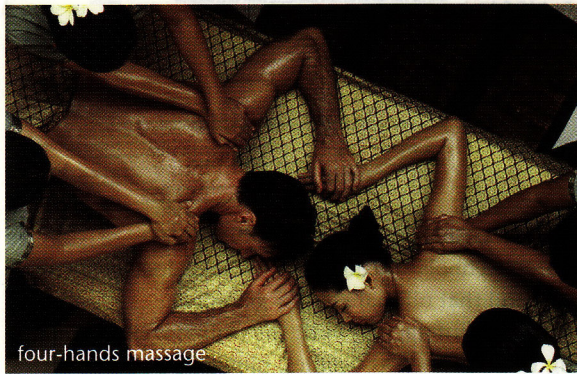


In the Land of Spas

The best Bangkok has to offer. By Ellen Boonstra



Weekender's correspondent in Thailand and spa enthusiast Ellen Boonstra shares three of her favorite spas in Bangkok—each unique in its own way.

Thailand has a rich tradition of natural healing arts such as ancient Thai massage, natural springs, and an abundance of medicinal flora. Combined with its deserved reputation for excellent service, this has led to a thriving spa industry. Every self-respecting 5-star hotel and island resort has their own signature spa promising an “oasis of tranquility” or “slice of heaven”, where guests can be pampered, rejuvenated, and restored. With quality consistently high, it's really hard to go wrong. Below we introduce three of the Bangkok-based writer's favorite places for a quick escape from the hustle and bustle of city life.

Oasis Spa: The Ultimate Spa Experience

The Oasis Spas are widely considered to be among the best day spas in the country. The first four opened in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand, the region which is regarded as the cradle of traditional Thai massage. Spa Manager Yasue Iwamura, who is originally from Osaka, moved from Chiang Mai down to Bangkok to provide better service for the growing Japanese clientele in the capital city's branch.

Tucked away in a side street off of bustling Sukhumvit Road Soi 31, you leave the frantic pace of city life behind you the minute you step into the spa's lovely garden. With the concept being a 'day spa'; you could literally bring your book and spend all day reading and relaxing under one of the large, stately trees almost forgetting what you came there for in the first place: the wonderful massages, body scrubs, body wraps, facials, foot treatments, steam bath, Jacuzzi... the list goes on. The day spa's signature and most popular treatment is their four-hands massage in which—as the name implies—two therapists work in unison, using long, continuous strokes.

www.bangkokoasis.com



S Medical Spa: Where Pleasure Can Heal

Located right next to the city's only resort hotel—The Nai Lert Park Bangkok on Wireless Road—this spa offers a one-stop shop with both beauty and health services performed by certified physicians, dermatologists, nutritionists, and other specialists. The medical spa combines the best of both worlds: Eastern traditional healing, and modern science of the West. For instance, a weight-loss program could consist of colonic cleansing and Carboxy Therapy (injections to kill fat cells), followed by an Oriental massage.

The spa is rumored to be frequented by Thai celebrities and other hi-society types, who enter the premises through the spa's private elevators to make use of their ultra-private treatment rooms for high-profile clients.

www.smedspa.com

Rasayana Retreat: The New Age Spa

Those looking for a cleansing experience in Thailand often head for Koh Samui. But why sit on a beach staring into the horizon and contemplating life when you could be contemplating which silk shirt or designer handbag to purchase? Rasayana Retreat, not far from Sukhumvit Road's 'ultimate shopping complex,' the Emporium, specializes in cleansing and detox programs, including slimming programs, featuring colon hydrotherapy, herbal bowel cleansing, and naturopathic support, as well as a selection of massages, reflexology, aromatherapy, and facial treatments.

Their 'raw food café,' featuring living foods, is a definite stop-over for health fanatics!

If you are longing for a more peaceful setting near the ocean, there's also a Rasayana Retreat in the beach town of Pattaya. But the Bangkok branch remains the best location for a unique detox and shopaholic therapy combo!

www.rasayanaretreat.com