

# spa business

## Diana Mestre

creates healing spas, retreats and suites across Mexico for Velas

## WELLNESS-SING

brings the benefits of singing to spas

How are spas dealing with

## SINGLE-USE PLASTICS?

## Mental wellness white paper

reveals the evidence behind spa modalities

## VR

massage

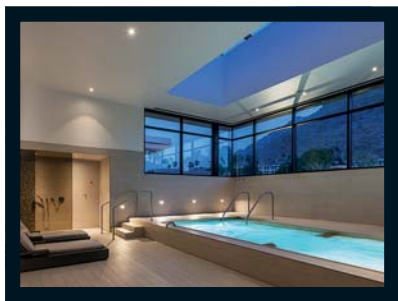
at The Oddly Satisfying Spa

# MARC COHEN

launches Extreme Wellness retreats



**p46:** Dr Marc Cohen takes wellness to the extreme



**p64:** Arizona's new-look Phoenician Spa



Place them in a virtual world. Use digital media to surprise them with new interpretations of traditional treatments

**p20:** Tyler Pridgen, The Oddly Satisfying Spa



**p18:** Diana F Mestre works with Velas, Mexico

## 7 | Editor's letter

Liz Terry on New Zealand announcing its first wellbeing budget

## 16 | Letters

Readers share their thoughts on the spa consultant's role and therapist pay

## 18 | Spa people

Diana F Mestre creates spas, retreats and suites across Mexico for the Velas group; Tyler Pridgen on digital wellness at The Oddly Satisfying Spa; El Etherington launches Wellness-Sing

## 24 | New openings

Mandarin Oriental London reveals next generation spa; Salt debuts new hotel and spa brand in Mauritius

## 32 | News

L'Occitane acquires Elemis for US\$900m; LVMH buys Belmond; Kelly and Riego ousted from Civana

## 40 | On the menu

Event saunas, sunlight therapy and health and happiness retreats feature in our programming series

## 46 | Interview: Marc Cohen

Dr Marc Cohen is launching an extreme bathing retreat and writing children's books. He talks to Jane Kitchen

## 54 | Everyone's talking about: Single-use plastics

Is it time for spas to look at their use of plastic? Kath Hudson investigates

## 60 | Research: Mind over matter

A new white paper reveals the benefits of numerous spa modalities on mental health. Editor Gerry Bodeker reports

# spa people



We have a strong sense of place and a deep desire to let the world know about Mexico's indigenous healing traditions, treatments and healing arts

**Diana F Mestre** spa and wellness consultant

**D**iana F Mestre has been working with Mexican hotel group Velas since 2003, when she designed the first Grand Velas spa at the Riviera Nayart in Puerto Vallarta, bringing a full hydrotherapy water experience to the resort. She's created a total of four spas for the family-owned Velas - with the largest at the Grand Velas Riviera Maya in Cancun weighing in at a fantastic 89,305sq ft (8,297sq m) and 42 treatment rooms - which bring

together regional healing traditions with a full sensory experience and Mestre's signature water ceremony.

## Wellnessing retreats

But over the past three years, she's taken things a step further, creating a series of Wellnessing retreats, and also helping the hotels to create their first wellness suites. Mestre says both the retreats and the suites help position Velas as a brand that cares about guests' wellbeing. She gives credit for her ideas to her grandfather,

a naturalist from Spain. "He indoctrinated me from when I was very little on the path of exercise, nutrition, fresh air and being in touch with nature," she says.

The retreats bring all of these aspects together through a mix of different experts and experiences over three days - from fitness classes to nutrition workshops, energy purification rituals, beachside meditation instruction and sound healing.

## Indigenous healing

It's this mix - and in particular, the exposure to indigenous healing traditions native to the area - that really sets the programming apart. "We have a strong sense of place and a deep desire to let the world know about Mexico's indigenous healing traditions, treatments and healing arts," says Mestre.

On a recent Wellnessing Retreat in Los Cabos, the weekend began with a sunrise ceremony by shaman Tonatiuh Garcia Mendez. Attendees, dressed in white, began by facing all six directions in turn - north, south, east, west, to the earth and to the sky - before a sage smoke cleansing ceremony. Another session saw guests painted with traditional patterns in day-glo paint for Glow Yoga - done under black lights to add a surreal visual aspect to the class. Later still, a session combined sound

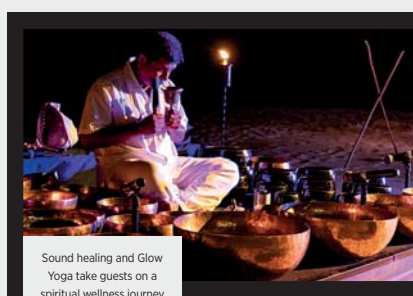


Mestre has created four spas for the Velas hotel group, as well as new wellness suites and retreats





The Wellness retreats include meditation and cooking classes



Sound healing and Glow Yoga take guests on a spiritual wellness journey

healing from Roberto Gopar - who brought not only singing bowls, but also conch shells, various traditional drums, and the haunting vibrato of his own voice - with an intense breathwork workshop.

### Seducing the senses

Sessions at the new Se Spa - which in Náhuatl pre-Hispanic language means 'one', or a sense of being at one with the world - tied it all together. Mestre's water ceremony concept, which she has included across the Velos spas, is an extensive, multi-step thermal journey hosted by a personal spa butler, who guides guests through each section, letting them know how long to stay in each facility, explaining the benefits, and bringing frozen berries and hydrating drinks in between.

Mestre says this idea of "seducing the senses" runs through all the Velas resorts and spas. It extends to an aromatherapy elixir workshop held during the Wellness Weekend, where



guests smelled the different oils, herbs and fruits; used a mortar and pestle to crush them together; and in between, were brought colourful, healthy bites to bring in the sense of sight and taste. The aromatherapy workshop also saw guests working in teams - one mortar and pestle for every two people - in order to encourage social interaction, a key component of wellness. In addition to engaging all the senses, the retreats also aim to address the many facets of wellness: personal, physical, spiritual, social, emotional and intellectual, and also, through the resort's wellness suites, environmental wellness.

We just want guests to try different aspects of wellness

### Wellness suites

Mestre has helped Velas create the new wellness suites, first at the Riviera Nayarit location, and most recently at Los Cabos, where six two-storey suites include a dedicated fitness loft with exercise bike and massage table, a personal wellness concierge, healthy minibar, in-suite juicing, Vitamin C shower, Nikken Kenko pillow and sleep pad, Phillips Wake-Up light and an aromatherapy kit. A nightly "spa turn-down service" means the spa concierge brings a different ritual for face or body each evening, using skincare from the Agave Spa line used in the Se Spa.

"I wanted a concept, not just a room with a mat and a bicycle - I wanted to incorporate all aspects of wellness," says Mestre. "It doesn't need to be intimidating; we just want the guests to try different aspects of wellness." ●