

TRAVEL ALERT!

By L. Brooks Baldwin

While this travel alert has nothing to do with national security, it has everything to do with national and international well-being—the well-being of travelers, that is. Spas are quickly moving in on travel territory when it comes to addressing the unique needs of this fast-growing, spa-hungry market.

Despite prevailing concerns about terrorism and air safety, the travel industry is rapidly regaining its momentum. Industry experts predict steady increases in both business and leisure travel sectors. It's a well-known fact that travelers tend to exhibit freer spending habits while away from home. And many of these same travelers select destinations at or near resorts, hotels and urban areas brimming with day spa businesses. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

There couldn't be a better time to expand your spa's menu to include services to address travelers' needs. Consider the last time you traveled any distance, whether it was via car, train or plane. How cramped were your legs? How sore were your back and neck? How did you cope with time differences? How desperately did your skin need a good cleansing and rehydration?

EVERY SPA HAS CLIENTS WHO TRAVEL TO BOTH BUSINESS AND VACATION DESTINATIONS.

Depending on your location, client demographics and marketing strategies, travel services may be a perfect niche for your business. Many spas overlook the relevance of addressing the travel sector claiming their spa's client base doesn't consist of travelers. They're also quick to point out that regardless of client base, they don't need to specify those services beneficial to travelers,

since many of the treatments and products currently offered already address those complaints. Before succumbing to this logic realize that every spa has clients who take business trips or travel to vacation destinations, and specified travel services could bring in new clients if your spa is located near:

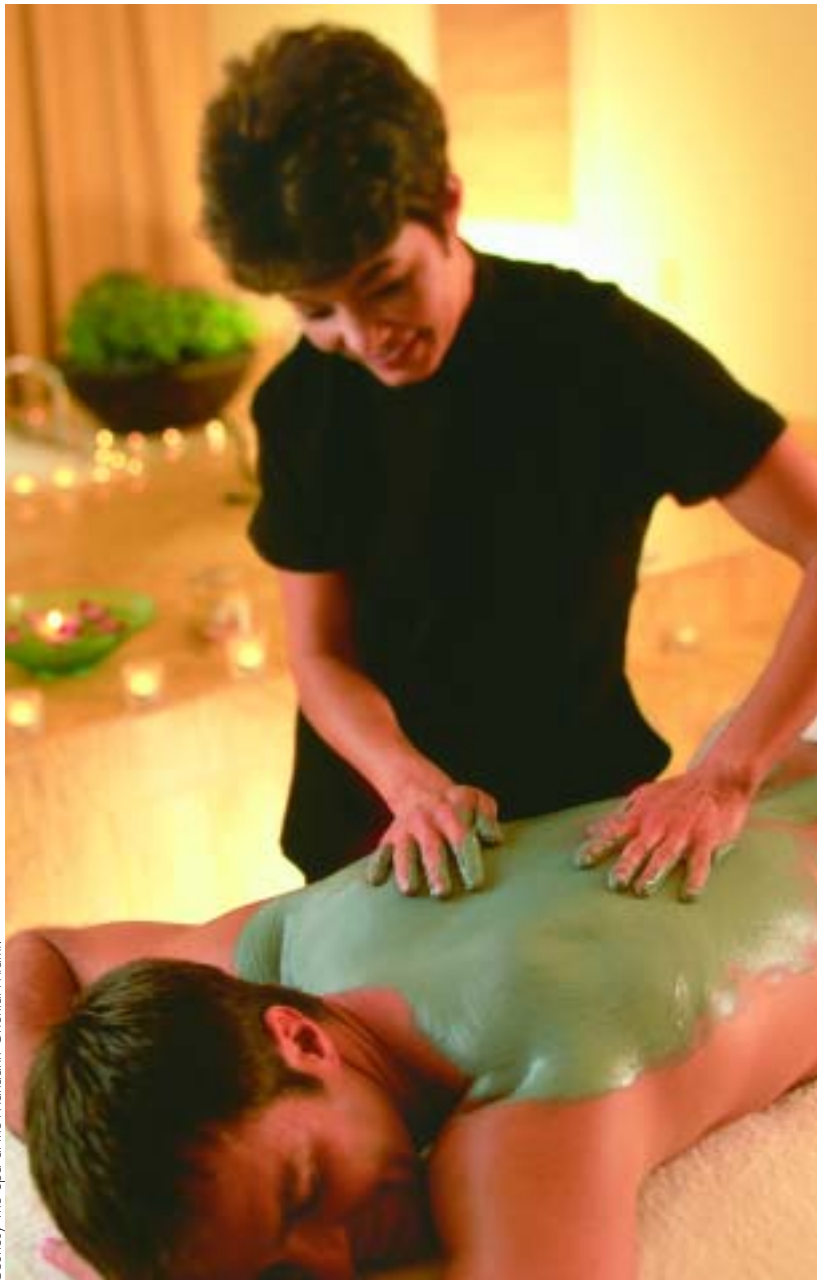
- Corporate or financial districts.
- Convention centers or the hotels that support them.
- Major airports or train stations.
- Major tourist attractions (including amusement parks and stadiums).
- Hotels that lack spa facilities.
- Any geographic region that experiences seasonal influxes of visitors (for example, Florida or Colorado in the winter; New England in the summer and fall).

