

WELLNESS & FITNESS (/BD/LIFESTYLE/HEALTH-FITNESS)

The business of touch therapy

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From red clay, and black mud, to wine and milk body rubs, the business of touch therapy in Kenya is growing. FILE PHOTO | SHUTTERSTOCK

From red clay, and black mud, to wine and milk body rubs, the business of touch therapy in Kenya is growing.

A few years ago, spas were mostly in high-end hotels but now there are hundreds of standalone parlours, attracting customers in droves.

Lucy Imison of Jet Spa, a women-only spa located in Nairobi's Kilimani, says when they opened, they did not anticipate attracting such high numbers.

“Looking at the targets we had set, we have surpassed them all. We now do at least 100 spa treatments a month,” she says.

Kenyans are seeking places where they can have a wellness experience beyond the sauna and steam bath, and spa investors are now pushing the experiential envelope, from setting up jacuzzis, and mud bars where people immerse themselves, to importing Thai masseuses to give authentic Thai massages.

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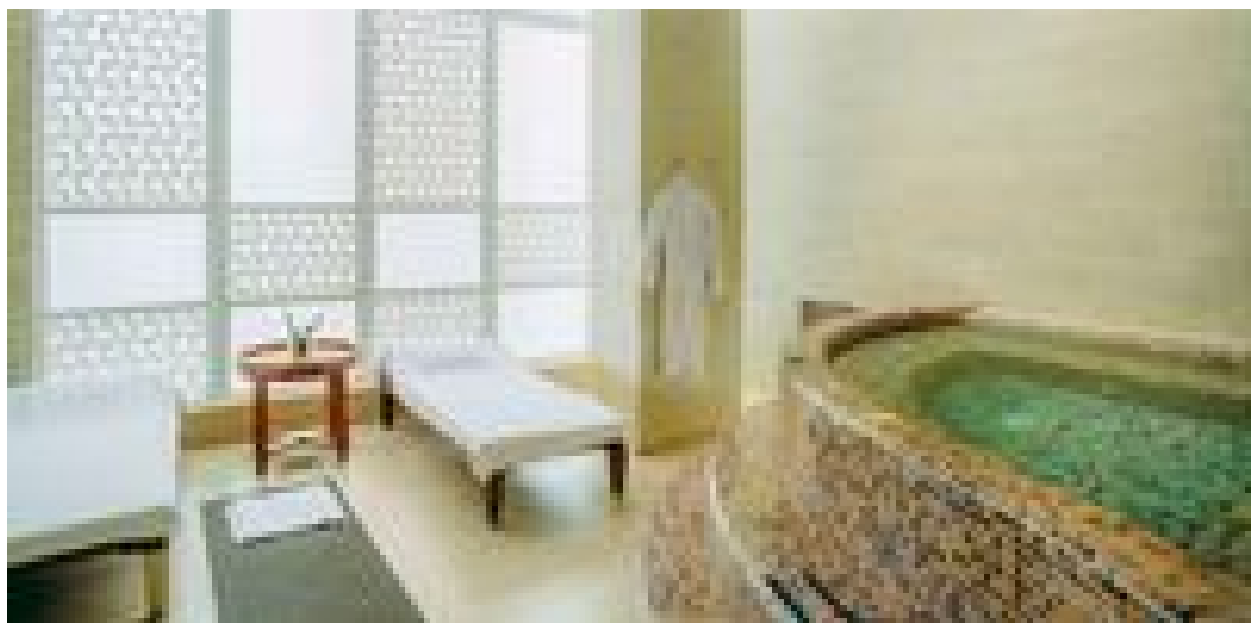


The Jet Spa Presidential Suite VVIP Treatment room as seen during the interview at the Senteu Plaza establishment on February 7, 2023. PHOTO | DIANA NGILA | NMG

Villa Rosa Kempinski and Tribe Hotel's Kaya are among the establishments that have Thai masseuses. Kempinski started bringing in the Thais about nine years ago.

In a day, the spa serves about 40 people, the Kempinski spa manager Stella Muthoni says, but the take-up for Thai massages is not as high.

“Before, people were not very cautious about spas. But right now they are trying to take care of themselves. People are now excited about going to spas and gifting people with spa vouchers she says, adding, “however people are yet to fully embrace Thai massages as it is a dry massage, they prefer wet massages.”



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Different massages

Say you are looking for a spa experience or want to gift a loved one, which one do you pick?

Different types of massages work for different people. While the more rigorous massages work well for younger people, their seniors require a more delicate touch.

“If you’re 30 years old, the best is a full body massage and a facial. If you intend to gift a married man in his 40s, a couple’s massage would be ideal,” Ms Muthoni says.



Kempinski Spa Manager, Stella Muthoni. FILE PHOTO | POOL

For a 60-year-old or 80-year-old, she recommends a hot stone massage or aromatherapy massage to help with muscle aches. Why the variation? The type of massage depends on your skin.

“When you are younger, your skin is not saggy so you are not limited to the frictions of the massage movements. When you age, your skin loses elasticity, hence it is not advisable to do a rigorous massage,” she explains.



