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## Spas in their eyes



Today's beauty therapists are expected to rejuvenate their clients' minds as well as their bodies, writes Jackie Woods.






Fewer blackheads, tidier eyebrows and glossier fingernails were once the signs of a beautician's job well done. These days, beauticians have become "beauty therapists", catering to stressed-out, cashed-up clients who don't just want to look better. They want to relax deeply, reconnect with body and soul, and maybe even live a little longer.

Jana Brunclikova, 23, is a beauty therapist at Amrita Spa in the five-star Swissotel in Sydney's CBD. Every day she works with hotel guests and city workers who are looking for some serious time out.

That means going beyond the beauty basics of facials and manicures to treat them with sea salt scrubs, mud wraps, botanical hair treatments, hand scrubs, paraffin dips, pressure-point massages and Shirodhara, an ancient Indian treatment where warm oil is poured on to the middle of the forehead to induce a state of relaxation.

But it takes more than a fancy treatment to satisfy clients, Brunclikova says. "They are coming for relaxation. When you come to the spa the whole atmosphere is relaxing. We use essential oils to create an atmosphere and we smile for the client to help them release the pressure from their daily life. Our personality is important, it's not just about doing a good treatment."

Australians are following the lead of Europeans and Americans in embracing spa treatments, says tourism consultant Isabel Sebastian. Health tourism has taken over from eco-tourism as the new big thing, she says.

"It's an overall trend in the Western world to seek healthier lifestyles with the aim to live longer, especially as the population ages," Sebastian says. "There's a search for people to get in touch again with what it is to be healthy and alive. That's where a lot of people looking for spa experiences are coming from."

The trend is partly driven by baby boomers staring down the barrel of old age. "But there are also plenty of 20- to 50-year-olds who are working really hard and are trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle at the same time," she says. "People are looking for a maintenance program. You take your car for a service - people are taking themselves for a service now."

There were about 300 spas and salons offering professional spa treatments in Australia as of July last year, a survey by industry research group Intelligent Spas shows. The spa industry employed 3120 people at that time, up 11 per cent on 2002. Visits to spas rose 17.5 per cent to 2.3 million in the 2002-03 financial year.

The trend is having an impact in the hotel industry as spas become a popular and expected feature. In recognition of the shift, the Blue Mountains Hotel School is building spa facilities within its campus and will offer a module in spa management from next year.

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For beauty therapists, the growing popularity in spas has meant a boom in job opportunities, says Linda Kerr, head of beauty at the Australasian College of Natural Therapies (ACNT). Once qualified, beauty therapists can still take the traditional option of working in salons or treating clients from home. They can also take advantage of growing demand for therapists to pamper clients in day spas, resorts and even cruise ships.

The study of beauty therapy is changing to keep up with industry developments, Kerr says. Aspiring beauty therapists at ACNT now study Shirodhara, "Lithos" (where hot and cold stones are placed over the body), and practise on a Vichy shower, a high-tech system of shower nozzles over an adjustable bed which stimulates pressure points with jets of water.

"There's always going to be a place for waxing and those kinds of basic maintenance things, but there's been a shift," Kerr says. "People are looking for a real experience."

#### JOIN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY

- \* Most employers will require a certificate or diploma in beauty therapy.
- \* Courses are available through TAFE ([www.tafe.nsw.edu.au](http://www.tafe.nsw.edu.au)) or private colleges such as Australasian College of Natural Therapies ([www.acnt.edu.au](http://www.acnt.edu.au)), the Strand College of Beauty Therapy ([www.strandcollege.com.au](http://www.strandcollege.com.au)) or the Australasian College Broadway ([www.australasiancollege.com.au](http://www.australasiancollege.com.au)). If you choose a private college, look for VETAB accreditation, which means your qualifications will be recognised nationally.
- \* Beauty therapists earn between \$15 and \$22 an hour, depending on qualifications and experience.

Posted July 7, 2004 8:12 AM

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