



## CORPORATE SPA'ING

Providing an incentive  
to de-stress

## ECONOMICALLY SPEAKING

How is the meeting  
industry faring?

## LEGAL-EASE

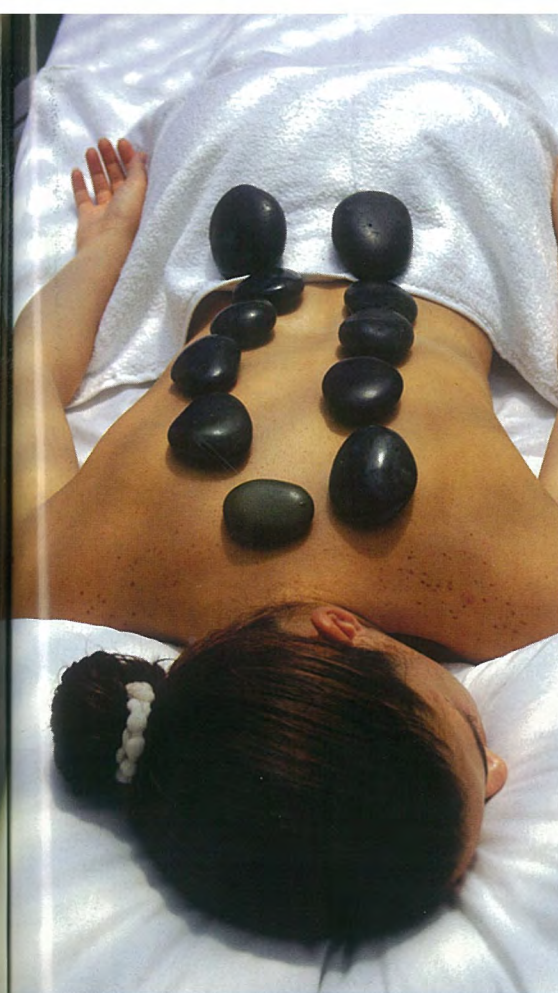
Top 10 liability  
issues reviewed

# FEEL THE TOUCH

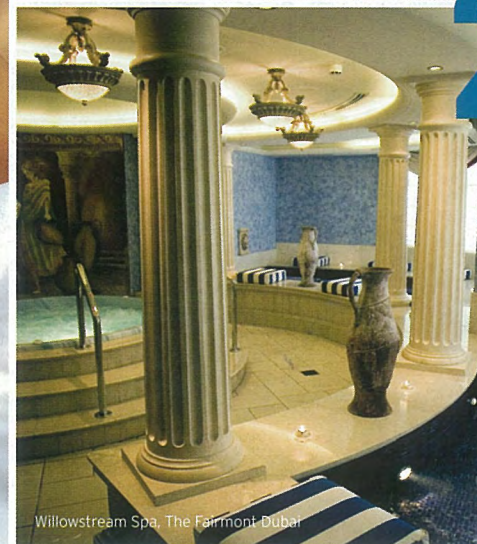
Rewarding a team with incentives has proven benefits, but more corporate planners are seeing the advantage of adding in an element of relaxation and rejuvenation too, making spas an essential must-have component of any incentive trip. **Jacqueline Khale** takes the hands-on approach to find out more



Club Olympus Fitness & Spa



Willowstream Spa, The Fairmont Dubai



Willowstream Spa, The Fairmont Dubai

## TOP TIPS FOR THE MEETING PLANNER

- 1 Put a twist on the room gift by giving out spa products as attendee gifts during incentive meetings. The gift could complement the treatment selected by each attendee
- 2 Provide immediate relief on arrival to jet lagged executives by setting up a spa station at registration, with a massage chair and therapist, along with a spa representative to book appointments for later in the programme
- 3 If the group is pressed for time, book a spa sampler evening including a chair massage, foot scrubs and massages, hand scrubs and massages, manicures, pedicures, and use of spa facilities
- 4 Include wellness into your meeting theme as many spas have staff who can address your group (in whole or in part) on topics of wellness, nutrition, fitness, and health

5 Some resorts are creating spa packages specifically for meeting groups. If you would like to be innovative and get out of closed spaces, book spa staff to lead sunrise hikes or yoga breaks



Relax, rejuvenate and revive is the corporate mantra that executives need to imbibe in these days of stress, deadlines, jet lag and power struggles. It is all about switching off for a while and reconnecting with oneself. What better place to do this than a spa?

