

LUCIRE BEAUTY FEATURE

Tamarind Retreat

Waterworld

Amazing spa experiences
BY JUDY CHAPMAN





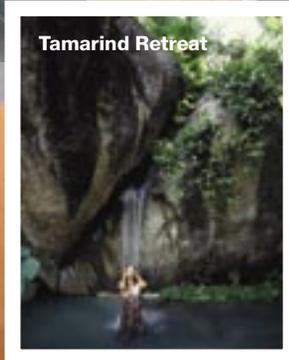
Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong



MOTYO



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MOTYO

ICE FOUNTAINS. VITALITY POOLS. RAINFOREST SHOWERS. Underwater spas. Japanese onsens and mosaic tiled steam rooms. Thanks to the revival of Spa, the world is full of amazing water experiences. In the past we cleansed and bathed ourselves in natural sources of water; now, with the advent of spas, the ocean has become the Thalasso pool, natural hot springs are onsen, and a variety of heat and cold therapies derived from ancient steam bath practices have developed. Indeed our world is becoming one big delightful Spa!

Drift. Dream. Float. Be. Ask anyone. Being in water is a miraculous experience. Whether one is bathing in a rock pool or dipping their being into the ocean, the feeling is often one of equilibrium. Without doubt, water has an equalizing affect on the body-mind system and is indeed one of our most precious elements.

Our appreciation for water is as long as mankind itself. In the past the word "spa" was synonymous with European destinations, but today it has far wider connotations. As our interest in wellness grows, so too has the interpretation of the spa evolved. Nonetheless at the root of all the best spas is pure and simple water – the source of health & rejuvenation. With today's spa often defined as a space where one can relax, breathe and take water treatments in a healthy environment, then bathing & showering is an essential part of any spa experience.

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the cleanest water in the world (lets hope it stays this way). In fact, one speculate that the reason why both of these countries might not have been as rapid to develop a spa culture compared to other countries is that our countries already look like one big natural spa! Indeed, Europe

is not the only destination burgeoning with a mineral spring culture. In Australia, the Daylesford and Hepburn Springs region is famed for its variety of bubbling experiences and in fact 80% of Australia's mineral springs are located in this area. The waters contain high amounts of minerals ranging from calcium, iron to sulphur & magnesium that flow through 450 million-year-old volcanic rocks. And in the daintree in North Queensland, where else in the world can you voyage through the oldest rainforest in the world and dive into the translucent Barrier Reef waters all in one perfect day? Far North Queensland is now touted as Australia's Spa Capitol and deservedly so. With rustic cabins and cozy B & B's alongside spa resorts and super luxe private retreats for hire together not to mention the surrounding Daintree that is home to rockpools & waterfalls, spa trekking around this area is full of variety.

Likewise, New Zealanders are already aware of the healing powers of water. Thanks to the natural thermal springs that are found around the country, locals have been immersing their beings in the therapeutic pools of hot mineral pools and liquid muds for hundreds of years. Lake Rotorua on the North Island is known as a 'geothermal wonderland' with waters filled with health-giving sulphur that is known as a powerful remedy for the body. It's believed that sulphur has a longevity affect on the body and can slow down the aging process because of its ability to protect the body against toxic affect so pollution and radiation.

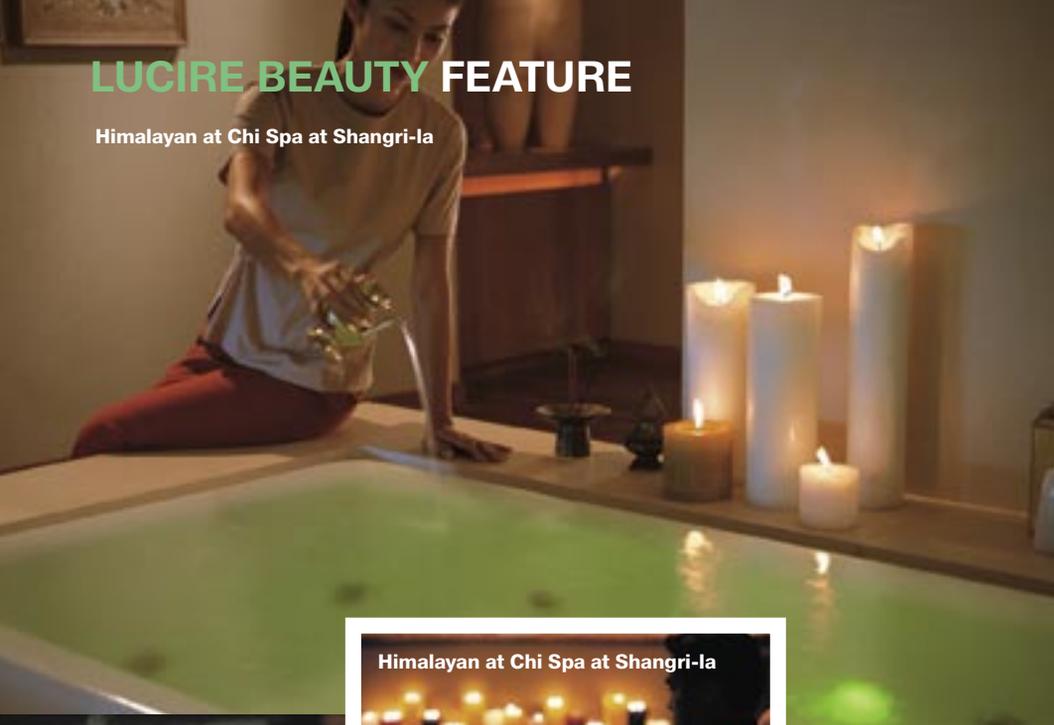
Bathing has been a popular past time for both health and rejuvenation for many cultures including the ancient Romans.

