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Y SPA AT WYBOSTON

Inside the evolutionary new
spa by Melt Design Hub

RELAX & ROAM

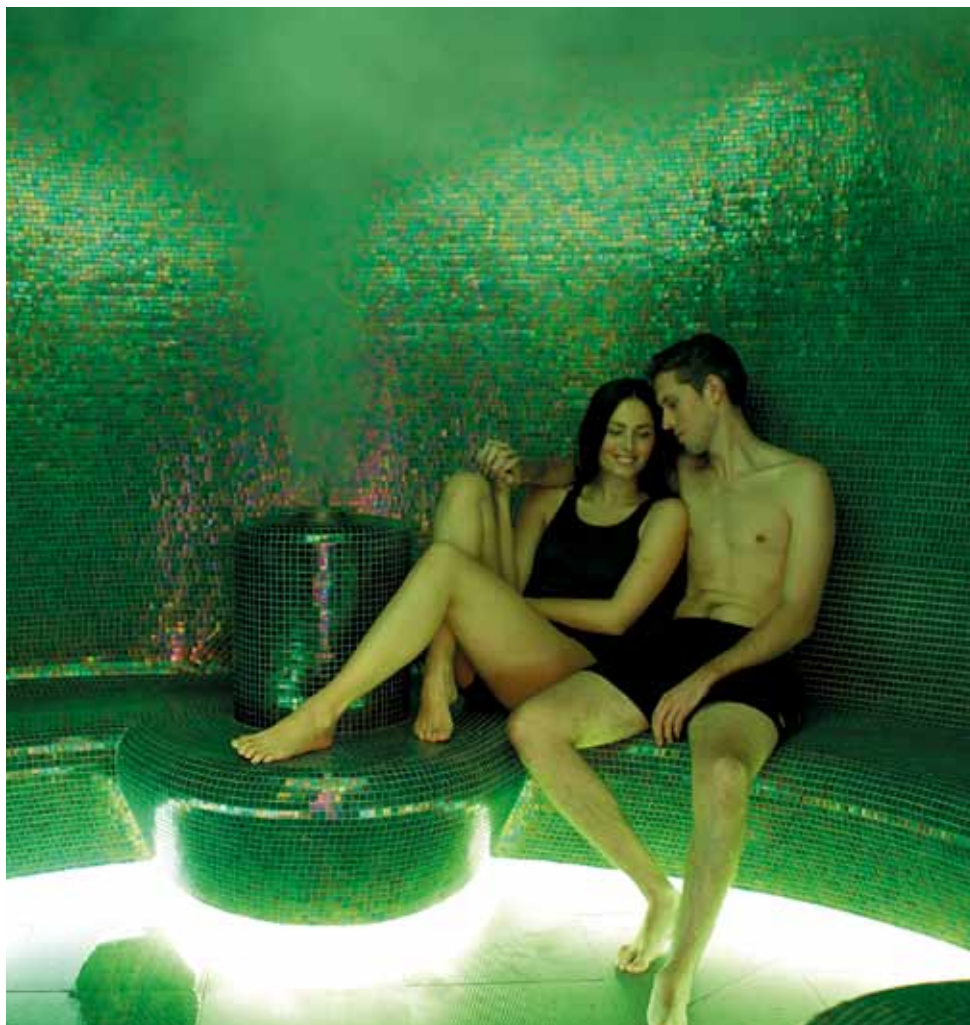
How creative use of outdoor
space can enhance your spa

DIAMOND LIFE

Natura Bissé's Patrica Fisas
reveals global expansion plans

ON THE MENU

Celebrate Spring with the
latest product innovations



38

An evolutionar Y Spa

Created by Melt Design Hub, the innovative Y Spa at Wyboston Lakes, UK, is blazing an ambitious trail by packaging its five-star experiences to suit each individual guest

[Report by Sarah Todd]

The £3m Y Spa development at Wyboston Lakes is the jewel in the crown of the 350-acre leisure destination in Bedfordshire. Family-owned by Wyboston Lakes Limited (WLL), led by founder Peter Hutchinson, the 743sqm facility was an ambitious project constructed in under six months. Officially opened in January this year, the spa complements the estate's 400-bedroom hotel, corporate training and conference facilities and sports offering, which includes golf and watersports.

"The development of Y Spa has created a truly exceptional spa facility that can offer both new and experienced spa-goers a wonderful journey, supported by fabulous treatments and a touch of unashamed indulgence and pleasure," says Wyboston Lakes Managing Director Mark Jones. "I have been involved in treatments and therapy since 1979 and have incorporated a number of features into the Y Spa that I believe allow us to deliver everything – from a single treatment to a residential spa break – in a setting that is of the highest quality as well as lots of fun."

From top left: Y Spa's extensive heat and hydro experiences were created by Melt Design Hub; the spa's outdoor hydro-pool complements the UK's first authentic Finnish Kelo sauna; inside the sauna, built from 100-year-old Kelo pine logs



Equality of service

The spa’s core day and residential markets are catered for equally and its diverse local catchment shaped a philosophy of being ‘ready to accept everybody and anybody, on their level’.