A client at Kaya Spa at the Tribe Hotel in Nairobi. FILE PHOTO | POOL

Non-touch therapies

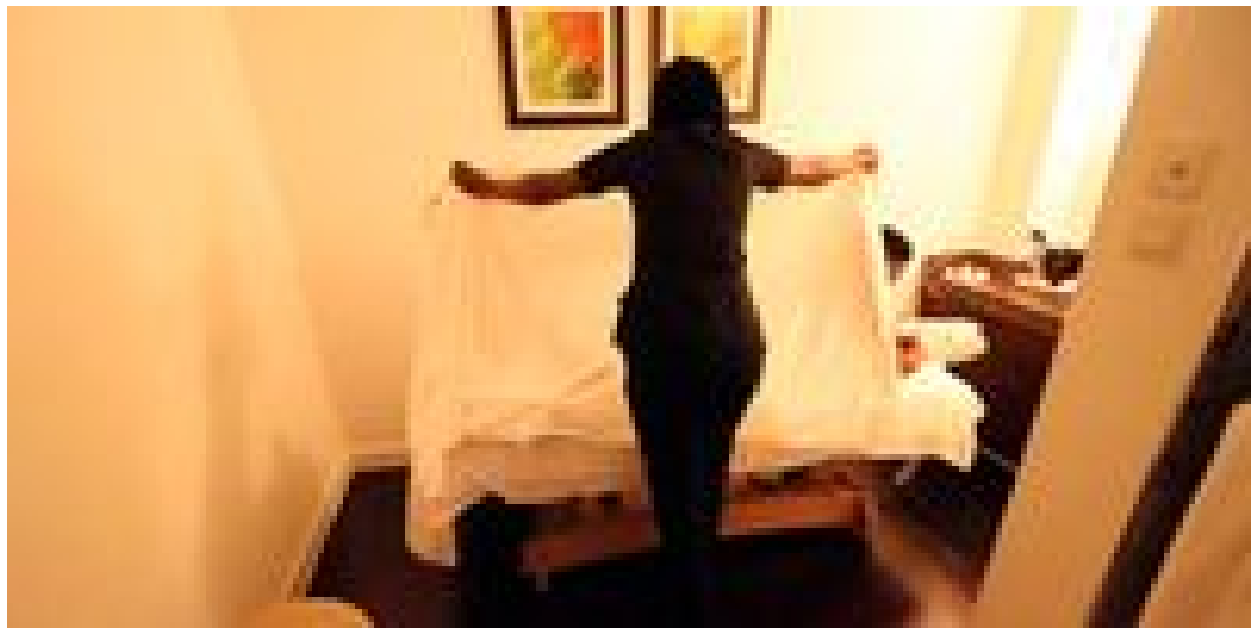
For those who prefer non-touch wellness therapies, mud bars do the job just as well.

At Kaya Spa, for instance, there is a Rasul chamber recommended for people who prefer non-touch but still want a maximum experience of relaxation.

“The whole process is automated. The first part is you put mud on the body, then you go to the steam sauna before finally going to the shower,” says Lucy Madahana, the spa manager at Kaya Spa.

Massage has many benefits. Apart from increasing circulation and getting rid of toxins in the body, spa treatments are good for relaxing.

“Spa treatments are alternatives to medicine. All the products that are used in spa treatments are scientifically proven to work. There is scientific proof behind manipulating your muscles so that they relax,” points out Ms Imison.



A therapist preps a client at The Kempinski spa. FILE PHOTO | NMG

The clientele

Massages are good for people with hectic work schedules.

“Clients who sit in the office for too long come almost every week to do a massage to realign their body posture,” says Ms Madahana.

Fitness enthusiasts also book massages almost every week to clear toxins build-up. On the clients' lists are also persons having trouble sleeping, with muscle aches, and who need to detoxify their bodies and remove dead skin.

“Spas are also good when you're grieving. Massages help you to release the tension of grieving,” says Ms Imison.

Pre and post-natal massage treatments are also good, however, they are not recommended for women under three months of pregnancy. After every spa treatment, take herbal tea.

“After a massage, blood circulation increases. In the process, a lot of toxins are released. The herbal teas help in flushing the toxins out faster,” Ms Madahana says.

Lack of regulation

However, as the spa business booms, authentic therapists decry of lack of regulations.

There are many professional therapists in Kenya but the industry is not regulated.

Without regulation, spas are being used for mischievous and shameful activities,” Ms

Madahana says. We use cookies to improve your experience on our site and to show you relevant advertising. To find out more, read our updated Privacy Policy (<https://nation.africa/kenya/nmg-privacy-policy-303724>)

The Spa Wellness and Association, Kenya Chapter is expected to launch the regulations this March, which will see every establishment have trained and certified therapists, a hydrotherapy area, and standard treatment rooms.



Lucy Madahana, the Spa Manager at Kaya Spa, Tribe Hotel. FILE PHOTO | POOL

The regularisation will also require that all therapists have licences issued by the Spa Wellness and Association Centre.

Valentine’s Day plans

What has also helped draw Kenyans to the spas is the addition of full-body services and the keeping up with global trends.

“Spas now have a whole wellness approach on their menu, from full-body massage to facial,” Ms Muthoni says, adding, “This has managed to make spa treatments affordable to more people as one pays for many spa services all in one package.”

Sh100,000 packages

Spa treatments range from Sh3,000 to Sh40,000, but some charge upwards of Sh100,000 for special events.

As lovers make Valentine’s Day plans, spas are hoping for high bookings. They have curated experiences such as spa chauffeuring where the spa organises pick-ups for a massage and drop-offs afterwards.

Others have shipped in Himalayan Salt that will be used for stone massage and body scrub. We use cookies to improve your experience on our site and to show you relevant advertising. To find out more, read our updated Privacy Policy (<https://nation.africa/kenya/nmg-privacy-policy-303724>)



Lucy Imison, the spa consultant at the Jet Spa during the interview at the Senteu Plaza establishment on February 7, 2023. PHOTO | DIANA NGILA | NMG

“We have an executive package where we pick and drop you in a luxury car. This one goes for about \$950 (Sh118,800),” says Ms Imison.

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