Spa brings to mind a haven of pampering - soft lights, soothing sounds, calming effects of gently trickling water, aromatic oils, candles, petals, gentle hands massaging away your weariness ... the list continues.

The origins of the word 'spa' are still unclear, but there are two main theories. One is that spa is an acronym for the Latin phrase, 'salus per aquae' or 'health through water'. Others believe the word originates from the Belgian town of Spa, known since Roman times for its baths. In any case, the word in the English language has become synonymous with a place to be restored and pampered.

Today's spa is a centre for healing and nourishing mind, body, and spirit. People go to spas for fitness, stress management, peace of mind, pampering and pleasure, as well as health and wellness.

Holistic healing, well-being and wellness are words that are constantly tossed around in spa banter. To achieve this, spas offer a wide variety of techniques and services - traditional and modern, from the East and from the West - Swedish, Japanese Shiatsu, Balinese and Thai massage, Dead Sea salt scrubs, mud wraps, thalassotherapy, aromatherapy complemented by classes in nutrition, meditation, yoga and Tai Chi, state-of-the-art fitness centres with personal trainers, and much more.

### THE SPA INCENTIVE

Even the most interesting meeting can reach a point at which energy begins to flag, attention wanes, and stress begins to build. What better way to handle those challenges than with a spa break? More and more planners are bringing the spa to the meeting by incorporating everything from 10-minute chair massages to yoga stretches during breaks.

While this may seem like a not-so-serious indulgence, others are choosing to make spas an important component of their agenda. So much so that full service spas are becoming a must-have for incentives and meetings.

The new popularity of spa retreats and incentives is due in part to corporate awareness that healthy employees are productive employees.

"I don't think it's just a fad," says Anni Hood, spa director, Talise - the home-grown brand of hospitality group, Jumeirah. "Corporate organisations are more concerned about their employees' health as it is a lot cheaper to keep your staff well."

Endorsing this fact is Dr. Gerald Huber, regional director GCC, Schletterer Wellness & Spa Design, who have many ongoing projects in the Middle East including one for Abu Dhabi Investment Authority. "This is an institutional spa that largely focuses on the well-being of employees through meditation and experience and thus positively influence working conditions and motivation."

Hotel chains, individual resorts (and cruise ships) that value meeting and incentive business are spending time and money on their



Talise Spa

recreational offerings - especially spas, an amenity that's now as critical as the ballroom for lots of corporate groups.

Gabriel Stancu, spa manager at Club Olympus Fitness & Spa, Hyatt Regency Dubai says, "On request we are able to offer tailor-made spa packages for smaller groups. This can include healing massages or relaxing treatments, fitness activities, aerobics or specially designed workouts."

Ahmed Baki, regional director of sales & marketing, Middle East, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, says: "Proof of the importance of spas in the Starwood group is the fact that we have actually bought over the leading spa brand Bliss. Properties need to meet the general, physical and programmatic requirements. The core philosophy, The Seven Pillars of Well-Being (incorporating beauty, life balance, harmony, water, vitality, nature and nutrition), is designed to ensure a high-level of spa programming at all of our properties regardless of location.

"Treatments are different at each spa - individuality is one of our strengths. Each spa also has signature spa treatments, which are unique to each property, mostly incorporating local products."