If any of the options listed above apply to your spa, now is the time to begin mining the travel market for golden business opportunities. Consider the incredible power of suggestion when it comes to grooming travelers to rely on spa services prior to, during and at the conclusion of their travels.

Addressing Travel Needs

Travel treatments are typically divided into two types: those designed to address specific travel-related complaints (jet lag, high altitude, etc.), and those that address general travel complaints or needs (muscle tension, skin care, anxiety, etc.).

The Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Miami, for example, provides the perfect antidote to flight-related complaints. Called the Jet Lag Reviver, this 70-minute aromatherapy treatment consists of facial cleansing, body exfoliation, scalp massage with acupressure points, and customized full-body massage. Explaining the benefits of the treatment, spa director Ronel Corbin states, "We offer holistic



Courtesy The Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Miami.

The Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Miami attracts traveling clients with its Jet Lag Reviver package.

EVEN GENERAL TREATMENTS CAN TARGET TRAVELERS.

therapy, specifically addressing each guest's mental and physical post-flight needs. We select aromatherapeutic oils and utilize techniques that conform to each guest's particular complaints."

Corbin provides a list of the nine most common flight-related health com-

plaints of travelers, noting that most suffer from a combination of two or three complaints rather than the entire list.

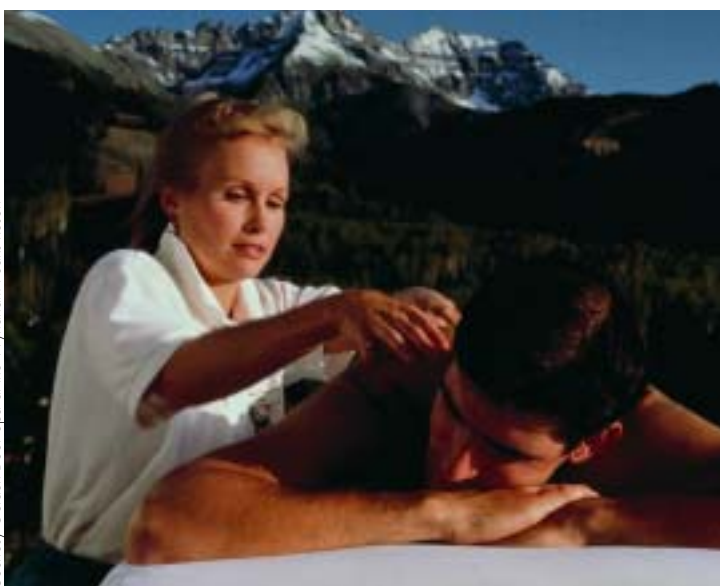
- Dry, oxygen-deprived air-conditioned air dehydrates my skin.
- Sitting too long in the same position causes swelling (edema), especially in my legs and feet.
- My back aches from cramped seats and slumping in my seat while asleep.
- My knees ache from being unable to straighten them out while sitting. (This complaint is more common among tall passengers.)
- Lack of exercise and too much sodium-saturated flight food causes abdominal bloating.
- Recirculated air and crowded conditions assault the immune system.
- Sudden time zone changes upset my body clock.
- Time-consuming pre-flight hassles, flight fears and pressing travel commitments build stress.
- Dirt and grime in the air around airports and in crowded planes pollute the skin on my face and hands.

This list provides fertile ground for the creation of a host of treatments designed to address travelers' complaints.

