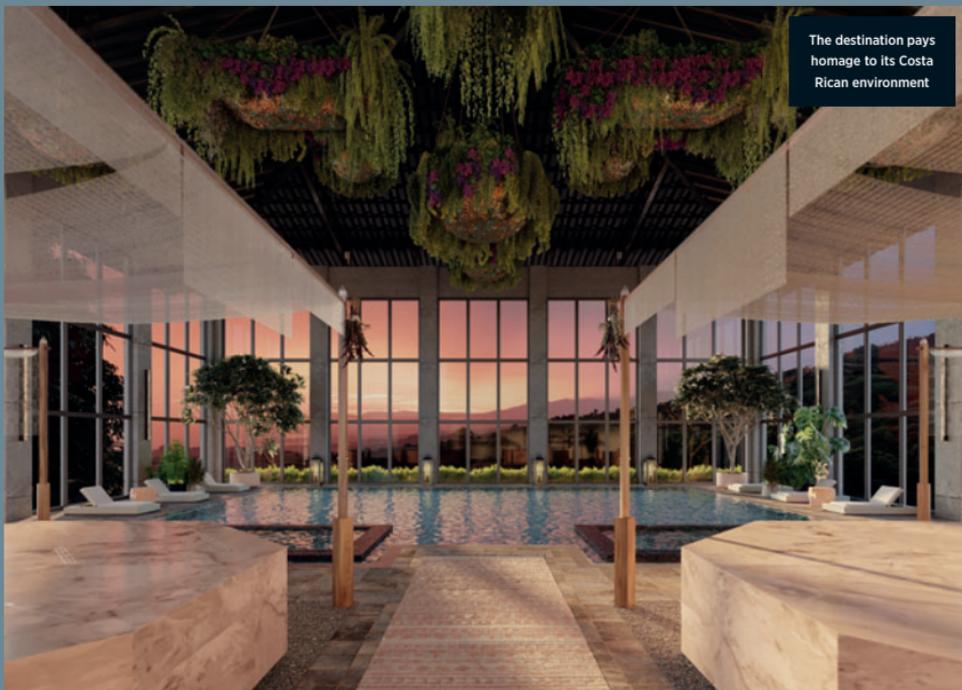
The team behind The Well in New York City has opened its first holistic wellbeing retreat outside the US at the Hacienda Alta Gracia in the tropical foothills of Costa Rica's Talamanca Mountains.

Adopting an integrative, holistic approach, the Costa Rican development sits on a 180-acre site in Pérez Zeledón with the property - part of the Auberge Resort Collection - encompassing a spa, a working coffee farm, 50 hacienda-style villas, organic vegetable gardens and stables.

According to VP of development, Vivianne Garcia-Tunon, the retreat is unique in the world. "The Well at Hacienda AltaGracia celebrates Pachamama, or Mother Earth, as the master healer," she explains. "With the universal healing power of nature at the forefront, the destination pays homage to the Costa Rican environment and its healing energy, which delivers transformative retreats to guests.

"The experience is brought to life by medical practitioners and through the delivery of custom spa services, daily programming, fitness classes and a calendar of seasonal retreats," she says. "We've designed an indoor and outdoor wellness centre that unifies the physical, mental and spiritual, with unique energy and intention to revitalise guests."

The 180-acre site has a working coffee farm and organic gardens



The destination pays homage to its Costa Rican environment

PHOTO: THE WELL

The Well Costa Rica: suppliers

Treatment rooms: Celluma, Hyperice and Living Earth Crafts
 Products: Ayuna, The Well's in-house line
 Wet & thermal: Supplied by architects Arconsa
 Interiors: Nina Gotlieb
 Retail: School House

Garcia-Tunon has worked in wellness the industry for over 20 years - for brands including ESPA, Mandarin Oriental and GHM - and is also an interior designer, nutritionist and licensed massage therapist.

Her role in realising the project involved overseeing pre-opening; starting with design consulting, OS&E, concept development, recruitment, treatment protocols, start-up and training.

The heart of the 20,000sq ft (1,858sq m) eight-treatment room wellness facility is Casa de Agua, a greenhouse-style pool and heat therapy room overlooking rolling hills and a canopy of tree-tops.

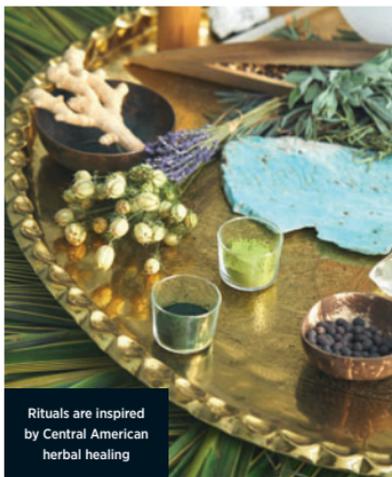
All wellness journeys at the retreat begin here, where guests are

immersed in a five-step purifying ritual using Costa Rican clay to prepare them to receive the benefits of their selected therapy.

"We're bringing our integrative approach to wellbeing to the Talamanca Mountains, where we're amplifying the power of healing through nature," says Garcia-Tunon. "Guests are surrounded by the natural landscapes of Costa Rica and have access to best-in-class services and adventure, all under one breathtaking space for a true sensory and healing experience."

Programming ranges from craniosacral therapy to rituals inspired by Central American healing methods using local flowers and herbs, as well as

PHOTO: THE WELL



Rituals are inspired by Central American herbal healing

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▶ binaural sound therapy, astrology sessions, forest-bathing and access to touchless recovery technology.

The Well has also curated a selection of restorative activities for guests, such as equine therapy, lunar gong baths and silent breakfasts, to help them connect to Hacienda AltaGracia's core philosophy, which is community, a sense of belonging and the connection of visitors and locals.

To complete the offering, certified health coaches are on hand to educate and support guests in pursuit of their individual wellness goals. They conduct a thorough health history review with each guest before creating a personalised experience that can include recommendations for mindful movement classes, appointments with practitioners, dietary support and integrated treatments and programmes.

Garcia-Tunon reveals that the opening of this first international location marks the start of The Well's global rollout: "We've



PHOTO: THE WELL

The Well New York city was the first in the portfolio

got an exciting expansion plan that includes a second location in Central America, as well as properties in the UK and four more in the US [Florida, California, Texas and Colorado]," she says.

The rainforest retreat at Hacienda AltaGracia joins the brand's existing portfolio; its flagship New York location and its latest opening at Auberge Resort Collection's Mayflower Inn & Spa, in Connecticut.

The Well celebrates panchamama, or Mother Earth, as master healer



"Costa Rica was a natural choice for The Well due to the country's commitment to health, wellness, sustainability and preservation of the natural environment," says Garcia-Tunon.

"We're delighted to be opening our first international location and the largest wellness centre in Central America, close to one of the few Blue Zones in the world." ●

More: <https://www.the-well.com>

The location in New York opened before the pandemic

PHOTO: THE WELL



The second site for The Well is the Mayflower Inn and Spa in Connecticut



The Mayflower Inn and Spa is an Auberge Resort Collection property

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PHOTO: ANNE CANNADY



It's taken the US longer to discover urban thermal bathing because we've had a more modest culture than in many European cities

Anne Cannady CEO, Alchemy Springs

When people think of communal bathing, the mind typically drifts towards traditional European bathhouses or countries with a storied hydrothermal history.

However, according to Anne Cannady, San Francisco has a strong track record as a former hub of communal hydrotherapy and she's on a mission to revive the city's bathing culture.

Cannady is working to bring the Alchemy Springs Communal Bathhouse to fruition in the city, working with wellness consultant, Mia Kyricos of Kyricos & Associates.

The development is being crowdfunding to give local people the opportunity to own part of the company at a manageable cost, alongside accredited investors.

Spa Business spoke with Cannady to explore her vision and understand why she thinks the return of San Francisco's urban bathhouse culture couldn't be more timely.



The design will pay homage to the city's last bathhouse which closed in 1966

Alchemy Springs' interiors will draw closely on biophilic design to enhance wellbeing



PHOTO: LINDA VALDESPINO SPRINGS

What's the story behind the development?

In 1894, the Sutro Baths were built in San Francisco by the city's former mayor, Adolf Sutro, as a large-scale communal bathhouse where family and friends could enjoy the healing waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Over time, the baths became a powerful symbol of the burgeoning of San Francisco as a city, hosting various events and exhibitions, until they sadly shut in 1966 after an arson attack.

Inspired by the same spirit, we're planning to restore and transform a registered building in a historic part of the city known as Lower Nob Hill to create Alchemy Springs - a new communal bathhouse.

Our design will pay homage to the original Sutro Baths, with balconies overlooking different baths surrounded by plants, art and spaces for relaxation and social events.

The development timeline from pre-construction and design, through construction to opening is estimated to be three years.

What are you building?

Alchemy Springs will be a hydrothermal spa and bathhouse drawing on biophilic design.

Designed by architect Olle Lundberg, our modern urban oasis will take guests on a journey of the senses through winding river baths and lush surroundings.

Bathing amenities will be inspired by water, fire, air and earth, with a focus on helping guests rebalance these elements. They'll also be able to experience nature's elements at our spa - from blazing steam saunas and bracing cold plunge pools.

Outside, the journey will continue with an outdoor sunbath and starscape moonbath and refreshing elixirs will be served among vibrant

flora in the greenhouse or gardens. Guests will also be able to head to the treatment rooms for a massage or relax in one of the private lounges.

Tell us about the packages

Three-hour drop-in day passes will cost US\$70 each (€60, £51), with memberships at US\$250 per month (€215, £181). We're also planning corporate memberships and hotel partnership discounts, with pricing and rates yet to be decided.

What's your target market?

In the San Francisco Bay Area, bathhouses are often booked in advance and many don't allow social co-ed bathing. Alchemy Springs will provide an alternative - a grand public bathing facility that caters for members as well as drop-in guests and tourists.

It will channel the true historical intention of bathhouses as being

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The famous Sutro Baths in San Francisco were built in 1894 and demolished in 1966

welcoming places for people of every race, gender and level of affluence, to come together in the spirit of wellness and community.

Has the pandemic impacted your plans?

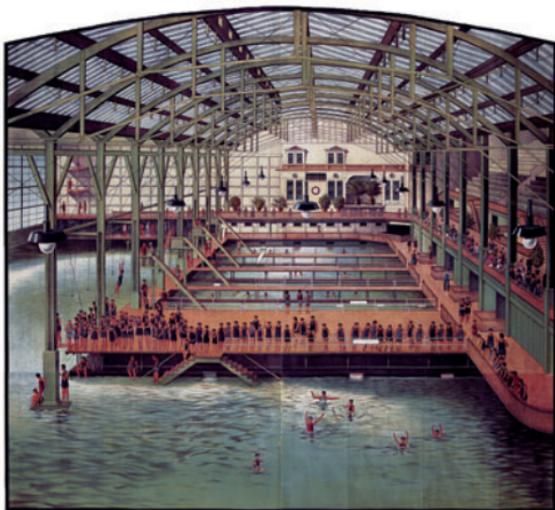
We believe hospitality business models that maintain diverse revenue streams are positioned to adapt to changes in market demand and this will be paramount to our success.

Should we enter a new pandemic, or if the current COVID-19 pandemic is persisting when Alchemy Springs is ready to open, we'll explore options to generate revenue through online amenities, such as retail, food and beverage, one-to-one massage appointments or small group offerings limited to gathering size restrictions.

Can communal bathing help society heal?

Yes, it gives us a healthy place to gather again and it's one of the last cell phone-free frontiers, offering true unplugged human connection.

We're going back to the basics with one of the most ancient community-building rituals in the world and according to the



“We're going back to the basics with one of the most ancient community-building rituals in the world and according to the Global Wellness Institute, younger generations in the US are the fastest-growing population of bathers

Global Wellness Institute, younger generations in the US are the fastest-growing population of bathers.

Urban bathhouses are popping up across the US from Brooklyn and Detroit to Minneapolis, Seattle, Portland and Chicago.

I think it's taken the US longer to discover urban thermal bathing because we've had a more modest culture than in many European cities - it even took a while for us to be comfortable in swimsuits in a co-ed setting.

Will this be a standalone site?

We have plans to scale and develop in other cities and also to extend the brand into other areas beyond real estate.

How will San Francisco benefit?

San Francisco has been losing its sense of identity as a creative city with a strong community bond and this trend has been accelerated by remote working which has enabled many people to move away.

Bathhouses are the perfect remedy for the rise in stress, tech overload and declines in human interaction and access to nature. This, in particular, led us to incorporate biophilic design in the project, because we're deeply inspired by the feelings we get from escaping to nature and want to bring that into urban living.

The Sutro Baths once brought the city together under one roof along with exhibitions and community celebrations. We believe it's time to do so again and that the development will have ripple effects well beyond our city.

The lockdown: Alchemy Springs

Architects: **Lundberg Design**

Landscape architects: **Surface Design & Habitat Horticulture**

Consultants: **Mia Kyricos**

Size: **16,000sq ft (1,486sq m)**

Capacity: **400 people per day**

Pools: **Moon bath, sunbath, mineral bath, massage bath and cold plunge pool**

Thermal area: **Himalayan salt cave, infrared dry sauna,**

herb-infused steamroom and wet treatment room

Number of treatment rooms: **Eight**



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Neil Jacobs reveals Six Senses Place concept for major world cities

Six Senses is incubating the launch of a new global wellness concept called Six Senses Place.

CEO Neil Jacobs and his team have indicated that new 'clubs' could potentially open at urban Six Senses properties in New York, London, Bangkok, Shanghai, the Loire Valley, Istanbul, Rome and Lisbon.

"People's interest in wellness has increased significantly as a result of the pandemic," he said, "as many people find they have more time and want a healthier lifestyle, which bodes well for properties with strong spa, health and wellness provision.

"The problem with destination spas is that guests visit to clean up their act, and then within two months they can be back where they started," says Jacobs.



Neil Jacobs has been CEO of Six Senses since 2012

PHOTO: SIX SENSES

He describes Six Senses Place as a concept driven by wellness and guests who travel to Six Senses resorts globally will then have access to these urban locations when they return home, so they can continue to benefit from the programming they need to stay healthy.

The goal is to help guests foster long-term changes to their wellness routines and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

"The clubs will be a lot of fun and will not be clinical," said Jacobs. "Every

aspect of the operation – from the cocktails in the bar to the programming – will have a wellness angle – that's what we believe people are looking for.

"Although this new interest in health and wellness isn't solely motivated by the pandemic, COVID-19 has certainly accelerated this awareness and desire."

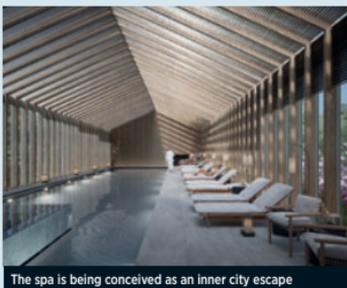
● To hear more from Jacobs about property investment, head to our property investment feature on page 60. [More: http://lei.sr/W5R2f_B](http://lei.sr/W5R2f_B)

Urban spa sanctuary inspired by herbal healing and renowned apothecary to open in former monastery in Antwerp

A 15th-century monastery in Antwerp is being transformed into a new five-star hotel and botanical spa; Botanic Sanctuary Antwerp.

Located next to the city's botanic garden, the 108-room destination will open on 15 February 2022.

The hotel's setting adjacent to the Botanical Gardens will be integral to the three-floor 1,000sq m Botanic



The spa is being conceived as an inner city escape

PHOTO: ADAPTIVE CENT

Health Spa, which has been designed to reflect a cloistral devotion to healing plants and herbs.

The spa concept will tap into naturopathy, herbalism, phytotherapy and alternative medicine to support holistic health. Plant-based treatments, herbal products and

nutritional supplements will take centre stage to provide solutions to help prevent lifestyle diseases.

The focus on herbal healing stems from the monastery's original inhabitants who grew fresh produce as ingredients in remedies for the sick. [More: http://lei.sr/d8i4X](http://lei.sr/d8i4X)



Frank Pitsikalis

PHOTO: RESORTSUITE

Frank Pitsikalis reveals ResortSuite will be acquired by Agilysys

Hospitality management software system ResortSuite is set to be acquired by SaaS software provider Agilysys in a US\$25m (€22.2m, £18.8m) deal in January 2022. "This will accelerate the move to fully cloud-native solutions for ResortSuite customers and access to best-in-class solutions across both companies' customers," explained Frank Pitsikalis, ResortSuite CEO and founder. Pitsikalis' new role as VP of strategy will see him report to Agilysys CEO Ramesh Srinivasan. [More: http://lei.sr/J2N8Z](http://lei.sr/J2N8Z)



The new pool will open in late December

Preidhof spends €2m linking to 400-year-old mineral spring

Destination spa Preidhof in Naturno, South Tyrol, will introduce a new medicinal bathing offering, following a five-year project.

Costing €2m (US\$2.26m, £1.7m), the hydrotherapy experience will comprise an 80sq m indoor pool and private whirlpool baths. All will be filled with mineral-rich water piped directly from a 400-year-old spring under Naturno's Reinhold Messner Castle, 5km from the resort.

The upgrade is fitting for Preidhof, as the resort is only a 20-minute-drive from the spa town of Merano, known for its healing mineral water.

"This project is the result of an independent, combined community initiative led by the local hospitality industry," said Patrizia Bortolin, Preidhof's spa director.

She plans to add new spa programming incorporating the baths to the menu, such as essential oil-infused whirlpool experiences.

More: <http://lei.sr/9g5h7>



Patrizia Bortolin

PHOTO: GLOBE



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/VALENTY ALBANDER

Playfulness to inspire Serenbe's new wellness community

Wellness community Serenbe, in Atlanta, is set to gain a new hamlet dedicated to play, says co-founder, Steve Nygren.

Named Spela – play in Swedish – the new community will open in 2023 and become the community's fifth hamlet.

With construction in early the stages, Nygren revealed plans include a community centred around a 4-acre park designed with both kids and adults in mind. This will sit on a steep hillside with townhomes and cottages forming an urban wall around the town square.

For Nygren, play and playfulness are a crucial component of wellness.

"Play brings out curiosity, adventure, whimsy movement and risk-taking," he says.

"We all need each of these elements in our lives to stay vital and stimulate us mentally and physically at every age.



Steve Nygren

"The park was envisioned as a mix of the natural forest with organised pocket parks for meditation, and play structures for all ages," he explains, "it will also serve as a gathering place."

Nygren said Spela is being conceived with the typical Serenbe customer in mind, but will be differentiated by its emphasis on family and the inclusion of larger homes in the development.

The community will also be infused with wellness architecture and sustainable operating features.

More: <http://lei.sr/b4l2o>



Huey worked with Montage since 2018

PHOTO: DANIELLE NOWAKA/NOVADIC RE/REX

Patrick Huey leaves Montage – joins The 'Quin House

ISPA board chair Patrick Huey has left his role at Montage Hotels and Resorts' as VP of spa and retail and joined Boston's new luxury private social club, The 'Quin House.

Huey's new title is executive director of membership, programming, The 'Quin Impact Fund and marketing.

The five-floor social club is home to a wellness centre, eight guestrooms, four dining venues, three bars and five lounges, as well as a rooftop deck and event space.

The 'Quin offers members access to spa treatments, saunas, a gym, group fitness classes, a Barre Studio, Pelotons, PTs and nutritionists.

Huey will oversee The 'Quin's membership division, while directing the marketing team and advising on community philanthropic initiatives.

A veteran of the spa and wellness industry, Huey's appointment could signal ambitions from The 'Quin to further develop its wellness concept. More: <http://lei.sr/p7L30>



Thermal spas are growing in popularity in Canada

Finnish wellness culture to arrive in Ontario as Vettä Nordic Spa schedules opening date

A hydrothermal day spa designed to offer a taste of Finnish wellness will be launched in a grand opening ceremony on 23 January 2022 in Ontario, Canada.

The goal behind the spa is to help guests restore their health and wellbeing through the emotional and physical benefits of Nordic bathing traditions.

Vettä Nordic Spa is the brainchild of Eric Harkonen, president and founder, and also a proud Finn.

"Coming from a Finnish family, it stood out to me that people in Canada, and especially Ontario, are missing out on the sauna experience and the opportunity to unplug for a while," he explained

"Vettä will be a place you can visit that quiets the mind, and rejuvenates your spirit."

Launching in phases, Vettä will open in January with a 12-treatment-room Nordic Spa and a host of indoor/outdoor thermal wellness experiences;

Facilities will include two steamrooms, a hot stone room, four warm pools, two plunge pools, three relaxation rooms, outdoor fire pits and three restaurants.

In keeping with Finland's integral tradition of sauna bathing, the spa will be anchored by four Finnish saunas – one of which will be one of North America's largest wood-burning commercial saunas.

More: http://lei.sr/G8T9Q_B



Nobu has 11 properties with spas

New Nobu resort and wellness centre to open in 2024 in Saudi Arabia

Nobu, the global lifestyle brand founded by Robert De Niro, Nobu Matsuhisa and Meir Teper, will launch a new destination in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, by 2024.

Located in the waterfront area of the city, the mixed-use development will be home to a 120-key hotel and residences, as well as a wellness centre, swimming pool, signature Nobu Restaurant and meeting spaces.

The project will be developed by Al Khobar Sands Real Estate Co, jointly owned by Retail Urban Development Company and Assayel Arabia.

2021 has seen a flurry of investment and interest in the Middle East's development scene, with major projects such as the 92-island Red Sea Project making progress. The developer behind the ambitious regenerative tourism project recently announced the signing of nine hotel management agreements spanning Marriott, Accor, Hyatt, IHG and Jumeirah's portfolio of brands.

More: <http://lei.sr/b8E2S>



Helena Grzesk, British Beauty Council

New course educates spas on how to best serve transgender clients

A new trans-awareness course, certified by Habia, has been launched for the spa sector to help teach spa staff how to accommodate, attract and support transgender clients.

Called Trans Awareness for Spas, the programme includes guidance for spa teams on how to conduct treatment adjustments, manage gender dysphoria during treatments and how to use the correct language, both in-person and online.

"Every hair, spa and beauty brand, business owner and practitioner should complete trans awareness training and ensure they're educated to respect and welcome everyone they serve, as well as their colleagues," said Helena Grzesk, chief operating officer at the British Beauty Council.

Costing £197 (€235, US\$263) each, the training can be hosted through Zoom or conducted in-house. More: <http://lei.sr/U1g7V>

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10-14 March 2022

Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna

Fair District, Bologna, Italy

Organisers of one of the world's biggest beauty trade fairs, with 10,000-plus exhibitors, are aiming for an in-person event in March www.cosmoprof.com

03-04 April 2022

World Spa & Wellness London

ExCeL London, London, United Kingdom

International spa figures convene for talks, networking and a trade show. www.worldspawellness.com

25-26 April 2022

Healing Summit

Pine Cliffs Resort, Portugal

Inspirational talks for those with a deeper sense of wellness. Organised by Healing Hotels of the World consortium. www.healingsummit.org

26-29 April 2022

W3 SpA EMEA

Le Méridien Ra Beach Hotel & Spa, Tarragona, Spain

Spa suppliers and decision makers from high volume luxury spas in Europe, the Middle East and Africa will connect through a schedule of one-on-one meetings. www.networkwellevts.com

02-04 May 2022

30th annual ISPA

Conference & Expo

Las Vegas, Nevada, United States

Key spa industry event with speakers covering topics such as business strategy and management, and an Expo which attracted 220 companies in 2019. www.attendispa.com

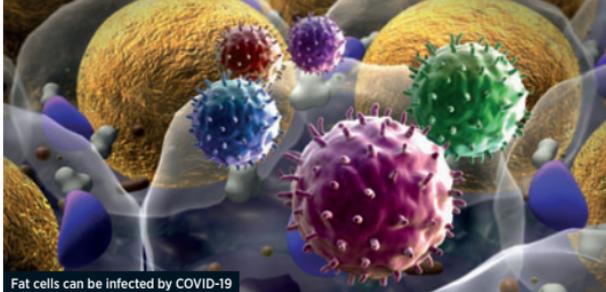
09-12 May 2022

Hot Springs Connection

Hot Springs, Arkansas, United States

Fourth annual gathering of US hot springs owners and operators. www.hot Springsconnection.com

28 spabusiness.com issue 4 2021



Fat cells can be infected by COVID-19

SHUTTERSTOCK/VOLODYMIR

COVID-19 attacks fat cells say Stanford researchers

New research suggests that COVID-19 infects fat cells, explaining why overweight people are at a higher risk of severe illness and death from the virus.

The study, led by Stanford University School of Medicine, examined whether fat tissue obtained from bariatric surgery patients could become infected by SARS-CoV-2 – the virus that causes COVID-19 and also how various other types of cells respond to the virus.

Researchers found that fat cells and also immune cells can be infected by the virus, with this leading to a 'robust inflammatory response'.

The findings show the virus is able to evade the immune defenses within

fat cells, before causing inflammation elsewhere in the body and could help explain why patients with excess body weight are particularly vulnerable to the virus – and also why some younger adults with no underlying health issues become ill.

The research will reinforce the importance of work being done in the fitness, spa and wellness industries to help people control and reduce their percentage body fat to achieve better outcomes if they become ill.

● Get more details about the research, plus links for further reading in our report on page 130.

More: <http://ei.sr/b2iID>



The cannabis-like substances can help reduce inflammation

SHUTTERSTOCK/ALPPOINT

Natural 'cannabis' levels boosted by exercise

Exercise has been found to increase levels of endocannabinoids – cannabis-like substances produced by the human body – which in turn helps reduce inflammation and could potentially treat conditions such as arthritis, cancer and heart disease.

A team of researchers at the University of Nottingham, UK, tested 78 people with arthritis. Thirty-eight of them carried out 15 minutes of muscle-strengthening exercises every day for six weeks, and 40 did nothing.

Those involved in the exercise intervention had not only reduced

their pain, but they also had more microbes in their guts of the kind that produce anti-inflammatory substances, lower levels of cytokines and higher levels of endocannabinoids.

The increase in endocannabinoids was strongly linked to changes in the gut microbes and anti-inflammatory substances produced by gut microbes called SCFAS.