The Japanese have been bathing in curative waters for centuries now. Japan is blessed with over 20,000 naturally flowing hot springs 'onsen' that is one of the oldest and most natural spa rituals on earth. Appreciation for bathing in Japan goes back to the Shinto period before the Chinese introduced Buddhism in 532ad. In the past Shinto priests would travel the lands to bless and perform ceremonies at the springs they discovered. Even as far as South Africa, people are celebrating the

art of bathing. At the Sante Winelands Hotel & Wellness centre that is located in the heart of the wine country, guests can immerse in a Cabernet Sauvignon Wine Casket Bath. This is essentially a red wine bath that is reported to be filled with antioxidants that are essential for health.

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Himalayan at Chi Spa at Shangri-la



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Lonu Veyo at Huvfen Fushi



What's exciting is that spas all over the world in all shapes and sizes are embracing the water element in the most innovative of ways. As ecology and technology merge then there are some awesome water-inspired creations being born. Basically the feeling is that spas are not just about treatments, some are purely water based experiences. Whether it be in the form of the traditional milk & flower bath or the range of steam and sauna therapies, one thing is clear is that the recreations of water experiences are becoming more incredible each year.

However, it's wise to remember that with our natural resources rapidly depleting, then its essential we select our water therapy experiences intelligently. Let's not allow all our water wash down the drain. If we all (spa operators and consumers alike) can be mindful about water usage then the power and healing quality of water can be experienced in generations to come.

All time favourite water experiences:

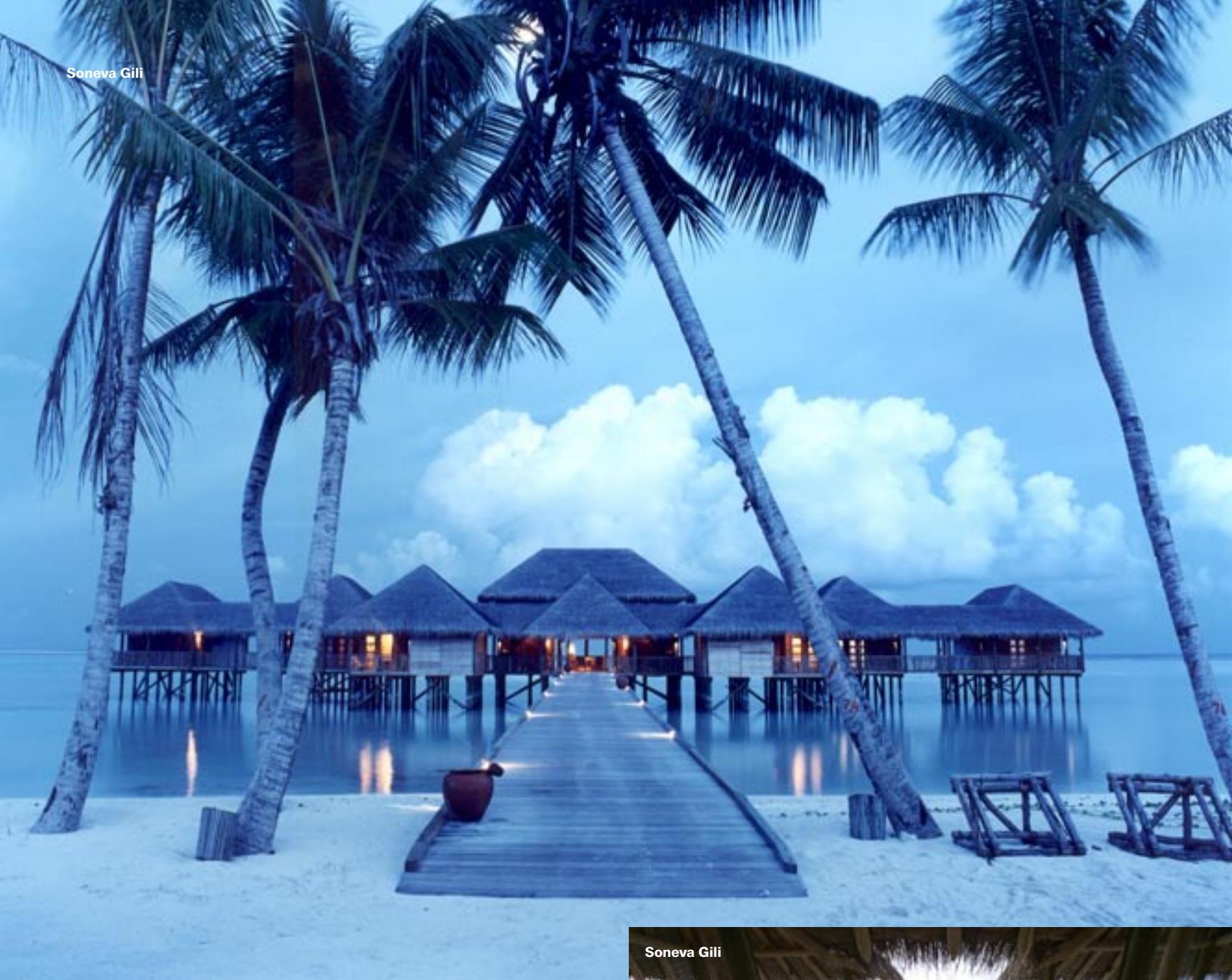
The Mandarin Oriental spas are revered for their recreations of the traditional European spa facilities only with a slight eastern twist. At the recently opened Landmark hotel in Hong Kong they have provided an array of amazing water therapies for guests to take before their treatment - only further proving their commitment to give guests memorable spa experiences that really do work. The separate men and women's facilities include rainforest showers, an ice fountain where one can smother crushed ice onto their body after the sauna to cool down, a vitality pool that where you lie on a bed under water and allow jets to gently massage your body as well as a Rasul (mud treatment) and the Laconium that is a dry heat sauna. But the most beautiful creation has to be their Amethyst Crystal Steam room that boasts a huge Amethyst crystal. Here, sitting meditatively in a haze of aromatic steam is inspirational if not centering. One cannot mention the Mandarin Oriental spas without referring to their Chiang Mai property in Northern Thailand where they

