
THE WELLNESS FACTOR

Spa news, reviews and recommendations by **Judy Chapman**



SECRET SENSES

The newly opened Six Senses Destination Spa is green, clean and organic: eco-chic villas and food raw, rejuvenating and locally grown. But it is the spiritual workouts and holistic fitness component that will open your heart and transform your body. Photos by Daniel Leser.

There is not one spa but four at Six Senses, the first all-encompassing wellness destination situated on an island; just a hop, skip and short boat ride from Phuket.

With the spa as its centrepiece, everything, from the accommodation to cuisine and fitness is centred on wellbeing. Translation: there's no Lavazza in my villa and the mini-bar is stocked with raw food balls. Each of the energy-efficient villas comes with a private steam room (the perfect morning detox), salt-water pool, outdoor *sala* as well as personal butler service. The entire landscape is edible, meaning there's wild lemongrass growing that one can pick to make a fresh tea or a bath blend. It's all very spa-like and you haven't even left your room yet.

Most refreshing of all is the innovative approach to fitness. Picture a beachfront glass-walled gym fitted out with Prada-designed Kinesis training. There's a menu of services that includes kayaking through the mangroves, mountain biking, beach boot camp plus an outdoor 'Jungle Gym' situated in a coconut grove where natural and recycled materials like rocks, pieces of wood, old bottles and car tires are used as weights.

So it was a bit of a surprise when Byran Hoare, Director of Wellness,



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who has trained athletes for nearly 20 years and previously worked at Chiva Som International Resort in Thailand, let me in on a little secret.

“Exercise in its pure sense could be said to be bad for you,” he tells me. “In fact, the effect that exercise has on the body (including yoga and resistance training) is quite destructive. Great demands are placed on the body. Muscle cells are broken down and the body is confronted in its capacity to use oxygen.” Ha! I always knew there was a reason I resisted the gym.

Hoare explains that the body’s reaction to stress from exercise is that it wants to find its balance again (homeostasis) and therefore will respond to be prepared for that sort of overload again.

“It’s actually the recovery after exercise where the body changes for the better,” he says. “Muscles, bones and ligament cells grow stronger, red blood cells and blood vessels grow to carry oxygen.” He explains the desire for the body to constantly find its balance, or homeostasis, is the basis for the rebalancing and rest, whereby the body treats itself. While some say that the Six Senses first Destination Spa is the spa for the 21st Century, my take is that it’s definitely the most creative.

During the ‘Functional Insight Training’ (FIT) session, for instance, I was first asked to open up to any page of Paulo Coelho’s book *Warrior of Light* and read this privately. Keeping Coelho’s heart-opening message in mind, Hoare guided me through several movements (some with my eyes closed) to create body awareness. While the exercises vary from guest to guest, my session included fitball, muscle

strengthening, meditation, self-reflection, rehabilitation movements and cardio. Different emotions arose, realisations came and went. Most significantly, I experienced a glimpse of how I hold my body in the world, how deeply our posture is affected by people and events, how essential it is to be present in our body.

Hoare explained that FIT is so much more than a physical activity. “It’s based on physiological and philosophical spheres that influences the individual to develop self-awareness and being in the ‘moment’ – driving a deeper cognitive understanding and spiritual consciousness.” It worked. Long after I departed Six Senses Destination Spa, I am still experiencing “insights” of mind and body integration.

Back to the spa, a maze of Indian, Chinese, Indonesian and Thai facilities flowing into each other creates a village-like impression. At the Indian spa, for example, a stunning courtyard opens up into dedicated Ayurvedic suites, colonic hydrotherapy rooms, an area for traditional and modern diagnostics plus a yoga and meditation sala. Take herbal scrubs in a white-stoned *hammam* at the Thai Spa while the Chinese Spa, surrounded by bamboo, features a tea bar and traditional medicine store.

