

SINGAPORE

THE PEAK

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THE WELLNESS ISSUE

**HEAL THE WORLD: RICHARD EU,
GROUP CEO, EU YAN SANG INTERNATIONAL**

DESTRESS AT A MILITARY-INSPIRED BOOT CAMP?
CONQUER A 4,000M MOUNTAIN ON YOUR SABBATICAL

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PURSUIT

in the process of expanding to other markets in Asia. "We have had so many success stories this year, when people start feeling better, they want to feel even better, and seek out further treatments and therapies."

HOLISTIC HEALING

For some, it's all about a soothing massage amid tranquil settings. The success of Banyan Tree Spas, known for their "high-touch, low-tech" approach, says it all. Banyan Tree, which set up its first spa here at Marina Bay Sands Hotel six months ago, boasts 64 spas in 26 countries.

However, more are now choosing to incorporate other wellness elements into their spa days, including yoga, meditation and nutrition. An ageing population, chronic health conditions and the stress of Singapore's urban lifestyle are some of the factors driving people to seek holistic treatments that "impact the mind, body and soul", notes Aislinn, director of Auriga Spa.

The spa regularly engages yoga teachers, tai chi masters and fitness trainers, and works closely with

the hotel chefs to create nutritious meals, healthy drinks and desserts. Two of its most popular programmes have wellness components. "Stress Management" includes a tonic drink and private yoga and meditation session, while "Beauty Inside and Out" rounds up almost four hours of spa treatments with a wholesome four-course meal.

Holistic healing is also the foundation of Verita's wellness programmes, designed by experts in medicine, naturopathy, nutrition and physics. In fact, it is so serious about addressing health and wellness issues that you won't find a single scented candle here. Don't expect to hear the soft strains of spa music either.

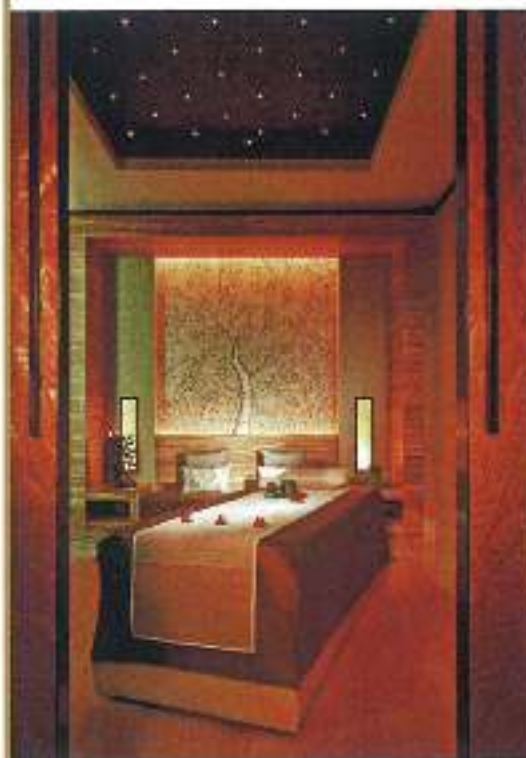
Instead, it uses a combination of nutritional supplementation, lifestyle management and therapies. These range from therapeutic massages, yoga and Pilates, to more high-

tech treatments such as cellular regeneration, which involves lying on a bed while your body is bathed in negative ions to neutralise and flush away toxins.

Indeed, the industry has grown more sophisticated, with many offering new-fangled treatments, complete with bells and whistles. Consumers, too, have become more savvy, says William Yeo, operations director of Singapore's Spa and Wellness Association, which has over 3,200 members. "Consumers are now more widely read and have received treatments all over the world, hence their standards are higher."

While some like to be pampered, others interpret "wellness" to mean powering up on their fitness levels. Willow Stream Spa at Fairmont Singapore has been running boot camp-style workouts – complete with jumping jacks, push-ups, sprints and

"SPAS ARE NO LONGER JUST PERCEIVED AS A PLACE FOR RELAXATION AND PAMPERING."



mini obstacle courses – since June 2009. The boot camps attract people in their mid-20s to early 40s, says its spa director Paula Perin. “The idea is that you are pushed to test the limits of your strength and endurance, and at the same time have fun.”

Others focus on the “inner peace” aspect, going for “detox retreats where all you do is exercise, eat right and participate in mind-wellness practices such as yoga or meditation”, says Perin. “These are popping up around the globe as people are eager to seek escape from their hectic lives and kick-start their health regimen.”

