

Once, all spas seemed alike. No more. Today's bastions of beauty and body care represent an array of styles and philosophies. From old-world glamour to minimalist modern, the perfect indulgence awaits.

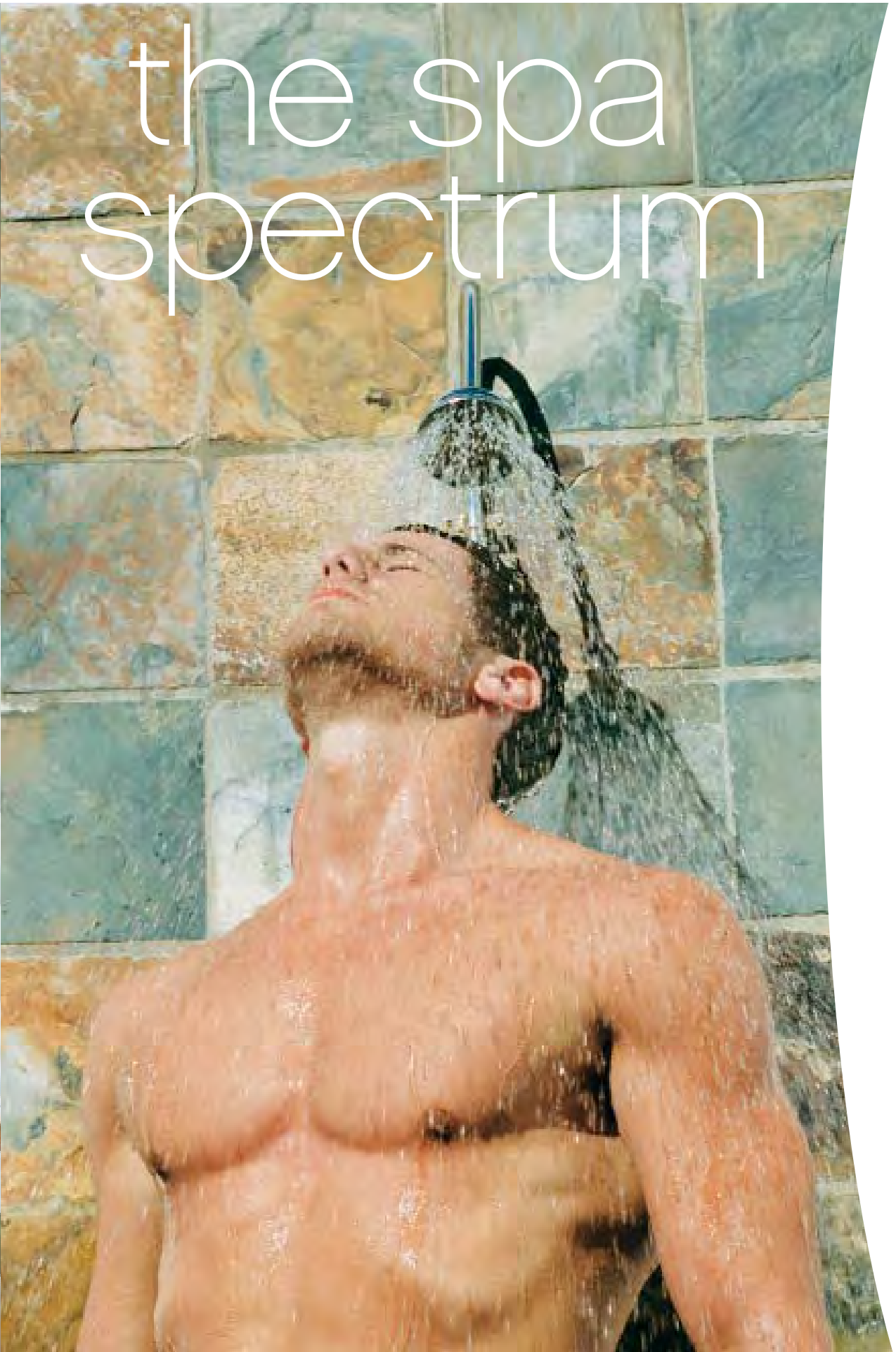
By Trisha McMahon



Above: Both the space and services are fit for a mandarin at the **Spa at the Mandarin Oriental**. *Right:* Tumbled-stone décor is typical of the spa genre known as naturalistic.

the spa spectrum

PHOTOS: SPA AT THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL GROUP; MAN IN SHOWER, VEER



In 1910, when 26-year-old Florence Nightingale Graham (aka Elizabeth Arden) opened the nation's first beauty treatment salon in Manhattan, little did the cosmetics trailblazer realize how successful she'd become. So successful that, for decades, day spas (as they were dubbed in the late 1970s) would mostly mirror Arden's tried-and-true template: ornate, ultra-feminine and vaguely European. But as populations changed and tastes evolved, so did the industry. Today the nearly 3,000 bastions of beauty in New York City are as diverse in design, amenities, products and philosophy as the women and men they serve. Proving there's a spa or salon for every style, here are five prototypes of the contemporary pampering field.

