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# SPA TRENDS

2008 *the evolved spa*

By Margie Goldsmith



## **As spa guests become more conscious of the environment and begin to understand their bodies better, spas are evolving.**

New spas are being designed to give back to the earth, products are being created without artificial ingredients, and spa-goers, who used to favor pampering, are opting for more educational and healing experiences. Here are the spa trends we see continuing in 2008:

### **Sustainable Spas**

Color it green. These days, many spas are going beyond environmental consciousness and instead of just talking the talk, they're walking the walk. Going green is not only good for business, it's also good for the environment. "From using environmentally sustainable beauty products to serving locally produced organic food, going to the spa is becoming a socially conscious decision," says Michelle Kleist, president of Destination Spa Group. Jim Root, International Spa Association (ISPA) chairman, agrees. "Sustainability is in the fabric of spa, and it's not a passing fad," he says. "It's a deliberate lifestyle for those who work in the industry as well as those who visit spas."

In Taos, New Mexico, El Monte Sagrado, was an early adaptor of leaving a lighter footprint by utilizing solar lighting, recycling and purifying water flowing into ponds and waterfalls, and maintaining a holistic glass-enclosed botanical garden. The eco-initiatives of the Spa at Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York, include an outdoor "green roof," which helps insulate the building, reduces energy, and provides a venue for yoga and meditation. Kohler Company, with spas presently in Wisconsin and St. Andrews, Scotland, is scheduled to open a spa in Chicago in early 2008. Working with a LEED-certified designer, the new Kohler spa will use recycled flooring and concrete as well as an HVAC unit with an "energy recovery wheel." Kohler's "waterless" urinals will also be installed in the men's spa.

Green is also key to the recently opened Solage Calistoga in Napa, California, where water used in the mineral pools and bathhouse is tapped from the Calistoga Hot Springs. Solage's interiors include furnishings made from natural and recycled materials, furniture manufactured with non-toxic varnishes, and interiors finished with non-toxic, low-VOC paints. The Agave Spa at the Westin Kierland Resort & Spa in Scottsdale, Arizona, recycles and uses battery-operated candles in the treatment rooms. Rancho La Puerta in Tecate, Mexico, which has had a sustainable garden since its 1940 opening, uses recycled toilet paper, soaps without phosphates, and recycles grey water through a marshland. Such brands as Four Seasons, Hyatt, and Marriott have all made firm environmental commitments, and some Leading Hotels of the World properties donate fifty cents per guest per night to help offset their carbon footprint.

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“There’s a really big shift in what’s happening in the sustainability movement in the luxury hospitality world,” says spa consultant Amy McDonald. In 2008, two Asian companies, Shrangri-la and Banyan Tree will be coming to North America, and both will raise the level of luxury service. Banyan Tree will also raise the bar in terms of social and environmental responsibility.

## Eco-Products

Spas are positioning themselves with more green products, and many skin-care companies are getting rid of paraffins and sulfites. Today’s savvy spa consumer does not blindly accept the label, ‘all natural.’ “A product needs to be greener, more pure, and must provide more proof,” says Tracy Lee, vice president of spa development for Auberge Resorts. (Auberge will also be opening a new property in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in summer 2008.) More and more natural ingredients are used in treatments, such as the Pineapple Pedicure at Spa Luana at the Turtle Bay Resort in Oahu, Hawaii, a scrub of fresh crushed pineapple, shaved coconut, and warm honey. The Sage Springs Club and Spa at Sunriver Resort in Bend, Oregon, partners with a local woman to create products utilizing local plants and herbs such as neem, aloe vera, and shea butter.

## Experiential Journeys

Spa-goers are looking for new experiences to help them forge connections to indigenous cultures, places, and traditions. “People are going to spas for the healing and educational benefits rather than just for pampering,” says Julie Raistrick, spa director for Montage Laguna Beach. “They crave a natural/holistic approach to health and healing in everything from healing time after surgery to improving sleeping patterns.” “Destination spas are about the experience,” Kleist adds. “People come for a purpose; sometimes because they’re at a crossroads and they’re looking for change. The destination spa program is geared towards facilitating those changes, and we’re seeing more and more customization. Canyon Ranch is an excellent example, where you meet with a program coordinator, explain your objectives, and the coordinator figures out how to facilitate that change and what you can take home.”

## Indigenous Treatments

Spa-goers are craving more indigenous treatments. The Willow Stream Spa at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess draws from the Arizona Native American tradition of “purifying” the spirit in its desert purification ritual, which includes burning sage. Mii amo a destination spa at Enchantment in Sedona, Arizona, offers Inner Quest, developed by local tribal elders of the Yavapai-Apache Nation. The treatment includes a simulated sweat lodge experience. Skana, the Spa at Turning Stone in Verona, New York, offers a genuine sweat lodge experience presided over by a Lakhota Sioux leader and an Oneida tribal drummer and fire-tender. At Auriga, the spa at Capella Pedregal in Cabo San Lucas (opening fall 2008), a *curandera* or Mexican folk healer will be available for treatments and rituals based on local Mexican folk healing traditions. Auriga has four signature treatments that correspond with the lunar phases such as New Moon: The

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Beginning, a treatment with juniper, rosemary, and fennel to rouse the spirit; and Waxing Moon: Sowing the Seeds, a therapy with white jasmine blossoms and salt exfoliation to release creative energies. In Ivins, Utah, Red Mountain Spa offers Four Directions, inspired by the indigenous Dakota and Lakota tribes. This healing treatment embraces the four directions of the Medicine Wheel and includes animal totems, smudging, and sacred herbs, plants, and stones.

