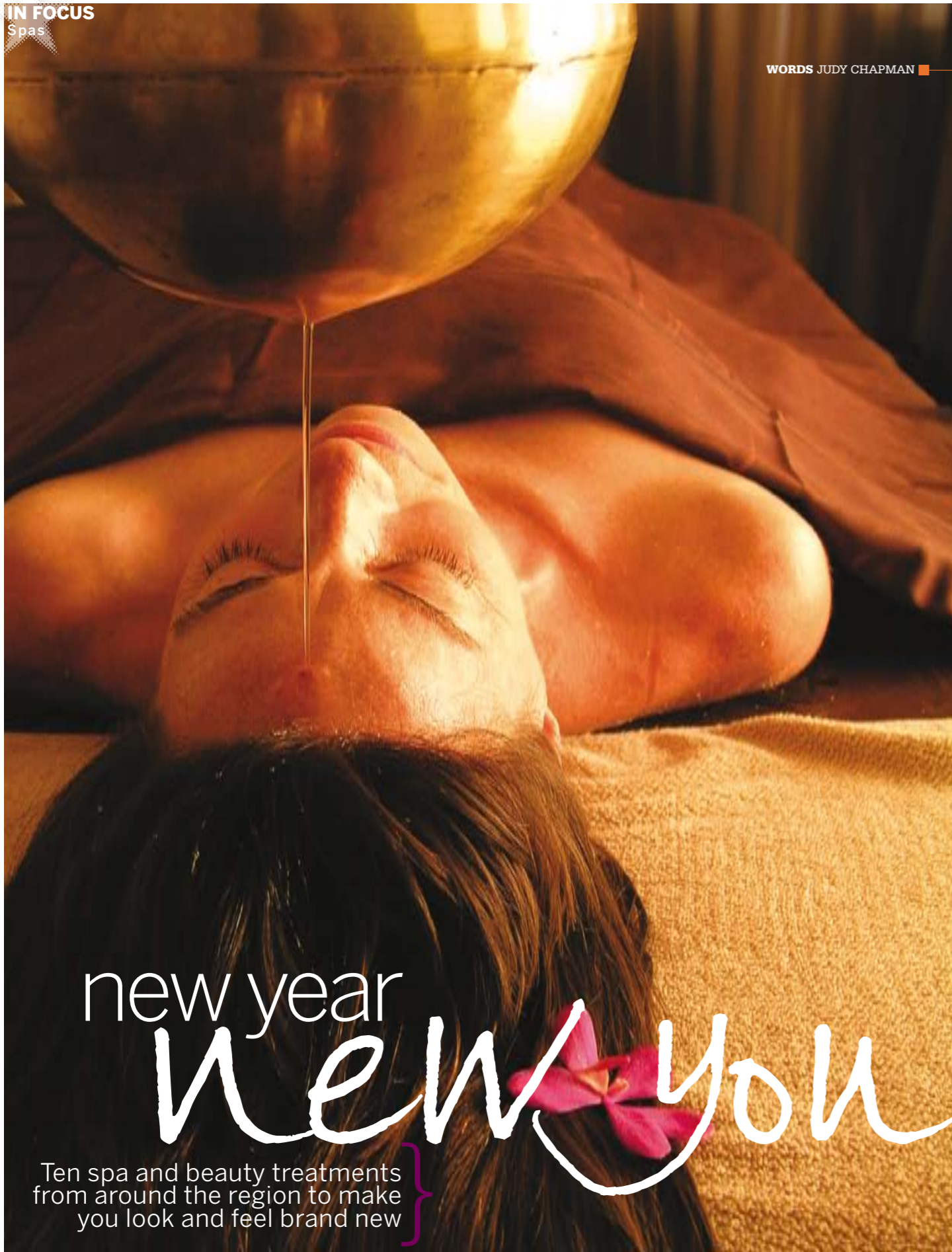


WORDS JUDY CHAPMAN



new year
new you

Ten spa and beauty treatments from around the region to make you look and feel brand new

With the excesses of the festive season behind us and a new year ahead, there's no time like the present to treat your body to an overhaul. When I went on a search to find this season's must-try treatments, I discovered a bunch of great spas offering both traditional and innovative experiences that cater to all budgets and styles. Some of these treatments are so special they're destinations in themselves. Here are 10 super treatments to make you feel as good as new.



