

Shimmering Shanghai

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is not just a medicine system, but a complete lifestyle choice. And as **Judy Chapman** discovered on a recent trip to Shanghai, TCM is no longer looked upon as an ancient or traditional discipline but is very much part of modern medicine. According to industry experts, China will drive if not influence spas around our region in years to come.



The Chi Spa luxury suites in Shangri La Pudong

The Chinese have long known how to spa. At any given time of the day (or night) you will find locals receiving their weekly foot reflexology sessions and Chinese massages at outlets across cities like Shanghai. There are bathhouses open 24/7 where you can spend several hours a day immersing in water therapies, sauna, eating and taking Tui Na Chinese massages all in the name of health and wellbeing (Tai Yang Dao (Changping Lu) is highly recommended).

Step from the streets into Dragonfly, a brand of contemporary oriental-chic outlets dotted around the city that caters well to city living. On the menu are affordable Chinese massages and reflexology alongside Japanese Shiatsu and aromatherapy massages. Then there is the Kanjung Massage Center where the therapist understood in a nano second what was going on inside my body. Both the Gua Shua and Cupping I sampled here were exceptional. As well, there is the Lotus Massage.

Cathy Chon from CatchOn, (www.catchon.com) a strategic marketing and communications company based in Hong Kong, says that while China's spa industry is still very much in its infancy, the territorial lines will start to blur as bathhouses, massage centres, foot reflexology places and salons start trading up to cash in on the term's Spa's popularity.

"It's Shanghai's time to shine," a local told me and after a few days in this exciting city I found this to be true.

"China will be a major force regionally," adds Chon. "China's emerging middle-class will drive if not influence our spas around the region in years to come." She says there are several factors converging to make this unavoidable.

"For a start, it's emerging middle class, which is currently 300 million and predicted to increase to 520 million by 2025, is hungering for new experiences that spas have to offer and are driving the demand," she says.

"Second, China is poised to be the

most popular destination by 2020 (some travel experts say they will reach this by 2011) and this has enormous relevance on inbound and domestic travel. With China's landscape full of untapped cultural and heritage sites and mineral hot springs, it is poised for the wellness destination boom," she adds.

Two other experiences to try is the famous "Shanghai Pedicure". No caressing or pampering here though. During this traditional medical treatment, the "therapist" uses sharp tools and knives to scrape and shave away any tough skin, remove calluses and corns and return them to new. Another unique one is a blind massage at The Funing Point Pressure Massage Center of Blind People.

During my journey, I was fortunate to spend time with Professor Dong Jing-Cheng from the Hua Shan Hospital of Fudon University in Shanghai. He is also the Director of the Department of Chinese Integrative Medicine in China. "Traditional Chinese Medicine is no longer only an ancient

or traditional medicine, but very part of modern medicine," he said. "There is no such thing as western medicine, only modern medicine." Professor Dong further explained, "The future is in integrative medicine."

Traditional Chinese Medicine has saved me several times. What I always find reassuring is that the TCM physicians I've encountered spend quality time diagnosing. Before prescribing any herbs or treatments for the patient, the physician wants to understand the whole state of their patient's physical, mental and emotional health. Pulse diagnosis, checking of the skin, eyes, tongue and a complete overview of one's history and lifestyle is considered.

The good news is that the awareness on TCM is on the increase. In a recent article published in the China Daily in April, for example, it was reported that Guangzhou, located near Hong Kong and Taiwan, is a hub for TCM treatments. At one of the clinics, up to 60% of their 80 patients each day are foreigners – with a majority of them coming in for acupuncture for common complaints such as repetitive stress injury or RSI. As well, they reported that at the International Guangzhou University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, there are around 10,000 students currently studying some branch of the discipline.

Luxury spas are also on the rise in not only Shanghai but all over China. What distinguishes these spas from the rest is the beautiful ambience and surrounds as well as their attention to offerings guests a complete spa journey.

At the newly opened Chi spa at The Spa at Pudong Shangri-La, they have been known to be a cut above the rest when it comes to providing the guest with an enriching experience throughout the entire journey, as you have your own private steam, shower and bathing facilities while you embark on their Himalayan and oriental-inspired rituals. Recommended is "The Travelers Retreat" for those who are in town on business and need to relieve muscle aches and stress. The spa at The Four Seasons Hotel is simply Shanghai's best when it comes to service, cleanliness and a sanctuary-like environment. Early next year, they will unveil their signature spa that will take spas


in Shanghai to a new level. Imagine expansive rooms where you can immerse in a collection of the best European water therapies and Eastern treatments before meandering to your hotel rooms upstairs.

I particularly enjoyed the Chinese Massage I sampled at the Mandara Spa at the JW Marriott Hotel. Interiors that are reminiscent of a small Chinese village with windy dim-lit corridors create a warming effect. It's also worth checking out The Banyan Tree Spa located inside The Westin Hotel. Each treatment room is designed to reflect the five elements – earth, fire, gold, water and wood with treatments to match. That and the fact that the Banyan Tree has an excellent training academy ensures that their therapists are always well trained. For deluxe facials, step inside the I-Spa at The Intercontinental where their head therapist delivered an exceptional Jurlique hydrating facial and at Evian 3 on the Bund, they offer well-delivered Clarins facials. Inside, their spa looks and feels like a 1980s art gallery and a treatment here is a must if only for its location on the Bund, a strip of exquisite buildings overlooking the river.

Tai Chi

One can't visit China without partaking in one of the oldest health exercises in the world. Morning Tai Chi sessions at Jing An park (nearby the Jing An temple) starts at 7am daily.

Yoga in China

For yoga devotees, take a yoga session at the Yoga + Yoga Center, located in the beautiful French Concession area set in a gorgeous 4 storey restored building with lovely dark wooden floors and classic Chinese style doors. There's also a great café downstairs named "Ginger" that serve juices, healthy soups and salads. Also recommended is a class with Duncan Wong at Yogic Arts who teaches a blend of yoga and martial arts. 

Tai Yang Dao

Tel: 6255 2118

Kanjung Massage

Tel: 021 6340 1661

Lotus Massage

Tel: 133-4178 8015



TOP TO BOTTOM: The dim candle lights at The Chi Spa in Shanghai Pudong Shangri La; Couples therapy in JW Marriott Shanghai

QUICK LINKS

Dragonfly

www.dragonfly.net.cn

Chi spa, The Spa at Pudong Shangri-La

www.shangri-la.com

Mandara Spa, JW Marriott Hotel, Shanghai

www.mandaraspas.com

The Banyan Tree Spa, The Westin Shanghai

www.banyantree.com

The Four Seasons Hotel

www.fourseasons.com

I-Spa at The Intercontinental

www.ichotelsgroup.com

Evian 3 at the Bund

www.threeonthebund.com

Yoga + Yoga Center

www.yplus.cn

Yogic Arts

www.yogicarts.com