### Location, Location, Location

Spas are taking advantage of their geographical locations for experiential journeys. The Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa in California, built on a natural thermal hot spring, creates energy-efficient heating and gives each guest a brochure describing his or her environmental philosophy. The Aspira Spa at the Osthoff Resort in Wisconsin, is using the waters from Elkhart Lake, which the Potawatomi, Menominee, and Ojibwa tribes consider sacred, in its Sacred Waters Massage. The Spa of Colonial Williamsburg is surrounded by the restored capital city, and while wellness is the spa's priority, guests are encouraged to explore the nearby Historic Area and Colonial Williamsburg's properties. The therapies at the Spa of Colonial Williamsburg draw on traditions from five centuries of wellness and include a cleansing 17th-century hot stone experience derived from the Powhatan American Indians and a Colonial Herbal Spa Experience based on herbs and apothecary ingredients used by doctors in the 18th century. Red Mountain Spa, which bills itself as an adventure spa, takes advantage of its jaw-dropping red rock location by offering some of the most beautiful hikes in North America for every fitness level. The beachfront spa at the Ginn Hammock Beach Resort in Palm Coast, Florida, relies on the Atlantic Ocean to create thalassotherapy products, rich with ocean minerals and coquina shells.

### Residential

Guests used to come to a spa once or perhaps twice a year. Now, owners and renters are living the spa experience on a daily basis. "There's a movement towards integrating more health aspects within the spa experience, and the term 'spa' has been branching out to include more than just fitness and therapies," says conceptual designer, Sylvia Sepielli. Other lifestyle aspects are now being incorporated such as nutrition, sleeping well, retirement, and how you use your leisure time—things beyond treatments and fitness. Sepielli adds, "We're seeing more mixed-use property, resorts with home-stay components, and a big part of that is the spa/lifestyle component."

Real estate developers are building spas in gated communities, residential communities are adding health and wellness facilities, and existing spas are adding residential components. Georgia's Sea Island Resort's "Exclusive Resorts" is constructing twenty-four residences steps away from the spa, to be completed by the fall of 2009. "It's not about the real estate, it's about the lifestyle," says Jim Root, general manager of Sea Island's spa operations, "which is why the spa was such a fundamental piece of the redevelopment."

Guests at the Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North wanted the spa experience but not in a hotel room. Instead they wanted all the comforts of home, including a kitchen; in response, the Four Seasons has built forty-four residential units. Owners share the spa facilities at a discounted rate. At Ginn

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Hammock Beach, the accommodations are privately owned, mainly by those who want the spa lifestyle. Canyon Ranch, which presently operates five wellness facilities, has opened the first Canyon Ranch Living residential community in Miami Beach with a second community planned for Chicago. Red Mountain recently added sixteen villa residences on property, and for \$100 per day, owners can enjoy the full spa program plus three healthy meals. Last year, some guests at Sundara Inn & Spa in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, said, "We wish we could live here." As a result, Sundara built eight residential villas, and have since added four more.

### Girlfriend Getaways

Girlfriend getaways are hotter than ever, mainly because women want time to bond with their friends away from family responsibilities and careers. Recognizing the greater rise in girlfriend getaways, La Costa Spa in Carlsbad, California, is introducing destination girlfriend spa packages in the near future. At Aji Spa at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort and Spa in Chandler, Arizona, girlfriends have been celebrating their important occasions, including birthdays and bachelorette parties for years. "It's not just girlfriends," says Kristi Kjar, spa director. "In the past year we've seen an increase of families as well, especially mothers and daughters." Mothers and daughters are a new trend and so is the frequency of returning guests. Berni Campbell, spa director of Coeur d'Alene Golf & Spa Resort in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, relates, "The biggest change we see is that women, who used to come to the spa once a year to bond, are now coming two or three times annually."

### Upcoming Trends

"The spa is taking its show on the road so members can have their favorite therapist in the privacy of their home—part of a 'beyond spa' movement," says McDonald. "The spa is moving out of existing offerings and into new realms. There are also spa 'in home' parties, which take the spa 'girlfriends weekend' into their homes," she adds. Denise Vitiello, spa director at The Spa at Mandarin Oriental in New York City, New York, says that longer periods of time are being spent in the spa and that in the future, spa-goers will spend even more time. "Achieving a synergy of mind, body, and spirit cannot be accomplished in an hour," she says. "In order to truly experience the benefits of a treatment, guests need time to relax and rejuvenate. It takes the body at least 24–27 minutes to truly begin to relax once a treatment begins, so it makes sense that a 2–3 hour or more block of time gives guests the opportunity to better enjoy and absorb their state of relaxation, and there's more value to the treatment this way." 🌿

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