HIGH-GLAM All spas are an indulgence. However, some are a little more indulgent than others. Upon their arrival at the opulent **Guerlain Spa at the Waldorf=Astoria** (Waldorf Towers, 301 Park Ave., 212.872.7200), a Spa Attaché escorts guests to an elegant, roses-filled lounge to sample wine and tasting plates of cheese and tartines—unless they'd prefer to visit the Culture Library and its selection of extravagant art books and global publications. Treatments are equally decadent. One luxurious facial is the Orchidée Impériale Prestige, a 140-minute feast that includes a firming massage and three distinct age-defying masks. As they luxuriate, guests can have their garments steamed and shoes shined if they request it in advance.

Similarly, senses are sent into overdrive at **Townhouse Spa** (39 W. 56th St., 212.245.8006), a tony three-story space, complete with classic mahogany detailing, a mother-of-pearl bar and tufted leather banquettes. The venue features separate steam and inlaid-pebble shower facilities for both sexes. Another perk: the Men's Lounge (women are allowed, too), outfitted with plush furnishings and a big-screen TV. Therapies range from collagen-producing facials to massages featuring Oceana Hydro Capsules that wash away stress with water shot from 30 jets.

At **Marie Robinson Salon** (155 Fifth Ave., 212.358.7780), the glamour lies not so much in the décor—though the white, light-filled space, with its exposed beams, hardwood floors and dark furniture radiates loft chic—as in the hair and makeup services. With half of Hollywood among its clientele, the team of stylists, colorists and makeup artists fawn over each client's coiffure and face, creating camera-ready looks and total transformations (one celebrated example: These are the folks who took Scarlett Johansson from blonde to brunette).

SCIENTIFIC METHOD While some venues emphasize escapist glamour, other spas adopt a quasi-medical approach—the

reassuringly professional air of a cutting-edge practitioner. Stepping into the white-on-white premises of the **Cellure** skin care boutique (422 W. Broadway, 1.855.235.5873—its clinical crispness off-

set by wood paneling—is akin to entering a chic doctor's office. Each client is given a bag of samples and led into a mirrored private booth where, aided by a touch-screen video, he or she tries each item in the line's five-step regimen, which features adult stem-cell extracts. The scientific approach also reigns at hair-analysis salon **J. F. Lazard** (764 Madison Ave., 212.288.2250). During the free 30-minute consultation, a single strand is plucked from the client's head, then scrutinized under a magnifying camera—literally, getting to the root of the problem. The client is then given a treatment “prescription,” fillable at one of Lazard's partner salons, such as nearby **Pierre Michel** (135 E. 57th St., 212.755.9500); products can be bought on the Lazard premises, as well.

If the facilities at the Upper East Side's **Wellpath** (903 Madison Ave., 212.737.9604) somewhat resemble a medical office, it could be because founder Dr. Jamé Heskett used to be an obstetrician. Her treatments take a high-



luxurious • scientific • earthy • exotic • classic • luxurious • scientific • earthy • exotic • classic • luxurious • scientific

An earth-toned décor—black oak and limestone flooring, stone vanities and wooden lockers—welcomes clients at the **Auriga Spa** (The Setai Fifth Ave., 400 Fifth Ave., 212.613.8720). Using plant-based products from The Organic Pharmacy, the spa’s signature multiphase treatments revolve around—and actually change with—the monthly lunar cycle (for example, detoxifying is emphasized during the waning moon, nourishing when the moon waxes). If Auriga looks to the celestial, **Great Jones Spa** (29 Great Jones St., 212.505.3185) emphasizes the aquatic. In its wet lounge, palm trees and a three-plus-story waterfall create a tropical oasis. In addition to a roster of tip-toe treatments—in which plant and marine-based products are used—the spa is famed for its full complement of soothing water therapies, including a steam room with shifting lights, a river-rock sauna and a bubbling hot tub, ideally followed by a cold water plunge.

EASTERN APPEAL

A growing group of spas are specializing in therapies developed by Asian cultures—some of them hundreds of years old. At subterranean sanctuary **Silk Day Spa** (47 W. 13th St., 212.255.6457), tall stalks of bamboo, imported stone floor tiles and billowy fabrics set the stage for serenity, Eastern-style. Its Asian-influenced therapies include a Korean-style body scrub and polish, and Shiatsu Ki, an acupressure massage to relieve stress and release energy. Various massages, including Tui-na, a Chinese deep-tissue technique, and a form of assisted stretching called Thai massage, are the pillar of **Graceful Services** (1097 Second Ave., 212.593.9904). Other Asian offerings include the Ginseng Deep Cleansing Facial, which uses the essence of the root, together with Chinese vinegar and a mask imported from China.

