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# Spa

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## THE NAKED TRUTH

Are more Americans taking it all off at the spa? Consensus among spa directors is yes, as the comfort level of relaxing in the hot tub, steam room, and saunas covering is rising. Much of the trepidation about going nude — especially on the massage table — comes from body insecurities and thoughts about what the therapist (particularly those of opposite gender) might think. But Denise Vitiello, spa director at Mandarin Oriental in New York City, says spa guests can be assured their therapists are not looking for any imperfections they may have. “When massage therapists initially greet clients, the first thing they look at is their walk and posture, observing skeletal structure to see which muscles they should be paying extra attention to during the session,” she says. “As for the skin, any observation is from a healthcare standpoint, as it is the body’s largest organ.”

therapies like mud wraps, mineral baths, exfoliation, and massages that have demonstrable therapeutic value,” says Lopis. “We choose not to feature the latest fads.”

And when it comes to body wraps, old-fashioned techniques using materials like herb-soaked linens are making a comeback. Takers of the Laguna Beach Kur at Montage Laguna Beach in California dip into a hydrotherapy bath infused with hot mustard seeds and eucalyptus before being wrapped in sheets soaked in buckets of ice water “to enhance the body’s autoimmune response,” says spa director Julie Raistrick. Meanwhile, in the Herbal Wrap at Rancho La Puerta in Tecate, Mexico, linens are boiled and steeped daily in fresh-picked rosemary, sage, lavender, and eucalyptus then used for a memorable detox.

**02-03 a sense of the unique** A few years back, Mandarin Oriental spas pioneered the Time Ritual — the concept of reserving a block of time (versus a specific treatment) to determine

on the spot an appropriate spa regimen based on how the guest is feeling. Now **customization** continues with personalized body scrubs and bath oils, such as those at Grand Wailea Resort Hotel’s Spa Grande, in Hawaii, where you can customize your own spa program.

The ultimate personalized spa experience comes from Quoia, a romantic private home in California’s redwood forest (15 minutes from Sausalito). Book the house for one night or an entire week, and sit back as every mind-body-spa whim — a private chef and cupboards stocked with all-organic foods; one-on-one yoga, tai chi, and meditation instruction; herb-infused massages; and long baths in a Japanese soaking tub — is fulfilled.

Used to enhance a sense of place during a spa visit, **regionally and culturally based treatments** incorporate locally grown plants, minerals, and natural waters. Cleopatra and the Queen of Sheba shared a fondness for the nurturing Dead Sea muds that still exfoliate and detoxify at the Moevenpick Resort & Spa Dead Sea in Amman, Jordan. “Guests want to experience the uniqueness of the area,” says Kate Mearns, spa director at The Spa of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. There, regional herbs like lavender, chamomile, and rosemary are used in treatments. And at Mexico’s Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita, the signature massage uses nopal (vitamin C-rich prickly pear cactus) and pulque (an alcohol made from agave) to reflect the area’s cultural heritage. Native Americans once purified in the heat of a *temazcal* during a shaman-led sweat lodge ceremony; today, a shaman leads this traditional ritual at Costa Rica’s Tabacón Grand Spa Thermal Resort (as well as many spas in the Riviera Maya).

**04-05 expanding the options** **Sound therapy** is creating a buzz at a growing number of spas, being increasingly incorporated into preexisting treatments or offered on its own. “Beauty and health cannot be separated and only exist in a vibrant state of well-being,” says Jovita Wallace, director of the Center for Sound Wellness in New Jersey, which features sound therapy utilizing quartz crystal singing bowls. Wallace explains that through sound vibration, the physical, emotional, and spiritual energy bodies are balanced and expanded, and renewal occurs. Made to produce sound by tracing a bowl’s edge with a wooden mallet, the bowl emits a soothing hum. “Entrainment is the process of