The study found that at least one-third of the anti-inflammatory effects of the gut microbiome was due to the increase in endocannabinoids.

More: <http://ei.sr/C2n5B>

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Glacial water and solar power fuel new hot pool and spa experience in New Zealand

PHOTO: JAMES MATTINSON

The power of communal bathing has inspired the inception of a new sustainable spa and wellness tourism destination in south-east New Zealand.

With the strapline 'sourced from the mountains, powered by the sun', the two-hectare property in Methven has been designed to deliver a sustainable hot pool and spa

experience set against a mountain backdrop.

Ōpuke Thermal Pools and Spa has recently launched featuring a collection of pools filled with water from the nearby Rangitata river that's fed by glacial meltwater from New Zealand's Southern Alps. These are heated by power sourced from an on-site solar farm.

Owned and operated by Methven Adventures, the project was developed over two years following an investment of NZ\$17m (€10.2m, US\$11.8m, £8.7m).

The bathing pools are interconnected, with private and public areas

PHOTO: JAMES MATTINSON



Ōpuke GM, James Mattinson, told *Spa Business* the project has been conceived to welcome all ages.

"Our vision is to build a premium-quality, sustainable hot pools and spa facility in the heart of mid-Canterbury that attracts visitors from all corners of New Zealand and the rest of the world," he says.

"The facility caters to the needs of families, adults and private spa guests, offering a host of innovative customer experiences.

"Our ethos is inspired by the spectacular mountain backdrop of our two-hectare site and draws on the 'clean green' principles of sustainable operations," Mattinson adds.

Facility mix

Ōpuke has an exclusive adults-only area as well as a family-friendly hot pool area featuring an aqua play zone to encourage curiosity and adventure.

All areas are linked by an interconnected network of pools that follow the form of a river, allowing for private nooks, open spaces and ample room to explore.

PHOTO: JAMES MATTINSON



Pool water comes from the Rangitata River, which feeds off glacial Alpine meltwater

The adult's area features water jet massages, bubble therapy, sauna therapies, a cold plunge pool and a luxury relaxation area.

The offering is completed by four secluded cedar hot tubs with views across the foothills of the Southern Alps, a pool bar, a social spa hut, hot pool packages and private cabanas for the delivery of premium treatments.

The on-site spa is home to five treatment rooms, including two for couples, a four-person rasul and a relaxation lounge. Here, visitors are offered a range of treatments supplied by French spa and skincare brand, Yon-Ka.

Spa and wellness consultants Spa Vision and Spa Guru Consulting have supported the Ōpuke project since its early stages, with the scheme being developed on a turnkey basis.

This involved them working alongside product-house Kurland which has designed and supplied

a custom rasul room and Soft-Pack system – a cocoon waterbed for delivering body treatments.

Marketing the dream

"We've got a marketing plan that will roll out in phases to attract customers from Christchurch and the wider Canterbury area to kick things off. Next, we'll roll out our campaign to the whole of New Zealand and then to the rest of the globe once the borders reopen.

"We want to give everyone the opportunity to be able to experience Ōpuke," Mattinson explains, "our offering is extremely inclusive."

Ōpuke is up and running, he says the team may look at opening other sites or additional developments in or around Methven.

More: www.opuke.nz



It's crucial we eco-design packaging right from the beginning of its lifecycle, while properly managing our products' end-of-life stage

Davide Bollati, chair, Davines Group

Rethinking packaging

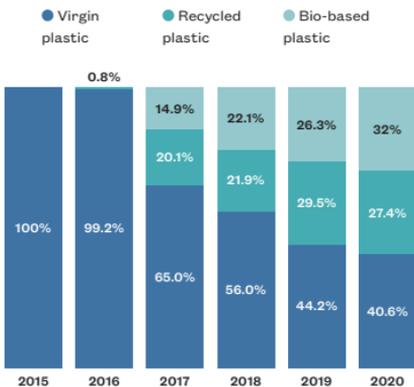
With its commitment to meeting the highest standards in relation to sustainability and regeneration, Comfort Zone is reducing its plastic footprint through the use of innovative packaging design and an important partnership to stop ocean bound plastic

Italian B Corp, The Davines Group, is renowned for its commitment to the sustainable creation and production of its result-driven Comfort Zone skincare line. Since 2014, the company has been aware of the damaging impact plastic packaging is having on the planet and has been working hard to develop innovative solutions that remove the need to use



Comfort Zone has introduced recycled glass and a refillable solution in the new Sublime Skin anti-aging range

Table: Davines Group, evolution trend of virgin recycled and bio-based plastic packaging mix



plastic, while engaging with global initiatives that help to counter its impact on the environment.

A circular approach

Although the spa and beauty sector has always been reliant on plastic packaging and it has traditionally played an important role in keeping products fresh and ensuring a safe user experience, the Davines Group has been accelerating its efforts to challenge its reliance on the material.

Through a programme of rigorous product research and development, the focus has moved away from the use of virgin plastic made from fossil fuels, towards the use of innovative packaging materials made from recycled or renewable plastic. Comfort Zone has also reduced the weight of its glass packaging and introduced fully refillable solutions, while ensuring all its packaging is recyclable.

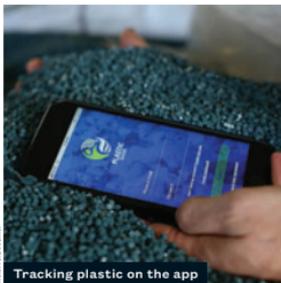
Following exhaustive scrutiny of the way it approaches the use of fossil fuel-based materials,

Without human ecology, there is simply no future

Tackling waste

Supporting sustainability initiatives enables the Comfort Zone to amplify its work to reduce its environmental impact

In autumn 2021, the Group started a plastic collection project with social enterprise, Plastic Bank (www.plasticbank.com), to prevent 100 tonnes of material being dispersed into the environment and ending up in the world's oceans.



Tracking plastic on the app



David Katz started Plastic Bank in 2013 – Comfort Zone is supporting the initiative

This initiative involves the management of ethical recycling ecosystems which are run by local people in the coastal communities of Indonesia, the Philippines and Brazil.

They gather ocean-bound plastic waste from land and beaches to stop it reaching our oceans and receive bonuses for doing so, which contribute towards the cost of food, fuel, school and health insurance, to help improve their quality of life.

Commenting on the partnership, Bollati says: "There's no social sustainability without environmental sustainability, and no progress



without respect for ecosystems and human rights. Without human ecology, there is simply no future."

the company has now updated its production processes so 59 per cent of all packaging used is recycled or bio-based plastic.

Significantly, Davines Group has reduced its reliance on plastic by a massive 631 tons since 2014, thanks to ongoing research and development into innovative, eco-friendly alternative package solutions.

Commenting, Davines Group chair, Davide Bollati, says: "We're conscious that packaging has an environmental impact and no material can be considered perfect, but properly managing our products' end-of-life stage is very important. It's crucial we eco-design the packaging right from the beginning of that lifecycle.

"We aim for simplification, by reducing the volume of the packaging components as much as possible, eliminating unnecessary plastic elements and introducing refillable solutions, just as we've done for our new Comfort Zone Sublime Skin Intensive Serum," he explains.

Plastic footprint

In 2020, the company calculated its plastic footprint using 3Ri standards (www.spabusiness.com/3ri), which revealed the business generated a total of 721.9 tons of plastic that year. This included waste produced by manufacturing and offices (27 per cent), plus the packaging of products sold worldwide (73 per cent).

These findings led to an investigation by the Group into whether its plastic waste was being correctly managed globally.

The outcome has been the development of initiatives to significantly reduce the company's environmental impact in areas of the world where there's a lack of institutions and technology to enable the full and proper recyclable process.

This has led to the partnership with Plastic Bank that will expand in 2022 to ensure an even stronger positive impact on planet and people. ●

More: www.spabusiness.com/ComfortZoneBlog

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Cultivating health

Montara Hospitality Group is creating a groundbreaking multi-generational residential wellness community, as Megan Whitby reports

In Phuket, Thailand, Bangkok-based developer Montara Hospitality Group (MHG) is busy sinking THB 6,600bn (€177.3m, US\$199.7m, £149.2m) into realising Tri Vananda - slated to be one of Asia's largest and most comprehensive residential wellness communities.

Scheduled for completion in Q4 2023 and ranging across 232-acres, the multi-generational Tri Vananda will be a sister property to established wellness destination Trisara Resort and Spa - also located in Phuket.

PHOTO: BILLY THAMMARAK



PHOTO: BILLY THAMMARAK

The new 232-acre wellness community on Phuket is aiming to be carbon neutral



The first phase includes villas, a farm and a central community house

Integrative approach

The developers of Tri Vananda – meaning forest of lasting happiness – say they expect it to mature into a community dedicated to living well in a location surrounded by lakes and forest.

The site will be anchored by a wellness resort specialising in cognitive wellbeing and integrative and functional medicine, with a focus on blending the best of medical and holistic wellness.

The project has been ongoing since 2020 and is being completed in phases, with the first phase – comprising residential show villas, a farm and plant nursery and a central community house due to be completed soon. The final phase with the central wellness resort and nature reserve is scheduled for completion in Q4 2023.

Amenities will include a health centre with consultation rooms for medical and preventative treatments and traditional Thai medicine therapies, a cognitive health centre and facilities for functional health diagnostics where residents and guests will be treated via specially tailored programmes.

The destination will have a special focus on the importance of cognitive health, the gut microbiome, respiratory health and building a strong immune system.

In addition, residents will be able to access a spa with 30 treatment rooms, separate-sex thermal rooms, relaxation spaces, a hammam, sauna and private spa suites, as well as a lakeside fitness centre with an Olympic swimming pool, gym, juice bar and lake pier for watersports.

Multi-generational

The development has been designed to support people of all ages in experiencing wellness and will include a dedicated club in the Pru Jampa Community House for young people and children, designed to help them learn about the importance of a wellness-led lifestyle and the cultivation of health and mindfulness.

Encircled by sand dunes, this community house has a bar and lounge, swimming pool, community garden, outdoor playground, function space and club areas designed especially for teens and pre-teens. ▶

The focus will be on catering for people of all ages, including families



Medical and holistic wellness will blend seamlessly together at Tri Vananda

Sue Harmsworth



One of the main differentiators of this project is the commitment to meeting each guest wherever they are on their wellness journey

Amy McDonald



Our residents and guests will enjoy access to some of the most fundamental and cherished contributors to overall wellbeing

Kittisak Pattamasavei

- ▶ The club offers a range of activities such as foraging, cooking and crafting, as well as educational experiences to enlighten younger guests on topics such as skincare, health, meditation and yoga.

Sue Harmsworth and Amy McDonald are consulting on the project, with McDonald's consultancy, Under a Tree, providing conceptual and technical pre-opening services and Harmsworth acting as a wellness advisor.

"One of the main differentiators of this project is the commitment to meeting each guest wherever they are on their own wellness journey," said McDonald. "So often wellness properties cater only for adults, but Tri Vananda also acknowledges the importance of wellness for younger family members." ▶

Living well post-COVID

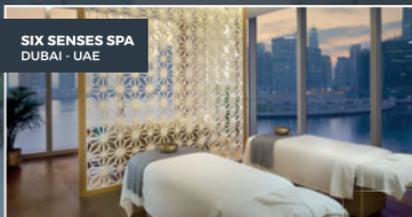
Wellness real estate and communities have been growing rapidly since the pandemic opened our eyes even more to the impact of the built environment on our wellbeing.

A recent report from the Global Wellness Institute, *Wellness Real Estate: Looking Beyond COVID-19*, confirms this shift, showing the sector experienced 22 per cent growth during 2020, despite the impact of lockdowns and travel restrictions and many industry insiders believe wellness real estate has transitioned from being a luxury into being an essential pillar of the industry. More: www.spabusiness.com/GWIWRE

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Tri Vananda - meaning
forest of lasting happiness
- will be immersed in nature

- ▶ The vision is heavily influenced by spirituality, which motivated the inclusion of a dedicated mindfulness centre with visiting monks, situated over one of the destination's six lakes, with an indoor hall and outdoor areas for meditation.

"Tri Vananda is a unique next-generation project," Harmsworth told *Spa Business*, "often wellness destinations tend to be focused on either medical or holistic wellness, but this project presents a new solution where the two are blended seamlessly together."

Accommodation on offer

The resort's accommodation offering will consist of two- or three-bedroom solar-powered villas designed by Habita Architects (www.habitaarchitects.com) in partnership with the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts (www.arsomsilp.ac.th). They'll range in size from 270sq m to 750sq m, with interior design by P49 Deesig (www.p49deesig.com).

70 villas will be designated for visiting guests, while the remaining 87 units will be sold for residential.

The low-density development will be built with sustainability at its heart and the aim of being carbon-neutral and achieving LEED certification. It will operate with environmentally-friendly practices, including a tiered wetland filtration system with a botanical garden to collect, filter and store water; an organic, non-toxic farm to supply restaurants on-site; nature trails; and renewable energy facilities, such as floating solar panels on the lakes.



The community house offers a bar and lounge area

"Our residents and guests will enjoy access to some of the most fundamental and cherished contributors to overall wellbeing, such as clean air and access to nature - which are increasingly lost in urban settings - while having access to proven health and wellness therapies and programmes," said MDG CEO Kittisak Pattamasaevi.



Megan Whitby, assistant editor,
Spa Business magazine
■ meganwhitby@leisuremedia.com

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The Alpenresort Schwarz in the Austrian Tirol is one of the first in Europe to offer cryotherapy to guests

Raising the bar

Delivering holistic, sustainable health and wellbeing experiences has always been central to the philosophy of the Me Sense Spa at Austria's five-star Alpenresort Schwarz.

The spa offering has recently been enriched and elevated by the introduction of cryogenic chambers in the form of Art of Cryo's new high-performance Vaultz V1 Lux.

Thanks to the newly-installed Art of Cryo technology, The Alpenresort Schwarz is one of the first spas in Europe to offer sophisticated cryotherapy treatment technology to its guests.

COLD GOLD

Introducing cryotherapy can be lucrative for spas, as well as offering customers a cutting-edge therapy with powerful benefits for both body and mind

Non-invasive, gentle, yet effective, cryotherapy can help ease numerous chronic health conditions, as well as disorders such as anxiety and depression. Its positive effects have been scientifically proven in three main areas; health and prevention; sport and fitness; and anti-ageing and beauty, making it ideal as a service for customers in the spa and wellness sector.

Cryotherapy exploits the difference in temperature between the user and the cryo chamber to cool the body and stimulate important body functions.

During a session - which typically lasts just three to four minutes - cooling happens extremely quickly, activating thermoreceptors in the body and causing blood vessels to contract.

After leaving the chamber, blood vessels dilate, the blood flows back and a rush of beneficial endorphins is released.

Backed by science

Art of Cryo is a market leader in whole-body cryotherapy solutions and offers evidence-based products underpinned by 30 years' experience in the field.

Its elegant chambers for whole body cryotherapy come in three lines: Single Vaultz, Vario Vaultz and Unical Vaultz.

All the high-performance chambers are powered by electricity and made to



PHOTO: ART OF CRYO

Depending on the model, operators can deliver up to 150 cryotherapy treatments per day

Rainer Bolsinger, Art of Cryo



The resort has invested in the V1 Lux chamber from Art of Cryo

the highest quality standards, making them both efficient and eco-friendly.

Each is designed and built with advanced technology, so it provides even temperature distribution to ensure the delivery of first-class treatments.

Rainer Bolsinger, Art of Cryo chief sales and marketing officer, says the brand's solutions offer an exciting opportunity for spas: "The initial investment can

be quickly repaid, due to the fact it's possible to deliver a huge number of treatments in a short time and at an extremely low marginal cost," he explains. "Depending on the model, operators can deliver up to 150 treatments per day."

● *Art of Cryo is part of industrial group L&R Kältetechnik - refrigeration tech specialists with a 30-year pedigree.* ● **More: www.artofcryo.com**



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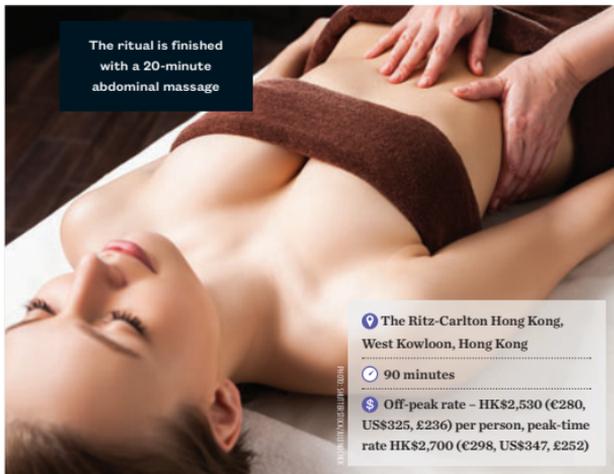


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The ritual is finished with a 20-minute abdominal massage

📍 The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong, West Kowloon, Hong Kong

🕒 90 minutes

💰 Off-peak rate – HK\$2,530 (€280, US\$325, £236) per person, peak-time rate HK\$2,700 (€298, US\$347, £252)

Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong introduces female wellbeing ritual

The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong's new spa treatment to promote feminine wellness begins with the application of a Womb Wellness Mask on the guest's lower abdomen, topped with a heat patch, to improve circulation to ease period cramps and encourage lymphatic drainage in the pelvic area.

Therapists then perform a 40-minute back massage to relieve tension caused by bras, desk-working and standing. Next, the womb mask is removed and guests receive a 30-minute Traditional Chinese Medicine breast meridian massage to encourage drainage and provide firming effects. The ritual is completed with a 20-minute abdominal massage to relieve any lingering tension.

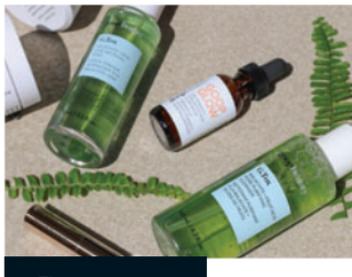
Gwyneth Paltrow's goop launches first spa treatment

The spa at Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts in Hawaii is the first in the world to offer the goop Glow Facial created by Gwyneth Paltrow's wellness and lifestyle brand.

The ritual is the brand's first spa treatment and combines facial massage, exfoliation and masking.

The signature facial is claimed to detoxify, moisturise and supercharge the skin with nutrients using clinically-tested goop skincare and a rosewater and pink clay mask from beauty and skincare brand Tammy Fender.

It starts with a deep cleanse and micro-exfoliation, then infuses skin with active ingredients – including



The goop treatment mixes facial massage, exfoliation and masking

vitamin C, hyaluronic acid, ceramides and peptides – to nourish, smooth, soften and brighten.

📍 Mauna Lani, Auberge Resorts in Hawaii, Waimea, Hawaii

🕒 50 minutes

💰 US\$265 (€229, £195) per person



MENU ENGINEERING

Chenot's new service assesses premature ageing

The Chenot Molecular Lab for Optimal Living is a new programme developed to help resolve issues associated with premature ageing.

Available as an additional service to Chenot's classic Detox retreats, participants are given blood tests that yield results based on novel mRNA-based molecular testing, using epigenetic technology to analyse gene activity and determine biological ageing status.

These tests then enable scientists to analyse the expression levels of certain

📍 Chenot Palace Weggis, Switzerland

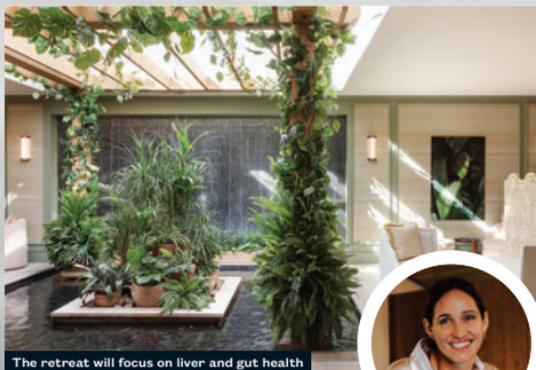
🕒 One hour

💰 1,500 CHF (€1,423, US\$1,630, £1,215)

genes associated with silent inflammation, oxidative stress, hormonal imbalance and the structural integrity of connective tissue.

Results are used to prescribe personalised interventions via the prescription of supplements and the creation of a lifestyle-based treatment plan designed to build resilience and maintain wellbeing.

Clinic results are used to design personalised treatment plans



Gleneagles explores food as medicine

Gleneagles has partnered with naturopath, functional medicine specialist and Harley Street nutritionist, Rosemary Ferguson to host two retreats in 2022.

Ferguson will focus on three key areas: liver, gut health and re-energising using nutrition and the great outdoors. Her goal is to help participants learn how to use nutrition to achieve optimal health.

The experience begins at home with a welcome pack featuring the estate's new in-house range of locally-sourced botanical oils, recipes, a three-day food plan and travel 'how-tos'. The retreat includes meals curated by Ferguson, outdoor yoga, sound baths, massage, guided countryside walks and personal consultations.

📍 The Gleneagles Hotel, Perthshire, Scotland

🕒 Three days

💰 £1,995 (€2,344, US\$2,707) + VAT

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Silvotherapy promotes healing through touching trees



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ANNA

Tree-hugging retreat launches on shores of Lake Como

Grand Hotel Tremezzo has introduced a new retreat to demonstrate how guests can harness nature to boost wellbeing.

The experience is anchored by 45-minutes of silvotherapy – a practice using nature to heal the mind and body that traditionally includes touching, stroking, leaning on or hugging trees.

During the session, a therapist leads guests through breathing and visualisation techniques to help them

📍 Grand Hotel Tremezzo, Tremezzina, Italy

🕒 Three hours

💰 €500 (US\$578, £424)

release anxieties, while they make direct contact with trees in private gardens. It's believed this process of physically reconnecting with nature helps guests reap healing mental and physical health benefits.

The offering is completed with a two-hour mindfulness ritual and a light, healthy breakfast.

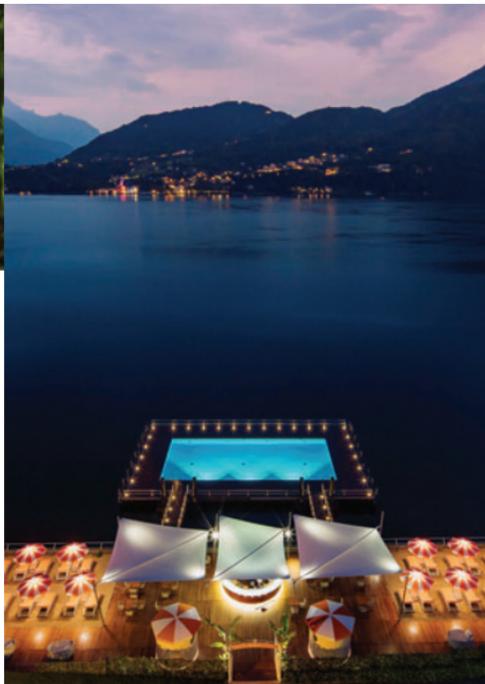


ILLUSTRATION: SHUTTERSTOCK/PAUL

📍 One&Only Reethi Rah, Maldives and One&Only Royal Mirage, Dubai, UAE

🕒 30, 60 or 90 minutes

💰 Starting cost, US\$145 (€126, £107)

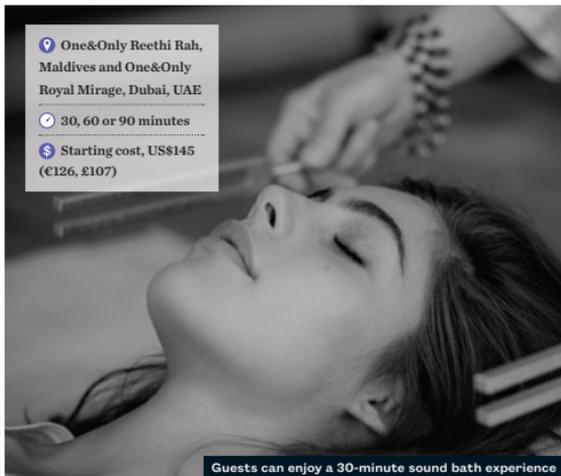


PHOTO: ESPA BY HENRIKINA

Guests can enjoy a 30-minute sound bath experience

ESPA designs holistic treatment series for One&Only

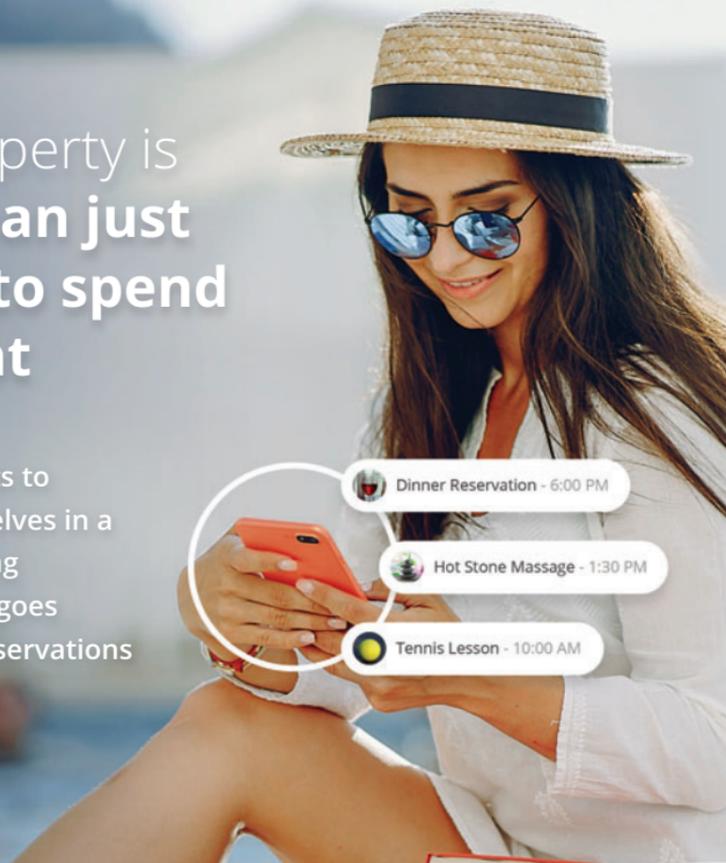
One&Only Resorts and ESPA have partnered to create Nature's Resonance by ESPA to re-connect guests' minds and bodies to the environment around them through binaural beats, soundscapes, nature and massage patterns.

