

LEISURE MANAGER

Business insights for attractions, fitness, sports and spa professionals

MIDDLE EAST

**DON'T MISS
SPA MANAGER
INSIDE**

**RESORTING TO
RELAXATION**

**Boost the appeal of a
resort through a spa**

FAMILY FUN

**Kidzania brings learning and
leisure to the UAE's kids**

MALL RATS

**Experts on making
malls more than
just a place to shop**

STYLE COUNCIL

How top design can create a unique spa offering

Providing for intimacy

In few places is the interaction between user and space as intimate as in a spa, says Selina Denman

When it comes to spa design, there is a single, universal theme. Tranquility. Each and every element of a spa's interior centres on this one, simple ideal.

There are few places where the design of a space so fundamentally impacts the end user's experience.

Certainly, in few commercial areas is the interaction with space so intimate, and the need to summon a specific atmosphere so essential.

The aim, at its most basic level, is to make users feel totally at ease, confirmed Gerald Huber, regional director for the GCC at Schletterer

Wellness and Spa Design. "The time of purism is definitely over," he

maintained. "Architectural trends are returning to making people feel comfortable and at ease."

At the spa at Six Senses Hideaway Zighy Bay Oman, the design favours natural materials that reinstate the resort's thoughtfully-created concept

of laidback 'barefoot luxury'. The spa design also follows the lead of the rest of the resort in embracing traditional Omani influences and blending seamlessly into its setting.

"Reflecting a unique and authentic design philosophy in line with an Omani fishing village concept, the spa uses natural and locally-sourced materials where possible.

The spa walls and floors feature local stone and wood, and typical Omani flat beamed roofing throughout the 1,500m² space.

Locally-sourced material, including wood and stone, provide a raw, traditional village feel. Balconies feature sand on the floor to support the natural look and feel," explained Rochelle Kilgariff, general manager, Six Senses Hideaway Zighy Bay Oman.

The spa's unique character is established from the outset and reiterated in even the most inconspicuous of details. "The entrance to the spa is through a traditional grotto-style tunnel. Upon entering, the spacious reception area features wall niches, an array of small windows and low lighting to create a unique, mystic ambience," Kilgariff explained.

Effective spa design is ultimately about the creation of experiences. "It is now not just about completing innovation in design, it is about creating an experience through design. Thinking beyond the box and outside of the bottom line has contributed to Wilson Associates' ongoing success in spa design," said Lori Campbell Rose, design director at Wilson Associates, the company behind some of Dubai's most iconic spas, including that at The Palace, Old Town.

In this spa, too, local influences preside, and mimic the Arabic-inspired theme of the rest of the hotel. "The lattice work and arches reveal the Arabic accent and tie in with the cultural

ambience. The client was looking for a true Moroccan retreat incorporating western aspects that created a comfortable design to relax and rejuvenate the mind, body and spirit. The design scheme is very innovative and incorporates a strong presence of culture with a simpler, clean-lined version of Moroccan influence."

The key, with any spa, is to create spaces that are soothing and subtle but not devoid of character. At the same time, the space must be highly atmospheric but free of any jarring, overbearing elements – this is no place for harsh lines and pointed edges.

"The round space of the relaxation room somehow brings out a tranquil feeling, the focal point being lit by a floating candle centered in a large, hand-tooled, antique brass bowl," said Campbell Rose of the Palace spa. "In addition, the innovative nature of this project lies in the circular layout of the wet areas and the material used. The continuity is revealed in the design language that fits into each area of the spa."

Spa design must also be highly sensorial. To this effect, the materials and textures utilised grow in importance, as they are key in enabling the space to appeal to a range of senses. "[With the Palace], I favoured the complementary texture and smoothness of the onyx basins, sandstone flooring and wall accents. The sandstone presents a sense of the desert within the spa, which acts as an oasis, while its natural texture provides a slip-free surface. The reflecting light bouncing off the smooth, polished onyx basins and against the flat sandstone provides a warm,

comforting glow within the space," detailed Campbell Rose.

Top quality design is essential for helping promote a guest's feeling of wellbeing

She also called upon a subtle colour palette to promote a sense of flow. "Neutral shades of browns and tans are revealed within the furniture pieces and tile and marble work to evoke an earth and desert tone. Mosaic tiles line the walls to echo typical Moroccan architectural elements."

Just as it seems unlikely that the world will become any less stressful, it seems probable that the spa industry will continue to develop and diversify. Already a \$40 billion plus industry, the wellness sector will only evolve further as the need to escape from the stresses of everyday life intensifies. This, in turn, will create massive opportunity for both spa designers and related product manufacturers.

Schletterer's Huber foresees increasing demand for hotel suites with in-built spa facilities. "Customers increasingly ask for individuality and privacy, and hotels offering special spa suites will gain market share. Guests are willing to pay for these high-quality standards, especially when there is an ideal combination of design, functionality and ambience."

Huber also anticipates the emergence of spa concepts that broaden their scope to focus on preventative health care. "Medical examinations will soon be a part of medical spas. Furthermore, there will be multifunctional concepts which offer a number of treatments and therefore are cost-efficient. Spa equipment will increasingly address all senses, must be state-of-the-art and blend in with the whole concept."

For Mohammed Nada, marketing manager of Kohler Middle East, the future of spa design lies in the soothing qualities of water. "At present, water is making a splash

at spas in the US. Increasingly, spa users are adding water treatments to their list of traditional spa favourites. Spa experts say that the more clients know about the many health benefits of water treatments, the more likely they are to frequent spas, and to tell their friends about them," he explained.

"Water treatments help to ease muscle tension, cleanse and hydrate the body, condition the skin, promote joint flexibility, stimulate circulation, relax the body and open pores to eliminate toxins. Hence we will see more spas designed with water as the central theme."

