

Relax, Refresh & Renew: Ready for a Spa?

Written by Connie Valimont

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Most of us start each new year with ideas of what we want to accomplish during the next 365 days (or in 2012, it's 366 due to leap day)! Usually at the top of the list is get in shape, lose weight and/or reduce stress in our lives. Or maybe it's to be pampered; indulge in beauty treatments, exercise or healthy eating; recover from a divorce or illness; or just overhaul mind, body and spirit.

Spas can do that and more. There are nearly 20,000 spas in the US alone. There are as many different spas and treatments as there are reasons to go. The proliferation of so many great spas makes choosing the perfect spa to match your personality and individual needs somewhat challenging!

The best place to start is with you. Decide why you want to take a spa vacation or have a spa experience, what programs and services interest you, what type of setting you would like and how much you can afford. Identify what you'd like to accomplish, and then select a spa that enables you to concentrate on an area of emphasis such as:

- Fitness – Work out in fitness classes, enjoy invigorating body treatments, participate in outdoor sports activities or sign up for programs to lose weight, get fit or adopt a healthier lifestyle.
- Stress Management – Learn relaxation techniques, how to manage stress, and other strategies for feeling more in balance and in control.
- Peace of Mind – Pursue a spiritual journey of introspection and reflection through meditation, yoga, tai chi, chi gong and other practices or activities that lead to serenity, understanding and self acceptance.
- Pampering and Pleasure – Guests indulge their senses with massages, facials, mud or aroma baths and other delightful treatments as they enjoy a completely relaxing vacation. It can be anything from a girl's makeover, make up classes, precious moments shared by couples, mothers and daughters... to special occasions like weddings and graduation.

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- Health and Wellness – Explore your health, learn to deal with issues such as smoking or medical concerns and discover how lifestyle choices can lead to optimal wellness.

- Cosmetic spa – specializes in medical enhancements such as skin smoothing laser treatments, facelifts, Botox or treatments for cellulite, body shaping and cosmetic dentistry.

Ready for a spa? The annual *Spa Travel Trend Report*, published by SpaFinder, was released recently, forecasting the trends poised to reshape spa travel in 2012.

- Spa, wine, and dine packages that range from "culi-spa" weekends to "plates & Pilates sessions.

- Spas aiming for the "wow" factor -- from amusement park and water park spas to spas made of Swarovski crystals.

- Quick and cheap beauty fixes like 10-minute manicures at airport salons, blow dry bars, and walk-in makeup makeovers.

- Spas becoming more family-friendly with separate kids-only spas and new treatments for the under-18 set.

- Wellness and beauty coaching that enable resorts and destinations to help guests stick with lifestyle changes that lead to long-term health and wellbeing.

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- Foot-focused treatments that provide relief to stressed feet and help prevent injuries and pain associated with high heels.
- Cold treatments like ice chambers, snow showers, and ice rubdowns that enhance circulation and reduce inflammation in muscles and joints.
- Online wellness games that use gaming features like challenges and rewards to help people make healthy lifestyle changes that stick.
- Multi-sensory therapies that include vibration, sound, light, and music to fully engage all senses.
- Alternative therapies, such as massage, sauna, acupressure, being held up to scientific scrutiny by sites like www.spaevidence.com.

So, go ahead – make time to care for yourself in 2012 and head for a spa.

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