"By harnessing the essence of each One&Only location, together we can deliver an unforgettable moment in some of the world's most exceptional locations of natural beauty," says Daniel Golby, general manager at ESPA.

The series is guided by the natural surroundings of each property and features three options: a 30-minute sound experience, a 60-minute body experience and a 90-minute face and body experience. The concept will be rolled out in South Africa, Mauritius and Mexico in 2022.

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MENU ENGINEERING

Chablé couples' retreat taps authentic Mayan healing

Chablé Hotels' latest couples retreat begins with a private consultation with the resort's Abuela Ak'be – a spiritual guide – to understand the couple's goals.

A traditional ceremony, complete with an energy-healing ritual is then performed, followed by a visit to a Mayan healing well.

Guided by the Abuela, the couple is 'reborn' in the waters before visiting a traditional Mexican sweat lodge for purification

and connection. The Mexican retreat's grand finale consist of a Couples' Mayan Compress Massage using a traditional poultice filled with herbs, followed by an energy cleansing ritual incorporating crystals and sacred Mayan shells.

📍 Chablé Yucatan, Yucatan, Mexico

🕒 Three days

💰 US\$2,445 (€2,109, £1,811) per couple



The guests are 'reborn' in the waters before visiting a Mexican sweat lodge (above)

This retreat offers a detoxing thermal mud ritual to nourish the skin

Vinotherapy and mud rituals inspire Four Seasons Napa Valley programming

The spa at Four Seasons Napa Valley in Calistoga has been inspired by the onsite vineyard and local Native American healing wisdom.

A signature treatment showcases the area's mineral-rich mud during a detoxifying thermal mud ritual to nourish the skin. To prepare guests for the application, therapists begin with a grounding foot soak, an aura cleansing ritual using a sage-infused flower spritz and feather wisp, followed by a marine algae and salt scrub and the application of nourishing body balm from Italian beauty brand Seed to Skin. The treatment is completed with a restorative body and craniosacral massage.

📍 Four Seasons Napa Valley, Calistoga

🕒 100 minutes

💰 US\$500 (€434, £372)



Spa Guerlain, The Woodward
Geneva



l'Art
the Art of fine linen
du linge raffiné



Photo Credit: Claire Cocano

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A photograph of two men standing side-by-side against a blue, textured background that resembles water or a spa setting. Both men are bald and have their arms crossed. The man on the left is wearing a grey suit jacket, a white shirt, a patterned tie, and dark shorts. The man on the right is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, a dark tie, and white shorts with dark stripes. A large, semi-transparent quote icon is positioned between them.

The key to success is to enable guests to experience wellbeing in a way that gratifies them

The brothers developed Bagni di Bormio, their late father's property, in 1998



The original Bagni di Bormio property now includes two hotels and two spas

Brothers in spa

Brothers Saverio and Andrea Quadrio Curzio have built a world-class wellness business based on the European bathing tradition. *Spa Business* editorial director, Liz Terry, talks to Saverio about expansion, and their first US development – QC NY in New York City

What's your story?

It all started by chance. Our father Pericles had just bought the Bagni di Bormio in northern Italy in 1982, but then he passed away and the ancient Bormio thermal baths were abandoned for 16 years.

I started redesigning the old baths in 1998. I didn't know anything about spas, so I chose to adopt a more affordable and accessible model that allowed guests to walk around the spa without the constant assistance of staff.

I would say that this model was one of the keys to success – at least initially.

We also focused first on the beauty of the old buildings and the breathtaking views that surrounded them. That first property we developed now includes a five-star hotel, a four-star hotel and two spas.

What have been the highs and lows so far?

The success was immediate; as soon as the old baths in Bormio were renovated there was a huge turnout. I would say that our most challenging project was the one in Milan (QC Terme Milano), which was the first we did without thermal water, as at the time, there were no water purification plants that met the needs of the project. ▶

With the success of
Terme Milano, we realised
the model was scalable

► **How has your strategy changed and evolved?**

In the beginning we didn't think we'd be able to replicate the model, but with the success of Terme Milano, we realised it was scalable.

You work closely with your brother Andrea – a former lawyer – give us some insights into your partnership

We work very well together, and both have our strengths; he handles more of the operational part of the business and I run the developmental side. We both share a passion for spas and wellness so we often go to spas together.

You both travel the world to find the best models and inspiration to inform your developments – how important is that educational travel?

Travelling, especially before the world of the internet, was and is essential to see what our competitors are doing.

It enables us to identify many details that are not noticeable from photographs – experiencing something first-hand gives us different perspectives and sparks countless new ideas.

Can you describe the business as it exists today?

We own and operate 10 working spas. Five of them are resorts with overnight accommodations, the rest are day spas.

We're opening our first US location in New York in 2022 as well as opening on Lake Garda and also in the Engadine in Switzerland.

We're also working on a second location with a hotel and a spa in Milan. ►

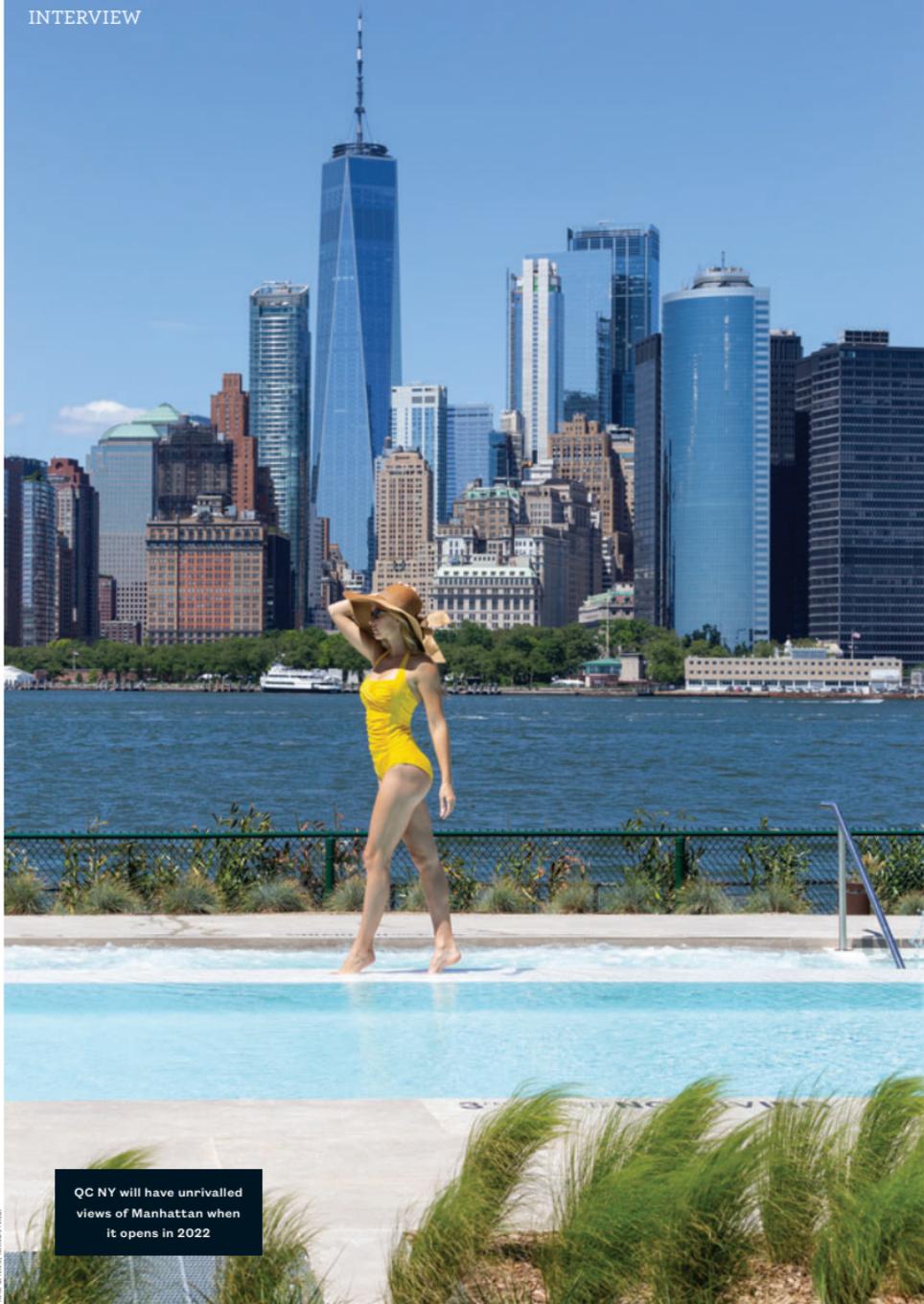


QC Terme Milano (above). A new hotel and spa in the city is currently in development

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INTERVIEW



QC NY will have unrivalled views of Manhattan when it opens in 2022

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See QC Terme's current pricing structure at www.spabusiness.com/QCpricing

Entrusting this project, in such an iconic location as Governors Island in New York, to a company such as ours that was not present in the United States was an act of courage



Saverio (left) and Andrea (right) have developed a spa model ripe for expansion

► **Tell us more about your New York property**

The New York project will be the most substantial for QC Terme in 2022. It's located on Governors Island and is a classic QC Terme day spa.

The most amazing feature of the New York property is the outlook. The two pools have the most incredible, extraordinary view, with Manhattan laid out across the water.

What did you feel when you first saw the site at Governors Island?

I immediately envisioned the design and knew that I wanted to build pools exactly where we built them.

Was the deal straightforward in terms of getting the site, or did you have to fight for it?

The Trust of Governors Island has proven to be a very good partner. They are courageous, because entrusting this project in such an iconic location to a company that was not present in the United States was an act of courage. We hope to be able to repay their trust, by building the awareness of Governors Island.

What's your inspiration for the New York development?

Ours is a well-established model, so we're working hard to maintain the model we've built over the years. This means it will be very similar to those we have in Italy.

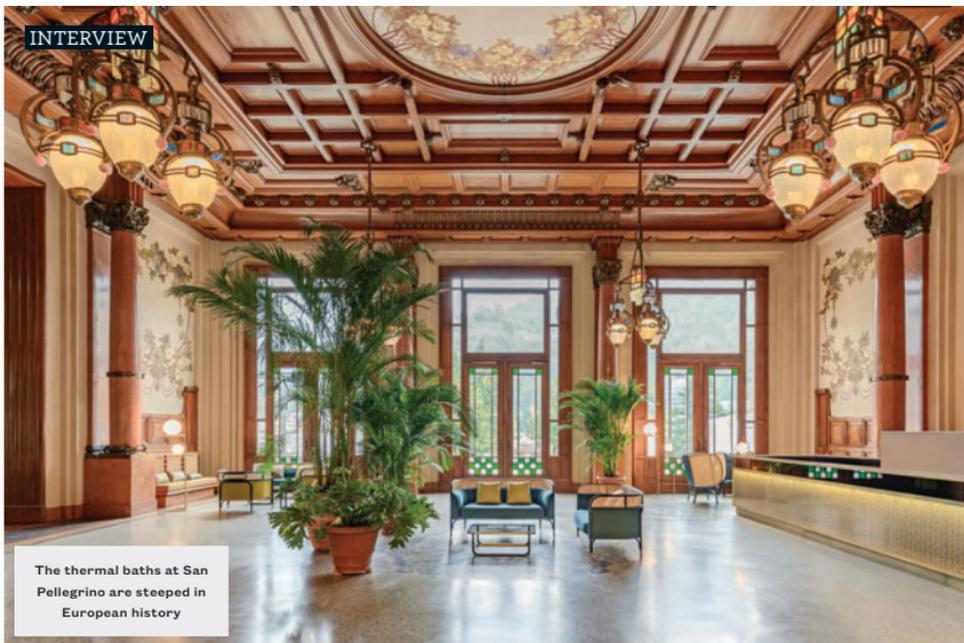
At our spas in Milan and Rome, most especially, we already have many American customers who greatly appreciate our model, so we know this approach will work.

What reaction are you getting from New Yorkers to the concept?

The reaction so far has been very enthusiastic!

What treatments will you offer in New York?

Our wellness programmes will include hot tubs, saunas, Turkish baths, relaxation rooms, restaurants, bars and massage and beauty treatments.



The thermal baths at San Pellegrino are steeped in European history

► **How many guests did you welcome in 2019 across all your spas?**

We had 1 million guests in 2019.

How has the business been doing during the pandemic?

We were closed for almost a year. The good news is that after eight months of closures – between October 2020 and June 2021 – in the months since reopening, we've had about the same revenues as in 2019.

More generally, what's the key to running a successful thermal spa?

The key to success is to enable guests to experience wellbeing in a way that gratifies them.

You're committed to preserving a sense of place and history and to restoring old buildings. Why is this and how does this set you apart from other spa developers?

In any city or building that we renovate, we put ourselves in the position of our guests. We try to bring the Italian character of the Roman baths to each location, so people don't forget the rich history that already exists there.

Rather than remake it, we use the historical aspects of the buildings to enhance the richness and beauty of the experience.

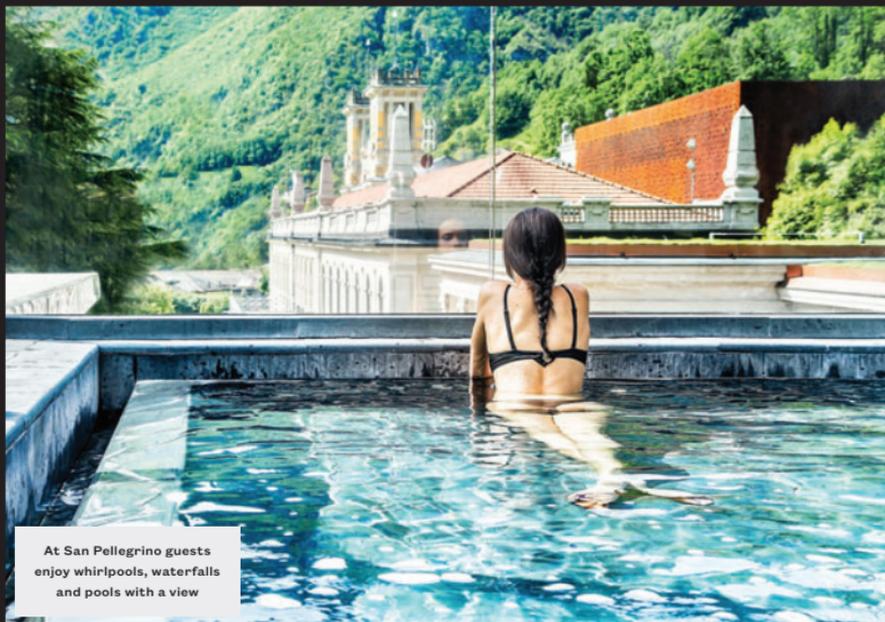
The setting of the spa at San Pellegrino is extraordinary – resplendent with restored frescoes, columns and ceilings from the early 1900s, as well as a fragrant lime walk

You have some very special properties in your portfolio, such as San Pellegrino. Can you describe these for *Spa Business* readers who don't know about your work?

We build our spa in places where there was either a tradition of spas, or in places that are characterised by environmental or architectural beauty. Often in environmentally beautiful places there are also very beautiful historical buildings. Governors Island, for example, has very beautiful buildings, with the most stunning view of New York.

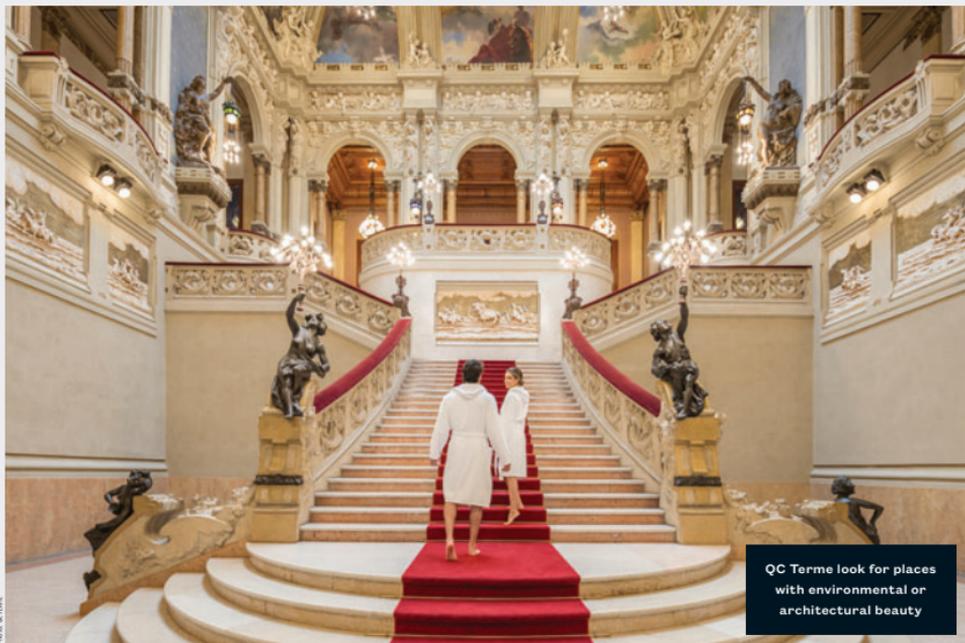
How will you develop the business going forward?

I would like to develop other spas around the model of QC NY in other cities in the United States. ►



At San Pellegrino guests enjoy whirlpools, waterfalls and pools with a view

PHOTO: G. TOSCANI



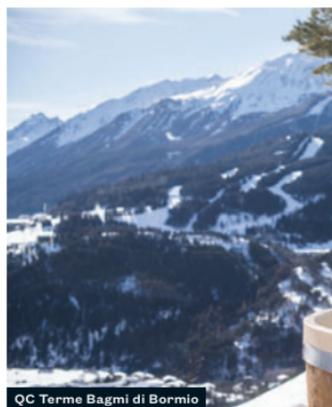
QC Terme look for places with environmental or architectural beauty

PHOTO: G. TOSCANI

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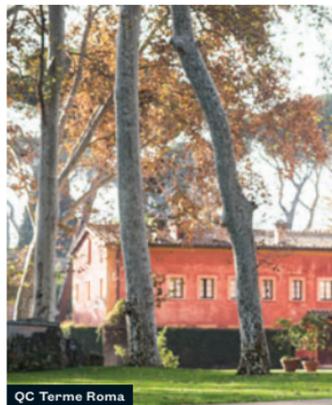
QC Terme Pré Saint Didier



QC Terme Bagni di Bormio



QC Terme Chamonix



QC Terme Roma

THE PORTFOLIO

QC Terme Bagni di Bormio

LOCATION: Stelvio National Park, Bormio
 COUNTRY: Italy
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness hotel, thermal bath

QC Terme Chamonix Mont Blanc

LOCATION: Chamonix
 COUNTRY: France
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness centre

QC Terme Dolomiti

LOCATION: Val di Fassa, Dolomites
 COUNTRY: Italy
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Thermal bath

QC Terme Milano

LOCATION: Porta Romana
 COUNTRY: Italy
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness centre

QC NY

LOCATION: Governors Island, New York City
 COUNTRY: US
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness centre

QC Terme Pré Saint Didier

LOCATION: Valle d'Aosta
 COUNTRY: Italy
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness hotel, thermal baths, wellness centre

QC Terme Roma

LOCATION: Fiumicino, Rome
 COUNTRY: Italy
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness hotel, wellness centre

QC Terme San Pellegrino

LOCATION: Val Brembana, San Pellegrino
 COUNTRY: Italy
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness hotel, wellness centre

QC Terme Torino

LOCATION: Crocetta, Turin
 COUNTRY: Italy
 WHAT'S ON OFFER: Wellness centre



PHOTO: STUBBINS



PHOTO: STUBBINS

QC Terme Dolomiti



PHOTO: STUBBINS



PHOTO: STUBBINS

QC Terme Torino

Wellness Hotels

Grand Hotel Bagni Nuovi

Alpine resort

LOCATION: Bormio

COUNTRY: Italy

Hotel Bagni Vecchi

Historical resort

LOCATION: Bormio

COUNTRY: Italy

QC Room San Pellegrino

Unconventional stay

LOCATION: San Pellegrino

COUNTRY: Italy

QC Termemontebianco

Mountain resort

LOCATION: Pré Saint Didier

COUNTRY: Italy



QC Termemontebianco

QC Termeroma

Country chic resort

LOCATION: Rome

COUNTRY: Italy

Villa Bagni di Bormio

Deluxe Apartment

LOCATION: Bormio

COUNTRY: Italy

Six Senses Places will be built in cities around the world to support Six Senses' resort customers when they return home

Everyone's talking about...

Property investment

Reductions in travel and the impact of homeworking have changed where people spend their time. How will this impact investment in the sector? Karen Maxwell investigates

The spa and wellness industries are largely real estate-based, meaning property sits at the heart of most industry investments and constitutes a large part of their value and a significant proportion of their cost base.

So what impacts will the pandemic have on operator and investor property holdings and what new threats and opportunities will these impacts present over the coming months and years?

The pandemic has had a major impact on the movement of people, which in turn is changing the game in terms of location and customer markets.

The UN World Tourism Organization reports that disruptions to travel saw a 76 per cent reduction in international tourist arrivals in the year to September 2021 and an 85 per cent reduction in air reservations in the same timeframe, meaning footfall in locations which depend on international travel has been severely reduced.

In addition, the pandemic has forced many people to work from home, with major corporations predicting that a combination of remote working and in-office working practices are likely to persist for some time.

All this is changing the shape of where people need services to be located and we expect this to impact property values and investment portfolios as the shakeout from the pandemic continues.

There's some better news too, as in some parts of the world, people's spending power has been preserved by government interventions and furlough schemes, as well as reductions in commuting costs, meaning they still have disposable income, but they're spending it more on 'local' wellness.

We ask our *Spa Business* panel of experts how these trends will impact property portfolios and what innovations we can expect to see.

Neil Jacobs Six Senses

There are big shifts going on in the real estate market in terms of consumer priorities and developers are finally seeing the value of wellness.

Demand for new deals has almost doubled in the last 18 months as a result.

Consumers increasingly want wellness to be flexible and integrated into their lives, so we've been developing new combinations of facilities that fuse wellness, sustainability, activity and socialising to create communities.

We're launching a new club concept called Six Senses Place. The clubs won't be clinical, they'll be fun, social spaces and everything will have a wellness element, from the cocktails at the bar - which will be made with botanicals



SENSES/RE COURTESY

grown in the rooftop farm - to the facilities on offer.

They'll open in London and New York and we're also looking at Bangkok, Shanghai, the Loire Valley, Istanbul, Rome and Lisbon to creating a global network.

Launching Six Senses Place gives us three complementary offerings and we're planning some cluster developments that include them all - a Six

Our new Six Senses Place club concept will allow club members to continue their wellness journey once they're back in their home town

Senses resort or hotel and spa, a Six Senses Residences - with wellness built in - and the new Six Senses Place club concept.

Building these together will create synergies between the three elements, so if you're staying at a Six Senses hotel which has a Six Senses Place and you want to enjoy the Eat with Six Senses programme, you'll be able to order it from room service, for example.

Six Senses Place clubs will also enable hotel and resort guests to continue their wellness journey once

they're back in their hometown and some developers are even planning to include a membership of Six Senses Place in with the price of a residential unit, so they become vibrant communities.

We expect to see more developments where residences eclipse the hotels in scale, as consumer demand for wellness residential communities grows.

All these ideas were in the pipeline before COVID, but the pandemic has accelerated these trends.

Scott Schubiger Massage Heights

We're witnessing a migration away from central business districts, with more people moving to the suburbs and as a result, landlords are on the lookout for strong, sustainable businesses to fill this void.

Real estate developers are scrambling to accelerate their 'live, work, play' vision of building mixed-use retail and living spaces for residents to enjoy.

We're also seeing spa and wellness operators pivoting from standalone retail sites to explore partnerships with hotels and fitness chains.

With some larger fitness facilities not maximising key metrics, such as revenue per sq ft/m, for example, these businesses are looking to bring in spa and wellness



offerings. In essence, carving out square footage to appeal to the same customer base.

A further trend is that many entrepreneurs are opening several brands in the health, beauty and spa space in the same location. This allows for the same consumer to frequent all the facilities in a one-stop shop visit, which may include working out, having a beauty treatment and getting a massage - which

We're seeing spa and wellness operators pivoting from standalone sites to explore partnerships with hotels and fitness chains

is appealing for the savvy operator of all three concepts.

This situation has helped our Massage Heights 'retreat' strategy, as our members have short drive times and accessible parking which has helped to push up member sales. Our revenue model is appealing to landlords who gain greater comfort knowing that the brand and business can weather the unforeseen.

Our retreats continue to be in strong demand to - in some cases - outstrip supply. With a rental requirement of approximately 250sq m,

our franchisee premises can fill an empty retail void and we're also exploring new terms in lease agreements with landlords and within our franchisee contracts.

Massage Heights is on track to produce all-time record sales this year, largely due to the fact we have excellent franchisee partners, a strong unit-economic model where 83 per cent of members have continued to pay their monthly fees throughout the pandemic and due to consumers' new focus on self-care.

Charlie Thompson The Massage Company

It's fascinating to see how real estate has changed since COVID-19 swung into town. There's less appetite for larger retail developments, as attention turns towards a semi-residential, semi-suburban 'smaller is better' retail model that enables 20-30 units to form part of a neighbourhood community.

Within that model, there's greater appetite for wellness zones, evidenced by landlords' increasing focus on tenants such as yoga, fitness and spa to fit a growing expectation of wellness options within communities.

This shift in real estate is allowing more choice for consumers. The 'little and often' drop-in wellness experience is easier for people to fit into their schedule when it's delivered in high street city centre or residential



locations, and although these smaller units mean less rent per square metre for landlords, they can attract a more diverse tenant mix.