The extent of this pursuit is exemplified by Y Spa’s determination that every guest should be able enjoy its many heat experiences, regardless of their physical ability. Since the majority of modern wheelchairs are electrically operated and therefore unsuitable for use in extreme humidity, an extensive European search led to the sourcing of a wheelchair able to withstand the highest temperature of the spa’s heat areas.

This willingness to ‘go the extra mile’ in order to create the best possible spa experience for each and every guest is fostered by Spa Manager Catherine Marchant and Spa Director Emma-Jane North. During two decades at Ragdale Hall, North progressed from therapist to senior management member and until recently she was Director of Leisure at the Lifehouse Spa and Hotel, in Thorpe-le-Soken.

Accessible luxury

The spa was designed by Managing Director Jean-Paul Blissett and Senior Interior Designer Russell King of Melt Design Hub, with consultancy input from spa expert and former Champneys Managing Director Ray Payne. Blissett has more than 20 years of multi-award-winning experience and his team has been responsible for the creation of exceptional spas including Thailand’s Chiva-Som, Hua Hin and the One Spa at Edinburgh’s Sheraton Grand Hotel.

The brief was to make Y Spa as accessible as possible while maintaining an air of exclusivity. “Operationally, the challenge was to create a spa which could respond to a large volume of guests while still feeling exclusive and special,” explains Blissett. “Our solution was to design smaller, more intimate areas within the larger space.”

Created with a neutral palette, the spa is divided into different ‘zones’ that create an atmosphere of fun and relaxation. The bright and vibrant cafe acts as a hub from which guests can venture into other areas,



“We’re not a destination spa, but that’s our beauty. We’re not conforming to any single idea of what a spa is, so we’re continually evolving. Y Spa can be anything it wants to be”

Emma-Jane North
Spa Director, Y Spa





Clockwise from above: Intimate spaces create a sense of exclusivity; waterbeds from Just Waterbeds in 'The Big Sleep' relaxation room; an Eero Aarnio reading pod by Interior Addict; the spa's luxurious finish extends inside and out; the plush manicure and pedicure lounge



Jean-Paul Blissett
Melt Design Hub

"Wyboston Lakes provided us with a great opportunity to bring the natural environment into the spa. The contemporary design includes a fun use of materials and graphics which helps communicate a natural environment. The site itself is quite an eclectic mix of buildings so we wanted to create a unique retreat within the complex, while still connecting to the outside space. To achieve this, materials and finishes were selected to help reflect Wyboston. For example, the lockers are disguised by large images of the lakes throughout the four seasons of the year and full scale graphics of reeds and grasses have been etched on to glass screens."

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such as the manicure and pedicure lounge; the thermal area; and the sleep zone, which features three different spaces to facilitate varying levels of relaxation.

"With Y Spa, we developed a design that has operational flexibility," says Blissett. "It is able to cater to specific markets as well as targeting a mass audience, providing a five-star feel minus the price tag."

The designer cites the spa's "exceptional thermal experience" as something that would not usually be associated with this type of facility, but which was achieved within a constrained budget.

Individual design

Throughout the spa, quirky touches create a sense of fun; bouquets of flowers are left outside treatment rooms to signify they are occupied; and the different areas have names such as 'Mud Glorious Mud' for the rasul chamber, 'Some Like It Hot' for the sauna and 'The Big Sleep' for the relaxation space.

Extra large and long square spa couches supplied by



Noella Gabriel
Elemis

“We are proud to partner with Wyboston Lakes and be a part of the experience, offering pure relaxation with a beautiful backdrop at the Y Spa. A comprehensive range of our face and body treatments are available, from clinically-proven results-driven facials to the invigorating Lime and Ginger Salt Glow and our deeply relaxing Hot Stone Massage. It is always exciting to have the opportunity to play a part in an innovative and forward-thinking project and we are thrilled to add the Y Spa to our portfolio.”

www.elemis.com



Ellisons have been a worthwhile investment, according to North, while the retail area features a bar that can be used for skin scanning consultations.

The spa has 11 treatment rooms and a ground floor suite featuring a wet room, rasul and hydraulic treatment beds for couples, all fully accessible for guests with disabilities.

Murad and Elemis are ideal product partners for Y Spa, says North, as “both brands have a natural synergy in terms of their methods and methodology.” OPI complements the line-up, with an extensive offering in the luxurious open-plan manicure and pedicure zone which was designed as a convivial communal area, ideal for parties.

The spa’s relaxation room is fitted with waterbeds from Just Waterbeds and a mesmeric double-sided open fire by Urban Fires UK. In addition, eight Eero Aarnio reading pods, reproduced by Interior Addict, feature noise-reducing hoods and are a perfect spot to enjoy the carefully selected magazine titles and books.

First place

Y Spa’s extensive heat and water experiences, created by Hermann Holme of GeoSpa, include an outdoor hydro-pool which is heated to around 35°C and connected to the interior via a water-filled glass tunnel. Another signature installation, in the south-facing spa garden, is the UK’s first authentic Finnish Kelo sauna, built from 100-year-old solid Kelo pine tree logs, that can accommodate up to 30 people.

