

a spa is born

With wellness being seen as a necessity and not a pampering luxury, spas are evolving to meet client needs. Annabelle Hood looks at the top 20 spa openings



RESTING YOUR HEAD lightly on the masseur's supple pillow, you feel your body tingle softly as the stress gently ebbs away with the comfort of a full body massage. Not a thought crosses your mind other than your mud and seaweed body wrap in half an hour, and why on earth you had never thought to

indulge in a spa holiday before now.

Eraze 'wellness tourism', the new term coined to describe travel across borders for well-being holidays — which 3.6 million UK adults have not yet tried, but crucially want to, according to a Mintel report on UK spa habits.

"It's increasingly poised to become the way we define our time away from home and work in the future," says Susie Ellis, president of SpaFinder, the global industry and consumer advisory body. Indeed, SpaFinder's annual State of Spa Travel global survey of travel agents reported that one of the top trends of 2009 was people choosing spas as travel destinations.

The same can be said for this year. According to Intelligent Spa's Global Spa Benchmark Report in June 2009, spas across the globe should expect to see their revenues grow between 8% and 32% in 2010.

Fittingly, as spa-going has become more mainstream, a new breed of 'middle-class' spa is rising from the embers of the economic downturn. "Look out for savvy new spas combining less expensive treatments and facilities with a touch of glamour, hitting a sweet spot between nice and price," says Ellis.





**Kempinski The Spa at the Grand Hotel
Kempinski High Tatras, Slovakia**



Meanwhile, top-end spas remain as luxurious as ever. "Spas opening or relaunching as a rule continue to be quite lavish affairs," says Nicky Shafe, Prestige Holidays' marketing manager. La Mamounia hotel in Marrakech unveiled its 27,000sq ft La Mamounia Spa this winter and big name super-deluxe spa brands, from Six Senses to Banyan Tree and Amanresorts to Four Seasons, have unleashed spas galore this past year, despite the economic climate.

The counterpart to the luxury spa, the eco spa, has also made its mark. Australia's first conservation-based resort, Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa, has opened in the Blue Mountains near Sydney, and Chile's Easter Island will launch a Hangaaroa Eco Village & Spa in April.

So what can we expect to see in 2010? According to Spafinder, a 'discount backlash' is set to take hold in 2010. "There's growing consensus from day and stay spas worldwide that the 'straight-up-heavy price-slashing' model isn't sustainable and may even erode brands and the spa/wellness value perception," says Ellis.

For Alison Scott, commercial director at Elegant Resorts, it's important agents and operators remember that "spas are a very personal experience, and different clients may have varying needs and expectations." Her advice is to "try to ascertain what it is they want to achieve" — to relax or lose weight, for example.

The average spa-goer is changing, too, with men, younger and older generations and ethnic groups now joining the fold. "Spas are taking note, with offerings catering to these diverse groups. Watch for 'silver spa-ing' really taking off in 2010," says Ellis.

One thing's for sure, says Shafe: "It's now almost essential for a hotel to have a spa of some sort as customers expect it." So check out our selection of new spas across the globe and be reinvigorated... ▶

asia & australasia

The Timeless Spa at Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa Blue Mountains, Australia

This Australian conservation-based resort is a member of Leading Hotels of the World, bordering the Blue Mountains three hours' drive from Sydney. The spa includes six double treatment rooms, a 25-metre outdoor infinity swimming pool, steam room and sauna, plunge pool and an indoor/outdoor relaxation deck with commanding views of the Wolgan Valley below. www.emirateshotelsresorts.com/wolgan-valley

Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, Himachal Pradesh, India

The new Moksha Himalaya Spa Resort, part of the Centara Boutique Collection, closely follows the recent opening of Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa in Maldives. At a height of 5,200ft and amid the pines of the Shivalik Valley, the spa has 12 private treatment rooms, including a hammam steam room, Ayurveda rooms and six yoga pavilions, an outdoor heated infinity pool with two heated Jacuzzis, and a fitness centre. www.centarahotelsresorts.com

The Spa by Parasa, Kamala Beach, Phuket, Thailand

This five-star Thai resort opened in September on Phuket's 'Millionaires' Mile'. The resort has a warm infinity pool and five suites for couples, each with private balcony, daybed and bathroom featuring a large bathtub, plus views across the Andaman Sea. Three of the spa suites have a private steam room; the spa's signature 2,500-year-old ritual Thai Boran Massage concentrates on pressure points to stimulate circulation and ease muscle tension. www.phuket.com/parasa-resort/spa.htm ■

Banyan Tree Ungasan, Bali

The Banyan Tree Ungasan in January, a short drive from the beaches of Kuta, Seminyak and Sanur. Perched on a cliff-top, the spa resort offers panoramic ocean views, the largest infinity pools in Bali and a gamut of spa treatments based on Indonesian healing traditions and natural indigenous ingredients. Signature treatments include Ayurvedic and Thai-style therapies such as the Javanese Lulur – an ancient exfoliating treatment using turmeric. Each of the 73 pool villas is set in its own garden with private infinity pool and sunset bath and bar (outdoor pavilion). www.banyantree.com

► Facilities at the Banyan Tree Ungasan include the largest infinity pools in Bali



Spa pool at the Banyan Tree Ungasan, Bali

SAMPLES

► **THE UK: THE SCARLET HOTEL** in Cornwall offers a double room on half board from £250 per night on its special winter rate. The price includes a 60-minute 'Short Journey' treatment per stay; the offer applies until 11 March, subject to availability, with the exception of 12 February. T: 01637 562800. www.scarlethotel.co.uk

► **EUROPE: ABERCROMBIE & KENT** offers seven nights' B&B at Verdura Golf & Spa Resort, Sicily, from £1,495 per person. It includes airport car hire and British Airways flights from Gatwick to Catania. T: 0845 618 2222. www.abercrombiekent.co.uk

► **MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA: THOMSON** offers seven nights' B&B at the InterContinental The Palace Port Ghalib Resort, Egypt, from £735 per adult, departing in June. The price includes

flights from Gatwick and transfers.

T: 0871 231 5595. www.thomson.co.uk

► **AMERICAS & THE CARIBBEAN: ELEGANT RESORTS** is offering seven nights' all-inclusive at Junby Bay, Antigua, from £4,090 per person, two sharing a Romantic Room and departing 24 April. It includes flight, Atlantic flights from Gatwick, plus boat and car transfers. T: 01204 807627. www.elegantresorts.co.uk

► **ASIA & AUSTRALIA: EMIRATES TOURS** combines three nights' B&B at the Park Hyatt, Sydney, with three nights' full-board (plus two daily nature-based activities) at the Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa from £3,305 per person. The price, from 16 April to 30 June, includes return Emirates flights and private transfers. T: 0844 800 1408. www.emiratstours.co.uk



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