It's all about creating longer dwell times. For example, The Massage Company attracts people to retail areas so they can enjoy a wellbeing experience, then have a coffee, lunch or shop. Members visit at least once a month, which offers potential business benefits to adjacent retailers.

People will be less willing to travel if they're able to get a wellness experience closer to home

Regarding location, in the UK, I've seen two or three spa and wellbeing projects recently move into central London and add childcare to their mix.

Although private operators and investors may head into these glamorous locations, I think the commercial wealth – investment banks and investment houses – will choose semi-residential areas, where they may already have properties, to develop spa and wellness offerings.

Business will be tougher for hotel operators that have bolted on spas to increase weekend occupancy at motorway junctions away from town centres, because people

will be less willing to travel if they're able to get a wellness experience closer to home.

Outside the UK, short-haul wellness destinations are likely to continue to appeal to European and British visitors. However, I'm not confident long-haul destinations, such as The Maldives and Mauritius, will be back up and running that quickly. They're attractive for the European, Asian and UK markets, but the challenge now is getting and keeping staff due to the variables in current occupancy levels. These could be strong in peak periods, but other seasons are likely to be short and then the value of that real estate will drop.

Ben Godon Colliers

We've seen a shift of spa and wellness destinations from urban to coastal and country locations. This is partially due to consumers' response to the pandemic where there's been a greater focus on health and wellbeing and people working from home and having more disposable income to spend on spa treatments or mini-breaks, due to saving on commuting costs.

We're also witnessing a shift to residential locations, as opposed to city centres to capture those working closer to home. These locations provide smaller niche offerings and emerging wellness treatments, as opposed to the traditional



full-service spa offerings. This is due to the lack of space available to provide full-service treatments locally, and also to manage operational costs.

Hotels with a good leisure and spa offering have always targeted local residential markets because they're more likely to secure regular

Some people working from home have more disposable income to spend on spa treatments or mini-breaks due to saving on commuting costs

income for these specialist facilities from local residents as opposed to hotel guests, who often have complimentary access to some spa offerings included in their room rate.

Optimal hotel developments are those with multiple income streams, whether that's spa or leisure facilities, meeting and events space, or an interesting food and beverage offer, making it not only attractive to guests, but also locals.

Some are suggesting that hotels with spa offerings could reposition as private members' clubs to gain subscription revenues. However, the business model for these clubs can be tricky to make profitable, and only very strong propositions in the right locations with a very defined client base survive. Also, repositioning a business from a hotel to private members' club would be difficult to pull off.

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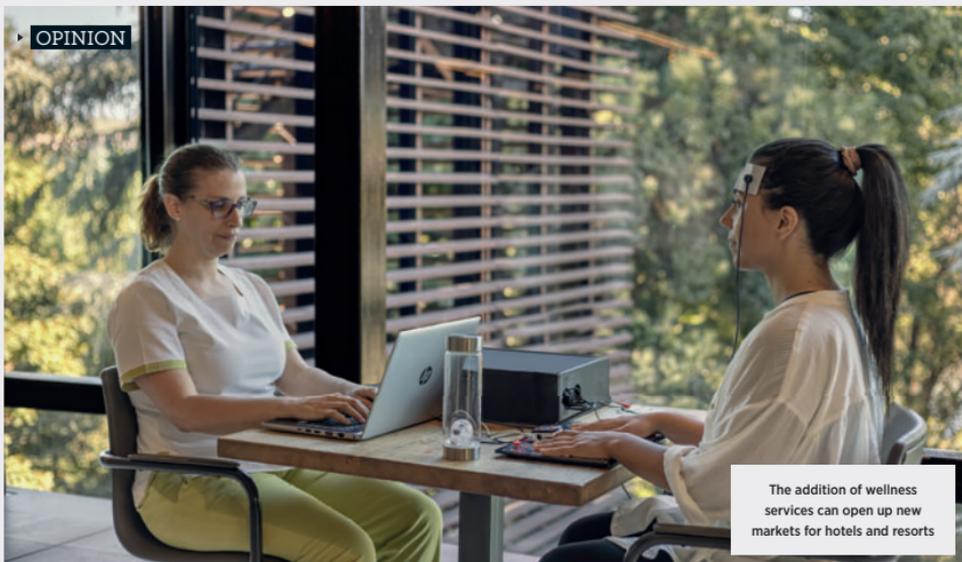
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The addition of wellness services can open up new markets for hotels and resorts

Roger Allen CEO RLA Global Group

Due to the outstanding performance of the leisure market since the start of the pandemic, resort assets have grown significantly in their appeal to investors – partly because of the swift return of demand from holidaymakers, who are eager to travel again after lengthy lockdowns.

We expect products that are close to nature to be especially of interest, due to consumers' increased appetite for healthy outdoor experiences. Many guests are also ready to pay more money in order to feel safe at a resort. Price is really not a factor for many people if they feel they're in a safe place.

Recent merger and acquisition deals by hotel groups and private equity investors bear this out, showing that leisure is where the current market is at, while the trends indicate that resort and leisure assets will continue to lead the recovery in the immediate future.



Our research shows that hotels with no wellness have had little ability to adapt since the start of the pandemic, not being able to offset losses in room revenue – whereas hotels with wellness report gross operating profit per available room (GOPPAR) levels 10 times higher than hotels with no wellness.

The numbers are in line with previous trends, but the pandemic deepened the gap in 2020.

These findings serve as a general indicator for investors, but they should not only look at the potential profit

Hotels with wellness report gross operating profits 10 times higher than hotels with no wellness

from wellness, but also at the impact such operations have on the performance of all hotel departments and on net operating income that drives the direct internal rate of return of the investment.

We're still seeing some savvy investors who are anticipating the acquisition of distressed assets and expecting discounts of up to 30 per cent.

However these deals are proving difficult to find, as the owners that can afford to are holding on to underperforming assets in order to minimise discounts at the point of sale.

It's certainly an interesting time for property companies as they navigate the new real estate market, which is seeing more hybrid real estate, such as co-living and co-working, serviced

and long-stay apartment models that cater for a new type of lifestyle and living.

Some city hotels are converting meeting space into specialised health or medical facilities to cater for guests seeking comprehensive wellness experiences, while others are introducing in-room wellness options, or offering more neighbourhood leisure or sport experiences to better attract guests.

The trends in co-living and co-working are also playing a role.

Thinking outside the box is vital. We've seen many examples of this, with certain resorts accelerating their plans to add standalone villas or residences to better serve the demands of the luxury market segment.



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Crossing the watershed

The Global Wellness Institute has taken a deep dive into the economic status of the US\$4.4tr global wellness economy.

Kath Hudson shares some of the fascinating insights

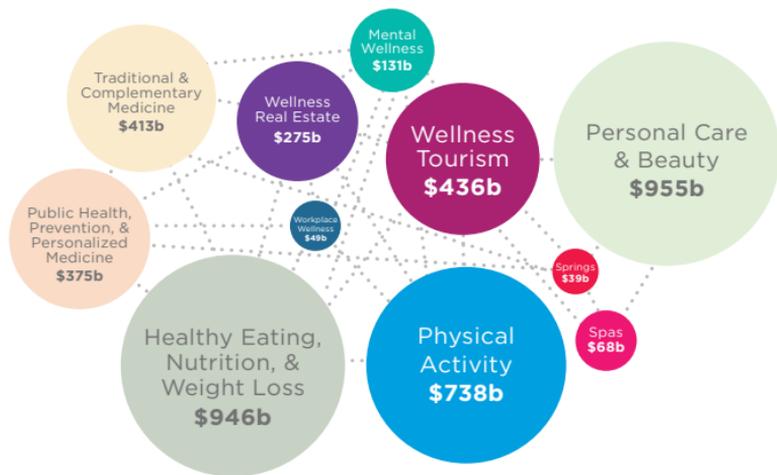
A new report from the Global Wellness Institute (GWI), *The Global Wellness Economy: Looking Beyond Covid* updates the GWI's previous reports in 2016 and 2018/19 (www.spabusiness.com/GWI2016 and www.spabusiness.com/GWI2018).

The new study was carried out by GWI senior research fellows and co-authors, Ophelia Yeung and Katherine Johnston, working alongside research fellow Tonia Callender.

"This research update is crucial, because 2020 is the watershed year that will forever divide history – and the trajectory of the growth of the wellness economy – into 'before' and 'after' COVID-19," says Yeung.

"When we analyse how different wellness markets performed in the past year, it's natural to want to compare them and label winners and losers. But there is no question that wellness – as a concept, as a lifestyle priority, and consumer value – is a big winner from the pandemic."

GLOBAL WELLNESS ECONOMY: \$4.4 trillion in 2020



Note: Numbers do not add to total due to overlap in sectors.
Source: Global Wellness Institute



GLOBAL WELLNESS
INSTITUTE™

Spending in three world regions accounted for 90 per cent of the global wellness economy



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

“This research update is crucial, because 2020 is the watershed year that will forever divide history”

Ophelia Yeung, GWI senior research fellow

THE FINDINGS

- The team found the sector showed an annual growth rate of 6.6 per cent between 2017 and 2019, increasing in size from \$413tr (€363tr, £309tr) in 2017 to \$4.9tr (€4.37tr, £3.67tr) in 2019. In 2020 it fell by 11 per cent to \$4.4tr (€3.93tr, £3.29tr).
- Asia-Pacific was one of the fastest-growing wellness markets from 2017 to 2019 (8.1 per cent growth). Buffered by high growth rates for wellness real estate, as well as public health, prevention and personalised medicine, it was the region that shrank the least during the pandemic (-6.4 per cent).
- While North America enjoyed the most growth between 2017 and 2019, it has also been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic (-13.4 per cent).
- The Latin America-Caribbean regional wellness market saw the greatest decline (-22.1 per cent).
- From 2017 to 2019 the spa industry was growing at a rapid pace, but revenues fell by 38.6 per cent in 2020 to \$68bn (€60.7bn, £51bn). It's still difficult to assess the number of permanent business closures, but an estimated 22 new destination spas opened during 2020.

HOTSPOTS

- Spending in three regions accounted for 90 per cent of the entire global wellness economy in 2020. Asia Pacific was the largest at \$1.5tr (€1.34bn, £1.12bn); North America accounted for \$1.3tr (€1.16tr, £970bn); and Europe stood at \$1.1tr (€975bn, £830bn).
- Per capita, spending on wellness is also significantly higher in North America \$3,567 (€3,181, £2,670) and Europe \$1,236 (€1,102, £925) than other regions of the world.

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GWI predicts the global wellness economy will grow by 9.9% annually, reaching nearly US\$7tr in 2025

CHANGING FORTUNES

- Despite the pandemic, some sub-sectors of the wellness market expanded in 2020. Wellness real estate grew by 22.1 per cent. The market for mental wellness services expanded by 7.2 per cent, as people downloaded apps and bought accessories such as weighted blankets.
- Public health, prevention and personalised medicine grew by 4.5 per cent. Healthy eating, nutrition and weight loss grew by 3.6 per cent, as people looked for supplements and foods which would boost their immunity. Although the physical activity sector shrank overall, the fitness technology sub-sector exploded by 29.1 per cent.
- The lockdowns inevitably led to a contraction in some sectors. Personal care and beauty shrank by 13 per cent and spending on physical activity was down by 15.5 per cent as gyms were forced to close by governments.
- Adversely affected by the travel restrictions and stay at home orders, wellness tourism was reduced by 39.5 per cent; spas lost 38.5 per cent and thermal springs were down by 38.9 per cent.
- Those which took the greatest hit also have the highest growth projections. GWI predicts the global wellness economy will grow by 9.9 per cent annually, reaching \$5tr (€4.46tr, £3.74tr) in 2021 and nearly \$7tr (€6.24tr, £5.24tr) in 2025.



WELLNESS TOURISM & SPAS

- The GWI research team found the global spa industry is heavily concentrated in Europe, Asia and North America, with the top five countries – US, China, Germany, Japan and France – accounting for 50 per cent of global revenues in 2020. The top 20 countries represent 78 per cent of the global market.
- Asia-Pacific has the largest number of spas and Europe has the highest spa revenues. Day spas serving local customers were more buffered against pandemic-related decline than destination spas, which were hit by travel restrictions and saw the greatest revenue declines in 2020.
- The wellness sectors most adversely affected by COVID-19 were those requiring a physical presence, so there was a drop in wellness tourism, with 601 million trips taken in 2020, compared to 936 million in 2019.
- Europe recorded the largest number of wellness trips and North America leads in terms of expenditure. However, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East and North Africa were the fastest-growing regions prior to the pandemic.



Spending in three regions – Asia Pacific, North America and Europe – accounted for 90% of the entire global wellness economy in 2020

THERMAL/MINERAL SPRINGS

- Appealing to an expanding segment of customers seeking to connect with nature, experience cultural traditions and pursue alternative modalities for healing, rehabilitation and prevention, thermal springs were among the fastest-growing wellness sectors from 2017-2019. Revenues were growing by 6.8 per cent annually during this time but fell by 38.9 per cent from 2019-2020.
- Asia-Pacific and Europe account for 96 per cent of revenues and 94 per cent of establishments in this sector. There were at least 115 new openings from 2018 to 2020 across every region: 17 in 2020 at least 25 in 2021 and there are more than 140 projects in the pipeline.
- Not all thermal springs fared badly. In the US, China, Australia and New Zealand some reported growth in attendances of 10 to 20 per cent, as customers flocked to COVID-safe outdoor activities.
- Indoor thermal facilities saw business decimated by restrictions. The sector is facing possible bankruptcy in Romania, due to long closures and insufficient government aid and in countries such as Slovenia, Italy and the Czech Republic, governments are offering state-subsidised vouchers to consumers to boost the sector.



The top 20 countries represent 78% of the global spa and wellness market

MENTAL HEALTH

- The pandemic has changed how we view self-care, which has become a means for self-preservation and survival. Self-care is no longer something that is practised for an hour a day a few times a month, or on vacation. Self-care is becoming increasingly embedded into daily life via home-cooked meals, human connections, good sleep, time in nature, financial wellness, search for purpose, meaning and much more.
- With 15 per cent of the global population suffering from mental health issues and substance-use disorders, as well as rising numbers of cases of dementia, stress, worry, sadness, burnout and loneliness, it is a dire landscape for mental health.
- Mental wellness offers a path forward to help meet widespread needs and increase wellbeing for all. The number of people using the top three global meditation apps rose by 59 per cent in 2020.
- Although the pandemic has caused more mental health issues, this has reduced the stigma of mental illness and has brought greater attention to ways of coping with adversity, improving resilience and moving towards flourishing.

Since the start of the pandemic, self-care has increasingly become embedded into daily life

Fast facts: The Global Wellness Economy

The value of the 11 segments of the \$4.4tr (€3.92tr, £3.29tr) global wellness industry assessed by the report – in order of value. (all \$ are US\$)

Traditional and complementary medicine

\$413bn (€363bn, £309bn)

Wellness real estate £275bn (€245bn, £206bn)

Mental wellness \$131bn (€117bn, £98bn)

Wellness tourism \$436bn (€389bn, £326bn)

Personal care and beauty

\$955bn (€852bn, £715bn)

Public health prevention and personalised medicine \$375bn (€334bn, £281bn)

Workplace wellness \$49bn (€44bn, £37bn)

Healthy eating, nutrition and weight loss \$946bn (€844bn, £708bn)

Physical activity \$738bn (€658bn, £552bn)

Spas \$68bn (€61, £51bn)

Thermal/mineral springs \$39bn (€35bn, £29bn)

Credit: The Global Wellness Economy: Looking Beyond Covid





Wellness travel will be boosted by people taking health sabbaticals

WELLNESS TRAVEL

- The grey area between wellness tourism and medical tourism is growing as further services are added, such as DNA testing, executive checkups, hydrotherapy/balneotherapy, detoxes and cleanses.
- There's movement in two directions when it comes to medical integration. The pandemic has accelerated the incorporation of medical offerings into spa and wellness businesses, while some medical spas are transforming their spaces to become less sterile and more spa-like.
- Wellness travel is likely to be boosted by a growing trend of people taking wellness sabbaticals or workcations. Some consumers are choosing hotels that promise to support their sleep, for

example with soundproofing, circadian lighting, air filtration, and fitness facilities on-site.

- There are indications the pandemic has accelerated demand for slow travel, transformative travel and regenerative travel. This is travel that's goal-based and values-driven, involving personal growth and an awareness of the social and environmental impact of tourism on the destination.
- We will see consumers questioning their own environmental and social footprints and making choices based on these concerns. The rising consumer appreciation of, and desire for, nature will push wellness businesses in a more regenerative and environmental direction.

THE BOUNCEBACK

- There are indications of a strong resurgence in demand for spa and wellness. Hunger for touch and human connections, travel and nature and wellness experiences is intense after all the social distancing, quarantining and staying at home. Guests are willing to have longer stays, spend more and try out new modalities.
- During lockdowns, research has been conducted into brain health, the gut microbiome, sleep hygiene, breathwork, sound healing, nature and other modalities, which offer exciting potential moving forward.



Find out more about the GWI's research at: www.globalwellnessinstitute.org
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*The LemiLemi treatment
leaves guests feeling
physically, mentally and
emotionally relaxed*



Jean Guy de Gabriac developed the LemiLemi protocol as a signature treatment for Lemi's Aemotio Spa bed

Creative fusion

Lemi and Jean Guy de Gabriac have joined forces to create a LemiLemi-inspired signature protocol that allows guests to float into total relaxation



PHOTO: GUY DE GABRIAC

Inspired by the Hawaiian LomiLomi technique, the LemiLemi signature protocol promotes a total mind/body connection – the flow is like a dance

Jean Guy de Gabriac,
Tip Touch

Multi-functionality has been a design focus for Italian wellness manufacturer Lemi throughout its 32 years of operation.

The company's in-house research and development team has a long history of working with industry experts to deliver stylish, high-quality treatment beds that enable operators to create exceptional massage experiences for their customers, within a wide variety of spa and wellness environments.

These collaborations often include the creation of signature massages that suit Lemi's unique bed designs.

Lemi's partnership with industry innovator, educator and CEO of Tip Touch International, Jean Guy de Gabriac, resulted in the creation of signature massages, developed in 2019, specifically for two versions of Lemi's Spa Dream massage table – an 'Ocean Dream' massage was created for the water table and a 'Sand Tide' massage for the Quartz table.

The LemiLemi Experience

Now the success of these signature treatments has paved the way for the most recent collaboration – the Aemotio Spa protocol. This consists of four modules, one of which is called the LemiLemi massage.

This unique treatment, based on the Hawaiian LomiLomi massage, offers a total-body experience and is performed on Lemi's multi-functional Aemotio Spa bed, which – as with all Lemi products – is designed and manufactured in Italy and has a 10-year guarantee.

The Aemotio Spa has been an industry favourite for many years. The solid curved bed has a height-adjustable heated water mattress, a full-length Vichy shower arm with six water jets, a control panel, bolero hand shower and steam bath function.

Chromotherapy effects enhance the customer's wellbeing experience during their treatment, with a choice of seven colours.



PHOTO: LEMI

PHOTO: LEMI

The Aemotio Spa bed can also be used for a range of treatments using the steam bath (above) and Vichy shower (right)



Creative freedom

"I was given carte blanche to create three signature massage protocols to highlight the sensorial features of the award-winning LemiLemi massage tables," says de Gabriac. "The aim was to help spa owners and managers elevate wellness sensations by combining high-tech with high-touch and to encourage them to find their own creative ways to use the beds.

"Inspired by the Hawaiian LomiLomi technique, the LemiLemi signature protocol is much more than just gliding forearm strokes," says de Gabriac, "it promotes a total mind/body connection with mana – the energy of life – and the flow is like a dance, moving up and down, right and left, front and back.

"The Aemotio table allows simultaneous work on the front and back, with the client lying face up during the whole treatment and results in guests feeling relaxed physically, mentally and emotionally," he explains.

Matteo Brusaverri, GM of Lemi believes the new treatment will inspire spa and wellness operators, saying: "The LemiLemi signature protocol on the Aemotio Spa illustrates the bed's full treatment potential, offering

an excellent example of how spa operators can create unique customer experiences to ensure guests benefit from all the wellbeing experiences built into its unique modular design."

The bed's many functions can also be used to deliver a wide range of innovative, whole-body treatments that meet customers' specific needs, including hydrotherapy, peels, slimming, toning, facials and exfoliation.

When enjoyed as a steam bath, customers are immersed in delicate perfume-infused steam amid a programme of sensory light effects, which creates a soothing, sensual treatment experience.

More: www.lemispa.com



PHOTO: LEMI



The LemiLemi signature protocol offers an excellent example of how spa operators can create unique customer experiences using Lemi beds

Matteo Brusaverri, Lemi

About the LemiLemi massage

The LemiLemi massage involves wide, fluid massage movements, which can either be gentle and enveloping to mimic sea waves, or very intense, using the therapist's forearms or knuckles – depending on customer preference.

The bed's heated water mattress creates a floating sensation to promote total body relaxation, while the therapist massages the upper and lower areas

of the body, allowing the customer the opportunity to enjoy a back massage while remaining face up on the bed.

The therapist's circular hand movements, the use of scented oils, the delicate touch sensation from the Vichy shower and the warmth and gentle rocking motion of the water mattress create a multi-sensory experience that promotes total relaxation and allows the customer to enjoy powerful massage therapy benefits.

Michael Roizen & Victor Koo

The Global Wellness Summit brought the industry together in Boston recently for three days of networking and idea exchanges. *Spa Business* caught up with this year's influential co-chairs



'Longevity is the next disruptor' is my new trademark



PHOTO: MICHAEL ROIZEN

Dr Michael Roizen

Chief wellness officer, the Cleveland Clinic and GWS 2021 co-chair

Tell us about your journey from the world of allopathic medicine to the world of prevention. What have been the ah-ha! moments?

When I started out, I wanted to run an intensive care unit, so I focused on internal medicine and anaesthesia.

By 1979, I was asked to co-run the cardiovascular anesthesia section at the University of California San Francisco and I soon realised surgeons were difficult to deal with, but cared deeply about their patients' outcomes and about them returning to normal function as soon as possible.

When I began to look at the data, I saw the most important factor for reducing complications was the patient's age. Ten years made a three-fold difference to survival rates - regardless of the surgical team. I started to study how we could change the physiological age of people to make them 10 years' younger in the period surrounding their surgery.

In learning how to do this, I figured we could make surgical outcomes significantly better by helping them get healthier before surgery. We focused on managing their blood pressure, getting them to eat a healthy diet and doing physical activities such as walking. These were simple changes that people could easily do on their own, but most people still don't do them.

So the next step was figuring out how to motivate people, and that's when I started working on my book *RealAge* (www.spabusiness.com/RealAge), which helps show people how you can fundamentally change your physiological age with some simple lifestyle adjustments, such as to your diet and exercise regimes.

By 1993, I started to spread the word through a series of additional books, and we've now developed *RealAge* into an app that's been downloaded by 72 million people worldwide.

You've led significant improvements to the US health system, what further changes are on your to-do list?

One of the things I'm focusing on now is that there will very likely be a major change in longevity in the coming decade. 'Longevity is the next disruptor' is my new trademark – and passion – we need to help people understand what's very likely to happen.

Medicine and public health have expanded the average lifespan – through sanitisation and immunisation initially, then by management of chronic diseases with things such as stents – by about 2.5 years every ten years since 1890.

We think, based on the research out there, that there's an 80 per cent chance that by 2035, there'll be a great age reboot. I've told people in the past that 60 can be the new 40, but in the near future, you could be 90 and have a physiological age of 40.

I'm working on an app to help people understand this, and show them how the choices they make now can impact their future. The most important thing to learn is how to manage

stress – stress ages you in every system, from the cardiovascular system to the brain.

Are the worlds of medicine and wellness aligned and if not, what can be done to bridge the gap?

They can be well-aligned, and that's what we did at the Cleveland Clinic by starting a wellness institute, to be sure that at least in our system they're aligned.

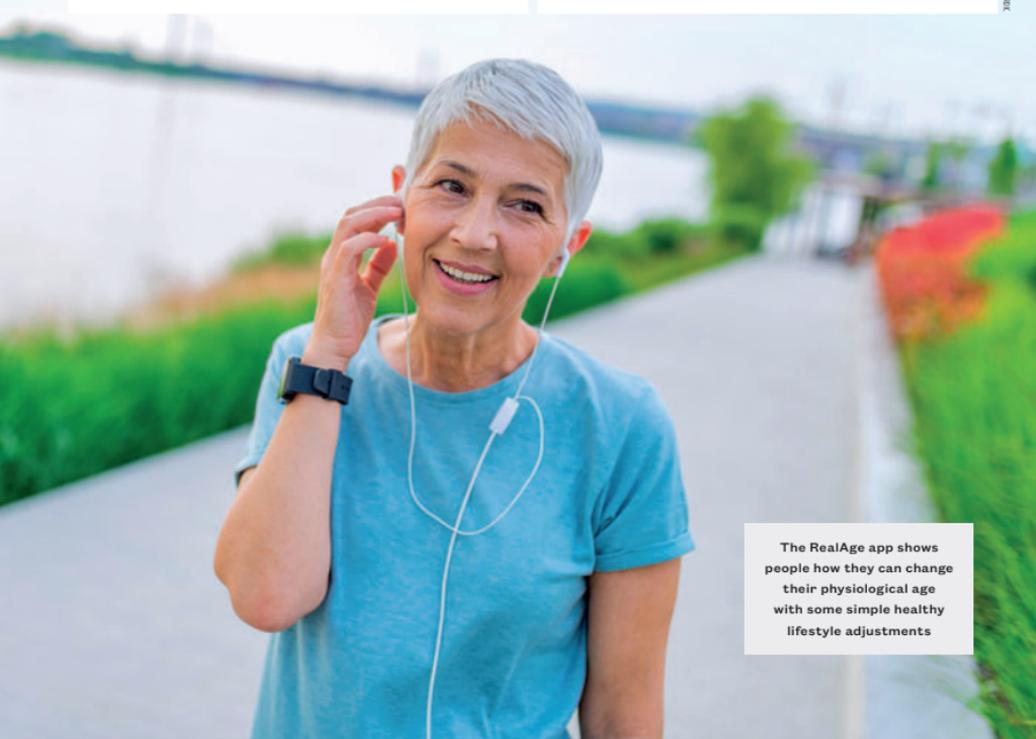
Clearly the spa and wellness industry has a major role to play in teaching people how to manage stress, and they're doing a wonderful job of that in some aspects.

