

A Spa for Him Too

Couples spa resorts are the latest rage. Here's why the two of you should share a mud bath
By [LAURA KOSS-FEDER](#)

Beatrice Foxman had to drag her husband Stanley to their first spa vacation eight years ago. It just didn't seem very, well, manly, Stanley says. But after a few active yet peaceful days in the warm sun--and as many deep-tissue massages--Stanley was singing a different tune. "Men are taking a different approach to remaining healthy and looking and feeling good," he says. Now the couple from Silver Spring, Md., get to a spa as often as time permits. They have been to the spa at the Ritz-Carlton in Key Biscayne, Fla., nine times in the past three years.



Stanley, a dentist, and Beatrice, an office manager at his practice, are both 65. They swim, read and take long walks on the beach during their spa visits--and increasingly they find themselves bumping into other couples their age and younger. It's no coincidence: the number of baby-boomer couples taking spa-oriented vacations accounts for 1 of every 3 spa-goers, up from 1 in 5 just five years ago, according to industry estimates. The most popular destinations in the U.S. are in Arizona, California, Florida, Texas and New York. Outside the U.S., top destinations include Mexico, the Caribbean, Italy, Thailand and Ireland.

Women have long appreciated the spa as a place to relieve tension and stress. Now the men in their lives are discovering the same benefits. KSL Resorts in La Quinta, Calif., surveyed boomer men in October and found that 20% of them had been to a spa. That's up from less than 1% five years ago, says Arthur Berg, vice president of marketing for KSL. "You used to see the wives in this age group go to the spas while the husbands played golf," Berg says. Now the men, driven to stay fit and attractive and to reward themselves for years of hard work, are enjoying everything from manicures to mud baths.

"The stigma is gone," says Kirwan Rockefeller, a social and behavioral scientist and co-creator of the certificate program in spa and hospitality management at the University of California Irvine Extension. "[The TV show] Queer Eye for the Straight Guy has done a lot toward reassuring men that it is O.K. to get a massage."

Spa therapies also have proven medical benefits. Massages and reflexology, during which muscles are rubbed and soothed and blood flow is increased in aching areas, help lower blood pressure, boost circulation and alleviate arthritis pain, says Dr. Gisele Wolf-Klein, chief of geriatrics at the North Shore--Long Island Jewish Health System in New Hyde Park, N.Y. Her colleague Dr. Laura Herman, a psychiatrist, adds that calm surroundings and relaxing treatments help release to the brain more endorphins, which are chemicals that promote an overall feeling of well-being and happiness. As boomers

begin turning 60 this year, they increasingly have the resources to afford that kind of upscale pampering. The average price for a resort massage is \$120, reports magazine and website Spa Finder spafinder.com) Facials cost \$120, manicures \$35 and pedicures \$60. Most spa visitors indulge in at least one treatment a day. That is on top of the usual airfare, meals and rooms that run several hundred dollars a day.

Floyd Isley, 65, a former Air Force pilot and now a semiretired high-tech consultant in Carlsbad, Calif., and wife Dianna, 61, a retired nurse, haven't any qualms about shelling out whatever it takes. "We're enjoying the fruits of our labor," Dianna says. The couple recently spent \$1,500 for massages on a weeklong getaway. They visit a day spa once a week near their home. "We like the deep-tissue massages that really help ease any physical discomfort," Dianna says. "It's our therapy for stress and anxiety."

Spa resorts are responding to growing demand from folks like the Isleys by offering facilities better suited to side-by-side treatments and new male-oriented services, such as barbershop-style shaves and massages specifically designed to ease muscles sore from sports and heavy lifting, says Spa Finder president Susie Ellis. Spa Toccare at the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa in Atlantic City, N.J., features a Yo' Rock Facial (\$150 for 50 minutes), which offers cleansing and exfoliation with products specifically designed for men's skin, and a barbershop with a pool table and leather lounge chairs.

"Men like me just didn't do this kind of thing years ago, but now I think I may just initiate our next spa vacation," says Steve Landon, 59, a retired phone-company executive who in October took his first spa trip, to Scottsdale, Ariz., with his wife Cathy, 58, a retired elementary school teacher. The Colleyville, Texas, couple enjoyed massages and facials during their four-day getaway. Spa veterans Carolyn and Giovanni Panizzi of Valdosta, Ga., co-owners of a staffing-services company, have been to about 15 spa resorts across the country. "Resorts are catering more to baby boomers who want to be pampered but not overly fussed over--particularly men," says Giovanni, 58. "They're understanding our needs better."

Retired police officer Harry McCormick, 68, of Northport, N.Y., was so relaxed during his visit to the Cranwell Resort, Spa & Golf Club in Lenox, Mass., that while there he managed to write the last pages of a book about his life in law enforcement--between massages and frequent stops at the pool, sauna and steam room. He and wife Maureen, 66, a retired secretary, stay at the hotel at least twice a year. They spend about \$700 on treatments, including Maureen's facials and his deep-tissue massages, which give him relief from two herniated discs. "It's like Dorothy finding her own special Land of Oz," says Harry. "These treatments are a quiet, peaceful oasis for me, even though they don't come cheap."

For those seeking a more comprehensive overhaul, there are medical spas that offer full health-assessment programs. The granddaddy is the Canyon Ranch Health Resort in Tucson, Ariz., where staff members include physicians, nurses, psychologists, exercise physiologists and nutritionists. The resort's two-year-old Executive Health Program, which calls for four days of complete medical exams, laboratory work, stress tests and bone-density tests, is geared toward boomers, says director Dr. Philip Eichling, and costs about \$3,500.

Coming soon: multigenerational spas to accommodate grandfathers with grandsons and grandmothers with granddaughters. Another growth area will be residential spas featuring large hotel rooms designed for in-room treatments, says Gordon Tareta, global director of spas at Chicago-based Hyatt Hotels Corp., which has such rooms at properties in Bangkok, Dubai and Hong Kong. "Boomers who have worked hard for so many years now have the chance to enjoy the ultimate in relaxation and convenience without having to leave their guest rooms," Tareta says. "They're embarking on a whole new generation of luxury, and the men are loving it even more than the women." So the couples spa movement promises to be around for a while.