« THE REAL THING

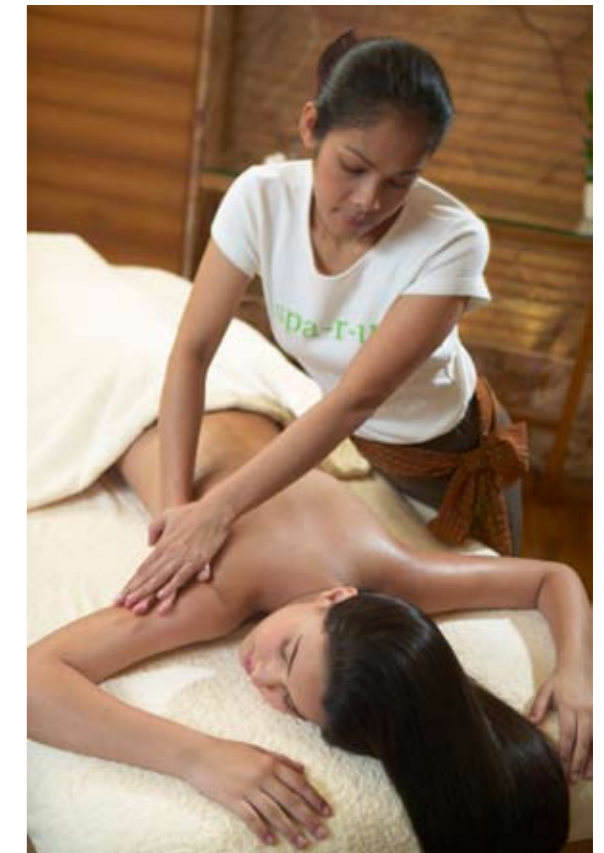
Of all the affordable spas I've visited this year, **Suk Spa**, located in a restored rambling Thai home, is my new favourite. Rustic interiors, hanging lanterns and the rumble of motorbikes outside create an authentic atmosphere. But it's their two-hour, Bht1,490 (AU\$49), Thai herbal heat massage that left me astounded. Time disappeared as the therapist pounded my computer-tense shoulders with a steaming hot compress of fragrant Thai herbs.

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COMPLETE RENEWAL

The newly launched three-and-a-half hour Ayurvedic Rose Glamour treatment at **Divana Nurture Spa** is alluring. Entry is through exquisite gardens and a teahouse, so even before the treatment a sense of harmony washed over me. Soon after, therapists presented me with a tray of aromatic oils and a sparkling rose

quartz crystal. Starting with a pepper berries foot soak, shirodhara – where oil is slowly trickled onto your forehead – and rose stone chakra therapy, the mind-soothing journey included a head and scalp massage, gum honey and rose body scrub, rose stone warm oil massage, a rose bath and more. Bht6,250 (AU\$229).



≈ CLEAN SWEEP

At first I was hesitant to check in for the half-day Purification Program at **S Medical Spa**, a high-end day facility in Bangkok. But I was curious – I'd heard that colon therapy was the fastest route to flushing out toxins and I had plenty of emotional baggage I was eager to release. Admittedly an acquired taste, the results were profound. The three-hour treatment comprised of a herbal steam, seaweed scrub and lymphatic drainage massage. I departed feeling far more energised than I had in years. Bht6,000 (AU\$219).



« ORIENTAL BEAUTY

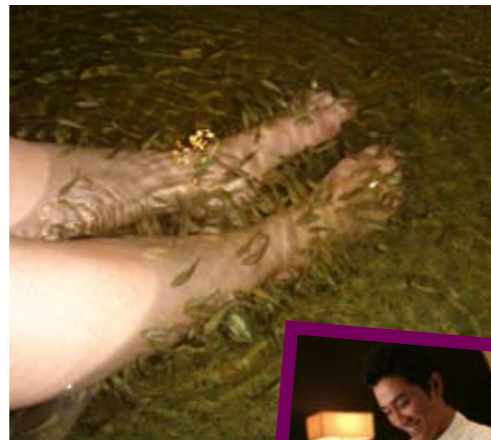
Who would have thought to pay for a boiled egg to be rolled across the skin for beauty and rejuvenation? Yet the Chinese Peranakan Treatment at **Spa Village Kuala Lumpur** is something very memorable. Inspired by ancient Chinese beauty practices, the three-hour journey also comprises of an anti-ageing whitening pearl and rice mask, and a jade roller massage. But it was the finale, a rhythmic bamboo-stick tapping, that sent me into a complete state of harmony. RM1,200 (AU\$400).



For something even more gentle, and bizarre, let the little Turkish garra rufa fish nibble on your dry feet for 30 minutes to emerge with feet (almost) as soft as petals.