A lot of things that start in the wellness space take a while to make their way into mainstream western medicine – mindfulness and using nutrition to change cardiovascular health, for instance.

Getting well-done studies to back these things up is necessary, but requires pioneers in wellness to drive progress.

What do you say to critics of your stance on exercise and healthy living?

If you don't have critics, you're not far enough advanced! I don't think anyone now doubts that 60 can be the new 40, but in 2004 I had a lot of critics when I said that.



The RealAge app shows people how they can change their physiological age with some simple healthy lifestyle adjustments

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Q&A

- ▶ I'm now saying that by 2035, 90 is likely to be the new 40, and there are plenty of people who think that's crazy. But there will be a lot of people living younger for longer. Already we're seeing the beginnings of this, where through advances such as CRISPR [a tool for editing genomes, allowing researchers to alter DNA sequences and modify gene function].

Longevity will not just be 'the next disruptor', it will be the biggest disruptor - it will give us life itself.

What do you view as your greatest achievement so far in life?

I've driven a lot of innovations in life, from being one of the first to use echocardiography in humans, to advances in pre-op testing. But my work with *RealAge* and getting people to understand how much power they have over their own health - that each person is really the greatest genetic engineer for their own body - is by far my greatest accomplishment to date.

What role can spa and wellness operators play in supporting people to make improvements to their own wellbeing?

So far, spa and wellness services have appealed more to the middle and upper-middle classes - and the wealthy. We have to figure out how to make these things available to everyone. We need a mass-market approach with McDonald's-style pricing and McDonald's-style reach to make spa and wellness affordable and accessible.

There's also a major role for the spa and wellness industry in continuing to lead. It was the spa and wellness industry that got us to change our emphasis on stress management, for example, and that brought mindfulness to the forefront. It also brought healthy eating and physical activity for all into common practice.

The industry needs to keep pushing to bring new wellness ideas to the forefront, and pushing



The core message from Roizen is that people 'are the greatest engineers for their own bodies'

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Roizen's pre-surgical interventions based on diet and exercise improved medical outcomes

PHIL GRIFF

for more scientific studies. The spa and wellness industry has had a huge benefit on people's wellbeing and can continue to do so in the future.

What are some of the highlights of working with the GWS?

The GWS organisers are brilliant. One of the things we highlighted at this year's Global Wellness Summit was the silver linings that have come out of COVID – not just breakthroughs in vaccines, but also the understanding of the role of socialisation to our wellbeing.

We also focused on the recognition that longevity is likely to be the next disruptor; this will be an incredible boost to the economy if we each have an extra 25 years' of human capital to share – and of course that means there's great potential to increase spa services.

The Summit is one of the most dynamic conferences you'll find – it mixes hard science with business and pleasure, and you end up with thoughts and interfaces you never thought were possible.

Dr Michael Roizen Bio

Michael Roizen is the chief wellness officer at the Cleveland Clinic. An anesthesiologist by training, he became famous for developing the RealAge concept and has authored or co-authored five number one New York Times best sellers.

Roizen is credited with 165 peer reviewed publications and 100 medical chapters and also owns 14 US patents. He's founded six companies, served on the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory committees and co-invented a drug – Relistor.

He's been praised for encouraging Americans to exercise and live healthier lives and also criticised for his statements on the payoffs of exercise and healthy eating.

Tianren Culture's social innovation projects focus on improving mental health through breathwork and meditation



REBEKAH GUSTAFSON / SHUTTER

Victor Koo

Co-founder of Tianren Culture and GWS 2021 co-chair

What has been your greatest contribution to the cause of planetary wellness?

It's still work in process, but we're working closely with a group of international foundations to support research organisations and NGOs on One Health-related initiatives (www.spabusiness.com/onehealth) which address planetary, human and animal wellness issues, such as factory farming reform, flexitarian diet promotion and new protein research.

Tell us about your current work

At Tianren Culture, we're working on social innovation projects focused on two main areas: improvements in mental health through breathwork and meditation and the impact of food production and dietary changes on human, planetary and animal health.

At Heyi Holdings, we invest in scientific innovation focused on health and technology.

At what point in your life did health and wellness become your priorities?

I started to monitor my health and wellness more when I started a family and later when I started my own company.

Since I shifted from an operational to an investment role at work, I now have more time to actively improve my physical and mental health through lifestyle and dietary changes, movement, breathwork and meditation practices.

How has this plan unfolded so far?

So far, so good.



PHOTO: VICTOR KOO



The pandemic has created a global reset of our behaviours and lifestyles

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► What are your next set of priorities?

Continue to go deeper in my meditation practices; attend retreats and take formal yoga lessons after the pandemic.

How can we empower people to take more responsibility for their own wellbeing?

Besides supplying accurate information related to health and wellness, it's important to provide accessible, inclusive, easy-to-use products, solutions and techniques that can be incorporated into our daily lives. While many people would like to improve their own wellbeing, time and cost constraints have been hurdles for wider adoption.

What role can spa and wellness business operators play?

Consumers visit spa and wellness businesses to improve their overall health and wellbeing. It's important for business operators to be responsible in sharing accurate information based on scientific research, when possible, to help improve their customers' lifestyle beyond the time they spend in their facilities. This can range from dietary changes and daily exercises to dos and don'ts in our lives.

What have your aims been as co-chair of the GWS 2021?

The pandemic has been a wake-up call and vivid reminder of the interconnectivity and global nature of public health, the critical importance of physical and mental wellness in our society and the interdependence of humans and the broader ecosystem of nature, plants and animals - whether we are talking about climate change or zoonotic diseases.

It has also created a global reset of our behaviours and lifestyles at home, work and play.

The theme of the GWS 2021 was The New, New Era of Health and Wellness and we hope GWS 2021 helped both offline and online attendees to navigate this new world and that it will foster a dialogue towards a more positive and sustainable future.

Have your dreams for the GWS this year come to fruition?

This year, we built on GWS's successful hybrid (online and offline) event from last year by offering new ways to foster interactivity and community - especially through online innovations. At the offline event in Boston, safety protocols ensured the wellbeing of all guests - and in a world of social distancing and travel restrictions, our hope is for these digital approaches to generally reach a more global audience and provide a richer experience to everyone involved. ●

Victor Koo Bio

Victor Koo has a background as an entrepreneur in the multi-screen entertainment and media markets.

In 2016, he co-founded Tianren Culture, a next-generation social platform that focuses on giving, supporting social enterprises and impact investing, with the mission of fostering positive global values.

One of Tianren Culture's core focuses is to promote the value of 'One Health, One Wellness', by cultivating healthy and sustainable lifestyles that lead to not only the physical and mental health of human beings, but also the health of the broader environment and ecosystem. Koo gained his MBA from Stanford Graduate School of Business.

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RKF Luxury Linen is a partner of choice for Guerlain and produces linens for the brand's spas

Simply bee-autiful

RKF has created a new line of exquisite bee-embroidered linens for Guerlain's spas to celebrate its environmental and conservation work

Luxury linen expert, RKF, is a partner of choice for many high-end brands, including Guerlain, one of the oldest and most prestigious French perfume, cosmetics and skincare houses in the world.

A 10-year partnership between the two is based on RKF's deep understanding of Guerlain's mission and the assurance that its bespoke, haute couture French linens are crafted from sustainable textiles and offer an exceptional sensory experience for Guerlain's spa clients.

Each piece of RKF's customised linen for the fragrance house has now been embellished with a signature bee motif, skilfully embroidered using organic satin. This symbol signifies Guerlain's commitment to sustainable product innovation, supporting biodiversity, creating a positive social impact and placing conservation at the heart of its work.

"RKF and Guerlain share a commitment to sustainable luxury," says CEO, Riadh Bouaziz. "It's been an honour to work on the bee collection with Guerlain, so that the company's values are represented in a very personal and tactile way to each and every spa client."

Unique style

Guerlain's bespoke linen collection benefits from RKF's continued R&D into fabric technology and includes materials from its patented Dreamsoft and Timeless ranges.

The light, double-sided Dreamsoft fabric has a silky surface with an alternate absorbent side, which is 60 per cent softer than standard terry towelling and reduces laundry time by 40 per cent, due to its lighter weight.

RKF's Timeless fabric took two years to develop and won gold in the A'Design Award & Competition (www.adesignaward.com) for its design versatility, as well as its lighter weight and volume and extra absorption capacity, which is five times greater than classic terry towelling.

RKF's combination of luxury and household linen design and production sets it apart from other suppliers says Bouaziz: "The intrinsic qualities of our Timeless fabric not only provide more comfort, they also allow for lighter bathrobes which reduces laundry costs and enables the creation of new, haute couture garment designs.

"We won the A'Design award for our use of an innovative fabric in the creation of an elegant



RKF has produced a new line of linens for Guerlain spas, with a delicate bee motif embroidered in organic silk

About: Guerlain for Bees

The Guerlain for Bees Conservation Programme oversees several partnerships and bee-focused initiatives.

The programme includes a Women for Bees entrepreneurial beekeeping programme, in partnership with UNESCO, for example, while it's also working to raise awareness among younger generations of biodiversity and bee preservation within its Bee School

- a volunteer programme for Guerlain employees.

Guerlain is committed to sustainably sourcing its iconic ingredients, as well as using sustainable packaging, without compromising on quality, sensoriality and effectiveness.

The company offers traceable and transparent information on all its products via its 'Bee Respect' platform and is aiming to reach net zero carbon by 2030.

bathrobe design," he says. "This fabric enabled RKF's designers to create a bathrobe that resembles a trench coat and is a fashion item in its own right."

About RKF

RKF is a French Maison with a timeless knowhow since 1834 that raises household linen to a form of Art.

With innovation and fashion at the heart of its DNA, RKF designs, manufactures and supplies world class linen for luxury hotels, royal palaces, restaurants, the beauty and wellness industry, across 77 countries.

The brand provides partners with bespoke, ecofriendly and operational solutions by developing patented and sustainable textile materials (15 brands and patents and 17 international awards).

RKF is committed to bringing the future into focus with the highest standards of sensory experiences and is continuously striving to optimise linen management.

The company is also on target to operate on a net zero carbon basis by 2025.

More: www.rkf.fr



*RKF and Guerlain
share a commitment
to sustainable luxury*

Riadh Bouaziz, CEO, RKF

Out of the Blue

The land of fire and ice is heating things up, with an expansion at the iconic Blue Lagoon and a new thermal bathing experience in Reykjavik at the Sky Lagoon. Jane Kitchen paid a visit

I land in Reykjavik on a grey morning of drizzle and gusty wind, but even from the air, I can tell this is a magical country – a place of myths and legends. The coastline is edged in green, with wispy trails of volcanic rock disappearing into an unsettled ocean.

The name Reykjavik comes from old Norse and translates loosely to 'bay of smoke' – so named for the steaming hot springs that are dotted across the landscape. Today, much of this thermal water is harnessed for energy, making Iceland one of the most sustainable countries in the

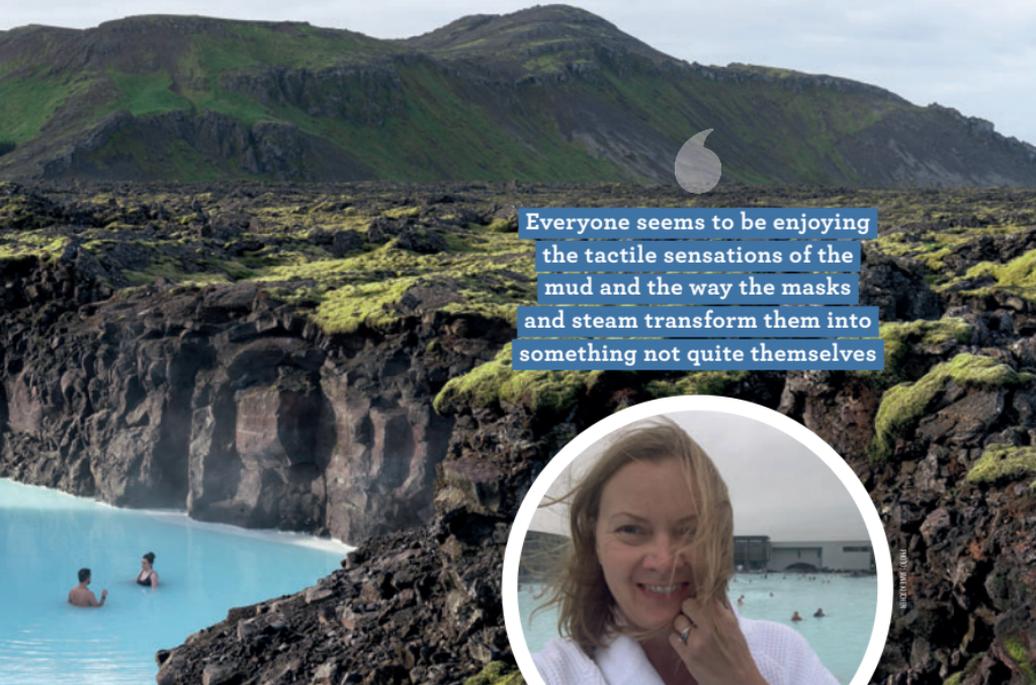
world. But the tradition of soaking in these healing waters runs deep in Icelandic culture, and as international interest in authentic experiences grounded in nature grows, Iceland's winning combination of hearty outdoor activities combined with geothermal hot springs is making it a go-to destination for wellness.

I've come to compare and contrast two recent additions to the country's thermal offerings: the new Retreat at the well-established Blue Lagoon, and its new competitor – the Sky Lagoon – both of which are set within easy reach of Reykjavik and only 20 minutes' drive-time from each other.

PHOTO: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

The lagoon formed in the 1970s, but first opened as a wellness operation in 1992

The Blue Lagoon pools are rich in minerals, silica and algae. Below, The Retreat



Everyone seems to be enjoying the tactile sensations of the mud and the way the masks and steam transform them into something not quite themselves



The Blue Lagoon

As with so many visitors, the Blue Lagoon is my first stop. The location's proximity to the airport (just 20 minutes, versus 45 minutes to Reykjavik) and its position at the top of so many people's bucket list means tour buses and private transfers are lined up, ready to whisk tourists away to soak in the waters for a few hours before continuing on to their city hotels.

Outside my taxi, miles roll on with nothing but the starkness of lava fields, a black backdrop green with moss from recent rains, and like nothing I've ever seen before. Rounding a corner, I catch a flash of the ethereal blue water – the spillover from the nearby geothermal plant where the Blue Lagoon had its genesis in the 1970s.

Ordinarily, runoff water from Icelandic power stations sinks through the porous lava, but the

high silica content in the water at this location gradually formed a layer of white deposits that created permanent pools rich in silica, algae and minerals and with an amazing milky blue colour.

That something so beautiful could be formed quite by accident seems further proof of this country's magical character.

Initially, this spillover pool was a nuisance to the geothermal plant, but by the 1980s, locals began soaking in the waters and feeling fantastic. A doctor from Reykjavik came to explore the health benefits of the rich mineral water, and in 1992, the Blue Lagoon opened as a tourist destination – a pool holding 6 million litres of water and covering an area of 8,700sq m (94,000sq ft) with a turnover rate of 40 hours.

Soon the 35-room Silica Hotel was added, then a restaurant, an R&D centre, a skincare line and an expansion of the main lagoon. ▶

MYSTERY SHOPPER

In 2018, The Retreat at Blue Lagoon – a luxury offering including a five-star hotel, restaurant and the lagoon's first spa – was opened. By 2019, the company's annual revenue was estimated at €125m (US\$141m, £107m), with €22m (US\$25m, £19m) in profit, and close to a million visitors each year.

First impressions

I've seen photos of the Blue Lagoon, and it's been on my own bucket list for years. I know it's been named by *National Geographic* as one of the 25 Wonders of the World, and yet – something about the pureness of the blue waters, the contrast with the black lava fields and the sheer otherworldly beauty of the place takes my breath away.

The pools look as though they've been lined with a layer of white ceramic, but it's just the silica deposits that also give the water many of its special qualities: it has deep-cleansing and purifying properties, strengthens and protects the skin, and helps it retain moisture. For those suffering from psoriasis or eczema, the water is extremely beneficial and an on-site clinic welcomes people from around the world to treat these chronic conditions. But perhaps most importantly, by a simple trick of light reflection, it's the silica that gives the Blue Lagoon its amazing milky blue hue, as when light strikes a molecule of silica, blue is the only colour that's reflected back.

The healing waters are especially beneficial for skin conditions like eczema

Social spa-ing

Whatever the science behind it, the colour is incredibly inviting. From the Retreat Hotel's lobby, floor-to-ceiling glass provides a soothing view of tranquil, steaming pools set against the mossy lava fields. The hotel has been designed to feel as though it's part of the landscape, and inside, the minimalist decor is all wood, black stone, and chunky, earthy textures in natural materials such as wool and leather; even the heating vents have been designed to mimic the texture of lava. After a breakfast of smoked fish and avocado toast, the travel-weariness from my early-morning flight hits me, and I can't wait to slip into the steamy water.

While I have access to the Retreat's more private lagoons, I head for the original pool first, which is all that most day guests see. The main lagoon is 70 per cent thermal water and 30 per cent fresh, and 1.2 meters deep on average (approximately 4ft), making it the perfect depth for socialising. Day passes (ISK 5,990, US\$47, €41, £35) include entrance to the main lagoon, a self-applied mud mask, and a drink from the swim-up bar (beer, wine or juices, with alcoholic drinks limited to three per wristband).

Even on a windy, drizzly morning, the lagoon is a delight; one of the first things I notice as I make my way around the pool is the sheer number of smiling faces – and not just for the obligatory selfies.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

The Retreat's sauna has a picture window over the striking Icelandic landscape

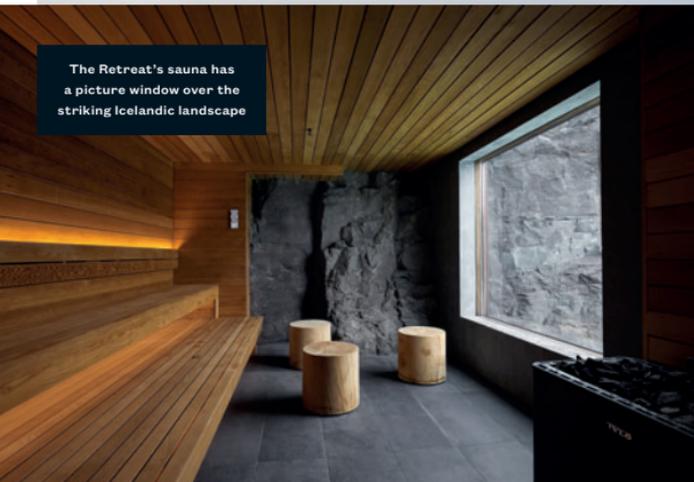


PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY



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The Retreat offers a more private bathing experience, away from the main lagoon

American tourists are by far in the majority, but the age range runs the gamut from 20-somethings to families to the silver-haired – and everyone looks happy. At the mask bar, dollops of silica or algae masks are handed out, and guests paint each other's faces white or green and take photos in the steamy water.

The silica mask is said to bring strength and radiance to the skin, the algae is for reducing fine lines and wrinkles, and a mineral mask is left on to hydrate overnight – but really everyone just seems to be enjoying the tactile sensations of the mud on their hands and faces, and the way the masks and the steam transform them into something not quite themselves.

I'm struck by the jovial nature of the whole thing, and what an active kind of relaxation it is; rather than simply soaking, there are drinks to be had, masks to be applied – even a short history lecture to be listened to. This part of the lagoon is best experienced in a group, and is more fun than tranquil, though the warmth leaves you feeling relaxed and the high mineral

content softens your skin and relaxes your muscles. But after a while, the number of people live vlogging got to be a bit too much for this middle-aged solo traveller, so I decided to try out the more private lagoons of the Retreat Hotel.

Privacy and tranquility

Guests of the Retreat Hotel or those booking a spa treatment have access to these smaller, newer lagoons, and the atmosphere there is decidedly different. For a start, mobile phones are prohibited in order to maintain privacy and tranquility (although staff members will head outside in fur-hooded parkas and take a photo for you, ensuring they do so out of the way of other guests).

The series of smaller, terraced pools are carved into the 800-year-old lava flow, with bridges and winding corridors making you feel pleasantly lost in the landscape. Because access is limited, I often had a pool to myself, and could float at leisure without fear of bumping into others.

A swim-up bar serves champagne from a window in the restaurant, but guests here tend

PHOTO: GUY LAWRENCE

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MYSTERY SHOPPER

► to be in quiet couples rather than groups. For 79,000 ISK (US\$608, €525, £450), day guests can access the Retreat Spa and pools, which includes a plush changing room with shower, a drink and access to the pools and the Blue Lagoon Ritual; at these prices, the tranquility and solitude of the pools is ensured.

For the ultimate in privacy, the Lava Cove (starting at ISK 240,000, US\$1,850, €1,600, £1,370) offers a self-contained spa within the spa, including its own lagoon, fireplace and butler.

The Ritual

The pools are flanked on one side by the new 43,000sq ft (3,995sq m) spa, which includes treatment rooms for massages and facials, as well as a relaxation area where you can gaze out at the lagoons from suspended, gently swinging nest chairs. A glass-fronted sauna looks over the pools, while a steamroom set in a lava cave is warmed by natural geothermal heat and an outdoor cold well offers a brisk plunge for contrast bathing.

Within the subterranean spa is an area set aside for the new Blue Lagoon Ritual, a self-guided seven-step ritual that expands on the powerful properties of silica and algae, and is available to all spa and Retreat Hotel guests at no extra charge. Here, a desk with spa concierge serves as the starting point for the signature journey, and guests move through a series of interconnected chambers



The Retreat has a five-star hotel, restaurant and the lagoon's first spa

New float therapy

A new aquatic healing therapy has just launched at the Blue Lagoon. Jane Kitchen gave it a try

While floating massages have been offered for some time, the Retreat at Blue Lagoon is soon to launch a new Float Therapy, created in conjunction with Flothetta (www.flothetta.com), an Icelandic company dedicated to aquatic healing. The treatment is a combination of bodywork, including stretches, pulls and light massage, along with passive floatation, and designed to transport guests to a relaxed, meditative state.

I had a chance to be one of the first to try out the new therapy, which involves wearing a Flothetta float cap and floats set just above the knees. The cap fitted snugly and clasped under my chin like a soft bike helmet, and was brilliant at keeping my head afloat without the need for a neck pillow, as I've experienced in other aquatic

treatments. These can be obstructive as you're moved through the water.

The 45-minute treatment (ISK 24,252, US\$191, €165, £141) incorporated elements of Watsu, but as someone who's prone to motion sickness, I appreciated the slower pace.

The treatment is offered in the same semi-private pool as the in-water massage, away from the noise of the main lagoon. I floated on my back as my therapist gently stretched and moved me as steam rose around me. As in any water therapy, there's an intimacy and element of trust required between guest and therapist; for much of the treatment I was cradled in her arms and gently guided in a slow water dance. But in between there were pauses of peaceful, solitary floating that were incredibly



A Flothetta cap enhances the floatation

powerful, watching the clouds drift across a blank sky while feeling weightless in the warm water brought me to a deeply meditative state, helped by the muffling of outside noise due to the cap – even when my ears were above water.

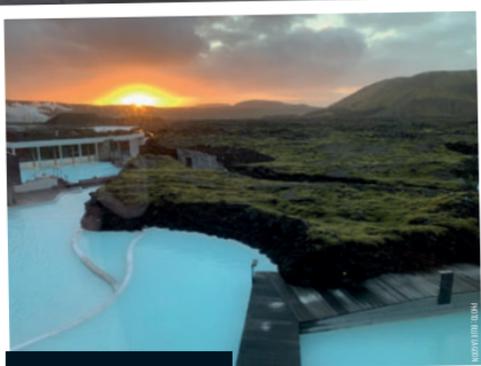
The treatment ended like Watsu; I was guided to an upright position against the wall for support, and my feet were planted to ground me. I felt light, free and calm, with every muscle looser, and I felt as if I'd just returned from a journey deep within myself.



over the course of 45 minutes, where they apply a series of scrubs, masks and oils to their bodies.

In essence, the ritual is not particularly complicated, but the dimly-lit setting, and again, the sense of active participation, make for an enjoyable activity. After a mineral salt exfoliation, couples and friends slather thick white silica clay or cool green algae mud on each other, and as they wait for each to dry, they lounge in the caves and speak in hushed voices before rinsing off in geothermal water from rainfall showers. The entire process is a journey - literally, from one room to the next - but applying the layers of scrubs and masks also does the double-duty of washing away any sense of the outside world. The ritual has the effect of slowing down time while allowing guests to still be doing something, and I noticed how happy people were to be following instructions when given them - eager to move on to the next step and satisfied at the sense of accomplishment at the end.

The polar opposite of the Instagrammable story, the Ritual is instead simple spa storytelling - a chance to bring the mineral benefits front and centre.



The new Blue Lagoon Ritual allows guests to experience a 7-step spa journey

Those who study learning modalities will tell you that engaging the senses is the best way to get people to remember anything and the dimly lit, cave-like atmosphere - heightened by the sense of sound, smell and especially touch - put people in the here and now of experience.



Pursuit hired a specialist in ancient Icelandic building techniques to create a traditional house, with grass roof and slabs of volcanic bog mud



PHOTO: JAVY HAROLD

The Sky Lagoon

Located in Kársnes Harbour, Kópavogur, is a new geothermal pool inspired by Icelandic bathing culture. The Sky Lagoon is owned by attractions and hospitality company Pursuit Collection, which also runs the FlyOver flight rides in Vancouver and Reykjavik (with new outposts slated for Las Vegas and Toronto), so it's no wonder the whole thing has been designed as a cinematic experience that creates a lush world with amazing views.