have built a Watsu pool in a room in a temple like structure that takes the treatment of massage under water to a new level.

For those who appreciate the mystery of the Himalayas, then CHI spas located at the Shangri-La hotels are for you and the good news is that they open another property in Fiji by the end of the year. With treatments and architecture honoring the region where India, Tibet and China converge then treatments naturally reflect the wisdoms of these regions. Here guests can experience the spa within a spa concept, which means one no longer has to share the locker rooms or showers with other guests. Treatments like the 5 and a half Vitality Ritual are given in your own private suite that comes fully equipped with changing area, bath and shower. Already one can immerse in a choice of Himalayan water therapies that are composed of color baths where one bathes as a full spectrum of colors washes over you. Rumor is that they are in the midst of creating a fantastic water therapy area designed to reflect the bathing traditions of the Himalayas - we can't wait! www.shangri-la/chispa.com

Maldives Already is a beautiful location for infinite water experiences. Just being here reminds one what earth would have been like long before man did it's thing. Just diving off a boat into the translucent waters is enough to bring about immense joy and relaxation. But as well there are some awesome water experiences created by some of the best spas here...

The *Lonu Veyo* at Huvafen Fushi is an outdoor salt water floatation pool that contains at least ten times more salt than the surrounding sea. Inspired by an ancient Buddhist practice of bathing in seawater before prayer, dipping into the warm sea-inspired waters does wonders for the health of the body and mind. As well as given as part of some of the treatments, one can also just float about underneath the stars and dream. They are also home to the world's first underwater spa where you can take massages and practice yoga with marine-life floating around and above you. Indeed Per Aquum spas and resorts are fast



gaining reputation for creating the most innovative dream-like experiences and we look forward to the opening of their Seychelles and Sri Lanka properties later in the year. www.peraquum.com

For a total water holiday check into the newly opened suites or residences at Soneva Gili by Six Senses also in the Maldives. I was privileged to spend a few days in the Private Reserve that is a spacious 1400 m² structure positioned some 500 meters away from Soneva Gili. In the usual Six Senses style, it has been built in harmony with the surrounding elements and is made of only recycled and natural timbers and materials. But the highlight is that no longer do you need to go to the spa to take your treatments – here it comes to you by boat. At the Private Reserve has its very own private spa, gymnasium and steam room not to mention 360 degrees of endless turquoise as your point of view. Basically the sense I had here is that you can spa without ever leaving your villa- the ultimate for water babies who love intelligent luxury. www.sixsenses.com.

But there's nothing more spa-like than being close to nature. At Tamarind Retreat in Koh Samui, Thailand, guests can steam clean in a haze of Thai herbs sitting inside a large boulder rock. Afterwards cool off in a gorgeous chilled rock pool and inhale the pristine air that flows through this unique property. Places like here remind us that at the end of the day there is nothing better than being in water - the source of an authentic spa experience.

Spa treatments are like architecture and reflect the mindsets of our time. With the current trend to look back for inspiration and merge the past with the contemporary, then perhaps it will be the spa industry who will help create a water conscious world. There is no doubt that water is our most precious resource. While all of these water experiences offer so much health, rejuvenation and joy, it's essential that we remain wary of how spas use water and choose treatments and facilities where the water is recycled or used at a minimum. The good news is that many spas are operated by forward thinking and environmentally conscious individuals. •

Soneva Gili



Soneva Gili