The wisdom of offering travel-related services and products at spas that are tourist destinations is obvious. In addition to the general travel complaints, the destination itself could call for specific treatments. For example, at an altitude of 9,490 feet, Telluride, Colorado's Golden Door Spa at the Wyndham Peaks Resort capitalizes on the tourist trade by offering services to alleviate the effects of altitude sickness. Guests are encouraged to visit the spa's Oxygen Bar and to sign up for the High Altitude Massage, which according to acting spa director Karen McGill, incorporates lymphatic drainage and specific oils



Courtesy Golden Door Spa at the Wyndham Peaks Resort



Courtesy Golden Door Spa at the Wyndham Peaks Resort

Telluride, Colorado's Golden Door Spa offers tourists a variety of services to alleviate the effects of the area's high altitude.

THE GOAL OF TRAVEL SERVICES IS TO ENABLE THE GUEST TO ADJUST TO VACATION MODE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

designed to ease the effects of the low-oxygen atmosphere.

Even general treatments can target the road-weary, so long as the menu description mentions benefits to the traveler. The Spa at Four Seasons Maui offers the Mele Wailea Massage to remedy the ill effects of jet lag. While the name itself doesn't hint at it being a travel treatment, the description of the massage includes a recommendation that the 80-minute

version offers "jet lag relief."

According to Jeremy McCarthy, spa project manager at Four Seasons Maui, the treatment was created to assist guests in adjusting to their new surroundings after a lengthy flight. The Mele Wailea Massage improves circulation to counterbalance cramped muscles, enhances relaxation to encourage adjustment to the current time zone, helps regulate sleep patterns, and relieves stress associated with all aspects of traveling and adjusting to the new environment.

According to both McGill and McCarthy, the main goal in offering these services, is to enable the guest to adjust to vacation mode as soon as possible. Guests obviously benefit as a result, but so does business for the resorts. From a business standpoint, a happy and healthy guest is more likely to spend money on various optional activities including additional visits to the spa, will consume more food and beverages from its various dining outlets, and will be more likely to return as a guest in the future.

Traditional day spas, especially those in close proximity to airports, have also been able to tap into the lucrative travel trade. Murad Medical Spa, located 10 minutes from Los Angeles International Airport, has benefited greatly as a result of offering the two-hour Jet Lag Package to LAX's frequent fliers and airline flight crews. The spa is currently in the process of revising its entire menu, which will include a range of treatments designed specifically with travelers in mind.

Asha SalonSpa (10 minutes from Chicago's O'Hare Airport) features the three-hour Himalayan Rejuvenation Treatment, which has been a boon to travelers, according to marketing manager, Kathleen Bucci-Bergeron.



Courtesy Absolute Spa Group



Courtesy Absolute Spa Group

The Absolute Spa Group offers a variety of spa services to travelers at its three locations, all housed within Vancouver International Airport.

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Utilizing custom-blends of aromatherapy oil based on individual guest preferences, the treatment incorporates ayurvedic detoxification rituals into exfoliation, massage and steam components.

Tara Grodjesk, owner of Tara Spa, a major producer of ayurvedic and aromatherapy spa products, says ayurvedic treatments are highly beneficial to travelers because of the balancing oils they use and their customized healing techniques. She suggests creating treatment packages for travelers, incorporating:

- An aromatherapy bath utilizing earth element oils such as sandalwood, vetiver or pine, which help travelers acclimate to new time zones and climate changes.
- Warm oil massage to balance doshas and provide nourishment, hydration and grounding to the body.
- Marma point and reflexology massage techniques to release energy blockages.
- Immune-boosting teas to counterbalance the weakened immune system.

According to Corbin of the Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Miami, “when developing customized treatments, the most important factor to consider is how long the journey has taken, since the human body undergoes various levels of strain depending on the length of travel.” She also stresses the importance of addressing all modes of travel, pointing out that a lengthy or stressful train or car trip will demand therapeutic renewal as well.

Added Services and Products

Vancouver International Airport in British Columbia, Canada, is home to two micro-spas and one full-scale hotel spa, all owned and managed by

the Absolute Spa Group. The two micro-spas, one located at the domestic departure gate, the other at the international departure gate, are especially popular with time-sensitive travelers (those arriving early for flights and those on tighter layovers between flights). The third spa, located in the Fairmont Airport Hotel, is directly above airline ticketing counters and includes a comprehensive fitness center, three pools, a sauna and a full array of treatments. This spa appeals to hotel guests, travelers commuting between airports and those waiting out lengthy layovers.

