

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a white tank top and white pants, is sitting in a meditative lotus position on a mossy rock ledge. She is looking down with her eyes closed. The rock is covered in vibrant green moss. In the background, a waterfall cascades over rocks into a pool of water. The surrounding forest is dense with tall trees and sunlight filtering through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall scene is serene and natural.

WILD SPA TREATMENTS

Connect your clients with nature
through outdoor spa services

by Maureen Castellon

Fresh air is one of the most accessible and effective beauty ingredients. Instead of recreating the sounds of nature with technology or attempting to bring the great outdoors in, spas can offer menu items for guests to enjoy the real thing. Nature is therapeutic and restorative on a multitude of levels. Given that the majority of spa clients work in offices or reside in increasingly developed areas, wilderness therapies renew a sense of well-being and reconnect the modern soul with the joys of being nurtured by Mother Nature.

Wilderness treatments honor healing on a cellular level, which has been referred to as eco-therapy or green therapy. This has proven so effective, participants in a mental health study found that depression scores were reduced by 45 percent just by being surrounded by nature for less than an hour. Spas with or without spacious grounds can be inspired by some of the top treatments in the country.

o *Full moon meditations*

With so many screens and devices demanding attention, clients may find themselves disconnected from the earth and themselves. The night sky and full moon can inspire spas to create new experiences. Full moon meditation is any activity that is intentionally done during the cycle of moon to enhance well-being. Eugene Gant, certified mediation teacher and healing practitioner, explains, “by harmonizing yourself with the natural cycles of Earth, as with the full moon, you have the opportunity to balance and heal the adrenal glands, nervous system, blood chemistry and any deep seated emotional or mental ailments. We reinforce the living support system that helps us through our personal struggles. The magic is in us, and we share it with each other and our environment.”

Physical activity and the full moon can create a winning combination. Full moon yoga offers the opportunity to ground guests to their bodies via lunar salutations. The Alderbrook Resort and Spa in Washington State offers Moonlit Yoga on the shores of Hood Canal, led by a local yoga expert. In keeping with honoring this cycle of the moon,



Red Mountain Resort in St. George, Utah, offers a Moon Light Hike that presents a two-hour adventure under a starry night illuminated by a full moon. **(Moon Light Hike \$60/2 hours)** Paradise Canyon in Utah has trails that include streambeds, lava flow fields and Navajo Sandstone rocks.

Spas can create a sacred space indoors or on rooftops with carefully placed lights, a few candles and scattered area rugs. For spas that are not in scenic areas, a nearby park can be an option to rent at least one night a month, or a guided adventure may be possible at a nearby national park.

Publicize these natural events to maximize interest.

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If doing rooftop or park activities, consider adding a waiver for participants.

o *Labyrinth/walking meditation*

Walking is a way to get from point A to B, but with a deeper consciousness, one foot in front of the other can turn into an effective mind, body and spirit treatment in nature. Guests simply follow a set path, walking from

the entrance to the middle of the framework and back again while remaining in silence. Meditative movement with or without labyrinths allows the human mind to have a set path to focus upon as the body slowly releases stress and anxiety while deepening a sense of self.

Spas can offer guided walking meditation via labyrinths to provide clarity and well-being through intentional movement. Tucson’s Miraval Resort Director of Programming Sue Adkins shares, “we believe nature and beauty go hand in hand, bringing out the best of each other. When guests are immersed in nature they

are one of the rawest, most astounding elements of the earth.” Miraval’s Labyrinth Journey offers guests the opportunity to be an essential component in these works of art seen on the floor of numerous Buddhist temples and the Chartres Cathedral. This meditation is an opportunity to be in tune with the healing forces of the wilderness. The Labyrinth Journey is included for guests or day pass holders without a time limit.

Spas without spacious grounds can create a labyrinth experience with masking tape, chalk or drop cloth. Paths must include an entrance and decorative center, with enough space

to return to the entrance. Guests can be encouraged to create a personal maze that expresses their journey through art.

o *Outdoor day retreats*

A full day retreat offers the chance to dedicate hours to self-care via a multitude of treatments and activities. Clients can fully enjoy a day scheduled to maximize complete well-being. Osmosis Day Spa Sanctuary, located in Sonoma County, administers the eponymous Osmosis Ritual, a full-day meditation ritual complete with a cedar enzyme bath, 75-minute massage, catered lunch, a hammock facial in a field featuring sound therapy, a dharma talk and mediation. By combining beauty treatments, such as the Japanese fermented heat cedar bath, and spiritual elements, guests can be fully grounded in nature while raising their vibrations into a state of complete wellness.

To create a similar experience, invite a spiritual leader to give a talk on a wellness topic ranging from forgiveness to emotional self-care. Consider incorporating juicing as it provides an excellent opportunity for a retreat to last hours or days. Juicing complements most retreats by being able to incorporate yoga and meditation alongside treatments such as chakra healing. Provide a set schedule with activities that are in harmony with one another, and clients are sure to sign up. A combination of beauty treatments and spiritual journeying can be tied into chosen themes to be incorporated throughout the day for a truly relaxing experience for clients.

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Osmosis Ritual prices are available upon request.
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o Sound therapies

For centuries, the sounds of nature have been part of integrative medicine for their healing properties. Branches of audio therapy, such as acutonics, have been created to heal the mind, body and soul. Every organ, bone and tissue has its own resonant frequency according to Ellen F. Franklin, co-founder and CEO of the Acutonics Institute of Integrative Medicine. Acutonics uses the audible vibrations of the Universe to heal the human body on a cellular level. "The non-invasive therapy generates a sense of enormous well-being as it improves skin, reduces pain and leaves clients feeling balanced on all levels," she explains. "The process of sound therapy is to apply planetary gongs, hand chimes, tuning forks or Tibetan bowls directly on acupuncture points to feed the body's core energy grids and meridians."

