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A Sense of Place

Spa treatments and wellness rituals that bring the outside in

By **Sandra Ramani**

As much as we love spas, sometimes the last place we want to be on vacation—especially when in a beautiful place—is shut away in a darkened room. Luckily, many spas have developed treatments that not only help ground the mind and body, but ground guests to the destination, too.

“Just like restaurants that reflect the food culture of their area, spas are realizing the importance of telling their story through services that

reflect the location,” says Raye Vogler, spa director at Montage Palmetto Bluff in South Carolina. “The entire reason people travel is to experience different places and cultures,” she adds, “so by incorporating native ingredients or customs into a spa, we are helping our guests to fully immerse themselves in our environment.”

Here are five spas offering treatments that evoke a true sense of place.



Sonora Island Resort & Spa

British Columbia, Canada

A quick seaplane, helicopter or boat ride from Vancouver, this idyllic resort is located on a private islet in British Columbia's Discovery Islands, surrounded by dense forests and Pacific Ocean-linked waterways. It's all about the outdoors here, with activities ranging from kayaking and hiking to birding and bear-spotting, so it's no surprise that the resort's Island Currents Spa draws upon nature for its signature services.

In addition to body treatments that incorporate BC-sourced ingredients like sea kelp and beach stones, the Canadian Balsam Oil Deep Tissue Massage evokes the setting by using an essential oil of a native fir that has long been used by First Nations tribes to treat various ailments. Mixed with nourishing base oils and essential oils of eucalyptus, spearmint and tea tree, the woody, warming scent gives guests the feeling of being outside during their massage—which, given this setting, is exactly where you'd want to be. sonoraresort.com

Akela Day Spa

Deadwood, South Dakota

When creating the first (and, so far, only) full day spa in South Dakota's stunning Black Hills region, the owners of Akela Spa—set just outside the historic town of Deadwood—were committed to being natural, reflecting the setting and paying tribute to the indigenous cultures of the area. In the Akela Hante Massage, cedar oil (known as hante in Lakota, and used in traditional ceremonies to purify and heal) is mixed with fir and massaged into the skin using warm compresses, helping to relax muscles and the mind, and connect you to the area's dense forests. Afterward, enjoy time in the outdoor sauna—set in an authentic tipi—or a dip in the hot tub, surrounded by views of the majestic mountains. akelaspa.com

Sun Valley Resort

Sun Valley, Idaho

Since 1931, Idaho's state flower has been the Syringa, a branching shrub that can grow to over 10 feet tall, and that's dotted with white blossoms that give off an orange fragrance (earning it the nickname "mock orange"). In honor of this native plant, the recently expanded spa at the iconic Sun Valley Resort has created the Detoxifying Orange Blossom Ritual, which evokes the forested peaks and wildflower-strewn valleys of Northern Idaho. Amid a décor of warm leathers and Western lodge-inspired motifs, guests enjoy a circulation-boosting full body scrub (done with an invigorating coffee-lemon-olive pit blend), a detoxifying wrap in self-heating thermal clay, a rinse-off in the 16-head experience shower, and a re-balancing massage with hot stones and stress-busting orange blossom essence, which helps nourish skin that may be dry from the high altitude or days out on the slopes. sunvalley.com

Four Seasons Kyoto

Kyoto, Japan

As the birthplace of geisha culture and home to over 1,500 temples and shrines, Kyoto is a city well-versed in rituals. You'll find evidence of that at the serene Spa at the recently opened Four Seasons Kyoto, which offers a menu of five locally inspired Signature Ceremonies. In the two-and-a-half-hour Kiyome Purification Ceremony, guests soak in a warm bath infused with circulation-boosting, skin-softening sake, then are scrubbed with bamboo-charcoal salt, and massaged with a silky oil.

Other rituals incorporate local ingredients like ginger, green tea and rice milk, while the Kyoto Heritage Massage features Japanese techniques like shiatsu and acupressure. The spa's décor evokes a traditional ryokan bathhouse, while outside, an 800-year-old Shakusuien pond garden—set on the hotel's property—further roots you in the meditative destination. fourseasons.com



Sonora Island Resort & Spa
British Columbia, Canada

Montage Palmetto Bluff

Bluffton, South Carolina

Set along the May River in South Carolina's Lowcountry, Montage Palmetto Bluff's 20,000 acres include extensive nature preserves, an oak moss-dappled central pond and access to miles of fresh- and salt waterways, through which you can boat, kayak and canoe. The healing powers of nature and water also take center stage at the spa, where several rituals incorporate Coastal Carolina ingredients. The two-hour Signature Carolina Kur Experience begins with a body scrub to prep the skin, followed by a wrap in mineral-rich Pluff Mud, sourced from the May River. A jet-tub soak in botanicals-infused water cleanses off the mud, while a shea butter massage locks in hydration.

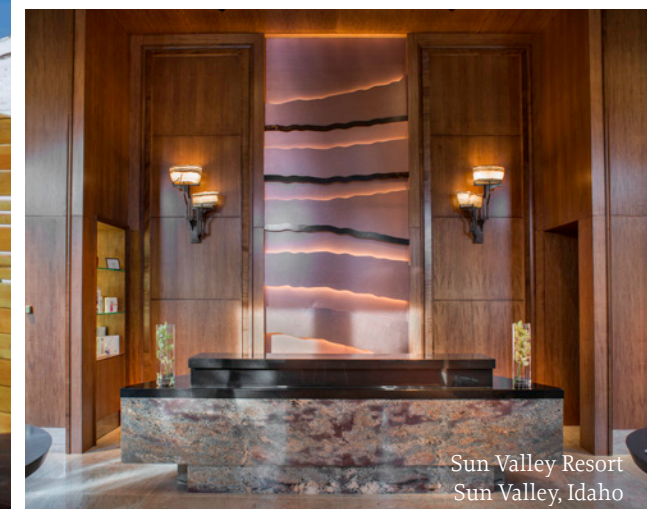
Treatments like the Coastal Carolina Body Wrap—full of nourishing seaweed—further celebrate the region, and highlight what Spa Director Raye Vogler describes as "the elements of our environment that were used for healing and wellness long before we were here." montagehotels.com



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