

Smart meetings

The Intelligent Way to Plan in the Western Region

APRIL 2007

THE WOW FACTOR

Five top event creators
tell us how they get it
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Foster great meetings and family togetherness
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This is what dinner for
6,000 can look like:
The 2007 GRAMMY
Celebration Party

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INDIGENOUS INSPIRATIONS

By Julie Keller

There's nothing like a one-of-a-kind, on-the-road experience to make you feel like you are really becoming part of the local landscape. Tequila and cactus are two iconic symbols of Mexico; Utah is known as the Beehive State; and Napa wouldn't be Napa without wondrous wine selections and the soothing scents of healing, locally grown herbs. Spa directors in these regions and countless others have learned a valuable lesson: native ingredients are often excellent elements to incorporate into spa menus. Not only are they readily available and effective, but treatments infused with these textures and aromas provide spa-goers with a unique experience that they wouldn't be able to enjoy anywhere else.

For planners looking to mix up a sometimes-stale meeting schedule and provide attendees with an experience they won't soon forget, planning a spa session or meeting break filled with regionally inspired treatments is an excellent solution.

"A sure way to create positive memories of a meeting's locale is to talk with the spa about ways to incorporate destination-rich offerings," says Lynne Walker, president of the International Spa Association (ISPA). "Incorporating the local ingredients and indigenous culture makes the spa experience even more interesting and educational for guests. These unique spa treatments enjoyed while attending a convention ensure the guest experience will be memorable."

Meeting-friendly properties around the globe have embraced this trend. Here are a few to consider when you are planning your next meeting and looking for an inspired way to impress participants.

- At Apuane Spa at the Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita (Punta Mita, Mexico), the signature Hakali Massage (\$160, 50 minutes; \$220, 80 minutes) brings a distinct Mexican flair to the treatment room. Using nopal, a prickly pear cactus, and pulque, an alcohol made from the agave plant and a predecessor to modern-day tequila, the hydrating treatment is actually performed using heated (and obviously spine-free) cactus paddles.
- The new 15,000-square-foot spa at The Coeur d'Alene Resort in northern Idaho offers a variety of spa sessions inspired by the region's fragrant spruce, cedar and mineral-rich lake algae. Some healing highlights include the signature Spruce & Cedar Vitality Bath [\$25, 10 minutes], which relies on the Northwest's aromatic spruce and cedar forests to create a soothing, circulation-boosting soak. The Alpine Lake Natural Spirulina Wrap [\$120, 50 minutes] features pure lake algae.

- Sweet spa solutions are available at The Grand Spa at The Grand America Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah, where local honey is at the heart of the menu. The Honey Body Massage (\$105, 50 minutes; \$145, 80 minutes) and the Warm Honey & Shea Butter Body Wrap (\$105, 50 minutes) are two guest favorites. "Our guests are not accustomed to Utah's dry climate, so they find that their skin becomes de-hydrated and parched," says spa director Tony Fountain. "These types of treatments assist in the exfoliation process as well as in the re-hydration process of the skin."

- The Essence of Awa & Olena treatment (\$260, 80 minutes) at Spa Grande at Grand Wailea Resort & Spa (Maui, Hawaii) incorporates locally grown awa (a derivative of kava), olena (tumeric), sugar cane, coconut oil, ti leaves and more to soothe the skin and awaken the senses, a process that starts when you arrive in Maui.

- The posh Spa du Soleil at Auberge du Soleil (Rutherford, Calif.) offers a variety of treatments in such regionally inspired categories as The Vineyard, The Garden, The Grove and The Valley, calling upon the antioxidant power of grape, locally harvested herbs and flowers, local organic olives and the healing muds and minerals found nearby. "The beautiful Napa Valley is rich in plants and minerals, which happen to be great for your skin," says Susan O'Bryen, spa director. "Grapes, olives, herbs, flowers and re-mineralizing mud all have beneficial and healing aspects unique to this area."


- Meeting-goers can get down and dirty at Spa Solage at Solage Calistoga (Calistoga, Calif.), which opens in June. The spa's playful reinterpretation of the region's historic spa and mud bath traditions allows guests to cozy up to a Mud Bar, where Mudtenders mix proprietary Solage Mud, essential oils and geothermal water. Guests then apply the mud and can sip on cocktails while they let the mud work its skin-soothing magic in the group lounge area, an ideal spot for meeting participants to let their hair down and get to know each other better—provided it's not wrapped in a towel.

While off-site meetings are a vital part of many businesses, they sometimes follow a rather predictable path. So if you are looking to mix up your next event, make a call to the host property's spa director and book some locally inspired spa sessions for convention-goers. "I believe that feeling refreshed at a break gives each of our meeting attendees a rejuvenated outlook for even the most focused of meetings," says Kara Adamson, director of sales and marketing for Auberge



Alpine Spa, Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita

du Soleil. "Indigenous treatments offer a specific perspective for guests, helping to incorporate the uniqueness of the surroundings and focusing on the setting as part of the retreat."

As Cecilia Hercik, spa director at Grand Wailea's Spa Grande, says, "Attendees who experienced our indigenous treatments felt that it was the highlight of their convention. It is the best bonus that their company could give them." 

Julie Keller is the editor-in-chief of American Spa, an award-winning magazine that reports on the national and international

RESOURCES

Auberge du Soleil

aubergedusoleil.com

The Coeur d'Alene Resort

cdaresort.com

Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita

fourseasons.com/puntamita

Grand Wailea Resort & Spa

grandwailea.com

The Grand America Hotel

grandamerica.com

Solage Calistoga

solagehotels.com