Marriott International also sees a niche for spas. "All Marriott properties have been fitted and retro-fitted with bigger and more sophisticated spas. There is a change in trend in terms of travellers being more leisurely. Generation X and Generation Y need to pamper themselves. We are one of the largest spa operators in the world, in terms of number of spas in properties", says Samir Daqqaq, vice president global sales, Middle East & Africa.

Heavenly Spa by Westin is the branded spa concept for Westin. Bobby Griffiths, spa manager at the Westin Dubai Mina Seyahi Resort & Marina says, "The core spa treatment is dictated by Heavenly Spa head office, including the signature 'Westin Heavenly' massage - Rollerssage, however other treatments are designed by the specific spa to showcase local ingredients, therapies or traditions."

With 11 treatment rooms and separate areas for men and women, the newly opened spa offers a large selection of spa treatments facials, massages, body wraps, slimming treatments and more. But Griffiths is most eloquent about Rollerssage. "It is an exclusive massage technique which combines the deep, relaxing feeling of a Swedish massage with radiating heat applied by the patented Rollerssage tool to relieve tight muscles. The smoothness and soothing heat from semi-precious stones, from around the world, give a euphoric sensation unique to the Rollerssage treatment.

"This unique treatment uses pure, perfectly rounded crystals which are heated and rolled over the body for a deeply penetrating massage that is



The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai

## POPULAR SPA TREATMENTS

### AROMATHERAPY

Aromatherapy uses warm essential oils to activate your sense of smell and increase your sense of well-being. The oils are massaged into your skin, mixed into water for you to bathe in, or blended with other oils or steam for you to inhale. The essential oils used in aromatherapy are powerful and are extracted from plants, shrubs, flowers, bark, peel, resin, grasses, fruits, roots, trees, petals, stems or seeds. Only a small amount of essential oil is needed, and is blended with a larger amount of another 'carrier' oil - such as rapeseed oil - and used on the skin. The most frequently used essential oils include camomile, lavender, rosemary and tea-tree.

Aromatherapy works on the basis that the smell of the essential oils helps to relax and increases the sense of well-being. Massage helps the skin to absorb warmed essential oils relieving stress and anxiety as well as helping to sleep better and relax.

### AYURVEDIC MASSAGE AND SHIRODHARA

Ayurveda is India's ancient and natural system of medicine which works on the belief that all life forms have a 'dosha' - a unique mix of energies known as 'vata', 'pitta' and 'kapha', similar to the Western idea of elements - water, fire, earth, and wind. A person's dosha determines the kind of lifestyle that is balancing and healthy for them, including the sorts of food they should eat and the amount and type of exercise they should do.

Ayurveda covers a variety of techniques, including diet, yoga, meditation and massage therapy. All are personalised to suit the individual's dosha.

Ayurvedic massages using essential oils to suit your dosha are designed to detoxify and cleanse as well as improve overall well-being.

Shirodhara is one part or feature of the ancient Hindu holistic medical practice of Ayurveda. Shirodhara is a Sanskrit word combining two other words - 'shiro' meaning head, and 'dhara' meaning flow.

Shirodhara treatments feature the steady streaming of warm, fragrant oil onto the forehead, followed by scalp massage, and depending on the treatment - by other body massage as well.

Shirodhara is a very relaxing treatment that leaves you feeling both calm and clear headed. It aims to harness the flow of energy around your body.

### BALINESE MASSAGE

A Balinese massage uses a combination of gentle stretches, acupressure and aromatherapy oils to stimulate the flow of blood, oxygen and 'qi' (energy) around the body, and bring deep relaxation and wellness.

An ancient technique, Balinese massage uses a variety of techniques including skin rolling, kneading and stroking, acupressure and reflexology to induce relaxation and wellness.

Balinese massage is a rigorous and luxurious spa treatment that is related to the Ayurveda that works deeply to soothe damaged tissue, and relieve strained muscles and joint pain.

Because it works very deeply into the tissue, as well as boosting circulation and harnessing acupressure and reflexology techniques, Balinese massage is a highly effective treatment for sports injuries.