"It is now not just about completing innovation in design, it is about creating an experience through design."



The Hydrospa Seaside offers a total relaxation experience

Man's affinity with water is no recent phenomenon, Nada pointed out. "From the beginning of time, humankind has been drawn to water to soothe both body and spirit."

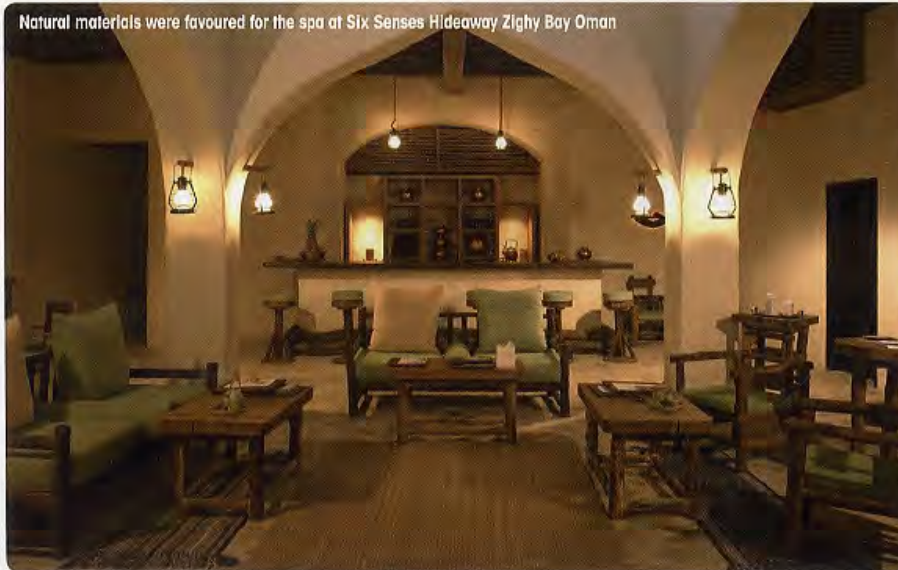
The key to successful spa products lies in promoting the perfect balance between water, light, materials, sounds, accessories and elegant lines, according to Teuco. The company recently launched its HydroSpa Seaside, the first mini-pool equipped with Hydrosilence, the soundless massage that offers an experience of total relaxation. All artificial noise is eliminated and users can envelop themselves in the natural sound of water being moved by the jets, or immerse themselves in music played out of invisible Acoustic Panel loudspeakers.

Offering an alternative range of materials to work with, France's Steel & Style has partnered with French designer Inox to produce a range of high-end stainless steel spa and swimming pool products that promise a strong dose of elegance and modernity.

Its overflow spas use stainless steel and glass to create rectangular lines of a distinctly contemporary style, and offer hydromassage and colour therapy features. Meanwhile, its infinity or perimeter overflow pools feature elongated sides and rectangular shapes intended to evoke a certain classicism.

With a whole host of materials and products to call on, the pressure is on designers to create engaging, all encompassing spaces that appeal to a range of senses. "The conventional, three-dimensional room experience shall be extended to enable guests to feel, smell, and even hear the things they previously merely used to see," Huber maintained.

Natural materials were favoured for the spa at Six Senses Hideaway Zighy Bay Oman



SPA DESIGN CHECKLIST

By Gerald Huber, regional director, GCC, Schletterer Wellness and Spa Design

- Closeness to nature: implementing natural features within the design
- A smart combination of different materials: combine wood with steel, water with fire, glass with grass, or hot and cold elements, to create an atmosphere of wellbeing
- Include fascinating and clever lighting solutions that are flexible and change according to the mood of guests
- Create contrasts to the conventional
- Introduce elements that nobody would expect, such as hay in a sauna or milk for showering
- Appeal to all senses: combine experiences that you can see, feel, hear, smell and taste

Grand Hyatt Doha launches Jaula Spa in Qatar

PROJECTS

The Grand Hyatt Doha has launched its new Jaula spa, inspired by the architecture and culture of Arabia.

The new spa includes a gym, indoor and outdoor pools, and a private beach.

Jaula spa director Karunanithi M said the spa menu of services was specifically designed to incorporate elements of Qatar's natural heritage.

"Hyatt believes in writing a spa discovery plan, we

have to be really specific to respecting local culture and incorporating that into our spa treatments," he said.

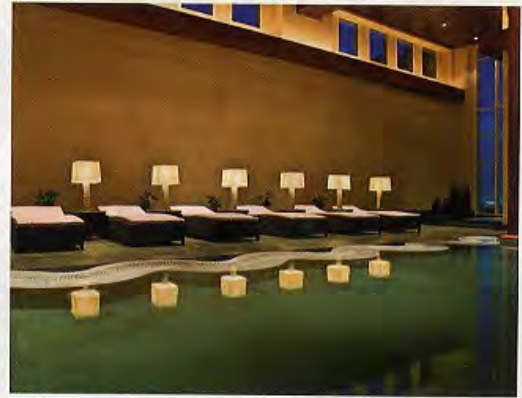
The spa's treatments will take a ritualistic approach, combining European treatments and therapies with local Arabian elements.

"Jaula's concept of 'Passages and Journeys' focuses on spiritual cleanliness. Each guest is taken on a custom spa journey designed to meet their needs. The spa incorpo-

rates the five senses into each experience, touch, sight, sound, smell and taste; each sense is a journey of its own," said Karu.

Grand Hyatt Doha general manager Garry Friend speculated that the spa would increase the popularity of the hotel.

"Jaula will set new a new standard for others to follow," he said. "The smell, music and design of Jaula reflect Qatar's heritage and Arabian inspirations."



■ The spa draws inspiration from the traditions and heritage of Arabia