“We worked with Melt Design Hub to deliver a one-of-a-kind spa at Wyboston,” says Holme. “The external hydro-pool and Kelo sauna, together with an open-air fireplace and thermal suite, clearly show how Y Spa’s owners were willing to go that bit further to achieve a world-class experience.”

Indoors, the soft sauna – a cross between a sauna and a steam bath with a lower temperature than the Kelo sauna (around 50°C) – has floor-to-ceiling windows which offer views of the spa garden and located nearby are the menthol mist shower, salt



Clockwise from below: The spa's salt inhalation room; the soft sauna is a combination of sauna and steam bath, heated to around 50°C; OPI products are offered in the open-plan manicure and pedicure zone; the spa and its treatments have been designed to be inclusive of both sexes



Lena White
Lena White (OPI UK distributor)

"Y Spa wanted to create the very best manicure and pedicure services for its clients, with a complete range of OPI treatments including our new Gelcolor system. We worked with the spa to create a treatment menu to ensure every single guest would feel truly pampered and relaxed."

"From the very beginning, we understood Y Spa's philosophy of health, wellness and rejuvenation was key. It is a great partnership and the spa is such a stunning venue."

www.trade.lenawhite.co.uk



inhalation room and a frost panel, believed to be the UK's first, on which guests can place their hands to cool down.

Business with a heart

As well as designing a beautiful spa, WLL placed great importance on attracting natural, engaging and friendly staff who could be instilled with the correct qualities to help forge and enhance Y Spa's reputation. As North explains: "We had to put some heart into the bricks and mortar. Something fabulous can be built, but to be truly successful you must have staff who are genuinely involved with the spa."

The process of putting together the spa's opening team began before ground was even broken on the building. "At their first interview, we gave each candidate a virtual tour of Y Spa to see how they responded to it," reveals North. "Once we'd created our opening team, we ran a 'build the brand'

workshop, where we asked staff to explain what their favourite brands were and what they loved about them. We then took elements from the workshop and included them in the Y Spa brand. In this way, everyone involved was able to have a voice in the creation of the spa's identity."

Focusing on a philosophy of 'natural hospitality', team members were extensively trained to provide a strong personal element to their service. "One of the most important things was to create an environment where no question was too small – so our staff don't assume knowledge, but equally don't patronise," explains North. "It's a very fine line but this personal element of service is very important and something we've worked very hard to achieve."

With a target demographic of 25-50 year-olds, Y Spa has been created to be inclusive and accessible to people of both sexes. "People are tired, stressed and fed up and they come to us for help," explains North.



“Y Spa is able to deliver everything – from a single treatment to a residential spa break – in a setting that is of the highest quality as well as lots of fun”

Mark Jones
Managing Director,
Wyboston Lakes



From top: Y Spa’s outdoor hydrotherapy pool is heated to around 35°C; the manicure and pedicure zone was designed as a convivial communal area



Spa Statistics

Y Spa

Wyboston Lakes, Wyboston,
Bedfordshire, UK
+44 (0) 333 700 7667
www.yspa.co.uk

Managing Director: Mark Jones
Director of Operations, Hotel, Spa and Leisure: Charles Morgan
Director of Spa: Emma-Jane North
Spa designer: Melt Design Hub
Spa investment: In excess of £3m
Spa area: 743sqm of internal space and a spa garden
Capacity: 50 guests
Facilities: 11 treatment rooms including a double therapy suite with mud rasul cabin; external hydrotherapy pool; chillout room with water beds; Finnish Kelo sauna; thermal spa suite comprising a soft sauna, a salt cabin, steamroom, experience showers, rasul and a cooling Frost Wall
Product partners: Elemis, Murad, Su-do Professional, OPI and Natural Spa Company

“We wanted to create a harmonious environment that was inviting and nurturing of everyone. The importance of Y Spa is that it is whatever it needs to be for our guests.”

A flexible future

As Y Spa’s team members are well aware, for any spa, the first year after opening is a time of operational development. “We don’t have a fixed clientele yet, so we have to be flexible about all areas of the spa business,” admits North.

To this end, the spa doesn’t have a membership scheme, nor any immediate plans to launch one. “We will be running an incentive scheme with an online company but we decided against a membership programme, as it can segment guests into behaving in a certain way,” says North. “Instead, we prefer to get

a feel for our guests and respond in a personal way to their needs – so, if they’d like to just use the thermal facilities for six weeks, we can design a package simply for that.”

With a return on investment expected within three years, Y Spa is undoubtedly an aspirational project and North believes the spa’s flexibility will be crucial to its success. “In this economic environment, it would have been very easy to open a smaller offering, so Y Spa is ambitious,” she admits, stating that “the owners are happy to hold their nerve to attract the right clientele and operate a sensible pricing structure.”

Summing up the spa’s approach and philosophy, North says: “We’re not a destination spa, but that’s our beauty. We’re not conforming to any single idea of what a spa is, so we’re continually evolving. Y Spa can be anything it wants to be.” ●●●●●