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## **Aaah-rizona: The State of the Spa**

Stress is a dirty word in Arizona, where the hot rock massage originated and some of the world's top destination spas debuted. From remote hot springs and urban day spas to huge complexes that create their own calming microclimates, Arizona has perfected the art of the aaaah.

### **A Natural: Spas and Southern Arizona**

The desert has long been considered a purifying place, and its early dwellers used local plants for a variety of healing purposes. And warm, dry weather attracts outdoor sports enthusiasts, whose muscles need kneading and skin requires moisturizing. It's no surprise, then, that southern Arizona's two sophisticated desert metropolises, **Greater Phoenix** and **Tucson**, should have sprouted so many spas. Farther north, New Age-oriented Sedona has a smattering of spas, too.

**Destination Spas:** Those looking to change their lives often book rooms at this type of spa, so named because their programs, from cosmetic to medicinal, are the goal of a visit, not incidental to it. Arizona boasts three world-class destination spas, the original **Canyon Ranch** and **Miraval – Life in Balance** in Tucson, and **Mii amo** in Sedona, all both listed by *Travel + Leisure* among the "Top 10 Destination Spas in the World." All three are multiple-award winners, and all are in knockout settings.

**Hotel Spas:** Few major hotels or resorts would dare to go spa-less these days, and Arizona's sprawling pleasure palaces are no exception. Posh hotels that arrived on the scene before the current cossetting craze have either added spas or vastly expanded their earlier versions. The effort shows: In the 2005 "World's Best" awards by *Travel + Leisure*, Sedona's Enchantment Resort and Scottsdale's Willow Stream Spa at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess both ranked in the Top 10 in the "Hotel Spas in the United States" category.

Some resort groups create their own spa brands – for example, Willow Stream at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess has counterparts at other Fairmont hotels. Others import established brands with cachet, like The Boulders and its Golden Door Spa. Now and then, resort themes

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are reflected in spa menus: Treatments at the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort & Spa, owned by the Pima and Maricopa peoples, are all Native American-influenced. But in order to soothe as many people, body and soul, in as many ways possible, the majority of spa menus are eclectic.

**Day Spas and Hot Springs:** Most Arizona resort spas offer packages or individual treatments to non-guests, but those not sleeping over often find day spas more convenient. Some day spas are aimed at stressed-out shoppers – for example, the Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon & Spa at Biltmore Fashion Park in Phoenix. Others have several central locations, among them Tucson’s Gadabout chain, with one spa dedicated to men. Most focus primarily on the body, hair, and nails, but a few, like Sedona’s New Day Spa, get metaphysical.

On the opposite end of the spa spectrum are natural hot springs, found throughout the state. The most popular are those near Safford, in southeast Arizona. Also in southeast Arizona, the Nature Conservancy’s Muleshoe Ranch provides a wooded setting for taking the warm waters.

### **Scrubs, Wraps, Rubs, and Readings: An Arizona Spa Sampler**

You’d be hard pressed to find a part of the world that Arizona spas don’t import treatments from; a part of the body they don’t wrap, massage, or pour aromatherapy oils on; or a part of the psyche they don’t attempt to explore. Here are just a few examples, some – or a version thereof – available at several spas, others (indicated by \*) unique to the resort named.

**Native American-inspired:** Tucson’s Mary Hannigan, creator of **LaStone**, which alternates warm and cool river rocks in a muscle-soothing massage, says the idea was channeled to her by a Native American spirit guide (Westin Kierland). **Blue Corn Vichy** (Sheraton Wild Horse Pass) combines the Native American use of ground corn to cleanse the skin with the European tradition of the mineral scrub and Vichy shower.

**Mind over matter:** Everyone has heard of **astrology**, **Tarot-card reading**, and **handwriting analysis** (Phoenician, Miraval, Canyon Ranch), and **past life-regression** \*(Mii Amo) is familiar to New Age followers, but far fewer know about **perscenteology**\* (Copperwynd), toe readings designed to shed light on the personality.

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**Far Eastern-oriented:** Explore Asia from head to toe, starting with **shirodhara** (Camelback Inn), where warm oil is poured on the forehead to stimulate the pituitary; **chi nei tsang** (Boulders), an abdominal massage designed to rejuvenate the digestive system; and **reflexology** (Sanctuary), based on the premise that the feet have reflex zones linked to the internal organs and other body regions.

**For sports buffs:** **Swedish, deep-tissue,** and other **sports massages** can be found all over the country, but a **golfer's massage\*** (Four Seasons Scottsdale at Troon North) that incorporates warmed golf balls is a rare birdie, indeed.

**Yummy, and no calories:** The **Green Coffee Body Treatment** (The Phoenician\*) incorporates unroasted coffee beans into a lotion designed to detoxify and sure to stimulate. Pure sugar cane and wine are mixed to create the scrub for the **Chardonnay Sugar Body Glow\*** (Spa at Gainey Village). Ingredients in the **Desert Nectar Honey Wrap** (Camelback Inn) include Arizona honey, buttermilk, and oats. The **Caviar Facial** (JW Marriot Starr Pass) doesn't use fresh Beluga but does utilize the fish eggs' antioxidant properties as a way to combat fine lines.

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