



# Spa seller



Wondering what a spa break might look like in the 'new normal'? **Laura French** speaks to the experts to find out

**T**he 'new normal' has transformed our lives in many ways – but how it translates into holidays is the question on everyone's lips right now.

Much of the hotel experience is fairly easy to imagine, from social distancing at check-in to less-frequent housekeeping in rooms, but spas, with their emphasis on touch and physical proximity, are a little harder to picture.

Many are reopening, albeit with modifications – reduced treatment menus, mandatory pre-booking and screening on arrival are among the features to expect, with an emphasis on social distancing and PPE for therapists.

So how will these play out in reality, and how will it affect the spa experience?

#### DIGITAL BOOKINGS AND SCREENINGS

Spas are putting caps on numbers and encouraging pre-booking, with technology playing a key role. The Peninsula Hotels has launched a private messaging service that allows clients to book treatments from anywhere, while Nizuc Resort & Spa in

Mexico asks guests to fill out a digital consultation form a week before their appointment.

Those digital pre-consultations are likely to become a common theme, according to Jacinta Stevens, head of wellbeing at Mason Rose. "Whether done by phone or email, spa and wellness teams will want to equip themselves with as much prior knowledge as possible," she says.

Many are also screening guests for symptoms when they arrive; Sandals, Windjammer Landing in Saint Lucia and The Peninsula Hotels all say they'll be doing temperature checks, while Algarve-based Longevity Wellness Worldwide says guests at its properties will be screened when they check in to the hotel.

Villa Eden in Italy and SHA Wellness Clinic in Spain are taking things a step further by asking guests to take a test before arriving to confirm they're Covid-free. The latter also gives guests an antibody test and medical examination on arrival – which might well be a selling point for clients wanting an added level of reassurance about standards across the resort. ➤



ABOVE: A maximum of four people can use the sauna at Chedi Andermatt, Switzerland

### HYDROTHERAPY AREAS

Saunas, steam rooms and plunge pools are something of a sticking point, with approaches differing depending on guidelines in each country.

“Since the virus cannot survive in high temperatures, many saunas and steam rooms are operating, but with a limit on how many people can use them,” says Stella Photi, founder and managing director at Wellbeing Escapes. “The same applies to spa pools that are either ozone or chlorine-treated.”

Wet facilities at all Six Senses spas will need to be booked in advance, as will the sauna and pools at Portugal’s Quinta do Lago.

Switzerland’s Chedi Andermatt has a limit of four people in saunas and steam rooms at any one time, while Nizuc is limiting its hydrotherapy circuit to four guests. Relais & Chateaux, meanwhile, has a one-at-a-time policy for its saunas.

Many spas won’t be opening these facilities just yet, however; Hard Rock Hotels’ hydrotherapy areas are closed, as are Sandals’ saunas and steam rooms (though plunge pools will be open). Elounda Peninsula in Crete says hydrotherapy areas at its Six Senses Spa will be closed, in line with Greek government guidelines.

Forte Village in Sardinia is helping to combat these issues by creating a new private area in its spa that can be booked for exclusive use, with four thalasso pools, a sauna, private treatment cabin and more among the features – setting a new trend towards extra exclusivity that we might well see more of in the coming months.

### ENHANCED CLEANING PROTOCOLS

As expected, there’ll be a big focus on cleanliness. The ultra-luxe Royal Mansour Marrakech in Morocco says guests will be asked to wash their hands and feet before entering the treatment rooms, and only two people will be allowed in the changing rooms at any one time. Joali Maldives will require guests to shower before and after their treatment, with a 30-minute window on either side to allow extra time for cleaning the room.

Ikos Olivia in Halkidiki is likewise allocating an extra 30 minutes between each treatment, and SHA Wellness is taking things a step further with UV light towers for disinfecting between treatments. Sandals will have a ‘triple check’ inspection of key areas at least three times per day, plus enhanced sanitisation at 18 key ‘touchpoints’.

Guests can also expect floor markings and other social distancing measures to become the norm – Quinta do Lago says it will have arrows directing guests to control traffic flow, for example, alongside an acrylic screen at the spa reception as an extra shield.

### TREATMENTS

When it comes to the treatments, reassure clients many will still be available, but with some restrictions.

