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Spa-Going Gets Social

By Julie Keller

In the heady intellectual days of the Greek poet Homer, all the way back in 500 B.C., groups of philosophers, government officials and other decision-makers gathered together in social baths to rejuvenate their bodies, spending hours talking, debating and making decisions that shaped society. The ancient Romans did the same. In fact, some of the greatest thinkers in history participated in these kinds of social baths. This tradition is being brought back today in a number of spas that offer social bathing experiences that include such elements as hot and cold plunge pools, saunas, steam rooms and other soaking options in expansive spaces that are perfect for a large number of people.

Just ask Aristotle—when people allow themselves to chill out and enjoy the rejuvenating, detoxifying and healing that can occur in such spaces, brainstorming becomes even more productive, and people who normally only interact in a strictly business setting can let their guards down and truly get to know each other. For these reasons and more, consider incorporating a group spa circuit during your next event and discover the business-boosting, team-building benefits such an experience can provide. There are several properties that offer the opportunity for just such a social spa interaction, including:

• **Aquae Sulis Spa at JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort, Spa & Golf (Summerlin, Nev.)** The Aquae Sulis hydrotherapy circuit at this off-the-Strip resort is an excellent—and relatively inexpensive—place for meeting-goers to congregate. Complimentary if they've experienced a treatment at the 36-treatment-room spa, and just \$25 per person for full-day access, the experience begins in either the men's or women's Ritual Room in calming and stimulating hot and cold plunge pools, followed by a soak in a warm float pool. Surrounded by garden waterfalls, guests next head outdoors and move through the six invigorating chambers in the hydrocircuit pool. They then stop in the steam room and sauna to help release toxins. An invigorating waterfall completes the session with a cascading massage.

• **Qua Baths & Spa at Caesars Palace Las Vegas** The Roman Baths at this 51-treatment-room spa, which Director of Spa Jennifer Lynn says "harken back to the original days of social spa experiences," are an ideal spot for group spa-going. Included in the experience, which is complimentary with a treatment and \$45 per day for a spa pass for hotel guests, are three distinct pools varying in both temperature and size, the ultra-heated Laconium Room, where spa-goers can sweat out the toxins in their bodies, and the refreshing Arctic Ice Room, which features

snow falling from the ceiling above.

• **Allegria Spa at Park Hyatt Beaver Creek (Colo.)** Following a recent \$12-million rejuvenation and expansion, the 30,000-square-foot, 23-treatment-room spa features the Aqua Sanitas water sanctuary, with a co-ed mineral pool as well as private spaces and deluxe spa locker rooms that offer additional hot and cold spa options. The self-guided water ritual, which is ideal for groups, is included with every treatment in the spa and costs \$20 à la carte for hotel guests. It is infused with essences of indigenous Colorado wildflowers and herbs



Qua Baths & Spa at Caesars Palace Las Vegas

and includes hot mineral pools, a cooling rain shower, a steam room and a relaxation room. "Our spa design allows groups to socialize in a playful, relaxing setting," says Gabe Steinke, general manager of the spa.

• **Spa Solage at Solage Calistoga (Calif.)** This 14-treatment-room Napa Valley spa offers a playful twist on a social spa option with its Mudslide experience (\$95; 60 minutes). This modern take on the traditional Calistoga bathing ritual is ideal for small groups and begins with a self-application of healing mud, which penetrates the skin and detoxifies the body. Then, guests chill out in a heated mud lounge to allow the concoction to dry before rinsing it off and soaking in a refreshing tub of mineral water. Afterward, spa-goers relax in a chair that offers vibrational sound therapy, then make a final stop at one of three heated mineral pools—one co-ed and separate men's and women's pools—as well as cold plunge pools and a steam room.


While these options—and others like it that are cropping up at spas around the world—can make for a fun group experience, there are some things to consider, particularly when it comes to the comfort levels of your meeting-goers. Number one is to make sure all of your attendees bring swimsuits and are comfortable wearing

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them around each other (it's probably best to run the idea by attendees and explain what is going to happen in the session before it starts so you don't surprise them). You might want to consider saving such an experience for all-male or all-female groups to make it more comfortable, as well. Also, be sure the spa offers robes and slippers in various sizes, from extra small to extra large, to address the needs of your attendees. Finally, be sure to explain the possible health side effects of the experience—extreme fluctuations in temperature can be detrimental to older spa-goers and those who may have a heart condition.

If those issues are manageable your meeting-goers, social spaing that incorporates a group bathing experience can be a fun option. "Social spa experiences are typically very memorable for hard-working group guests," says Qua Baths & Spa's Lynn. "The bonding and memories that come from events planned at spas have a long-lasting effect."

And don't forget the great ideas and relationship building that can occur when people are relaxed, refreshed and really let their guards down. After all, if Homer could create *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* after experiencing the rejuvenating powers of spas and reaping the benefits of a social experience, imagine what a shared spa event can do for your next meeting. 

Resources

Allegria Spa at Park Hyatt Beaver Creek
allegriaspa.com

Aquae Sulis Spa at JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort, Spa & Golf
jwlasvegasresort.com/spa-resort

Qua Baths & Spa at Caesars Palace Las Vegas
harrahs.com/qua

Spa Solage at Solage Calistoga
solagecalistoga.com/spa