### HAMMAM

A hammam can be either one tiled steam room, or a suite of steam rooms and pools for communal use.

In a more traditional Turkish hammam, there are many different rooms and chambers, each offering different water-based benefits, similar to the Roman baths. There is often a proposed order for using the facilities to gain maximum benefit. The visit may include a luxurious, and rigorous soap-wash, and a short massage with essential oils.

A hammam is usually a segregated facility.

## UNIQUE WELL-BEING CONCEPTS ARE CONVINCING



© Gavriel Jecany/CORBIS

## WE SPA YOUR WORLD

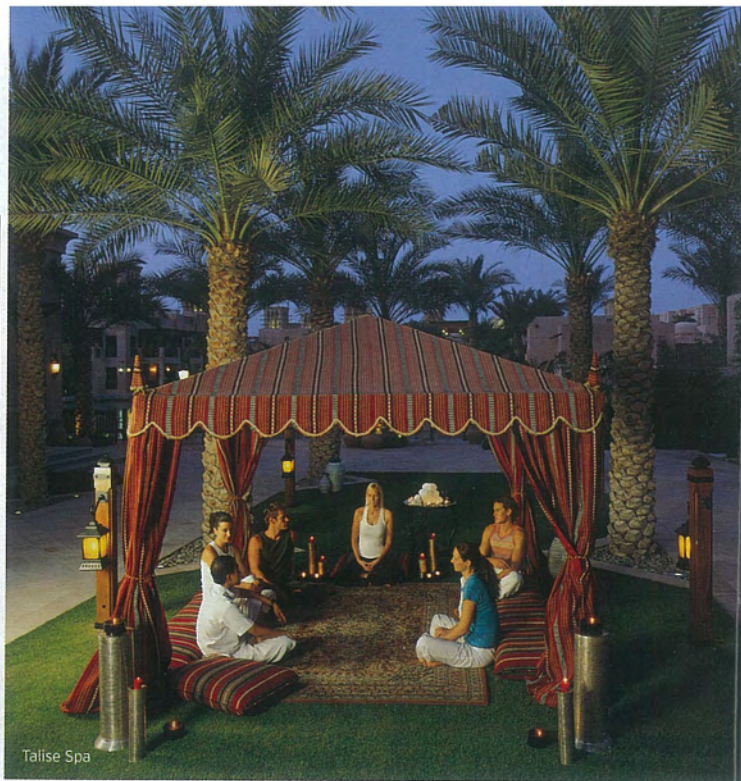
Something is unique not only because you may not have seen it before but, more importantly, because of what's behind it and what you make of it.

As the leading spa and consulting company worldwide we have been successfully benefiting our clients from the local and international hotel, thermal and leisure industries, as well as day spas, cruise liners and private customers.

We know what it means to create unique well-being concepts with excellent profitability. We stand for holistic concepts which guarantee an exceptional well-being experience.



Club Olympus Fitness & Spa



Talise Spa

## Jordan is undoubtedly home to the world's largest natural spa — The Dead Sea

utterly calming and completely absorbing. The guest is given a small crystal to take with them at the end of the treatment," she adds.

The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai offers an intimate retreat for any incentive group. With extensive landscaped gardens and beach, the hotel is ideal for an incentive retreat. "The Ritz-Carlton Spa caters to incentive needs by being able to tailor treatments to suit any budget or time constraints that groups may have," says Nicola Bush, spa director at the resort. "Every service is flexible so therapists and treatments can be made available according to the group's schedule," she adds.

The decor of the purpose-built spa at The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai reflects a Balinese influence, with much of the furniture and artwork coming from the island. Soothing colours of ivory, cream and pale yellow contrast with the natural wooden floors. The Balinese theme is also evident in many of the treatments and therapies that are performed by highly skilled male and female masseurs. These include the Balinese Boreh massage and the Javanese Lulur Body Ritual.

