

## EXCLUSIVELY FOR HIM: SPA FOR MEN IN BANGKOK

Where men can go  
for wellness in the city  
By **PERCY ROXAS**

**W**HO SAYS SPAS ARE ONLY for women? “Only the last few remaining members of the male chauvinists tribe,” said a Bangkok spa manager who requested anonymity for the quote, apparently half in jest. Jest or not, more and more men are now becoming a growing part of the spa market. Indeed, more and more men are shedding off some antiquated perceptions about going to a spa. They are becoming more conscious about the role of the spa in making a modern man look and feel good.

“Modern man is taking an ever-increasing interest in their personal well-being, skin care, and grooming,” Nathalie Paque, the spa director of JW Marriott Bangkok, was once quoted staying in a report. “We are seeing an increased number of men’s products and this has been well accepted in many societies. Men are also becoming increasingly interested in spa treatments, not only massages, but also facial treatments, body scrubs, manicures, and pedicures.”

According to Conde Nast, 35 percent of spa-goers today are men, and their numbers are increasing by the day. In fact, some Bangkok spas report a 50-50 ratio of men/women clientele. That explains why these days, many spas in the city

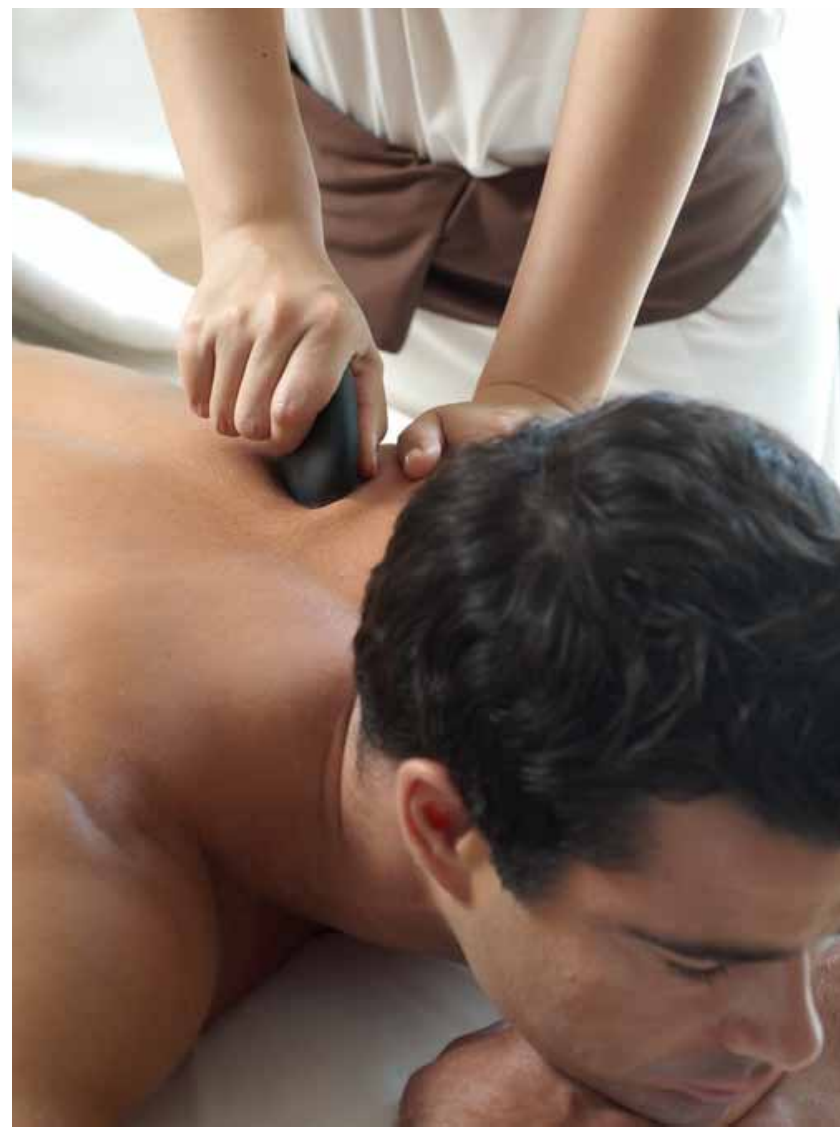
are not just providing treatments and programs exclusively for women. They have become truly “gender-neutral.”

From Spa Cenvaree of Centara to Devarana of Dusit, from Chi of Shangri-La to ESPA of the Peninsula, from Four Seasons’ Spa by M-Spa to Metropolitan’s Como Shambala – and among the stand alone spas: from Oasis Bangkok to S Medical Spa – there are facilities and treatments readily available to men looking for wellness, pampering, and relaxation, even if they are coming “straight from branding cattle” (in a manner of speaking).

The most popular treatments for men in places such as JW Health Club & Spa (JW Marriott Bangkok, Sukhumvit Road) are still aromatherapy massage, Swedish massage, and the Thai massage with hot herbal compress – probably because they are perfect to ease muscles that are tired after a day’s work, although the place also offers invigorating coffee and salt scrubs as well as deep-cleansing and moisturizing facials, among many other treatments. Insiders here even say that it is common for business meetings to take place at the juice bar.