Mention must also be made of Food & Beverage Director Hunter J Reynolds’ serotonin-soaring raw food cuisine and juice mixes. As well, there’s organic wine cocktail parties and beach BBQ’s. With the architecture very Fred Flintstone (think pebble beach and curved walls), this is finally, a health spa with a sense of humour!

www.sixsenses.com/six-senses-destination-spa-phuket/

JUDY'S HOT LIST

NEW-AGE SPA TREATMENTS ARE BACK IN VOGUE

Who would have ever guessed that five star hotel spa brands would offer esoteric therapies for guests? At the **Four Seasons Koh Samui**, for instance, they will soon launch a fascinating menu of ‘Alternative Therapies’. Likewise, at **The Peninsula Bangkok**, thanks to the creativity of Spa Director, Richard Williams, who has a decade of experience in this field. Guests who book in for the new *Freedom of Mind Journey* will receive a personalised creative visualisation performed by Williams himself. Starting with The Peninsula Tea Ceremony, Williams guides you into a deeply relaxing state to encourage you to open up to the concept of living a happy life.

Says Williams: “I created this treatment as many spa goers are now seeking something more meaningful. Our demographics are well-seasoned travellers who deserve to take time out and be reminded how to listen to their inner selves and choose to be happy on a daily basis.” He says that our true potential lies in understanding infinite possibilities in our lives and that life can truly get better and better. “It’s a matter of choice, intention and manifestation.” With the finale, a soothing holistic massage, I for one departed more than a little bit blissed-out. Added to this, the spa is one of the region’s loveliest, boasting the comfiest massage beds in town, and The ESPA treatments are flawless.

www.bangkok.peninsula.com, www.fourseasons.com/kohsamui

New at the **Conrad Maldives Rangali Island’s** luxurious Over-Water Spa is a menu of colour therapy holistic rituals. There are seven choices, one for each *chakra*, that includes a massage, scrub and wrap enhanced by coloured lighting, aromatherapy, meditation and positive affirmations to help bring the guests abundance, balance and good energy.

www.conradhotels.com

There’s more than a few metaphysical picks on the ‘Mind and Emotions’ menu at **TRIA Integrative Wellness**, Bangkok’s new hot spot for holistic care. Opt for the ‘Change your Mind’ hypnotherapy session with Counselor Nicholas S Ihle and you won’t be disappointed. The treatment provides time to relinquish

issues, habits and perceptions as well as create something new for your future. It’s kind of like a de-programming of the mind. During the entire session the guest is fully conscious and fully aware of what is happening. Hypnotherapy is reported to be effective in areas such as overcoming bad habits, addictions, fears, confidence enhancement, self-discovery and stress reduction. TRIA offers several routes for those seeking to improve their lives nutrition-, health-, fitness- and emotion-wise. What’s special here is the medical doctors believe that it’s the blend of medical, traditional and holistic medicine can benefit our lives. Other offerings on the Mind & Emotions menu include ‘Inner Calm’ meditation, ‘Free Expression’ that includes Counselling, Life Coaching and Psychotherapy as well as ‘Communicate’ a NLP-based therapy to enhance one’s confidence and communication skills.

www.triaintegrativewellness.com

Life feels like a dream when you are at the mercy of three therapists massaging your feet, head and lower extremities in synchronicity during the ‘Royal Trisara Six-hand Massage’ at the boutique villa resort, **Trisara**, in Phuket. The mind-blowing creation includes Thai acupressure massage, herbal hot compress and Shirodhara. The finale, a scalp massage using warm coconut oil will leave you begging for more. Added to this, their Reiki (hands-free energy massage) is rumoured to be one of Thailand’s best.

www.trisara.com

Equally profound is the newly launched ‘Himalayan Tsangpo Ritual’ at **Chi Spa, Shangri-la, Bangkok**. Based on the Sowa Rigpa 1,500 year-old Himalayan healing traditions, this sacred experience is bestowed in a cave-like spa suite. Includes a Himalayan salt scrub performed on a heated stone slab, generous head and shoulder massage and a soak in the Blue Moon Spring Bath reminiscent of Himalayan moon-lit rivers. Depart knot-free and transformed.

www.shangri-la.com/en/corporate/chi

(Regrettably the photos in the Wellness Factor last issue were not attributed, as they should have been, to Daniel Leser.)