The rising popularity of spas is a region-wide phenomenon with Bahrain being home to one of the largest spas in the Middle East. At 10,000 square metres, The Banyan Tree Spa at the Banyan Tree Desert Spa & Resort, Al Areen, boasts the region's largest spa and one of the most extensive hydrothermal gardens in the world.

The Six Senses Spa at Sharq Village & Spa in Doha is the largest Six Senses branded spa in the Middle East. Marteyne van Well, spa director for the facility, says: "As the spa facility is spread over four villas with 22 treatment rooms, incentive groups coming to Al Sharq Village & Spa have the option to book an entire building for multiple activities for the group on a rotational basis. While one group indulges in a yoga session, other members can get a massage. With over 100 treatments on offer, spouse programmes are also very popular."

Further afield, Jordan is undoubtedly home to the world's largest natural spa - The Dead Sea. Its mineral-enriched waters are said to have healing properties and is complemented by the unique experience of floating in the Dead Sea. Three five-star resorts that fringe the Dead Sea - The Mövenpick Resort & Spa Dead Sea, Kempinski Hotel Ishtar Dead Sea and the Jordan Valley Marriott Resort & Spa - have extensive spa facilities.

### POPULAR SPA TREATMENTS (cont.)

#### HOT STONE THERAPY

At the start of a hot stone therapy, smooth water-heated basalt stones are carefully applied to key points on the body. This direct heat relaxes the muscles, which means that the massage itself is more effective and intense than it would be otherwise. The size of the stones varies, according to which part of the body they're being used on. The stones are coated in fragrant oil to increase the sense of relaxation and calm.

It is generally accepted that treatments of warmth and cold are beneficial, and help to soothe an aching body. The hot stones expand the blood vessels and the cold ones constrict them. The warm stones sedate the nervous system and the cooler stones gently wake it up again.

The combination of relaxing warmth and refreshing coolness is thought to encourage the body to detox and heal, increasing lymph flow and helping to flush out waste. The body becomes relaxed in a much shorter space of time, and the therapist can focus on a deep working of the tissues using both stone and hand strokes.

#### SWEDISH MASSAGE

In Sweden, Swedish massage is simply known as classic massage. And that is exactly what it is - a classic treatment which represents the western standard for massage.

The five main techniques used in Swedish massage - stroking and gliding; kneading; rubbing; tapping or pounding and vibration. They're designed to improve circulation, soothe muscles and increase relaxation.

Swedish massage uses softer strokes on the bonier and more delicate parts of the body, and stronger strokes where there is thicker muscle coverage. This sensitivity to pressure makes it ideal for relaxation.

#### THALASSOTHERAPY

Thalassotherapy comes from the Greek word for 'sea', and refers to a variety of treatments that use seawater and seaweed, each designed to tone, moisturise and revitalise the body and skin, and in many cases to improve circulation. Other marine and ocean derivatives feature in thalassotherapy, too, including algae, mud and sand.

Thalassotherapy comes in a bewildering array of packages - mud baths, underwater showers, hydro-massage, aromatherapy, and seaweed, mud and algae wraps all exist to help restore the body to a state of serenity.

In general, thalassotherapy is said to induce relaxation and cleanse the skin.

#### WRAPS

Wraps are spa treatments designed to slim and tone the body, hydrate or firm the skin, or relax and soothe the muscles. Body wrap treatments come in varied and exciting packages, with one common factor - mummification - where the body is wrapped in a nourishing cocoon to warm, cleanse and moisturise.

Some wraps are also thought to relieve tired or heavy legs and aching joints, ease inflammation, and help to flush out toxins through sweating.

[www.goodspaguide.co.uk](http://www.goodspaguide.co.uk)

## EMERGING SPA TRENDS

The writing is on the wall. Spas have come to stay and users have come to be discerning in their demand.