The lagoon's design draws inspiration from the landscapes, with an unobstructed 70-metre (230-ft) infinity pool at the centre, blurring the boundary between water and ocean. The Sky Lagoon is designed to look as if it's been built into the volcanic landscape, but unlike the Blue Lagoon - which actually has been - the rocks have been moved here.

To reach Sky Lagoon means taking a drive 20 minutes outside Reykjavik, past bleak industrial warehouses, to the edge of the harbour. But while the journey is less than inspiring, once there, the architecture and the setting are



The seven-step Sky Ritual involves warm and cold waters, steam and dry heat



Pursuit Collection has created a place that feels authentically Icelandic

PHOTO: NIELS - ILLUSTRATION: ANDREW LACROIX

stunning. Pursuit has gone to great lengths to create a place that feels authentically Icelandic, hiring a specialist in ancient building techniques to create a traditional turf house, with grass on the roof and a special herringbone pattern constructed from slabs of volcanic bog mud.

Sunset magic

I plan my visit for sunset, when the view over the ocean is set perfectly to enjoy the last rays of the day reflected in the North Atlantic. The menu for Sky Lagoon is simple, with just three choices: the Pure Lite Pass (ISK 6,990 US\$54, €47, £41), for those short on time who only want access to the main lagoon; the Pure Pass (from ISK 9,990 US\$76, €67, £58), which includes access to the Ritual; and the Sky Pass (from ISK 13,900 US\$107, €94, £81), which also includes a private changing area. Pricing is variable, with weekends and sunset hours priced higher.

I opt for the Sky Pass, and the private changing area is quite quiet, with locker areas and private shower rooms. This also means I have a separate

entrance into the lagoon, down a few steps and through the mouth of a cave. The approach is dramatic; steam rises from the warm geothermal water, and you wind your way past tall, canyon-like rocks before rounding the corner to see the view. It is utterly gorgeous, and well worth paying slightly more for at sunset hour.

A swim-up bar serves Prosecco and beer, and the decidedly young crowd is taking selfies through plastic-bag wrapped cell phones, chatting and generally having a sociable time. I settle into a spot on the far edge of the pool to watch the sunset – a favourite activity, no matter where I am, but utterly enchanting when floating in warm water that feels as though it's at the end of the earth.

The Ritual

The Sky Ritual is a seven-step experience inspired by the traditions of Icelandic bathing culture and combines the healing powers of warm and cold waters, warm steam, dry heat and fresh air. Step one is to relax in the lagoon, breathing the

MYSTERY SHOPPER

- ▶ fresh air and letting the warm geothermal water relax you. Step two is a cold plunge pool, and I'm impressed by how many people brave the icy water.

When I ask a lifeguard, he says 85 per cent of people take the plunge, another 5 per cent dip a toe in before chickening out, and 10 per cent skip it entirely. Considering the place is filled once again with American tourists who are only just now learning the power of contrast bathing, those are impressive numbers.

After the plunge pool – small, round and just enough room to dip in and out – I make my way inside for Step Three, a sauna with another stunning view across the water.

Guests are encouraged to spend five to 10 minutes here, gazing through what is said to be the largest single window in Iceland, and it feels amazing after the shock of the cold water. I watch a woman set up her tripod to take images of herself in silhouette against the sunset and I must admit, she knows what she's doing. If taking in tranquil, beautiful views is good for wellbeing, then this is the place.

After the sauna, guests are directed to Step Four, a small area with a refreshing fog mist, a light, cold spray designed to be energising for both body and mind, but not quite as shocking as the cold plunge. Once through, I'm given a small pot of Sky Lagoon's body scrub, which I'm instructed to self-apply for Step Five, and then head to the steamroom to let it sink into my pores for Step Six, where I'm told the scrub's hydrating benefits will be at their peak



Buildings at the Sky Lagoon are made from local materials, including volcanic bog mud

PHOTO: SKY LAGOON BY PETER BERT

as they soak into my skin. Step Seven is a quick warm shower and a return to the thermal pool for as much relaxation time as I please.

Once again, the ritual is quite simple, but guests seem to really enjoy the direction they're given in how to walk through the different steps, and to be actively doing something while they're there. Groups of friends squeal in the cold fog mist, slather body scrub on each other, and laugh in the thick fog of the steamroom.

When I return to the main lagoon, I grab a glass of prosecco and enjoy the waning glow of the sunset. As the last of the light is about to go, there's a sudden flash of green, and everyone points to the sky. "The Northern Lights?" I ask the man next to me, and he nods. The Sky Lagoon is far enough away from the glow of Reykjavik to enable this magic, and there's a collective sigh as the mythical lights dance across the sky.

The 70ft infinity pool offers unobstructed views over the dramatic landscape



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PHOTO: SKY LAGOON BY PETER BERT

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Social bathing is a major part of both businesses.

HIGHLIGHT

BLUE LAGOON

The colour of the water; you've seen it, you know what it looks like, but nothing can quite prepare you for what it feels to be engulfed in that milky-blue water

HIGHLIGHT

SKY LAGOON

The stunning sunset views, the incredible heritage architecture, and the number of people who braved the cold plunge!

THE VERDICT

The question remains: is there enough room for two lagoons in such close proximity to Reykjavik? The answer, in short, is yes

While nothing can compare to the iconic nature and incredible colour of the Blue Lagoon - how can you go to Iceland and not see it? - the Sky Lagoon provides an entirely different experience. The Blue Lagoon is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, while the Sky Lagoon feels more like something you could do regularly on a Friday night if you lived in town. In fact, Sky Lagoon offers a Pure Multi-Pass, ISK 24,990 (US\$192, €170, £145), which allows for six visits at 50 per cent off the regular price.

Both have a social spa element, with in-water bars and tactile experiences such as masks and scrubs, but the clientele at Sky Lagoon - at least at sunset - was young millennials (the minimum age at Sky Lagoon is 12, where at the Blue Lagoon children aged two-plus are

welcome, making Blue Lagoon more family-friendly). For repeat visitors or those with packed itineraries, Sky Lagoon offers a taste of Icelandic bathing traditions that's easier to dip in and out of, as it's closer to Reykjavik. As I told a friend who visited a few weeks after me, if you only have time for one, see the Blue Lagoon - it's iconic, it's otherworldly, and it stands alongside the Grand Canyon and the pyramids of Egypt as one of the 25 Wonders of the World. But really, I told him, you should experience them both. ●

| Scores | Blue Lagoon | Sky Lagoon |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| Overall experience | 10 | 9 |
| Customer service | 10 | 8 |
| Facilities | 9 | 8 |
| F&B | 9 | 7 |
| Location | 8 | 9 |
| Total | 46 | 41 |

VERIFIED WELLNESS TECHNOLOGIES BY GHARIENI



Triple Detox Therapy

The Johnstown Estate
Johnstownbridge, Ireland

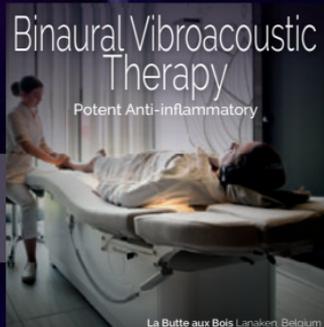


Body Contouring



Psammo Therapy
Potent Anti-inflammatory

Mandarin Oriental Doha, Qatar



Binaural Vibroacoustic Therapy
Potent Anti-inflammatory

La Butte aux Bois Lanaken, Belgium

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CAN BE INTEGRATED WITH OTHER SPA AND WELLNESS OFFERINGS



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Research from Gharieni has found that treatments delivered on its beds boost the immune system

Optimal results

Gharieni is using research findings and insight to ensure its innovative wellness concepts exceed customers' expectations

Gharieni treatment beds are renowned for their features and wellness benefits. The range includes MLX Quartz, Welnamis, MLXi³ Dome, and Celliss – with others currently in development.

Spa customers who experience a treatment on a Gharieni bed are not only enjoying whole-body relaxation on a high-tech piece of equipment, they're also benefiting from the company's ongoing research into customer needs that enables it to ensure truly beneficial treatments.

Investing in research

Gharieni has been investing in product and consumer research since it was founded 30 years ago and its scientific research into consumer trends has accelerated and become a major focus since the start of the pandemic, with the company



PHOTO: MELISSA DUBINI

"We've been using our research findings to adapt our treatment concepts to enable our clients to meet their customers' needs"

Sammy Gharieni

reporting significant findings when it comes to delivering improved technology and evidence-based treatment concepts to the market.

Third-party scientific research has found that treatments delivered

Partners in innovation

A number of spas have worked on product and treatment testing for Gharieni, including Raffles the Palm, Dubai, JW Marriott Turnberry Resort in Florida, and the Cartesiano Urban Wellness Centre in Puebla, Mexico.

According to Ayman Gharib, GM at Raffles The Palm, partnering with Gharieni has already resulted in new treatments being created to optimise its treatment bed technology. "The Gharieni team worked with my team to design and curate Gharieni Wellness Technology Journeys for Raffles The Palm, which has helped us create an innovative offering within the resort space here in Dubai," he says.



Ayman Gharib, Raffles The Palm, Dubai



Scientific research proves Gharieni beds give health benefits

on Gharieni beds boost the immune system, regulate the autonomic nervous system and aid sports recovery and general wellbeing, as well as being effective in supporting weight management programmes and the delivery of aesthetic services.

Disease prevention

Hands-on and touchless experiences can also help with chronic disease prevention and boost mental fitness.

"Today's consumers are looking for real and proven treatment benefits," says CEO and founder, Sammy Gharieni. "We've been using recently-collated research findings to adapt our programming, product education and treatment concepts to enable our clients to meet their customers' current needs.

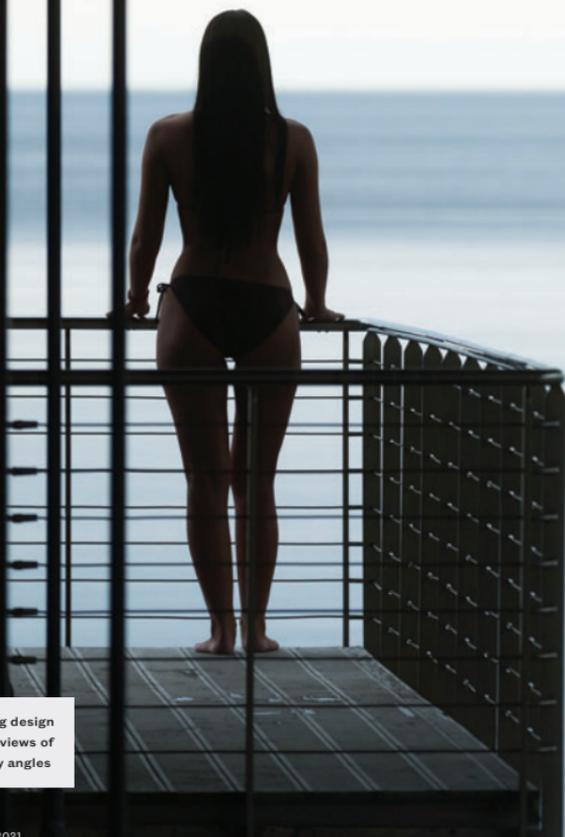
"The personalisation trend has evolved and now there's an increasing demand for precision treatments that promise tangible results. If customers are happy, truly engaged and get the results they want, then we're confident they'll return – and our clients will benefit from repeat business." ●

More: www.gharieni.com

FIRST PERSON

True North

Andrew Gibson headed to Larvik in Norway to experience the world of wellness that is Farris Bad



The hotel's striking design allows for multiple views of the sea from many angles

PHOTO: ANDREW GIBSON

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It takes a lot for me to recommend that you go out of your way to try a new wellness experience, but Farris Bad will not disappoint

If you want to try something different, exhilarating, profoundly moving and at the same time, totally relaxing, then fly to Oslo and make the 90-minute journey to Larvik in the south of Norway to spend some time at Farris Bad. That is, if you can get a room. At the time of writing, the hotel is fully booked and has no weekend vacancies for months ahead.

With its unique architectural design, Farris Bad reaches out to sea, bridging over the sand to delicately dip a toe into the ocean. This ingenious building provides public access to the beach while enabling hotel guests to step straight into the sea from the spa, via a suspended staircase.

My most memorable Farris Bad experience, by far, was running out from the event sauna, steaming hot, with fellow bathers, all heading to the beach and out into the sea, at midnight, on a winter night, howling at the full moon.

Sauna rituals

Lasse Eriksen, development manager, has spent a decade researching the traditions of sauna bathing in Scandinavia, Russia and the Baltic States and so it's the sauna rituals that set Farris Bad apart.

The largest sauna is the event bastu, where you bathe with regulars who wear nothing but knitted hats to keep their heads cool. Aromas and chanting, accompanied by live music and steam, filled one of



our sauna sessions that took us through a number of changes from hot to cold leaving us feeling truly invigorated and elated.

The magic formula

What make this hotel on the south-facing coast of Norway such a success? Is it the proximity to Oslo and a good local market?

Or the fact that Larvik is one of a few cities in Norway that has a sea-facing horizon? Or that it has great rooms and an expansive spa, offering every bathing option?

For someone who's been in the spa and wellness industry for 35 years, it takes a lot for me to recommend you go out of your way to try a new wellness experience but Farris Bad will not disappoint. I spent two days fully immersed in discovering the story and trying the experiences that are the heart of the hotel and I'd attest that it's the people and their passion for reviving the Nordic bathing traditions that are most memorable.

During our stay, a full programme of activities was on offer, including between three and five guided sessions of Aufguss and at least two sessions of scrubs per day. These are led by Lasse and his sauna masters with great knowledge and a deep passion for the preservation and presentation of Nordic sauna rituals. During our time, the minimum number of people in any of these was in the double figures and at times the classes maxed out at between 20 and 50 people, depending on the service. We also had

FIRST PERSON

- ▶ the privilege of going backstage, where the scrubs were prepared from locally-picked herbs and amber, each portioned out for guests to apply in the steam.

Larvik's long history of spa

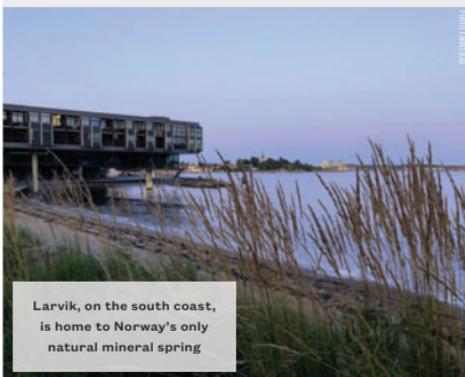
Larvik, which is known as the hometown of Thor Heyerdahl, is on the southern coast of Norway where Farris Lake exits into Larvik Fjord and Skagerrak Sea. It's also the home of Norway's only natural mineral water spring – Farriskilden.

The city of Larvik was also a 19th-century spa community and home of Larvik Bath. The Norwegian royal family – King Haakon VII and Queen Maud – vacationed at Larvik Bad in 1906.

Farris Bad Hotel was built in 2009 on the shoreline of the old industrial area by industrialists – Stein-Erik Hagen and Mille-Marie Treschow – a couple who wanted to give back to the town. Although the ownership has passed on and the management today is through Nordic Hotels group, the husband-and-wife team have left their legacy – and art – throughout the hotel.

The four-story design allows light to penetrate through the various sections of the hotel which gives multiple views of the sea from many angles. The interior is modern, minimalist, and peppered with poetry and artwork.

Throughout the hotel, and the town of Larvik, is poetry that connects the reader to nature and provides words of wisdom. The art



Larvik, on the south coast, is home to Norway's only natural mineral spring

undoubtedly plays an important part in the overall experience for each guest, and I would like to see more information relating to the artists and meaning behind the eclectic mix of works.

Our journey at Farris Bad

The hotel has an unassuming entrance and it was not immediately obvious where to park the car. The signage could be improved to help direct guests to the entrance and parking. On entering, your eyes are immediately drawn to the view of the beach courtyard and hotel rooms sitting above the beach and sea.

The hotel lobby always seemed busy, with a constant flow of check-ins and check-outs, plus a healthy mix of local spa business. We were one of several arrivals, but each was efficiently dealt with, and our wait was not long. Our booking and spa treatments were confirmed

It's in the contrast between hot and cold that you find the most profound experience



Bath with a view: The Larvik Suite offers an outstanding outlook over the bay

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PHOTO: JARVIS/SHO

Guests can take in the sea views from the balcony beds in the main pool area

and an explanation of the procedures for bathing were given. The hotel gifts a swimsuit to all guests, while slippers and robes for the spa are provided for use during the stay and towels and peshtemals are collected each time a visit is made to the baths.

All guests are expected to take showers before entering the baths and in true Scandinavian style, these showers are taken in an undressed state in the changing rooms.

Since the start of the pandemic, the hotel has been closed for just two periods, totalling five months. Since it reopened it's been busy and the average length of stay has increased to three days. Precautions are in place throughout, with cleansing agents everywhere, but there is no mandatory masking requirement. There were no spacing requirements due to COVID-19 in the restaurant or the spa during our visit.

The rooms

We were honoured to stay in the Larvik suite, on the corner of the building, with outstanding views of the bay. The bathroom entices you to relax in the bath and observe the wind ruffling the surface of the bay as the natural waters of Farris lake rush into the sea. The rate for this suite is NOK5900, (\$700, €610, £515) for two for B&B with a standard room starting at NOK 2539 (\$297, €257, £217). The hotel has 176 rooms, of which eight are suites. The

website is optimised to promote spa treatments and extras to help maximise revenue per guest.

All rooms have a balcony with seating. Ours had sheepskins and blankets provided to keep us warm while we sat looking at the horizon. The room was spacious, the bathroom floor heated and the room serviced very well and with information in English and Norwegian on the TV. It was also very nice to be able to turn the lights on and off without taking a course in modern electronics.

We received a written itinerary of our activities and recommendations to join in some of the bathing events that we hadn't considered.

Once we'd relaxed, we changed into our swimsuits that fitted well and felt comfortable. After donning our spa robes (different from the room robes) and spa slippers we made our way to the spa. It could have felt awkward passing reception with so many guests dressed in their civvies, but since a good number of guests were similarly robed and making their way to and from the spa, no one seemed concerned.

The baths

To access the baths, guests return to the lobby to collect their towels and peshtemals before entering through the male and female changing rooms. At busy times this gets a little congested, but once into the 2,500sq m spa the feeling of

FIRST PERSON

► space and relaxation begins. Although the process and protocols were explained at check-in, a leaflet explaining these practices would have been nice to read in your room before going to the baths.

Upon entering you find yourself on a balcony overlooking the main pool. From here you can see the different levels, offering bathing both indoors and outdoors. On a ledge a few steps down, you find loungers where you can relax in-between your baths while taking in the views of the ocean. This is also where you sign up for the sauna experiences that are offered throughout the day.

There are 19 different water features of varying temperatures, including several saunas of different sizes and temperatures, each offering a different view. The coolest offers relaxing footage of underwater diving on a TV screen, while one of the hotter ones offers panoramic sea views and the direct access by a staircase straight into the sea. There are steamrooms, foot baths and Kneipp pools. The relaxation areas are dotted between the baths, allowing you to meander through the facilities taking your time.

There are whirlpools indoors and outdoors and I particularly enjoyed sitting in the warm bath enjoying the cool air by the beach. It's in the contrast between hot and cold that you find the

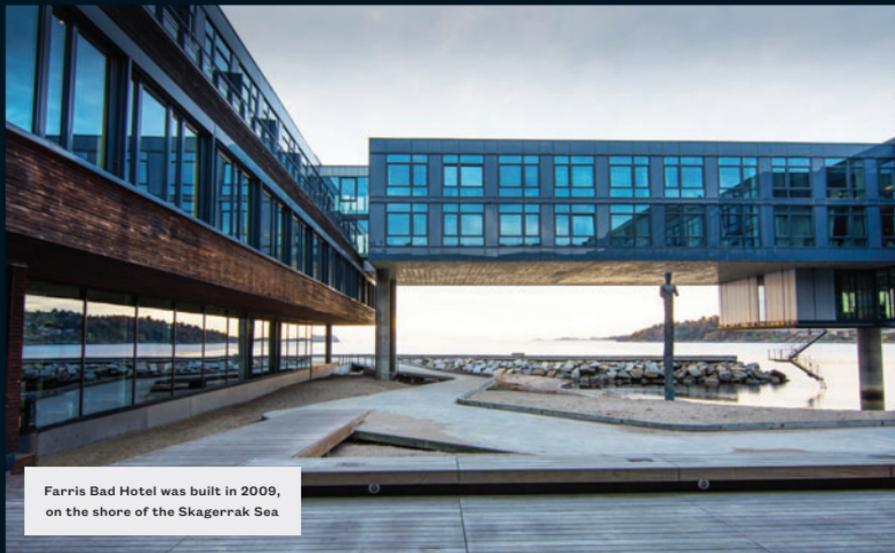
most profound experience. There's a cold plunge pool for the brave and beautifully tiled showers by the ice fountain, clearly marked cold and hot, allowing you to alternate from one to the next.

Warm Farris spring water fills the pool in the spring water cave – a dark space, offering intense relaxation and a quiet refuge from the pulse of the world.

Leaflets invite guests to take three different journeys around the various water facilities. These are the 'signature', 'relaxing' and 'detox' experiences. Each journey gives you a route through the water facilities with an explanation of what to expect. The leaflets are in Norwegian, because their guests are predominantly local, but leaflets will be printed in English once the international demand picks up. It's worth noting that everyone in the hotel seems to speak English and that events are conducted in English.

The facilities were originally built by the Austrian company Thermarium but the show piece additional sauna was purposely designed by Lasse Eriksen, B&S Finland Sauna and Rob Keijzer, using the best Norwegian wood available.

I think everyone is likely to have their favourite bathing experience and with plenty of places to relax there is never a feeling of being rushed or overcrowded, despite full occupancy of the hotel. Our favourite was the sauna hanging above the sea



Farris Bad Hotel was built in 2009, on the shore of the Skagerrak Sea

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Those of you that have tried this bathing ritual understand that this is a deeply moving experience that rejuvenates the mental spirit



Lasse Eriksen (above, and right) has spent a decade researching sauna rituals

with a window to the south. We had dry weather and great views during our time but were told that during storms the water crashes against the window of the sauna. There are 30 steel steps down to the sea to allow the opportunity to mix hot and cold.

Bastu (sauna) rituals

With regular Aufguss sessions offered through the day and evening we took two 15-minute sessions by two different sauna masters. These were held in a large event sauna with room for the sauna master to walk around the heater, controlling the heat and steam by applying aroma-infused ice balls and water to the heater and by skillfully fanning the bathers with a towel to ensure the hottest air flowed over them. These shorter events are a great way to familiarise yourself and prepare for lengthier sessions.

We also took part in a full sauna event which started at 10.00pm and lasted well beyond midnight, during which we gathered with 37 bathers to enjoy the ritual of cleansing, healing, and gratitude.

About the ritual

As we entered the sauna we were welcomed by the sauna master who sprinkled us with water using branches of local birch. The sauna was lit with coloured lights and the floor was cooled so that there was no frantic running across the room. We lay on our towels to respect the hygiene for our fellow bathers.

The first session of around 25 minutes allowed us to be in the heat while listening to the history and value of Nordic bathing as we inhaled lavender and chamomile scented steam. The sauna master applied large ice balls infused with essential oils onto the central heater and then wafted the hot steam with a large hand-held fan towards the end of the session. After some breathing exercises we slowly sat up.

The sauna doors opened and we walked down the 30 stairs and across the beach to dip into the 10°C ocean, immersing our heads, followed by floating for 10 seconds – for those strong enough to endure the contrast between hot and cold.

During the second session, the sauna master began a drum rhythm to which we slowly engaged in joik, a Norwegian form of chanting. The session once again finished with sweating, as scent-infused steam was skillfully applied via the Aufguss process, followed by a run to the sea to cool off before the final session of gratitude.

Having taken our positions the third time, I noticed a few of the top benchers had moved down a layer or two (some were lying on the floor). In this 25-minute session the sauna master played a guitar and we joiked to a different rhythm and chant that put us in a deep state of relaxation both physically and mentally.

There's no way you can think of anything else when you're bathing in a hot room resounding with the unified melody of 37 people joiking. It is profoundly mesmerising.

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FIRST PERSON

► The session concluded with a full steam exposure of Siberian oak-scented ice and plenty of water applied to the hand-selected hot Larvik granite stones. But that was not the end, because after heat comes the cold and so we made the final trip to the sea, with full immersion and almost everyone taking the 10 second float before howling at the moon to let our spirits go free.

Those of you that have tried this bathing ritual understand that this is a deeply moving experience that rejuvenates the mental spirit. To those of you that are curious or dismissive, it's an experience you want to try and there is no place better than Farris Bad.

The treatments

On the ground floor you find the entrance to the more traditional spa with treatment rooms for massage, scrubs, a beautiful hammam, seaweed baths and beauty-oriented facials and nails services.

My wife tried a seaweed bath while I took a slightly more generic hot stones treatment. The seaweed bath is something we're familiar with, as our summer house is at the site of one of Sweden's oldest bath houses where seaweed baths have been taken for over 100 years. The seaweed for Farris Bad is supplied by Voya and is dried and packed in Ireland and reconstituted in the bath.

The seaweed bath was prepared in a purpose-built bathing room. It was hot and the aromas of the seaweed were strong. This was a private experience where all the components of the treatment were beautifully presented for the bather to enjoy – starting with the scrub, in a bowl to be taken into the shower and ending with the lotion for your skin after the bath. There was a spread of fruit, snacks and a glass of ice-cold lemon water followed at the end by a lovely cup of tea. What a truly relaxing experience it is, to sit in a hot tub covered in plants from the sea.

The hot stones treatment was exactly as I expected and the therapist, despite limited English, was courteous, professional, and skilled in her job. The escort to the room, the protocols, the draping and the technique were excellent and in line with my expectations for a high-quality spa.

We also took the duo hammam which was a pleasant feature and worth doing for couples. The Farris Bad hammam is spacious for two. To the side of the washing area is also a small steamroom for two people. The bathing ritual followed the traditional hammam process of hot steam to relax and soften the skin, a heated slab to scrub, lather and rinse the body and plenty of water to wash away your troubles.

