

SundayTravel

WITH: NEW ENGLAND DESTINATIONS

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TRENDSPOTTING

New on the spa menu: Treatments for your mental health

‘There’s not just massage therapists any more. There’s not just facialists any more. There’s all kinds of energy and emotional healers.’

BY JON MARCUS | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Entering the K’Alma Spa at the Hotel Victor in Miami Beach involves more than being checked in at a reception desk and pointed to a massage room. Guests are relieved of their phones and shoes, their feet are washed, and they’re guided down a chakra pathway to a relaxation room from which they might choose treatments such as crystal or aromatherapy, sound bowl healing, guided meditation, smudging, or an Andean energy ritual under the guidance of sha-

mans and healers. “We are so distracted by what’s going on around us that we totally forget one important thing: connecting with our souls,” said Marizza Contreras, co-founder of the spa, which also has a location at the Ritz-Carlton in Chicago. “More than ever, it’s a need.” Hotel, destination and day spas that once focused largely on facials and massages have started branching further into treatments to improve sleep, reduce stress and generally address not just clients’ physical

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A spa room at the Mandarin Oriental in Boston.

Chatham Bars Inn finally earns a coveted Forbes five-star rating

By Christopher Muther
GLOBE STAFF

With its private beach, thick blooms of perfectly manicured blue hydrangeas, and rooms outfitted with high-end linens, it’s almost unimaginable that it’s taken decades for Chatham Bars Inn to earn a Forbes five-star rating. But this year, the magazine finally bestowed the honor on the resort, which opened in 1914 and underwent a \$100 million renovation in 2006.

The Newbury Boston, which opened in Boston in May 2021, debuted on the list with a four-star rating. The Langham, Boston, which underwent extensive renovations and reopened in 2021, also earned four stars. The 2023 rankings were unveiled Wednesday.

The Forbes Travel Guide, which began rating hotels in 1958 as the Mobil Guide, anonymously reviews hotels,



With cocktail or coffee in hand, guests can enjoy the oceanside view from the front porch of the Chatham Bars Inn.

restaurants, and spas around the world. Five stars are awarded to hotels that it defines as “outstanding, often iconic properties with virtually flawless service and amazing facili-

ties.” Four-star properties are “exceptional properties, offering high levels of service and quality of facility to match.”

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These websites make it easier for animal lovers and pet owners to travel

By Niece Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

As a pet owner making travel plans, you need to consider what to do about your furry friends. Are you taking them on your trip? Leaving them behind? Either choice leads to more questions that need answers, from how to learn about domestic and international documentation rules to finding professional pet sitters near home. Luckily, these websites offer services that make travel planning easier for pet lovers.

‘Yes, I want to travel with my pet.’

If you hope to vacation with your pet, BondVet offers one-stop answers for all your pet-related travel questions. To help navigate your way through sometimes complicated rules, simply fill out an online inquiry form to connect with a team of dedicated veterinary nurses and travel agents who will explain the requirements needed for your specific destination, both domestically and abroad. This includes such topics as mandatory health certificates, microchip rules, vaccination reports, rabies antibody level tests, and Certificates of Veterinary Inspection. Once your documentation has been confirmed and organized, the team will coordinate an ap-

pointment for your pet with one of its US Department of Agriculture-accredited veterinarians who will perform an exam and submit all documentation to the USDA. International health certificates can take up to 72 hours to be endorsed, so plan accordingly. Offices are available for visits in three Boston-area locations: Chestnut Hill, Seaport, and Somerville. bondvet.com/pet-travel

More information about international travel with pets can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website. Topics covered include what you need to ask your vet regarding vaccinations and tests; the best way to fly with a pet (carriers in a cabin or cargo); how to best address your pet’s comfort in what can be a stressful environment; cruise ship

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SENSE SPA

Spas are tapping into a new energy

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well-being, but their mental health.

Demand for these services, after years of political polarization, pandemic lockdowns and other stress, is huge, according to the people who are adding them.

“The attitude has changed, as a result of everything we’ve been going through, that you have to put as much energy and focus into your mental wellness as you do into your physical wellness,” said Patti Biro, a business consultant to spas.

“It used to be that if you went to a traditional resort you thought of the spa as an amenity or luxury,” said Biro. Now, she said, “they’re not luxuries. They’ve really become part of a personal wellness regimen.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected people’s mental health, the National Institutes of Health reports. Nearly half of Americans say they are experiencing anxiety or depression. Ten percent say their mental health needs are not being met. And so many people have experienced sleep disruptions, according to the Sleep Foundation, researchers have given it a name: coronasomnia.

That’s a giant market, and one that many spas are seizing on.

The Mindful Meditative Massage at the Leaf Spa at Miami’s Hotel AKA Brickell, for example, begins with a guided meditation and sound bowl healing, which sends wave vibrations through the body; practitioners say it helps harmonize and restore balance to the mind.

The Leaf Spa in Chicago offers treatment for seasonal affective disorder, using an herb-infused body treatment it says helps clients adjust to seasonal changes.

The Elms Hotel and Spa in Excelsior Springs, Mo., combines acupuncture with sound waves, which it says corrects energy imbalances.

The spa at the Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, reports huge demand for time with the resident shaman, who offers



K’ALMA SPA PHOTOS (ABOVE AND BELOW)

Top: Sense Spa at the Rosewood Sand Hill resort near San Francisco. **Above and right:** K’Alma Spa has locations at the Hotel Victor in Miami Beach and the Ritz-Carlton in Chicago.

rituals for rest, clarity, strength, and connection in a jungle setting with ocean views.

At the newly opened Six Senses Vana resort in India, Tibetan therapists administer Sowa Rigpa, a treatment for anxiety, stress, and insomnia based on Indian Buddhist tradition.