Having recently attended the World Spa Summit in New York, where the spa market was valued at a trillion dollars, Hood of Talise says, "The key trends (some very futuristic) that came out of the summit are for very strongly integrative and preventive health and how spas can embrace that and be instrumental in helping improve the health of the people who use spas. So spas are coming away from just being about pampering and relaxation to making well people 'more well'. Other topics that were discussed were sustainability, sociability, segmentation in terms of resort spas, urban spas, day spas, medi-spas and getting that sense of difference between them.

"It's about pulling together five different industries - nutrition, fitness, mind-body, meditative and alternative therapies, and traditional spa treatments and offering one integrative package. That's the way the industry is going. People want to hit all the top notes in one environment," she says.

Dr. Huber of Schletterer says, "You can never be a trendsetter if you don't have uniqueness. Nowadays most spas just showcase different facilities into one spa combination. But that is not the way for the future. There needs to be a focus on one core competence or select specialisation, whether it is a themed destination, sport or family destination all applying the holistic approach."

Of the numerous projects being developed by Schletterer in the region, of particular interest is The Cube, a sport medical spa focussed on high altitude energy training to increase the oxygen in the blood: clients undertake high altitude training after which oxygen is infused into the blood with oxygen masks in a relaxed spa surrounding.

At the other end of the spectrum, catering to the high-end market, is the spa at the Tiara Palm, on the Palm Jumeirah featuring novelty in functions and luxury products - caviar, pearl, gemstones, crystals - not just for cosmetic use but to rein in the power and energy of gemstones.

The other trend is wellbeing without compromise especially with regards to the products used. "The bar is going up in terms of spa products," says Hood. "Organic has become the qualifier, never mind being something that was aspired to," she says.

Hyatt Regency Dubai has taken this a step further by featuring a Pañpuri Boutique. Commenting on the 100 percent natural Pañpuri range of products used in the spa, Stancu of

## Spas are coming away from just being about pampering and relaxation to making well people 'more well'



H2O Oxygen Lounge,  
Jumeirah Emirates Towers

## Spa fixes...

### for the busy executive

For those short on time, it has to be our signature massage, Rollerssage. It is extremely relaxing. For those with a little longer to spare, it is great to come for a full or part day package and spend a few blissful hours using the heat facilities and taking a couple of hours of treatment.

#### Bobby Griffiths

Spa manager, The Westin Dubai Mina Seyahi Beach Resort & Marina

Thai Green Tea and Lemongrass Radiance Wrap. In this wrap your skin and body will benefit from a fusion of bamboo powder, green tea, creamy coconut and crisp lemongrass - a combination that is suspended in a base of sea kelp and rich mineral clay. The green tea and crushed rice body scrub will remove dry and dead skin cells while improving the circulation and the body mask of sea kelp and green tea will have an anti-oxidant effect on the skin as well as a detoxifying effect on the body. Enjoy the soothing scalp massage and once the mask is removed you will take pleasure in the benefits of a coconut, lemongrass and honey body massage to hydrate and brighten the skin while giving a rejuvenated feeling to the body and mind.

#### Nicola Bush

Spa director, The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai

Thirst for Energy and Vitality - for those who are in need of the extra energy to keep on going as it eases muscle tensions and stimulates circulation and energy levels. Also revitalises the body through pressure points inspired by Shiatsu and dynamic impact. Also, for those who have terrible muscular tension, our Aroma-Tonic Massage with warm oils is the massage to alleviate stress, ease aching muscles and revive the senses

#### Bénédicte Flouriot

Marketing manager, The Palace, The Old Town

It should be the Chakra balancing body treatment or the Talise Absolution, which is the four-handed synchronised massage that combines, hot oils, poultices, kneading techniques, facial cleansing. Also, forget the Blackberry.