We left fully cleansed and totally impressed by the service and the quality of the hammam. ►

CHRISTOPHER WELSH



Taking a plunge in the cold sea after a hot sauna is an energising Farris Bad ritual

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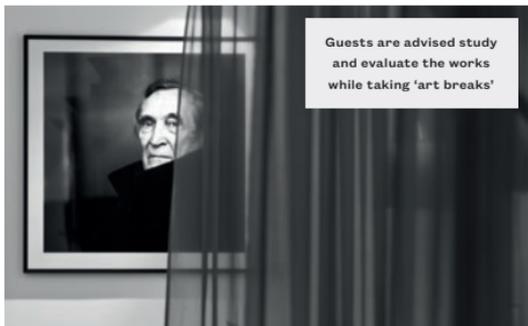


PHOTO: ANTHONY GORMLEY BY HENRIK SØGAARD

The presence of 50 pieces of art make Farris Bad a living gallery, with works by Anthony Gormley (above) and Nicolaus Widerberd (top right) among those on display



SCULPTURE: NICOLAUS WIDERBERD



Guests are advised study and evaluate the works while taking 'art breaks'

PHOTO: HENRIK SØGAARD

- ▶ Farris Bad is impressive. While most people come for the bathing, the treatments are high quality, the staff courteous, and the facilities clean and spacious. Although Aufguss and sauna masters are a feature in many northern and eastern European countries, the passion and expertise of the team Lasse Eriksen has attracted – with their knowledge and skills – shine through.

Food and beverage

The weakest experience at the hotel was the food and beverage – both in terms of service and quality. The lunch was a buffet and since we arrived towards the latter part of the service, we found the food was a little overcooked and dry.

The evening service was much better, with an a la carte menu. Since we had treatments in the evening we decided to get to dinner as soon as it opened. We were second in line and within two minutes there were 25 groups of couples behind us. Within 30 minutes the restaurant seemed full.

Breakfast is a typical Scandinavian-style buffet, and in fact all meals are very much to Scandinavian taste and met expectations. However, I feel there is an opportunity to improve the quality and to link the food to the experiences of sauna and Nordic traditions. There is also an opportunity to connect food and nutritional advice to complement the treatments or bastu services.

The best part of the food and beverage experience was the thoughtful snacks which were placed in the room after our treatments and bastu sessions. Fresh fruit, nuts and juices ensured we were hydrated and nourished

Final observations

Farris Bad is well worth a two- to three-day visit if you want to immerse yourself in bathing and learn about the Nordic bastu traditions. It's also a good place to hold a business congress, with great meeting facilities both indoors and out.

The 50 pieces of art and photography around the hotel are also memorable. We were lucky to have our host explain their significance, but for guests that aren't so fortunate, there could be more written communication of the hotel's history and a pictorial guide to the art. We would also have liked a leaflet explaining the regeneration of this part of Larvik and benefit to the local community.

The history of the hotel, the city, mineral water and Nordic bastu traditions are connected and many hotel guests want to learn more about places they're visiting and the stories behind the services they receive. ●

More: www.farrisbad.com. For details of the event sauna, click here: www.spabusiness.com/100

Andrew Gibson is contributing editor of Spa Business magazine

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La Samaritaine

LVMH has deployed some of its most prominent luxury brands to create a world class spa, beauty and wellness offering at La Samaritaine in Paris, as Karen Maxwell reports



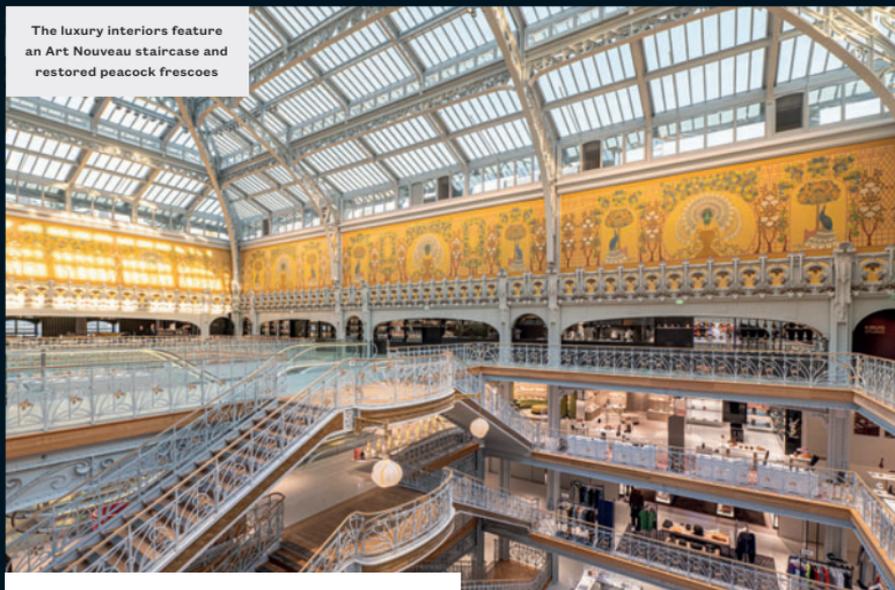
The refurbished landmark has been topped with a statement glass roof

PHOTO: SHARON PHELPS/STYVE ASSOCIATES

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The luxury interiors feature an Art Nouveau staircase and restored peacock frescoes



Located in the heart of the French capital, the newly renovated La Samaritaine department store was reopened recently by the President of France, Emmanuel Macron – a testament to the significance of this iconic landmark building on the banks of the Seine.

Now owned by luxury goods conglomerate LVMH – the company behind a vast portfolio of brands from Chanel and Dior to Louis Vuitton and Moët – La Samaritaine has been extended to create 70,000sq m of floor space with the building of a vast glass-walled addition by edgy Japanese architectural firm Sanaa.

The original building has also been sympathetically restored to highlight its Art Nouveau features, which include a magnificent staircase and atrium, peacock frescoes and enamelled lava panels on the façade.

Sanaa were also responsible for the installation of a statement glass roof with Eiffel-style iron frame which oversails 20,000sq m of luxury retail space, 12 gastronomic 'concepts', 15,000sq m of offices and what is reportedly Europe's largest beauty retail floor, which covers the entirety of the building's 3,400sq m footprint.

The pièce de résistance, however, is a 72-room hotel – Cheval Blanc Paris – which comes complete with luxury Dior Spa, fusing multiple LVMH brands in a single development.

This is Cheval Blanc's first urban location and follows on from openings in Courchevel, St Barts and The Maldives. Further properties are planned for Beverly Hills and London as LVMH takes Cheval Blanc into more urban locations. ▶

Sanaa's glass curtain wall brings a modern twist to one of the façades



PHOTO: TAKASHI HOSHINO

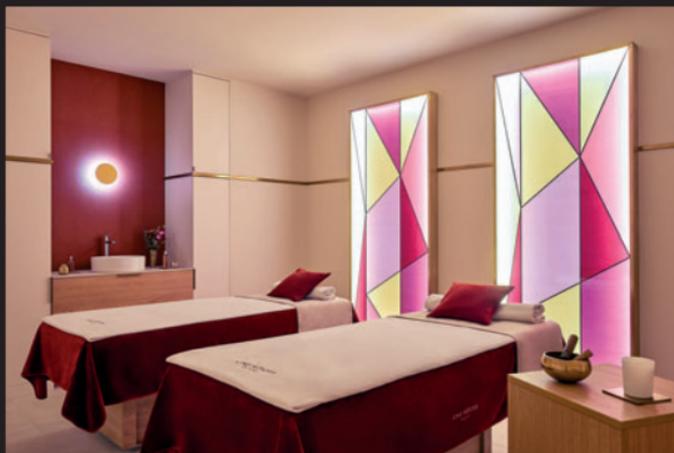


A restored Peacock fresco

STYLING: JEFFREY BROWN

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Rooms at the Spa Cinq Mondes have backlit Art Deco-style panels (below)



► Huge investment

LVMH poured nearly €500m (US\$587.5m, £425.6m) into the project during the building's controversial 15-year overhaul, with the entire site now being managed by LVMH subsidiary, DFS Group.

La Samaritaine had been a staple of the Parisien retail scene since its opening in 1869, serving the mid-market until its closure in 2005. Its reinvention as an icon of luxury, designed mainly for the super rich has angered some local people, with black paint being sprayed onto the building's facade during its opening weeks during protests about wealth inequality.

Reports from Paris indicate that the store is quieter than expected - partly due to the absence of wealthy travellers to the French capital and partly due to pandemic pressures. However, LVMH is taking a long-term view of the investment, so this is not thought to be of immediate concern - especially as the luxury market appears to be riding out the pandemic better than many other sectors.

Spa Cinq Mondes à la Samaritaine

LVMH also reached outside its own brand portfolio in creating the spa and wellness offering at La Samaritaine, issuing a tender for the creation of a second spa on the beauty retail floor which was won by French brand Cinq Mondes.

Founded in 2001 by Jean-Louis Poiroux and Nathalie Bouchon-Poiroux, Cinq Mondes now trades

in 35 countries, with the new Spa Cinq Mondes à la Samaritaine being the brand's second location in Paris.

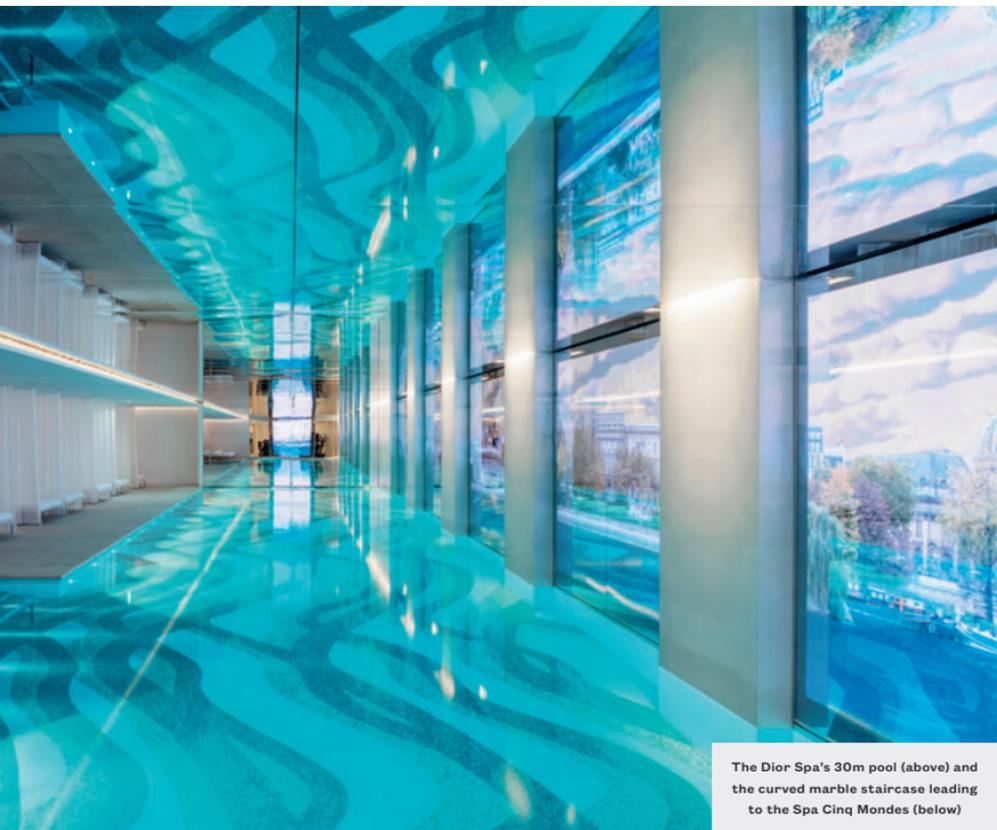
The design is by Suprem Architectures, with each of the seven treatment rooms - including one for couples - having a backlit feature wall reminiscent of Art Deco stained glass.

Poiroux told *Spa Business* all facilities - including the hammam, double exfoliation room and private relaxation areas - have been conceived to create an immersive healing journey in the heart of Paris.

Spa rituals including massages, scrubs, wraps, facials and hammam treatments draw on global healing practices from Japan, India and China, while an exclusive treatment called The Great Ritual from Okinawa lasts 50 minutes and includes a traditional Japanese kobido facial and amma back massage, costing €124 (US\$147, £106).

The new spa also has a 100sq m boutique showcasing Cinq Mondes beauty rituals and skincare range.





The Dior Spa's 30m pool (above) and the curved marble staircase leading to the Spa Cinq Mondes (below)

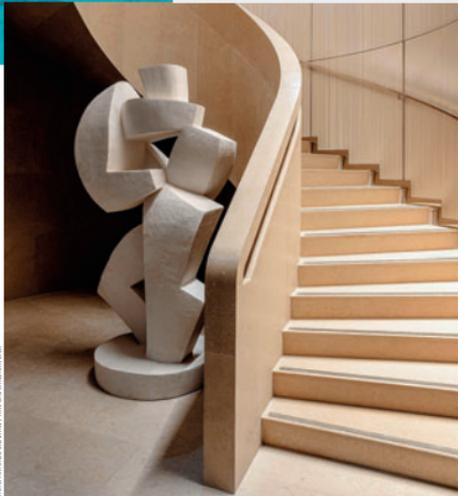
The Dior spa

This is Dior's first standalone spa opening for nearly 10 years and is thought to signal a renewed interest in the spa and wellness sector by the brand.

The entire spa pays tribute to the life and work of celebrated couturier Christian Dior, with the layout - from the curved marble staircase to an evocative Parisian 'salon' - celebrating landmark moments in the history of the brand. An interactive mirror above a cosy fireplace screens the latest fashion shows, while the spa boutique offers exclusive Dior/Cheval Blanc product collections.

The six treatment suites have private white onyx bathrooms and opulent finishes. Among these the rose and gold-decorated Bonheur suite features two massage beds that rise from the floor during treatment for a weightless experience for two; the avant-garde New Look suite has been designed specially for the six-hand Couture Dream massage; ▶

PHOTO: DANIELA WANG / EUROPEAN COURTESY FOR



Dior Spa's signature treatments:

Sublime Revelation

A restorative massage using semi-precious stones with Dior Prestige Le Micro-Caviar de Rose delivering 22 regenerative micro-nutrients

Couture Dream

Two therapists and a hair stylist work on the face, hair, hands and feet simultaneously

Sensorial Choreography

Four-handed massage in a dedicated suite

Singular Interlude

Bespoke Dior Sensorial Awakenings massage

Precious Energy

Semi-precious stone massage and Dior facial

and the Sauvage suite - with its alpha quartz massage bed - evokes a natural environment.

The standout feature is its 30m swimming pool - reportedly the longest hotel pool in Paris - which is finished with waves of hand-made mosaics by artist Michael Mayer and is overlooked by secluded rest areas with oversized loungers.

The opulent ambience is down to design by architect Peter Marino, who previously worked for LVMH on Louis Vuitton stores in Los Angeles and London, Chanel stores in New York, Seoul, Namiki Ginza and Istanbul and a Dior flagship in Seoul - as well as being on the team for the upcoming Cheval Blanc Beverly Hills.

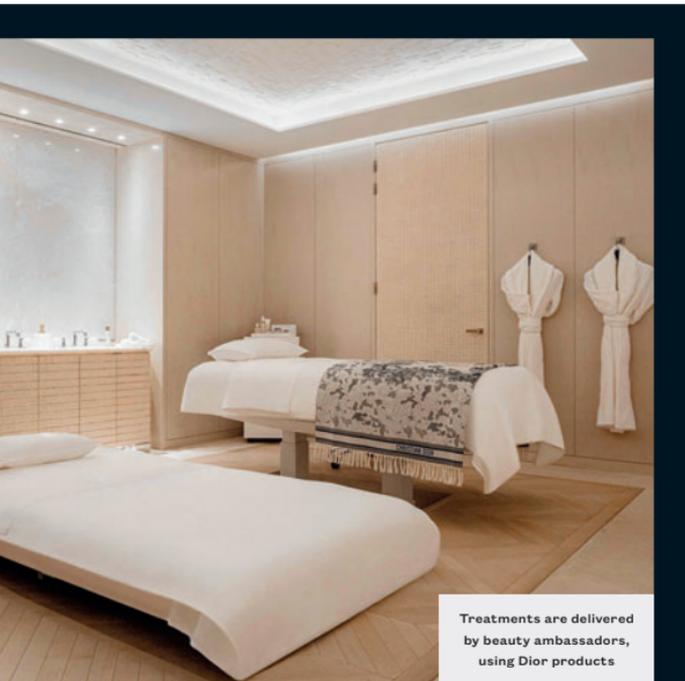
The spa's gym, with kit by Technogym, Peloton and Rogue, has a private personal training studio where training sessions can be viewed on a big screen. The gym is available to hotel guests and a limited number of members, who pay a rumoured €9,000 a year for use of the select facility.

The mix is completed by a Rossano Ferretti hair salon located close to the Dior Spa reception where the stylists are personally mentored by the Italian hair icon.

The opulent spa ambience is down to design by architect Peter Marino



PHOTO: MICHELE GAZDING / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



Treatments are delivered by beauty ambassadors, using Dior products

Dior: © Dior SpA / Dior SpA / Dior SpA / Dior SpA



The treatments

Dior's beauty ambassadors combine techniques such as Dior Tissue Massage and Sensorial Awakening with technology to provide bespoke experiences for guests.

Three classic treatments are inspired by Dior's Prestige and L'Or de Vie skincare lines which harness the power of the Rose de Granville – a flower which is hand-picked twice a year for its regenerative properties – and extracts of the Yquem grapevine from Bordeaux vineyard, Château d'Yquem, which is also owned by LVMH.

A Sapphire Crystal Micro-Abrasion treatment uses Dior technology for a programme of customised and booster treatments.

Expert Protocol facials for men and women at the Dior Spa include active hydration, deep purification, radiance detox and cell rejuvenation, with 30-, 60- and 90-minute options, while 'Happiness Shots' can be added to chosen treatments and include Head in the Stars, Relax Back, Irresistible Lips and Velvet Hands – all lasting 30- to 45-minutes.

Happy Occasions is an extended programme of treatments, including Baby Showers, Sports Transformation, Happy Bouquet, 'Cheval Blanc Sunday' and the lavish 'Grand Ball' option, which includes a body massage, facial, hair styling and make-up treatment and costs €795. ▶

Dior Spa at the
Cheval Blanc Paris
Treatment Menu
Prices @ 2021

Signature Treatments
– €220 for a one-hour
Couture Dream to €560
for a one-and-a-half-hour,
four-handed Sensorial
Choreography experience

Sapphire Crystal Micro
Abrasion facial is €260 for an
hour's treatment and €360
for one-and-a-half hours,
while a 30-minute booster
treatment costs €150

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Expert Protocols – for face
and back – range from €120
for a 30-minute Irresistible
Lips treatment to €330
for Cell Rejuvenation

Happiness Shots are
priced from €90 for a Hot
Quartz Ritual to €150 for a
30-minute, body-specific
Sensorial Awakening

Body Massages range
from €120 for 30-minutes
to €290 for a one-and-
a-half-hour treatment

World Massages include
Shiatsu, Thai, Ayurvedic
and Tui Na techniques,
priced from €240 for one
hour to €310 for one-and-
a-half-hour treatment

Happy Occasions packages
start from €530 for
the three-hour Sports
Transformation to €915
for a five-hour Grand Ball
massage, facial, hair styling
and make up treatment in
the couples' Bonheur suite

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Ghislain Waeyaert at Dior Spa in Paris

DORIS WITTEKAMP



I've had many massage and facial treatments over the years and this was one of the best I've ever had

Ghislain Waeyaert, editor-at-large of Spa Business magazine, shares insights from his recent visit to the Dior Spa, Paris

First Person

Dior Spa Cheval Blanc Paris

From the warm welcome I received from the beauty ambassadors as I stepped into Dior Spa Cheval Blanc Paris, to my exquisite treatment and the gracious farewell on my departure - I had an exceptional experience.

The customer service was exemplary, as you would expect with Dior. I was greeted by spa director Sophie Levy Kraeme who - like the other staff members - was impeccably styled in her Dior uniform. She's

considered to be a French spa expert and certainly understands how to deliver a luxurious experience, having previously worked at Cheval Blanc Courchevel.

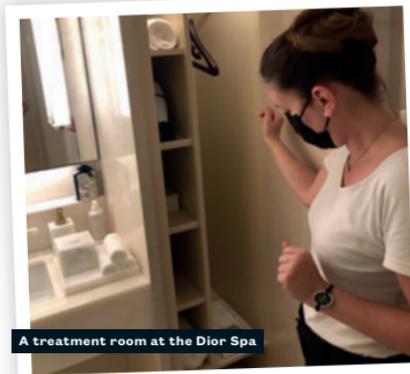
Sophie led me through reception to a comfortable armchair in the opulent beige and rose 'Parisian' salon and I was taken through an iPad-accessed diagnostic questionnaire which included simple, uncomplicated questions about my age, health and areas I wanted the therapist to focus on during my treatment.

Treatments

I had an extensive list of no less than 48 enticing treatments to choose from, which had been carefully curated by Sophie and her team, and decided on the one-and-a-half-hour Precious Energy signature treatment which I was told has been designed to 'promote positive energy and inner wellbeing'.

My Dior ambassador guided me to the Bonne Etoile suite. She was extremely professional and explained the preparation etiquette and checked the room temperature and my music preference before leaving me to undress.

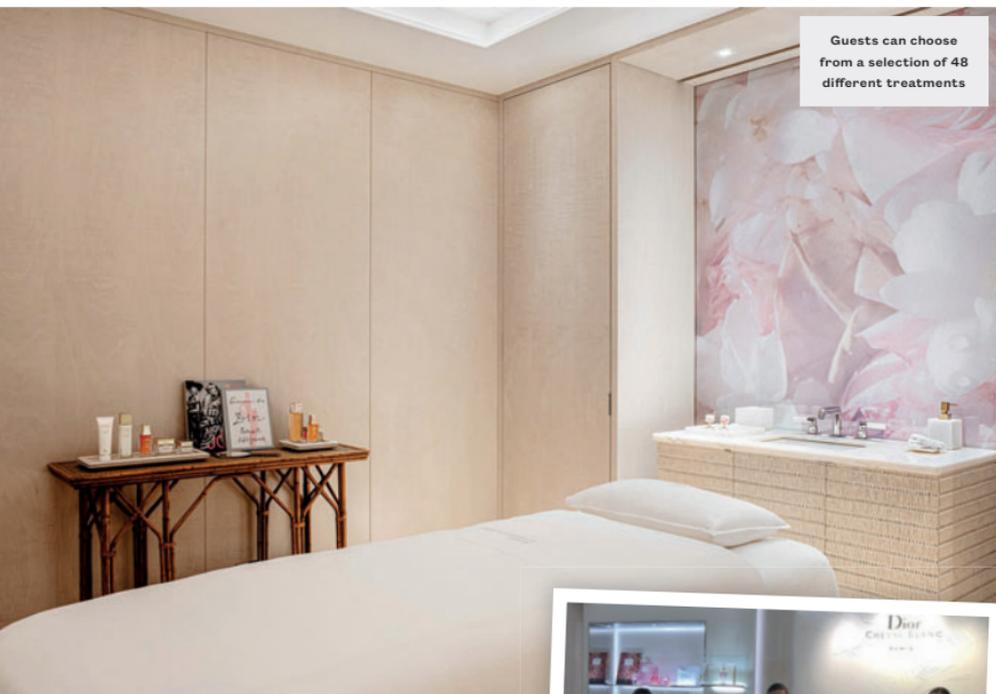
The bed linen was embroidered with a classic Dior quote: 'Deep in every heart slumbers a dream' - very apt for this luxurious experience and as I lay on the treatment bed, the ceiling lit up to reveal Christian Dior's 'lucky star', showing my personal horoscope in lights - a unique feature within this particular suite.



A treatment room at the Dior Spa

DORIS WITTEKAMP

Guests can choose from a selection of 48 different treatments



My ambassador seemed exceptionally well trained and showed a natural aptitude for customer care. She examined my face and suggested a deep cleanse before my chosen treatment. This involved the energising use of semi-precious stones – rock crystal, yellow quartz, labradorite and agate and a slow back, arms and stomach massage, followed by a relaxing facial.

This started with a traditional thermo-heating mask and followed by a facial massage using dermatologically-tested, high-performance professional products and my personally-chosen fragrances from Dior's 'garden of flowers'.

She explained the treatment process, the stones' effects and the product benefits and regularly checked my comfort throughout. Her expertise regarding treatment protocol, technique and product knowledge was exceptional and I have to say I felt fantastic afterwards. My skin felt light, bright and revived and the Dior floral-fragranced products, which is unusual given the prevalence of unscented products these days, were delightful.

Afterwards, she left me to get dressed and handed me over to a colleague who offered water and a selection of teas and escorted me back to reception – through the boutique – where I enjoyed looking through the range of Bains de Dior purifying mists and Solutions Professionnelles – which included active formulae exclusively designed for Dior Spa.



The verdict

In my opinion, the whole experience was superb. Each treatment has been very well designed and presented within the brochure – although the treatments are expensive by Parisian standards – my treatment cost €350 Euros for the hour and a half, while an average range for the city is €150-180.

However, I've had many massage and facial treatments over the years and this was one of the best I've ever had right across the board – spa ambience, therapist expertise and attention to detail, plus the quality of the products and my post-treatment feeling of wellbeing throughout my body. I left Dior Spa Cheval Blanc Paris with a big smile on my face! ● Ghislain Waeyaert is co-founder and president of *bbspa_France*

Staff retention

Operators are reporting challenges finding and retaining great staff due to pandemic pressures. We look at how software can help, while also increasing business

Operators can benchmark staff performance to help them achieve their goals

Oliver Cahill

PREMIER SOFTWARE

There are three key elements to attracting and retaining great staff. Showing you care about their wellbeing, helping them to progress their career, and recognising hard work.



PHOTO: OLIVER CAHILL

Core by Premier

Software assists with all these, helping protect staff against repetitive strain injuries with RSI points so operators can easily identify how close staff are to their set limit.

Using the Staff Snapshot report, operators can also benchmark staff performance to help them achieve their goals, while the system's commission structure helps incentivise staff to meet their sales targets.