And Sense Spa at the Rosewood Sand Hill resort near San Francisco has introduced a sleep improvement package it calls the Rosewood Dreamscape, which in addition to accommodations and traditional spa services includes morning and sunset yoga, a “sleep box”



stocked with CBD-infused teas and bath salts and “wellness-curated” bedtime snacks.

For all of the advantages of working remotely, “our clients were complaining they couldn’t sleep or they couldn’t switch off,” said Ania Mankowska, Sense Spa’s director. “People’s life balance has been really thrown off. They couldn’t find the balance of, ‘OK, now I’m done with my work life.’”

It’s also the case, Mankowska said, that “people are trying new things and going back to basics, both with spa treatments and in general with life. I’ve never seen such a huge uptake in booking those treatments.” The spa plans more over the next year.

The spa at the J House boutique hotel in Greenwich, Conn., has added energy healing sessions using the acupuncture therapy Jin Shin Jyutsu and other treatments.

“More people are interested in these types of eastern healing modalities and in regulating and balancing their energy,” said Daniela Ranallo, spa coordinator. “They’re just going within a little deeper. They’re not really happy living the day-to-day lives they used to live, and thinking that there’s something more.”

It’s not only about addressing their immediate problems, Ranallo said. “Sure, people are concerned about stress and want to work on that. But they’re also now just more interested in overcoming previous obstacles and challenges they used to push away.”

The spa at Boston’s Mandarin Oriental Hotel is offering several new services to deal with sleep issues, stress management, and anxiety — most notably, a Japanese-inspired “Shinrin-yoku” or forest-bathing treatment, in which guests are taken to the Arnold Arboretum to be immersed in nature. The ritual, which ends with a tea ceremony and meditation, is led by Nadine Mazzola of Acton, who has written a book about the practice.

“There’s not just massage therapists any more. There’s not just facialists any more. There’s all kinds of energy and emotional healers,” said Danielle McNally, the Mandarin Oriental’s marketing director. “Look at it like your doctor’s office adding alternative medicine therapies. Because that’s what the customer is looking for: ways to relax, ways to restore, that are so much more than a massage.”

Mental health professionals urge some skepticism about this.

“I think there are a lot of cautions,” said David Rosmarin, associate professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School and founder of the Center for Anxiety.

The best way to cope with stress is to confront it — “to face your fears,” he said. “You have to carefully and systematically move to higher levels of anxiety. These spas do exactly the opposite. And when the person comes back to real life, they’re less prepared” to cope.

Going to a place that takes away all stress “can actually make it worse. You end up thinking you can escape it, which you can’t. You’re being given false hope, and as soon as you leave the hope vanishes.”

It’s not a bad thing that people want to deal with their mental health, Rosmarin said, just as it’s healthy to get such things as colorectal screenings. “But that doesn’t mean if you screen positive you should go and see a shaman.”

Contreras, in Miami Beach, is undeterred. Among the tensions people have experienced over the last few years, she said, is that “we isolated more. There was fear. It triggered so many issues for people. There was less connection and less meaningful human interaction.”

At spas, she said, “we touch people’s souls. If we do that with one person at a time, our mission has been fulfilled.”

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Websites try to make travel easier for pet owners, animal lovers

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and other travel by sea requirements; and rules for dogs, cats, and other pets leaving from and arriving to the United States. The site also includes links to other helpful information, such as needed crate sizes, preparing your pet for flight, dealing with airlines, and rules for international dog adoptions. www.cdc.gov/importation/traveling-with-pets.html

‘Sadly, I have to leave my pet behind.’

Planning a vacation or business trip and need pet care at home when you’re out of town? Pet Sitters International is an educational organization that provides an extensive online directory of licensed professional pet sitters in your local area, free of charge. Simply enter your ZIP code in the online database to find a range of personalized services near you, such as daily dog walking (including more than once a day); feeding and changing of water bowls; providing

exercise and play time; cleaning litterboxes and other pet messes; and administering medications, if needed. Some companies may even provide overnight stays. At-home pet care offers peace of mind for you, and less stress on pets who can stay in a familiar environment. Sitters can also give the home a lived-in look by taking mail inside, alternating blinds and lights, and performing other tasks as requested. The website also offers reasons for using a certified professional pet sitter and tips for interviewing and hiring one. www.petsit.com/locate

‘I don’t have a pet but I love animals.’

If you love animals, and love to travel, consider TrustedHousesitters, a website that offers free homestays around the world in exchange for taking care of someone else’s pet. The catch? You pay an annual fee (from \$129) to become a Basic Sitter and — voila! — you are guaranteed a year of unlimited pet sits worldwide. This membership also in-

cludes a secure and free background check; two additional levels of membership include such things as free video calls and online chats with vets when pet-sitting; accident and third-party liability protection; cancellation insurance; instant alerts for saved searches; two global airport lounge passes; and more (\$169 and \$259). Once you’re a member, you can filter your travel choices by destination, dates, pets, and local attractions. Of course, the service also works for pet owners. Verified and reviewed sitters take care of all manner of pets, including dogs, cats, horses, reptiles, fish, livestock, birds, poultry, and other small animals. Pet parents can leave town for business or pleasure knowing that their animals are being taken care of in their own home. Annual pet parent memberships are also available at three levels, and include a range of services including unlimited care from verified sitters; home and contents protection; dedicated member support; free video chats with vets; boosts for your listings in search results;



JULIA NIKHINSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS/FILE

and more (\$129/\$199/\$259). 844-293-6126, www.trustedhousesitters.com

Necce Regis can be reached at necceeregis@gmail.com.

Websites can make it easier for people to travel with pets, leave them behind when traveling, or travel as pet sitters.