

Healing

lifestyles & spas

magazine

Featuring: Solage Calistoga

Mud and clay treatments have been around for a millennia. Uncover the history and the pleasure behind mud therapy.

Earthy Experiences

by Karen Werner | additional reporting by Bess Hochstein

The tradition of slathering mud on the body goes back centuries. Cleopatra believed black mud scooped from the bottom of the Dead Sea made her more beautiful, and the Romans discovered the healing benefits of soaking in warm mud as far back as 120 B.C. As Nicole Kiger, head esthetician at Mepal Spa in New Marlborough, Massachusetts says: "Mud is the ancestor of all body treatments."

Today, the mud bath remains a staple at spas all over the world. It's a tradition practiced in Japan, California, Europe, and New Zealand—basically, wherever both hot springs and volcanic ash appear.

Why has mud enjoyed such staying power? Well, to begin muds possess numerous healing attributes. Mud baths have a long history as a natural cure, and they are said to relax muscles, soothe body aches, improve circulation, and tone the skin. "Mud is such a wonderful element from the earth. It's got everything—vitamins, biominerals, amino acids, and hormones from plants. And it absorbs into the skin very easily," says Sharron Hopley, the Gerente de Spa at Mexico's Maroma Resort and Spa.

In fact, muds and clays are used extensively in European spa clinics to treat everything from arthritis and joint problems to skin diseases and menopausal issues. Mud baths are believed to help clear metabolic pathways, improve waste elimination, and boost cell oxygenation.

But the most simple reason to jump in the mud is because it's so relaxing. Held afloat in the soft, sultry substance, all worries melt away. Warmed between 102 and 108 degrees, mud causes the body to perspire, which cleanses the pores, flushes out impurities, and leaves the skin feeling soft and renewed. Plus, mud retains heat, which means you can enjoy a toasty soak longer than a mere bubble bath.

Twelve Ways to Get Dirty

Mud Bar

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