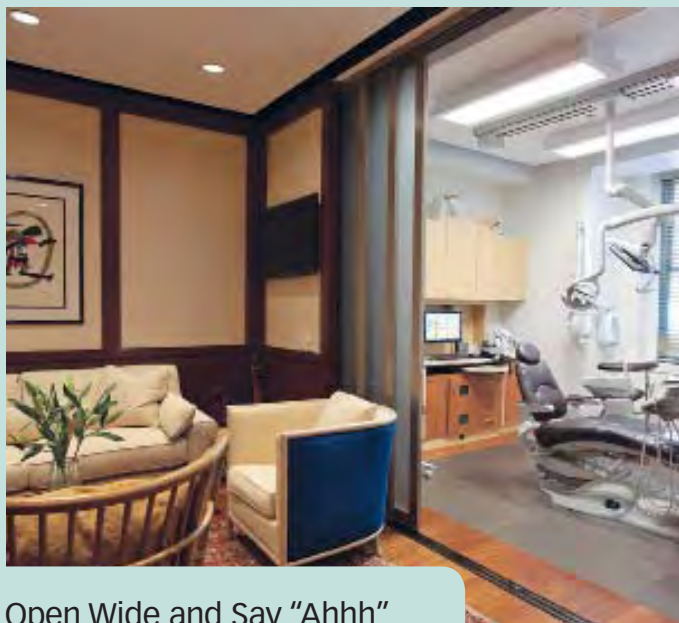
Decorated with bamboo, stone, rich teak woods and gold leaf in Asian-inspired motifs, the **Spa at the Mandarin Oriental** (80 Columbus Circle, 212.805.8880) features a services menu developed by specialists in traditional Chinese medicine. Examples of ancient therapies include the Ayurvedic Ritual Experience, which begins with a diagnostic foot washing; the Oriental Harmony massage, which subscribes to Eastern meridian massage techniques using custom-blended essential oils; and the Lanna massage, a Thai technique that uses a wooden mallet to lightly tap away tightness.



Below: Auriga Spa's therapies follow the moon's cycles. Right: Aromatherapy candles play a key part in spa services today.



Modern massages range in style from Swedish to Shiatsu.



Open Wide and Say “Ahhh”

With all the glitterati, literati, politerati and assorted VIPs (very important patients) who come to his office from around the world—many accompanied by an entourage of family or friends, personal physicians, bodyguards and security personnel—cosmetic and restorative dentist Jan Linhart, D.D.S., P.C., was inspired to create the Continental Room (above). More like a luxurious pied-à-terre than a place to undergo a dental procedure, the 750-square-foot treatment suite is outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment, such as The Wand, a computerized device for the pain-free delivery of anesthetic; digital X-ray machines; and a chair that massages while the dentist works. Separated by a sliding glass wall, there’s a handsomely furnished living room with HD televisions, a stocked pantry and private bathroom. “It’s a friendly, comfortable environment,” says Dr. Linhart, who recently expanded his already sprawling office into this space when the neighboring tenant moved out. “We use this room for patients who are having longer procedures, so they can get up and walk around. Also, some of my foreign patients arrive with five or six other people, so they can all relax in one place.” In addition, Dr. Linhart, who is on the staff of NYU Dental School, is able to don a wireless microphone and perform “hands-on tutorial procedures that can be viewed live, taped or transmitted.” The ultimate purpose of this opulent retreat, he adds, is to pamper clients as he creates “the healthiest, most beautiful smiles.” **Dr. Jan Linhart, 230 Park Ave., Ste. 1164, 212.682.5180—BD**



CLASSIC TWIST The Old-World spa, traditional in appearance and/or technique, is still alive and well. From Switzerland, Europe’s time-honored stomping ground for rest and rejuvenation, comes **La Prairie Ritz-Carlton Spa** (Ritz-Carlton Central Park, 50 Central Park So., 212.521.6135), which offers a range of facials and body wraps utilizing the prestigious La Prairie skin care line. In keeping with the classic 1930s-style hotel venue, the men’s area affords patrons a clubby atmosphere, complete with an oversize steam room, while the guests in the women’s space enjoy a Hollywood-style makeup table and lockers with special jewelry boxes for stowing precious trinkets.

Clients can expect a brush with British tradition upon entering **Tommy Guns** (138 Ludlow St., 212.477.1151), a quaint replica of an Edwardian barbershop, complete with period accoutrements and an apothecary. Open

to men and women, services include haircuts, coloring and highlights, as well as hot and cold towel wet shaves. **Salon Ziba**, by contrast, offers a modern-day décor of rich walnut woods, stainless steel and glass accents, both at its bi-level flagship (200 W. 57th St., 212.767.0577) and its new cheery white Greenwich Village venue (485 Sixth Ave.). But at heart, it’s a classic full-service beauty salon, where clients can feel encouraged to come in for anything from a simple blow-dry to a hair-straightening Brazilian Keratin Treatment, from a quick manicure to a leisurely body massage (uptown branch only).

Hollywoodesque glamour and earthy environments, radio sound waves and ancient Asian oils—surveying the variety of spas today, wouldn’t Miss Arden be amazed?