Newbies who want to start off slow can try something less intense such as Auriga Spa’s “Detox Day”, which includes a 75-minute breathing exercise to stimulate the body’s lymphatic system, followed by a lymphatic drainage massage, soothing bath with hydro jets and aromatherapy, and a healthy meal.

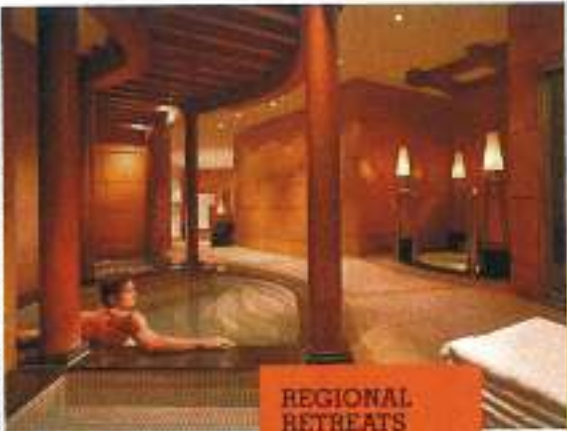
The spa also has a 10-day Do-It-Yourself Detox kit, for those who want to take it a step further. This involves a strict regime designed by nutritionists, including a supply of herbs and supplements, instructions for breathing exercises, as well as daily menu plans ranging from sautéed mushrooms on rye toast and carrot soup, to smoothies and juices.

GETTING SCIENTIFIC

For some, wellness is more of a science than an art. More spas are now offering medically oriented services that zoom in on specific concerns. Colon hydrotherapy, for example, removes toxic waste lodged in the wall of the colon to improve digestion, boost metabolism and combat constipation.

Spaboutique, the first spa in Singapore to offer colon cleansing in 2004, says that customers were initially apprehensive. They were concerned about “the discomfort, dependence and dangers”, says spa manager Janice Ng. Today, colon cleansing is a widely accepted and popular treatment taken up by a quarter of their customers.

The spa also offers coffee enemas, a popular means of liver and colon



detoxification. Some may balk at the idea of inserting organic coffee into the anus, but this therapy is offered by some medical practitioners as well.

At Verita, you can even get a three-dimensional analysis of your organ health, muscle mass and cardiac parameters with its advanced body scanning tools. It also has cutting-edge facilities, such as its salt cave – a 14 sq m chamber with negative-ionised salt particles – that helps to alleviate respiratory illnesses and skin allergies.

Dallaghan believes that the next step in the wellness industry here is integrative medicine, where “both natural and conventional medicine work hand-in-hand to obtain better clinical results”.

In the meantime, wellness buffs such as Adele Hetherington, who has been to health farms in the Philippines and Thailand, are just happy that there are now more wellness programmes available here. “I was very excited when I found Verita, as it’s the closest thing here to a residential wellness centre,” says Hetherington, an artist in her 40s. “It’s not just a spa or beauty salon. I love the holistic approach to wellness.” ☉

REGIONAL RETREATS

Banyan Tree Spa Sanya, China

Located on the southern coast of Hainan Island, this luxurious spa offers a variety of wellness programmes including a three-day retreat, complete with healthy meals, yoga and tai chi classes, spa treatments and even a consultation with a traditional Chinese medicine master.

Soukya Holistic Health Centre, India

Started in 2002, this holistic healing centre in Bangalore – the first of its kind in the world – has about 350 guests per year. It incorporates Ayurvedic and osteopathic treatments, including nutrition, meditation and exercise. Dr Isaac Mathai, its chairman, managing and medical director, feels that more people are now looking for long-lasting, medically-oriented programmes rather than “feel-good superficial” ones.



Clockwise, from above: At Verita Advanced Wellness, holistic healing is the foundation of its programmes, with meals and treatments such as iridology in medicine, naturopathy, nutrition and physics; take a relaxing soak in the cold pool at Willow Stream Spa at Fairmont Singapore.

Opposite, from left: A luxurious single spa suite at the Banyan Tree Spa Marina Bay Sands; the Soukya Holistic Health Centre in Bangalore, India.

The Chateau Spa @ Organic Wellness Resort, Malaysia

The world’s first completely organic spa resort opened its doors in 2011 outside Kuala Lumpur. Located amid a 20-year-old tropical rainforest, it is housed in a sprawling building resembling an 18th-century medieval French castle. It offers fitness and wellness programmes including yoga, dance classes and horse riding. Meals are created by a dietician and include fresh produce grown in its own gardens.