

Mind/Body/Soul

By Maryann Hammers

EAST MEETS WEST FOR WELLNESS

Ancient Asian techniques are the newest offerings at area spas.

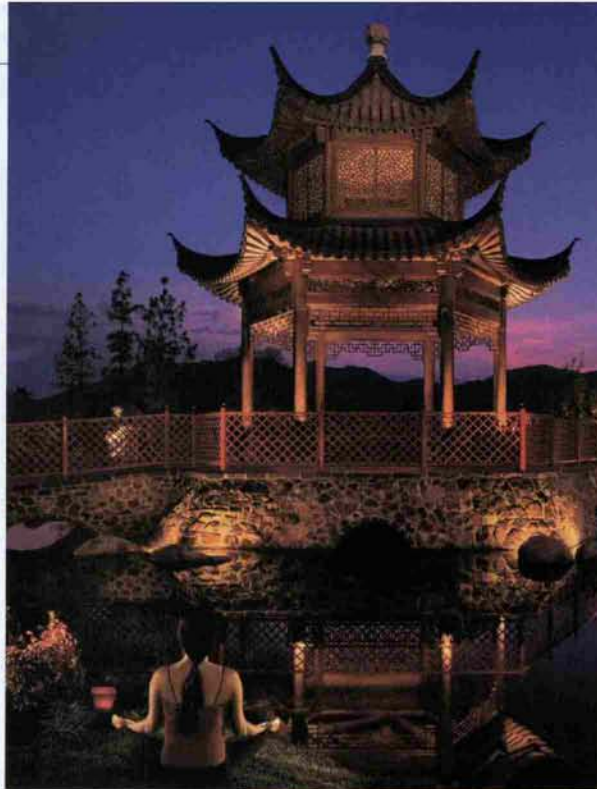
SPA-GOERS ARE GETTING SMARTER. No longer content with merely being pampered, fluffed, and puffed in posh surroundings, they seek real treatments for reducing stress, losing weight, and relieving aches and pains. They want holistic wellness for mind, body, and soul. So it's no wonder that many Southern California spas have recently embraced ancient Eastern philosophies and programs.

Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village (fourseasons.com/westlakevillage) offers the perfect setting for immersing oneself in Eastern traditions, with grassy walking paths, bonsai gardens, massive boulders from Thailand's River Kwai, glistening reflective ponds, and a pagoda from Beijing. And the California Health & Longevity Institute (chli.com) here was one of the first local facilities to offer East/West therapies, including acupuncture, acupressure, and energy-based treatments like Reiki and Thai massage.

Dr. Steven Tan, an integrative medicine physician and director of the Institute's Complementary and Alternative Medicine program, explains that while a person should get to a hospital ER *pronto* in case of a crisis (heart attack, infection, car accident), Chinese medicine is best suited for getting "healthier at the core," which is the Institute's overriding goal.

"Western medicine is powerful at managing acute symptoms, but there are gaps when it comes to promoting wellness, dealing with stress-related conditions, and getting to the root of our health issues," Tan says. "These issues are better addressed through holistic health models that look at the bigger picture of how we live, eat, sleep, exercise, manage stress, regulate emotions, and relate to others—all of the themes covered beautifully by Chinese medicine. This is where the Eastern emphasis on balancing our lives, physically and emotionally, coupled with therapies such as acupuncture, meditation, and herbs that address our symptoms and promote underlying biological balance, comes in."

For more than a century, Pasadena's elegant grande dame of a hotel, now called **The Langham Huntington Hotel** (but still called simply "The Huntington" by many in the community) has gracefully presided over winding Oak Knoll Drive, which is lined by stately mansions and towering oaks. Its lush grounds boast California's first Olympic-sized swimming pool while a 1932 wooden picture bridge—with hand-painted scenes of California landscapes—spans a tranquil Japanese garden. The hotel's well-known, much-loved Huntington Spa had been known for luxe facials and other typical treatments. Now that's changed.



The tranquil gardens at the Four Seasons Hotel Westlake Village offer respite from the daily grind (top); Dr. Steven Tan practices acupuncture on a patient as part of the California Health & Longevity Institute's Complementary and Alternative Medicine Program.

TOP: BARBARA ROBERT; BOTTOM: GARY MOSES



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Dr. Paulette Saddler serves as the traditional Chinese medicine doctor and acupuncturist at the newly opened Chuan Body + Soul at The Huntington Spa (pasadena.langhamhotels.com). "It's a back-to-basics approach to healing and health," she explains. "Hundreds of years ago, physicians viewed the body holistically, but in the 1900s, with the explosion of knowledge of each organ, medicine started to specialize. But everything *is* connected to everything else, and health has to involve the whole person. That's what traditional Chinese medicine is about."

Saddler says it makes perfect sense to adopt Asian medical therapies in the new spa because it's the perfect setting for people who work hard, need a break, and want healing services.

Saddler performs several acupuncture variants, including no-needles-needed cupping (where impurities are drawn out from the skin through suction) and moxibustion (where a lit herbal stick is held close to an acupuncture point to bring a "pleasant heat sensation that penetrates deep into the skin," Saddler says). In addition, there are rituals and treatments based on the five elements of traditional Chinese medicine: fire, water, earth, metal, and wood. Spa-goers fill out a short questionnaire (favorite season, times of the day when motivation lags) to determine their dominant element and where they might be deficient. Based on that information, incense candles, teas, and essential oils are incorporated into treatments such as "The Tao of Detox" wrap (\$385) and the Chuan Harmony acupressure massage (\$185).

For those who love an ocean-side atmosphere, Casa del Mar (hotelcasadelmar.com) is a 10-year-old Santa Monica beachfront hotel. Once a stylish 1920s beach club (later the home of The Pritikin Center), it's now a spectacular setting for Casa del Mar's new Sea Wellness Spa.

There are several treatment rooms, a private yoga studio, a Thai massage room, and a very Zen and lovely candlelit lounge with gauzy curtains, bamboo walls, spicy scents, and trickling fountains. But the most innovative facet of the Sea Wellness Spa is its newly forged collaboration with nearby Moonview Sanctuary (moonviewsanctuary.com), a treatment center for people who are overcoming a crisis or addiction, dealing with chronic health issues or pain, or who want to achieve peak performance in life, work, or athletics.

A Moonview treatment begins with a traditional Chinese medicine counseling session (\$30) to determine which modality (yoga, meditation, acupuncture, energy rebalancing, or something else) is best suited for each person's particular situation.

"We find the techniques and tools to help you move whatever is blocking you," says Moonview practitioner Andre Ziteer. "Chinese medicine is rooted in the spirit, and in helping people take on their own health."

The bottom line is that while "new and improved" slogans may be good for detergents and face creams, sometimes time-tested traditions are the cure when it comes to spiritual wellness. The best thing to experience at a spa may not be the massage, facial mask, or moisturizer to soften your skin, but rather the wisdom of the ancients. ■

The Japanese garden at The Langham Huntington Hotel in Pasadena (top); yoga on the beach (middle) in front of Casa del Mar in Santa Monica (bottom).