For those who still have hang-ups, places such as i.sawan Residential Spa & Club offers a great initiation. This spa – named “Men’s Spa of 2010” during the AsiaSpa Awards in Hong Kong – boasts a “man-space” treatment menu that is getting lots of raves as the “ideal option for men on the go.” As Grand Hyatt Erawan general manager, Richard Greaves said, “i.sawan offers the most of what men want to keep fit and invigorated, and enables them

(Opposite Page)  
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"King of Oasis" Massage  
at Oasis Spa Bangkok

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to cleanse their body, clarify their mind, and calm their spirit for a productive day every day."

Geared for businessmen in the city, the i.sawan line of treatments -- such as "Man Spa Pure Performance," "Man Spa Hydra Performance," and "Man Spa Anti-Age Performance" -- offer pampering to the fore. Not cheap for the ordinary street guy -- each 90-minute treatment at Bt3,900++ -- but definitely worth it for those who can afford.

At the Spa Cenvaree of CentralWorld, just a few steps away from Grand Hyatt, there's a dedicated section called "Exclusive for Him" -- offering a variety of packages for men: stress relief, jetlag recovery, golfers' specials, and a signature Jurlique facial. Like the i.sawan, this spa was built with a chic urban concept with an elegant Thai twist that continues in the treatments. Prices vary from package to package -- but we recommend the signatures: "Signature Salt Pot Muscles Melter (Bt2,800++) and the "Thai Harmony Four Hands Massage" (Bt3,000++) -- for utter bliss. The "Jetlag Revival," package is Bt2,450++.



Farther on, on Petchburi Road, is another spa you should not miss: Amari Watergate's Sivara. In one of its eight treatment rooms, I had the pleasure of having a "Chocolate Body Wrap" -- a rejuvenating soft scrub followed by a sophisticated wrap of blended cocoa, plant-based-oil, and other hydrating ingredients to nourish, firm, and tone the skin. More than that, it improved my blood circulation and metabolism -- and a "Wasabi Body Wrap," afterward. Gave my body a zing, indeed!

One thing about being in Bangkok is that you are always spoilt for choice. That's even truer for men spa-goers, who don't even have to leave their hotels to enjoy some rubdown, de-stressing, or recharging. I had

a great facial once at the Devarana Spa at Dusit Thani Bangkok -- unbelievable results really; made me feel like, to use a cliché, a brand new person. Another personal favorite -- especially for its soothing Zen-like ambiance -- is Shangri-La's the Chi.

Among others, The Mandarin Oriental Spa is world-renowned for its facilities and treatments, and the Sukhothai's Spa Botanica is just as famous. One should try their Thai herbal scrubs and compresses if given a chance. The Spa at the Millennium Bangkok has a treatment aptly called "Equilibrium" featuring Thai herbal packs and royal honey and sesame scrub. And there are many others: Banyan Tree Spa, Avatar Spa of Dream Hotel, The Antidote of Grand Millennium Sukhumvit, etc...

Even Chao Phya Park Hotel Bangkok (on Ratchadapisek Road), offers four packages for men, including one called "Fred Flinstones" -- a unique massage using hot and cold stones to eliminate stress and relax you, capped by a body scrub to take away dead skin.

For those who are not staying in a hotel, but want to enjoy a legitimate spa -- if truth be said, many places in Bangkok also calling themselves spas are "shady" -- fret not because there are hordes of them as well. Some often recommended are the Divana Massage & Spa (Sukhumvit 25), Thann Sanctuary (5th floor Siam Discovery), and Tria Integrative Wellness (behind Piyavate Hospital, Rama 9 Road). There's also the newly opened Morphosis, located at O.P. Garden in Bangrak.

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One recent unforgettable experience was had at S-Medical Spa (Wireless Road near Nailert Swissotel), where I tried the "Cool Guy Massage." This 90-minute cool treatment was designed to eliminate stress and rid the body of toxins, and it did just that. The spa also has a "manly ambiance," if I may say so, nothing fancy or fussy – although interiors are quite elegant. And if you are feeling a bit more indulgent, you can try their "Men's Secret." What's that, you say? I leave that to you to discover.

Another recent spa visit was at the Oasis Spa Bangkok (Sukhumvit 31), where I enjoyed a "King of Oasis" massage, a two-hour treatment that really made me feel like a king. This spa never ceases to amaze me, because it always comes up with great treatments ahead of the others – I had my first four-hands massage here, my first gold scrub, and this month, I might try their new facial featuring – believe it or not – caviar!

And even more recently, one spa experience that I really enjoyed to the hilt was that at The Peninsula Spa by ESPA. There's a selection of treatments but I chose a package called "Time" – a one-hour and 50-minute pampering where you can really let go. The concept is to enjoy a program specifically for you depending on how you feel. I chose a full-body massage with hot volcanic stones and just let the therapist make all the decisions for me, and it was ahhh...pure bliss! This treatment is gender-neutral, but there's a "Mankind" treatment that is designed to release muscle tension in the shoulder and back, followed by foot massage with pressure point technique. The "Time treatment" costs Bt5,400 while "mankind" is Bt3,800 for one-hour and 20 minutes.



Well, let's just say that since I was christened (forced, really) into enjoying the bliss of a spa a few years ago, I have learned to love it. Now, I go to a spa to relax, to de-stress, to detoxify, to recharge, to rejuvenate, to find balance, to self-heal, to experience a true sense of well-being. And I don't care what you're thinking; I enjoy going to a spa. You too, would! ■



**The Peninsula Spa by ESPA** Try "Mankind," a treatment that is designed to release muscle tension on shoulder and back, followed by foot massage with pressure point technique.