The Claremont Club & Spa at the Fairmont Hotel in Berkeley, Calif., offers the Tibetan Sound Massage that has five Tibetan singing bowls crafted from 17th and 18th century bronze of varying sizes placed on key spinal energy centers. The practitioner uses soft mallets to strike the rims to generate binaural beat. These relaxing audio sensations create two slightly varying frequency tones distinctive of alpha and delta states. These sounds harness the power to release emotional patterns, thought forms, muscle memory and scar tissue to bring deep relaxation to the body. Clients experience being completely present in a new level of relaxation.

Tibetan Sound Massage
75 minutes/\$225

To create a similarly tranquil ambience by creating a healing area,

simply rearrange the waiting area or create a serenity nook complete with blankets or yoga mats. Instead of hiring in-house, spas always have the option to partner with local practitioners of the curative arts. Crystal bowl healing and gong bath sessions can be contracted out for singular treatments or as add-ons. Research local spiritual leaders to determine which best serve your client base via references and testimonials as well as years of experience.

Continuing to be a trendsetter in wilderness therapies, Miraval Resort provides guests with an innovative sound therapy treatment christened the Himalayan Sound Bath. Every treatment includes a strong element of mindfulness. Master Healer Pam Lancaster designed the experience to tune into sonic healing. Guests are immersed in the spa's therapeutic pool as five ancient healing bowls are

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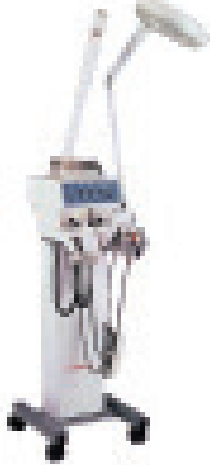
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placed on or float around the body. Sounds radiating from the vessels create a healing, womb-like experience. **Himalayan Sound Bath 60 minutes/\$125**

Sonic, non-invasive approaches to health and well-being can be adopted for use in a variety of spa services. Massages, for example, can extend deeper into the muscles with directly applied sounds, and simple, focused treatments can be taught to clients for home use to improve sleep and promote deep relaxation.

◦ Soaking in the sun

The sounds of the great outdoors combined with massage can create a treatment that has a wait list! Leaving the four walls of traditional spas, therapists work on guests under coverings. Those that have experienced outdoor massages report a sense of relaxation that remains for days afterward. Wilderness treatments reach a new level of luxury with the Sacred Space Massage offered by The Wilderness Adventure Spa at Spring Creek Ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyo. Guests relax on a massage table in a teepee overlooking the vistas of the nearby Grand Tetons, often still snowcapped in May. The alpine scenery provides the perfect environment for healing as therapists customize massages. **Sacred Space Massage 60 minutes/\$155**

Spas that do not have similar views can use tents, canopies or umbrellas to shield clients as they enjoy wilderness treatments. The key element is to harness the power of natural locations. Clients will enjoy the crisp air of the mountains, the lulling quality of seaside massages or just the gentle breeze. Research the best times of day and the best seasons for treatments.

The C Lazy U Spa in Granby, Colo., explores the great outdoors with relaxation. The Cowboy Soak offers a truly spectacular experience. Senior Operations Manager, Ami M. Spektor, Esq., describes the wilderness treatment as “two massage tents that open to a large meadow that also has a view of the babbling water of Willow Creek below the massage tables via glass floors. The spa’s signature treatment indulges patrons with a combination of comfort and beauty during a moonlit soak in deep copper tubs that overlook the creek.” Guests can look down during their body treatments to enjoy the aquatic wilderness beneath them. During the cold months, a wood-burning stove warms guests, and for holidays the tubs are decorated to match the festivities, such as rose petals for Valentine’s Day. **Cowboy Soak 50 minutes/\$375**

Over the din of technology, the sounds of nature are deeply relaxing to the modern mind. When produced authentically, the mind focuses on amplitude and frequency fluctuations rather than stresses. One way to give guests a wilderness experience indoors is to purchase a soundscape that is a true recording of nature, rather than one done on a loop for white noise purposes. Guests may also appreciate a video of natural settings, and this visual delight can be placed in relaxation or waiting areas.

◦ Garden of beauty

Facials experienced in the wilderness can have added dimensions. Clients enjoy face treatments, generally without extractions, in the fresh air to revitalize their skin. Hawaii has one of the best wilderness treatments inspired by local beauty. The Anara Spa at the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and

Spa offers the Lokahi Facial, which takes place in a garden of the same name. The word lokahi means harmony for the mind, body and spirit. In keeping with the flow of nature, each treatment bungalow opens to a tropical garden with a private rain shower. Nearby waterfalls add to this wilderness treatment by generating negative ions, believed to increase serotonin levels, via motion and sound. The gentle flow of waterfalls, both natural and engineered, creates natural white noise that promotes well-being in clients. **Lokahi Facial 50 minutes/\$185, 80 minutes/\$270**

Spas can draw inspiration from Anara by creating a local garden for outdoor treatments to take place. Consider filling a patio or rooftop with sand or add whimsical additions, such as hammocks tied to palm trees, if space permits. By creating an outdoor space inspired by nature, guests reap the benefits of fresh air and experience a mini holiday simultaneously.

Bring clients into the wilderness to add enjoyable dimensions to mind, body and spirit treatments. ■

Maureen Castellon is the associate editor of Les Nouvelles Esthétiques and Spa and an adjunct writing professor at Miami Dade College. She graduated with honors from the English department at the University of Alabama and currently blogs at sirenpublications.com. When not writing about beauty, Castellon can be found meditating on the beach with her German Shepherd.