Information such as products sold, treatments completed, client attendance and repeat business can be emailed to the operator to share with staff to keep them on track with targets.

The software can also be used to reward staff through discounts on retail or appointments, which will automatically apply at checkout.

Premier Software has also partnered with Smartbox, Red Letter Days and Buyagift to boost revenue and streamline staff time through the digital redemption of vouchers, reducing admin work for staff.

We're working with the UK Spa Association to raise awareness of staffing issues and offer a guide on how to boost recruitment. To find out more, go to www.premiersoftware.uk/blogprem and search for 'recruitment'.



PHOTO: ANDREW COX

Katherine Wernet

MINDBODY

One way to encourage retention in this sector is to ensure that staff members are protected from multi-task burnout.

Mindbody's AI receptionist - Messenger[ai] - deals with reception-related administration duties 24/7, answering calls when staff are busy by automatically sending a text to the caller to ask how the spa can help.

It can also answer Frequently Asked Questions, book appointments and automatically follow up with clients to prompt them to rebook, allowing therapists to focus on client's treatments, rather than reception duties.

Using the Mindbody marketing suite, spas can also win back lost clients, convert drop-ins to members and upsell treatment add-ons and enhancements, creating more earning potential for the spa team. One of our clients



PHOTO: MINDBODY

Instant feedback helps motivate spa employees by highlighting the impact they have on the business

is pulling in an extra US\$3,800 a month using Messenger[ai].

Spa employees can also get instant feedback on how they're impacting the business by checking the new Mindbody Insights app to view key metrics linked to the number of clients they attend to, what treatments the clients choose and their retail expenditure. They can also participate in contests with the rest of their team.



Simplifying and automating admin tasks leaves staff more time for client care



STYLING: MIMI / SHINE

The right software can provide staff with greater insight into a spa's financial health and profitability

Frank Pitsikalis

RESORTSUITE

Professional people choose to work in the spa industry because they want to provide exceptional care for guests and performing administrative tasks takes away from the time they can allocate to this calling.

The adoption of technology helps spa operators relieve their staff of administrative tasks, operate effectively with a fewer staff members and engage with opportunities to increase revenue and streamline operations.

ResortSuite integrated software solutions help spas relieve their staff from having to spend time on administrative tasks in two ways. Firstly, web and mobile modules allow guests to easily book or make changes to their appointments, view their itineraries, and fill out health questionnaires

without the need for staff involvement. Secondly, these modules can automate labour-intensive tasks, such as inventory management, product ordering and commission assigning. Staff also benefit from an online/mobile view of their work schedule and operators can easily track staff hours for managing payroll.

Watergate Bay, a destination spa hotel in Cornwall, UK, launched the mobile app in 2020, recording 16,000 sessions and 200 spa bookings in the first month - all of which would have taken a substantial amount of staff time if made in person.

Integrating these modules into the system allows seamless information sharing across a spa and the automation of manual tasks, while enhancing staff productivity by ensuring they can focus on providing an exceptional level of care to guests. ▶

Staff utilisation is vital to ensure pay levels remain competitive



WWW.KOESTLER.COM

Staff have the ability to feed back suggestions to ensure we stay current, responsive and user-friendly

Ricky Daniels

TRYBE

Recruitment is definitely an issue within the spa sector, particularly for customer-facing roles.

At Trybe, we're constantly working on solutions to make the use of tech more time-efficient for staff. This is demonstrated through the online booking facility we provide, as well as all employees being able to access their rotas and timetables, so they're able to plan around appointments and colleagues' schedules.

Our spa software is built for the industry by the industry, meaning staff have the ability to feed suggestions back at any time to ensure we stay current, responsive and as user-friendly as possible.

Fully cloud-based, our software can be accessed at any time and from anywhere in the world, so staff are no longer tied to a particular computer or location when at work. It also involves less staff time taking bookings, as all treatments are bookable by the customer online, 24 hours a day. This enables staff to focus and excel in their main areas of work.

Trybe is super easy to use, and requires very little training to get started. There's only one upfront cost and no additional costs for licenses, so less money is spent on software. This allows opportunities for funds to be put into other areas of the business, including staff remuneration.



TRYBE.COM

Roger Sholanki

BOOK4TIME

When employees feel they're integral to an organisation's success they're more likely to feel invested, stay longer and promote the business to their talented friends.

Book4Time makes a positive impact on employee wellbeing and manager-employee relationships because it provides valuable performance management insights, which allow spa managers to coach employees and encourage them to progress their careers.

Spa team members can access schedules and guest information at any time, without having to be on-site, so they can prepare for their work day. Automatic alerts inform them of new guests and guest preferences - including special notes on

conversation topics and their preferred therapist. This information helps them create an exceptional guest experience and encourages them to take a personal interest in the success of the business.

In addition, we're investing in new software features that will use AI to automatically distribute bookings to under-utilised staff to ensure everyone gets their share of non-request bookings, as under-utilised staff are usually the first to be let go.

The ease of scheduling makes a difference. Research has found that routine instability in work schedules is associated with psychological distress, poor sleep quality, and unhappiness - more so than low wages. Unhappy employees are more likely to quit, meaning a reliable and manageable schedule is key to employee wellbeing.



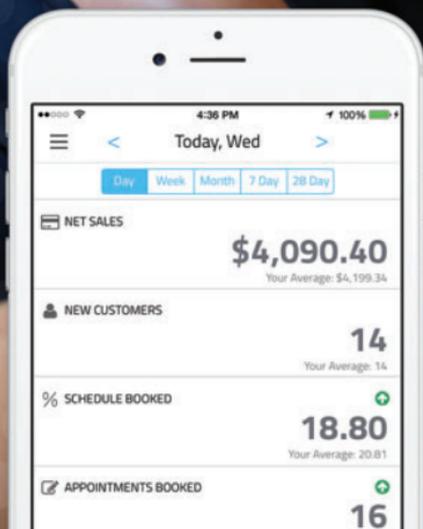
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AI algorithms automatically distribute bookings to under-utilised staff to ensure everyone gets their share of non-request bookings

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Emily Martin

ZENOTI

To aid staff retention, the Employee Mobile App empowers staff to own their success by giving them mobile access to their schedule, appointments, guest profiles, commissions and performance goals. With these insights, providers can put their expert knowledge to good use and go into each guest appointment feeling confident and ready to deliver the best experience. This gives each guest a memorable visit and helps staff increase their average ticket price and earnings, contributing to their long-term happiness and success with the brand.

The beauty and wellness industry is all about building connections and making people feel good. Zenoti's ezConnect enables staff to communicate with guests over SMS and nurture lasting relationships by encouraging guests to book an appointment and recommend products they may not have considered. Strengthening these bonds helps staff feel valued and invested in the business and its customers.

The biggest issue spas face is attracting and retaining enough staff to drive revenue. To counter this, it's critical



to empower them with tech solutions that boost their earning potential by making it easy for clients to book.

Furthermore, ezPulse increases team collaboration, speeds up issue resolution and boosts motivation, while SmartShifts optimises the scheduling process and improves retention by empowering employees to stay in control of their time.

We also offer support via Zenoti University to equip staff with access to continuous learning modules. <https://university.zenoti.com>



EMILY MARTIN

Staff can communicate with guests over SMS and nurture lasting relationships



ANDREA MILLER

Making life simpler for service providers is a critical factor in reducing burnout

Andrea Miller

DAYSMAART

When a business is either understaffed or mired in manual processes, staff can feel overwhelmed and unproductive, so making life simpler for service providers is a critical factor in reducing burnout, increasing productivity, and allowing more time for quality client engagement and career progression.

DaySmart Spa simplifies spa management with HIPAA-compliant software, allowing employees to spend more time focused on the customer experience

and less time bogged down with administration.

One example is checking inventory – a time-consuming process that's important to manage and hard to control. DaySmart Spa allows staff to automate inventory management with up-to-date reports based on sales activity. It's adjusted with each sale, providing insight into which products are the most popular or profitable and which are not selling as expected – without all the counting.

Staff members can also reduce the time spent on managing the appointments calendar by using the DaySmart online appointment booking system. This allows spa customers to easily schedule their own appointments and receive reminders in either text or email format.

The job of spa management should be to minimise operational headaches, so service professionals can deliver exceptional service.



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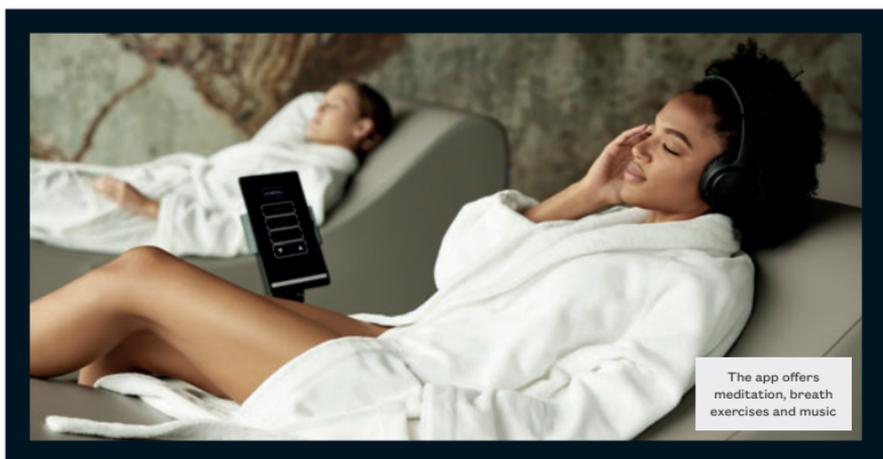
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Product innovation

Spa and wellness industry suppliers tell us about their latest product, treatment and equipment launches



The app offers meditation, breath exercises and music

Riccardo Turri introduces Starpool's new technology to care for guests' psycho-social health

Italian wellness supplier Starpool has created a new entertainment system called Wellness Coach to boost wellbeing journeys in spas and hotels.

The product consists of a 10-inch interactive tablet mounted on a stand, paired with a speaker or headphones. The technology offers access to three content categories: breathing exercises of varying difficulty; relaxing music incorporating sounds of nature; and guided meditation programmes tailored to specific wellbeing goals.

Starpool recommends incorporating the set-up into relaxation spaces, hotel rooms,



© STARPOOL

In a world that always spins fast, we create wellness oases where time slows down

private homes and the spa treatment room – before, during or after rituals – to enhance the sensory experience.

The product has a matte-black varnish finish, an adjustable stand and offers programmes in five languages. Each piece of content has a minimum duration of 10 minutes. "In a world that spins fast, we create wellness oases where time slows down," says Riccardo Turri, Starpool CEO. "Wellness Coach is an innovative solution to make wellness more accessible in daily life."



© STARPOOL

Each piece of content runs for a minimum of 10 minutes

spa-kit.net keyword:
Starpool



PHOTO: ESTERINA COPPINI

Luca Gualdrini says i-Boost offers customers a total wellbeing experience

i-Tech Industries has created a spa and wellness treatment concept called i-Boost using patented devices.

The new dual-treatment spa concept is claimed to improve skin structure, body muscle tone, posture, flexibility and overall wellbeing.

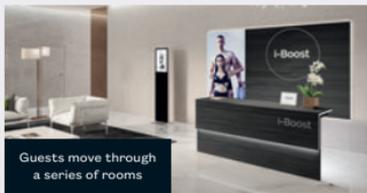


PHOTO: ESTERINA COPPINI

Guests move through a series of rooms

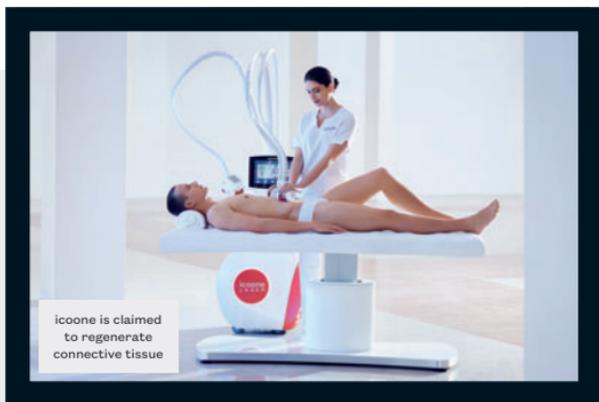


PHOTO: ROBERT T. SCHMIDT

icoone is claimed to regenerate connective tissue

A total wellness experience based on a harmony between skin quality, balanced muscle tone and mental wellbeing

Guests move through a series of rooms where treatments are delivered.

The first is a body protocol using i-Tech's icoone skin treatment system which deploys Roboderm technology to revitalise the skin by regenerating connective tissue through the device's micro-stimulators, which act on the skin 21,600 times a minute.

Guests then move to another room, where they use the

icoone Booster, a platform that stimulates 95 per cent of the body's muscles – through rotation, sloping and vibration – improving muscle tone, balance and flexibility. GM Luca Gualdrini says: "i-Boost offers customers a total wellness experience based on a harmony between skin quality, balanced muscle tone and mental wellbeing."

spa-kit.net keywords:
i-Tech Industries



PHOTO: ROBERT T. SCHMIDT

Jörg Demuth: Zero Waste compostable disposable underwear helps cut back on single-use plastics

Zero Waste by Urb'n Nature has upgraded its sustainable spa and hotel amenity collection with plastic-free, compostable underwear made from plant fibres, cotton and modal.

Formulated from cellulose, modal is entirely plant-based meaning the underwear is suitable for vegans. Plus, it's considered a sustainable fabric, as less water and energy are required during manufacturing.

"Plastic-free sustainable spa underwear is just one of our brand's many ways to tackle the overuse of single-use plastic in spas," explains Jörg

Demuth, product development director and co-owner.

Suitable for allergy sufferers, the underwear is soft, crease-resistant and breathable and has a cooling effect on the skin.

spa-kit.net keywords:
Urb'n Nature

The material has a cooling effect on the skin



PHOTO: ROBERT T. SCHMIDT

Plastic-free sustainable spa underwear is just one of our brand's many ways to tackle the overuse of single-use plastic in spas

PHOTO: SOOTHYS



The inspiration came from the natural sources surrounding the Sothys Gardens

Christian Mas unveils plans for Sothys Organics vegan skincare range inspired by nature

Sothys is preparing to unveil Sothys Organics collection with vegan formulas combining advanced efficiency and natural active ingredients, in Q1 2022.

The range includes a Cleansing Oil for the face and eyes, a Skin Radiance Exfoliant to remove dead skin, a Radiance Mask to hydrate and a Revitalising Emulsion to help re-energise skin.

Commenting on the upcoming launch, Sothys CEO, Christian Mas, says: "The inspiration

came from the natural sources surrounding the Sothys Gardens, with birch sap harvested from the nearby forest and other active ingredients from local producers. We're particularly proud of this organic and vegan range, as it offers the same level of sensoriality and efficiency as a signature Sothys range."

Sothys has curated the new line to create a 30-minute facial called the Organic-Certified Radiance Treatment. The



PHOTO: SOOTHYS

Birch sap is harvested from the forest

anise-scented ritual begins with make-up removal, followed by a facial scrub, serum application and a modelling massage mask, before a final serum reapplication to stimulate the skin and enhance radiance.

spa-kit.net keywords:
Sothys

Paul Scialla introduces new biophilic mindfulness app from Delos

Wellness specialist Delos has launched a mindfulness app that plays to the innate human instinct to connect with nature and other living beings.

Called Mindbreaks, the app uses 3D audio with spatially accurate biophilic sound to provide immersive, transformative and restorative sessions.

By making users feel more connected to the natural world, the app is targeted at those who live a hectic life and want to pause and recuperate.

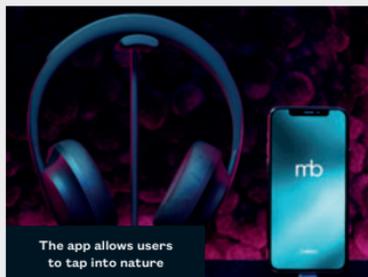
The app offers short, restorative sessions across a range of experience categories, including Escape, Energise, Rest, Meditate, Focus, and Inspire.

Each session has been designed to increase energy, improve focus, enhance mood and reduce stress.



PHOTO: DELOS

We've been studying the impact of the built environment on people's health and wellbeing



The app allows users to tap into nature

Paul Scialla, CEO of Delos, says: "We've been studying the impact of the built environment on people's health and wellbeing and have created the app to tap into the human need to feel connected to the natural world. It offers curated mindfulness content for every mood at any time of day."

spa-kit.net keyword:
Delos

Peter Ruokonen reveals Cariitti Oy's new LED heat and humidity display for sauna bathing

Finnish spa and wellness engineer, Cariitti Oy, has developed Aspectu, a stylish heat and humidity meter that provides an LED temperature display for use on sauna wall panels.

The fixture consists of a 230mm-circumference display panel made from Finnish birch plywood that can be freely positioned on the sauna wall,



The panel is made from Finnish birch plywood

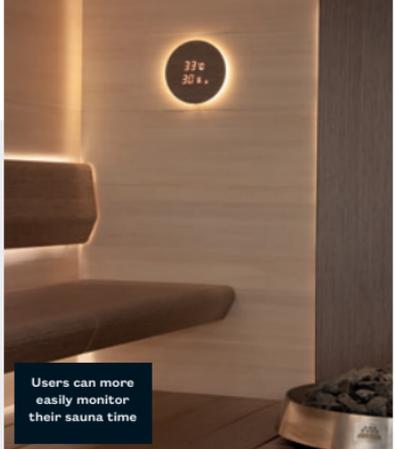
while the electronics remain concealed behind wall panels.

The meter's LED light forms an hourglass pattern on the surface of the wooden panel, enabling users to monitor their time in the sauna. This timer works on a loop whenever the meter is switched on.

The product comes in three finishes - birch, hemlock or kelo - as well as three Supi sauna wax colour options; kuura, kaarna and noki.

CEO Peter Ruokonen says: "The panel can be tinted to match the exact colour of the sauna and be fitted wherever you want it."

spa-kit.net keywords:
Cariitti Oy



Users can more easily monitor their sauna time

PHOTO: CARITTI OY



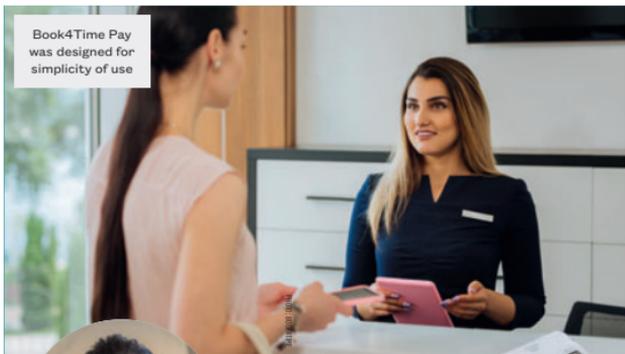
“The panel can be tinted to match the exact colour of the sauna and be fitted wherever you want it”

Roger Sholanki unveils Book4Time's integrated payment solution

Book4Time has launched a new all-in-one payment processing platform called Book4Time Pay to enable customers to take guarantees at the time of booking, accept EMV credit/debit at point of sale, sell giftcards online, manage recurring membership and offer customers self-service mobile checkout functionality.

The service comes with flat-fee pricing, enabling spas to realise savings to the bottom line. "Book4Time Pay represents a significant avenue for us to help our clients further elevate the guest experience and drive efficiencies and cost savings," says CEO Roger Sholanki. "Payments have typically been an afterthought in the industry, but it's an area that's ripe for disruption." Director of payments at Book4Time, Ali Mroueh, adds:

Book4Time Pay was designed for simplicity of use



“The release of Book4Time Pay was driven by the need for simplification”

"The release of Book4Time Pay was driven by the need for simplification.

"Our clients sometimes struggle with limited IT staff and having to juggle various technologies - now they have one less vendor to work with for sales and support."

spa-kit.net keywords:
Book4Time

The service comes with flat-fee pricing



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Gaia's new Strengthening Oil is used in treatments for long-term health conditions, explains Diane Nettleton

Gaia Skincare has curated the Gaia Affinity Experience for anyone living with health concerns, such as cancer, Parkinson's, psoriasis, anxiety and burns.

The CIBTAC-accredited treatment lasts between 40-, 60- or 90-minutes and comprises a foot ritual and a tailored full-body massage, as well as homecare advice.

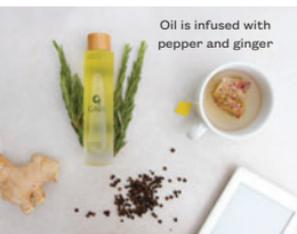
PHOTO: GAIA SKINCARE



Everyone who visits a spa wants to take care of their wellbeing

To enrich the treatment, Gaia has launched an immune-boosting Strengthening Body Oil infused with essential oils of black pepper and ginger to relieve aching muscles, rosemary to support immunity and ylang-ylang to nurture positivity.

Oil is infused with pepper and ginger



STYLING: WYVO, DUBAI



A consultation is conducted prior to treatment

PHOTO: WYVO, DUBAI

Prior to each treatment, therapists conduct a consultation to adapt the experience based on guests' personal needs and preferences.

"Everyone who visits a spa wants to take care of their wellbeing," explains Diane Nettleton, founder of Gaia. "No one needs it more than those experiencing emotional distress and physical discomfort. It's about focusing on wellness, rather than illness."

spa-kit.net keyword: Gaia Skincare



Shower users can watch a soothing video of a tropical beach

Showervision lifts the sensory experience in an experience shower to the next level

Werner Dosiertechnik's new visual experience shower accessory lifts the experience for guests, says Rainer Rieger

German wet area specialist, Werner Dosiertechnik (WDT), has unveiled a new experience shower accessory consisting of a 75" HD screen and immersive nature visuals.

Called ShowerVision, the digital screen complements traditional sensory shower elements such as chromotherapy, aromatherapy, audio content and water jets, with corresponding nature visuals.

The Tropical Rain sequence begins with smooth water drops, a fruity aroma and a crimson light. Next, the screen projects a video of a tropical beach to relax the user.

MD of WDT, Rainer Rieger, told *Spa Business* the



ShowerVision "lifts the sensory experience in an experience shower to the next level."

In combination with a WDT Experience Shower, ShowerVision is an attraction for the luxury hotel and spa market, as well as for private homes.

spa-kit.net keyword: Werener Dosiertechnik



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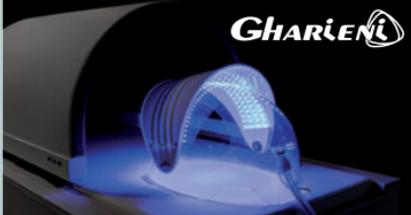


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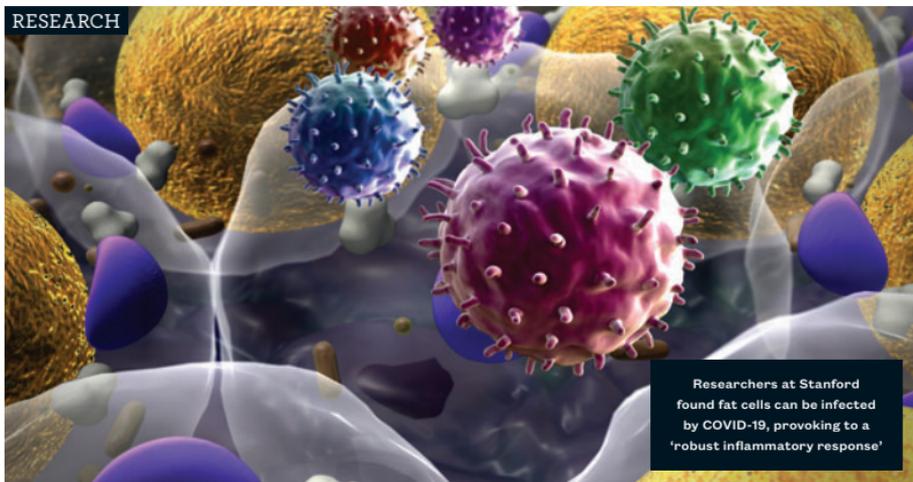
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Finishing touch

COVID attacks fat cells

Researchers from Stanford University set out to explain why people with obesity are at higher risk when contracting COVID-19, as Tom Walker reports

New research suggests that COVID-19 infects fat cells, explaining why overweight and obese are at a higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19.

The study lends added credibility to the work being done by spa and wellness businesses in supporting people to control their levels of body fat.

The study, led by Stanford University School of Medicine, examined whether fat tissue obtained from bariatric surgery patients could become infected with the SARS-CoV-2, and tracked how various types of cells responded to the virus.

It found that fat cells and also immune cells (macrophages) can be infected, leading to a 'robust inflammatory response'.

The findings show the virus is able to evade the immune defences within the body's fat cells, before causing inflammation elsewhere in the body.

In addition to explaining why patients with excess body weight are particularly vulnerable, it may also explain why some younger adults with no underlying health issues become so ill.

Obesity is associated with adverse COVID-19 outcomes, but the underlying mechanism was unknown

'Permissive' fat tissue

In reporting the details of the findings, the researchers said: "Collectively, our findings indicate that adipose (fat) tissue supports SARS-CoV-2 infection and pathogenic inflammation and may explain the link between obesity and severe COVID-19.

"Obesity is associated with adverse COVID-19 outcomes, but the underlying mechanism was unknown up to this point.

"We demonstrate that human fat tissue is 'permissive' to SARS-CoV-2 infection - the virus that causes COVID-19 - and that infection elicits an inflammatory response, including the secretion of known inflammatory mediators of severe COVID-19.

"We identify two cellular targets of SARS-CoV-2 infection in adipose tissue: mature adipocytes and adipose tissue macrophages.

"Adipose tissue macrophage infection is largely restricted to a highly inflammatory subpopulation of macrophages, present at baseline, that is further activated in response to SARS-CoV-2 infection.

"Pre-adipocytes, while not infected, adopt a pro-inflammatory phenotype. We further demonstrate that SARS-CoV-2 RNA is detectable in adipocytes in COVID-19 autopsy cases and is associated with an inflammatory infiltrate.

The research has not yet been peer-reviewed, but has been published: www.spabusiness.com/fatcells ●



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