#### Anni Hood

Spa director, Talise, Madinat Jumeirah

The three-hour Sense of Stress Release is a relieving experience which includes the Indian head massage, foot acupressure and the balancing facial, leaving you feeling rejuvenated and balanced. For those short on time, I recommend the 75-minute Hot Stone Therapy, an indigenous technique of full body and face massage uses volcanic stones to instil a deep level of calmness whilst relaxing tight muscles, removing blockages and dissolving stress.

#### Elaine Okeke

Spa manager, Six Senses Hideaway Zighy Bay

Ayurvedic Abyhanga with scalp massage followed by a foot reflexology. The Abyhanga massage in the traditional Indian Ayurvedic method is extremely relaxing and ideal for anyone suffering from stress or jetlag. The foot reflexology stimulates the energy of each organ, helping to promote the body's own healing.

#### Gabriel Stancu

Spa manager at Club Olympus Fitness & Spa

## 1 TOP TIPS FOR THE SPA USER

Always arrive much before the appointed time as you can be relaxed and take advantage of the spa facilities. The journey before you start your treatment is as important as the treatment itself

2 Communicate with your therapist. Let your therapist know if the room is too cold, too dark or bright and if the music is not to your liking

3 In terms of choosing the treatment, be conscious of how you feel, what you want to achieve and discuss this with one of the spa concierges

4 Take some time after the treatment to truly embrace that relaxed feeling of well-being

5 Adhere to good spa etiquette – mobile phones should be switched off. This is not an alternative venue to the boardroom



The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain



Heavenly Spa, The Westin



### Know your spa

**DAY SPA** - A spa offering a variety of professionally administered spa services to clients on a day-use basis.

**DESTINATION SPA** - A destination spa is a facility with the primary purpose of guiding individual spa-goers to develop healthy habits. Historically a seven-day stay, this lifestyle transformation can be accomplished by providing a comprehensive programme that includes spa services, physical fitness activities, wellness education, healthful cuisine and special interest programming.

**MEDICAL SPA** - A facility that operates under the full-time, on-site supervision of a licensed health care professional whose primary purpose is to provide comprehensive medical and wellness care in an environment that integrates spa services, as well as traditional, alternative therapies and treatments. The facility operates within the scope of practice of its staff, which can include both aesthetic/cosmetic and prevention/wellness procedures and services.

**MINERAL SPRINGS SPA** - A spa offering an on-site source of natural mineral, thermal or seawater used in hydrotherapy treatments.

**RESORT/HOTEL SPA** - A spa owned by and located within a resort or hotel providing professionally administered spa services, fitness and wellness components and spa cuisine menu choices.

Hyatt Regency Dubai says, "Pañpuri is a luxury spa product from Thailand based on completely natural ingredients, such as herbs, flowers and essential plant oils. The name stems from 'Panna' meaning wisdom and 'Puri' meaning palace. In some eastern languages, Puri also refers to untying what has been tied and of making the unknown, known - suggesting solution. The Pañpuri range of products also makes wonderful gifts for incentive visitors.

Space and privacy will also rank high on the wish list. According to Dr. Huber, "Hotels offering special spa suites will gain market share. Guests staying in a hotel suite with a personal private spa enjoy a very spacious ambience. They have their own holiday living area where they can experience numerous services without having to leave the room. Guests are willing to pay for these high-quality standards, especially when there is an ideal combination of design, functionality and ambience."

One size does not fit all, where spa indulgences are concerned and individuality in treatments and therapies has remained popular. Bush of The Ritz-Carlton, Dubai says, "When guests arrive at the spa an individual consultation is arranged with a therapist who will establish whether a guest is seeking an energising or relaxing spa treatment. Based on these requirements, individual massage oils are created using any number of base oils to which additional oils will be added dependent on their properties. This individual oil is then used for massage and also for aromatherapy within the treatment room.

"The Ritz-Carlton Signature Massage is an indulgence where nourishing oils are infused with refreshing aromas of your choosing that will complement the combination of massage techniques which include Swedish, deep tissue and Shiatsu styles." ●