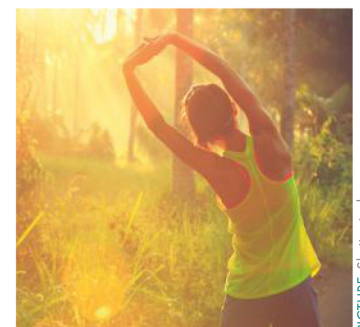
Lansdowne Resort and Spa in Virginia is offering massages, manicures, pedicures and hair treatments but not facials, as face masks are mandatory in the state. Sandals says it has likewise modified the list of treatments available, with facials currently off ➤

### KEY TRENDS

**Outdoor treatments:** Expect more outdoor treatments and nature-inspired wellness activities. “Mindful activities in tranquil locations including outdoor yoga classes, forest bathing and hiking will be key trends,” says Pia Marie Ametsbichler, Preferred Hotels & Resorts’ director of global sales for the UK, Ireland & Nordics. Il Castelfalfi in Tuscany has a new open-air cabin where guests can have treatments overlooking the rolling hills, while resorts that already offer outdoor treatments such as Costa Navarino in Greece and Elounda Peninsula in Crete could be in high demand.

**Mindfulness:** There’s likely to be an increased focus on alternative wellness therapies, according to Jacinta Stevens, head of wellness at Mason Rose. “Any hesitation around touch therapies may mean that more people embrace therapies such as energy healing, meditation and mindfulness practices to support mental health in particular,” she says.

**Fitness classes:** Many will still be offering fitness classes but with guests spaced further apart and a cap on numbers; Como Shambhala, reopening in September in Ubud, Bali, will have smaller groups for its classes, while Joali Maldives will be offering outdoor fitness classes with a maximum of six. Its gym will also be open, but with equipment spaced two metres apart and a limit on occupancy.



PICTURE: Shutterstock

## DESTINATIONS

HOTELS, RESORTS & SPAS | SPA BREAKS



### top tip

Windjammer Landing in Saint Lucia is currently offering \$150 spa credit for clients booking five nights or more. [windjammer-landing.com](http://windjammer-landing.com)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Park Hotel Kenmare, Ireland, a member of Relais & Chateaux; Lido Palace Hotel, Italy; SHA Wellness Clinic, Spain; Sandals Emerald Bay, the Bahamas

the cards until guidelines change.

Relais & Chateaux says it is reducing treatments with physical touchpoints at its properties, while Crete's Abaton Island Resort & Spa will be offering facial treatments and massages but not body treatments, with only two of its cabins in use to reduce numbers.

But others are keeping the full menu: MarBella Corfu (barring couples' massages), Nizuc, Royal Mansour Marrakech and Unico 20°87° Hotel Riviera Maya say all of their usual treatments will be available. Hard Rock Hotels will also be offering their full array, but with a maximum of three 60-minute services per cabin per day.

In terms of types of treatment, spas are, logically, putting the emphasis on immunity. Anantara has created a new signature massage oil for use in all its spas, designed to boost the immune system with eucalyptus oil, rosemary, clove and other ingredients said to have anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.

SHA Wellness is meanwhile offering consultations to evaluate the immune system with new immune-boosting health packages, and Longevity is promoting immune-boosting programmes that range from nutritional guidance to Pilates classes.

### MASKS AND GLOVES

Spas across the board say masks, gloves and, in some cases, acrylic visors and full gowns, will be mandatory for therapists. Lido Palace Hotel in Riva del Garda, Italy, says gloves don't need to be worn during massages, provided therapists disinfect their hands and forearms



### STELLA PHOTI founder and managing director, Wellbeing Escapes

"So many people have been suffering with tension and anxiety throughout lockdown and a spa holiday could be the perfect antidote, with touch treatments such as massages carried out in a safe environment. Interest is there; we have received a flurry of last-minute demand to Europe from our clients who are desperate to relax in an environment they know will be calm and safe. When it comes to selling, check on the spa's protocols so you can be sure you're offering a safe option to clients. There is a lot of hand-washing and sterilising before, during and after the treatment to ensure the highest form of hygiene, so highlight these aspects to reassure any clients with concerns."

between treatments. Where it differs is for the guests; some, such as Windjammer Landing, require guests to wear face masks under government guidelines, while most say it's not required unless they wish to – worth emphasising to clients who might worry about whether they could really switch off while wearing a mask.

But spas are working hard to banish that image, reassuring guests things won't look drastically changed – beyond the odd directional arrow and extra bottle of hand sanitiser.

"The overall experience will not be different," says Teresa Mattos, general manager at Carlo IV, The Dedic Anthology in Prague. "Little changes will be noticeable, like having safety instructions on the wall, sanitisers placed at different spots in the spa and staff members wearing masks. But we do not want this to detract from the relaxed environment."

What will stand out is the fact there'll be far fewer people at any one time, so use this element of privacy as a selling point – and capitalise on the fact clients are likely to be in serious need of some R&R after a rather turbulent few months. **TW**