≡ EARTHLY OFFERINGS

It was only a matter of time before Australian spas began to offer indigenous experiences to honour their own landscape. At **Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat**, book the four-hour Gwinganna Signature Spa Ritual for two, given in spa suites built beside a real billabong, and let the sounds of nature form a sweet lullaby. This experience comprises of a bath, steam, scrub and clay rituals – all made from organically grown ingredients. Includes organic snacks and a spa cocktail. AUD\$550 per couple.



≡ FOOT SPA

Another great way to look after your health is to attend regular reflexology sessions, where massaging nerve endings in your feet rejuvenates the mind and body. **Kenko Reflexology & Fish Spa**, founded by Dr Jimi Tan, offers reflexology sessions to help ease migraines and back and neck pain. Prices range from RM46 (AU\$15) for a half-hour head and scalp massage to RM88 (AU\$29) for the one-hour signature foot reflexology. For something even more gentle, and bizarre, let the little Turkish *garra rufa* fish nibble on the dry skin of your feet for 30 minutes to emerge with feet (almost) as soft as petals. RM38 (AU\$13).



≡ BALI HIGH

What I love about Byron Bay's **Buddha Gardens Day Spa**, a Balinese-style day spa, is that every treatment includes a dip in their heated plunge pools and detoxifying sauna. Plus their menu bursts with exotic offerings, such as the orange crème scalp rejuvenator (AUD\$85) and shirodhara (AUD\$110). For couples, the Romantic Fantasy Delight (AUD\$440 per couple), features a bath set in natural rock with a waterfall and outdoor shower, three blissful hours of treatments plus two glasses of bubbly.





IN FOCUS Spas



≡ SWEET LIFE

The **Heavenly Spa** offers some sumptuous experiences, good enough to eat. Try their Ola Body Latte with Vichy body scrub, made from organic honey, coffee and sugar given with a warm vichy shower and coconut-lemon mist for US\$130 (AU\$148) to leave you smooth, soft and fragrant. Also divine is their "Westin Workout" 24-hour Reebok facility with state-of-the-art equipment overlooking waterfalls, exotic wildlife and the ocean, plus full moon yoga held on the beach every month. After-treatment delights include ginger lavender lemonade and lavender biscotti.



He'll give you a reading based on your birth-date found on an ancient numerological scroll.



≈ TEMPLE MASSAGE

How divine to experience the traditional Thai massage at the source, the historical **Wat Pho** temple in Bangkok, where in the past only monks were permitted to give massages to the people. Today, however, anyone can gain a certificate in this yoga style of massage. For those who simply want to be at the mercy of healing hands, then head to the massage pavilion where the region's most highly skilled healers await to stretch your body and mind into shape. Arrive early to avoid the crowds. A one-hour Thai massage is Bht360 (AU\$13) and Bht480 (AU\$18) with herbal compress. ★

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Judy Chapman says:

I've written four books on wellness and spas, including *Ultimate Spa* that explores the origins of Eastern spas and treatments. I often wonder what people who lived centuries ago would think of us forking out hundreds of dollars to dip our bodies in

volcanic mud or soak in a bath of flowers? Thankfully, the next wave of treatments has arrived, and creators are coming up with some real gems that offer deep and lasting healing.



▶ FIND IT:

Suk Spa

1/30 Sukhumvit 11 Rd, Bangkok, Thailand, tel: +66 (0) 2651 2672

S Medical Spa

2/2 Bhakdi Bld, Wireless Rd, Lumpini, Pathumwan, Bangkok, Thailand, tel: +66 (0) 2253 1010

Divana Nurture Spa

8 Sukhumvit 35, North Klongton, Wattana, Bangkok, Thailand, tel: +66 (0) 2261 4818

Spa Village Kuala Lumpur

The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur, 168 Jalan Imbi, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, tel: +60 (3) 2782 9090

Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat

192 Syndicate Rd, Tallebudgera Valley, Queensland, Australia, tel: +61 (7) 5589 5000

Buddha Gardens Day Spa

Arts Factory Village, 15 Gordon St, Byron Bay, New South Wales, Australia, tel: +61 (2) 6680 7844

Kenko Reflexology & Fish Spa

Lot 5.01.09, Level 5, Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, 168 Jalan Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, tel: +60 (3) 2141 6651

Chakra Spa

Karma Kandara Resort, Jln Bukit Permai, Jimbaran, Bali, Indonesia, tel: +62 (361) 708 800

Wat Pho

2 Sanamchai Rd, Pranakorn, Bangkok, Thailand, tel: +66 (0) 2225 4771

Heavenly Spa

The Westin Maui Resort & Spa, 2365 Kaanapali Parkway, Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii, USA, tel: +1 (808) 661 2588