Absolute Spa Group’s president, Wendy Lisogar-Cocchia, reports that the three-year-old airport spa business is incredible. “Since 9/11, we’ve seen a 225% increase in sales,” she says. She attributes the dramatic increase to several factors, including escalated stress levels, travelers arriving earlier for flights and seeking relaxation and pampering prior to departure, and travelers wanting basic treatments like manicures and pedicures they don’t want to take time with after reaching their destination. Business has been so good that the Absolute Spa Group is now franchising and licensing to open in other airports.

D-Parture Spa, located within the secured zone of Terminal C in Newark International Airport, has been so successful in its two years of operation that it’s also ripe for expansion. A larger, more comprehensive spa facility will open there in spring 2003, located outside of the security checkpoint at Terminal B. Although D-Parture Spa hasn’t engaged in independent advertising efforts and has no solid client base due to the transitory nature of travelers, business has been steady. Business will

**ALWAYS KEEP
CONCIERGES
WELL STOCKED
WITH SPA MENUS.**

likely become even more consistent with the opening of the more attractive Terminal B spa, which is expected to attract a steadier clientele consisting of airport employees and airline flight crews.

Besides treatments, spas are cashing in on a creative array of additional services and products targeting travelers. Spa owners have discovered that travelers are eager to purchase products designed to address travel issues and ease travel problems. For example, Murad's dual-action Vitalic line simplifies skincare rituals and reduces the amount of space needed for packing, according to Lisa Polley, Murad director of communications. The product line consists of dual-action products, such as cleanser/toner, moisturizer/sunscreen, and treatment/repair gel.

its own unique method of garnering the attention of travelers. Besides forging relationships with LAX area hotels, event coordinators and concierges, Murad Medical Spa offers seminars to educate members of local flight attendant organizations on the benefits of travel treatments and products. During the seminars, estheticians perform facials and familiarize the flight attendants with relevant retail products. Sample products and coupons are distributed as well. The ensuing relationship has paid off, since flight crews now make up 50% of Murad's travel treatment clientele. Recommendations by flight crews to passengers provide additional business. To investigate the possibility of offering similar training or educational seminars, contact your local airline corporate office.

Located in the heart of Chicago's corporate-dominated West Loop, Spa Space day spa does heavy trade in the travel market, despite not offering any designated travel-related services. The key to this anomaly, according to company president Natalie Tessler, is in the tight relationship she has forged with the local concierge community. After contacting concierge associations (Chicago Hotel Concierge Association and the National Concierge Association), Tessler began participating in local organized concierge events. She found the events beneficial in two respects: First, by buying booth space, she could introduce her spa to local concierges; and second, the concierge association provides educational seminars to business attendees on how to engage concierges' interest. As a result of working closely with the local concierge community, Spa Space has received countless referrals of travelers staying at nearby hotels. Tessler offers the following tips on working with concierges:



Courtesy Absolute Spa Group

Escalated stress levels since 9/11 have made relaxation services increasingly popular among travelers.

D-Partures offers a unique kiwi and cucumber eye pad called Eyece from Vivi products that soothes and cools irritated and stressed eyes—a common complaint of frequent fliers. Soon, depending on negotiations, Jet Blue may be providing Eyece pads as onboard amenities to long-haul passengers.

Targeting Travel Clients

Though it doesn't advertise travel treatments, Murad Medical Spa has created

- Host special events at your spa for local concierges to familiarize them with your services and products.
- Offer complimentary mini-treatments, cocktails and tours.
- Host events twice a year to make sure you include all new employees.
- Consider advertising in concierge trade publications.
- Include corporate concierges in your efforts as well. Marketing to road-weary executives and celebrities as well as the general travel market makes sense.
- Offer VIP cards to concierges to pass on to their guests. Concierges love to offer perks to guests and will refer your business over one not offering perks.
- Always keep concierges well stocked with spa menus, and regularly update them on menu or schedule changes.
- Treat concierges like VIPs. They may become your best clients.
- Acknowledge referrals with cards or other tokens of appreciation.

Take advantage of the benefits your spa can derive from offering clients relief from their travel woes. The increased income could send you and your entire crew on a well-deserved vacation trip of your own. ♦

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