

STATE OF *Play*

From the Tourism Action Plan to the William Angliss Institute/Hilton Eforea spa school to the awards crowding the poolrooms of new and established properties alike, the spa scene is vibrant in Victoria. BY ANNE-MARIE COOK



Peninsula Hot Springs' natural hot spring waters are only part of the destination's appeal.

Peninsula Hot Springs

Truly unique in Australia, Peninsula Hot Springs on Mornington Peninsula has not suffered from resting-on-its-laurels syndrome. This celebrated sprawling network of geothermal spring-fed bathing experiences takes visitors on a journey of temperatures that now culminates in a hilltop pool with views to the ocean. The hydrotherapy is supplemented by naturally occurring magnesium, lithium, potassium, silica and other skin- and body-nurturing minerals. Global influences, such as a reflexology path and Turkish hammam, show the depth of research invested by co-founder and director Charles Davidson. Next on the list is a pool with hydrotherapy jets (inspired by the French thalassotherapy spas) that can be used for fitness programs in conjunction with a series of exercise stations around the gardens. "It's our intention to provide a range of spa and exercise options suitable for personal trainers to create and operate their own programs," says Charles. The long-term plan for the site includes accommodation, conference facilities and wellness programs, setting the stage for Peninsula Hot Springs to join the ranks of Australia's celebrated retreat spas. SPRINGS LANE, FINGAL, MORNINGTON PENINSULA. PENINSULAHOTSPRINGS.COM

Azaaya Health Spa

A holistic, spiritual spa with treatments focussing on the rhythm of the earth and aligning with the seasons. Not necessarily an obvious choice for a town known better for its history and visits from royalty. But Azaaya Health Spa is finding a welcome from locals in Ballarat. Recently opened by sports science trainers Jacinta and Justin Power (who've returned to their home town after working in spas in Daylesford and internationally), Azaaya's well-thought-out offerings have a strong bent toward education and exploration. "We've held workshops on detoxification, but in a very relaxed



The hilltop pool at Peninsula Hot Springs is one of a long list of recent and pending additions.

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HEEL BEFORE



HEEL AFTER



Open for a year, Isika Day Spa in the Crown Metropol is already a multi-award winner.



Japanese Mountain Retreat drilled for mineral water in 2008.

format, and tea and tarot afternoons,” says Jacinta. “We’re dedicated to helping balance toxicity in the body and supporting people on their healing journey.” Azaaya uses LaGaia products as well as offering infrared sauna and kinesiology. “Our stress management techniques have had strong takeup.” 526 MAIR STREET, BALLARAT. AZAAYAHEALTHSPA.COM.AU

Isika Day Spa in the Crown Metropol

If cool could be embodied in a space, it would manifest as Isika. The spa’s casual vibe brings to mind the Wynn or Qua Baths & Spa in Las Vegas. Laid-back yet exclusive, Isika oozes effortless sophistication. (Which is not to suggest that the service isn’t impeccable.) Louisa Burke, Isika’s manager who has been with Crown for five years, says that the spa is especially suited to groups. “We’ve done many tailored packages for events,” she says. “Because 28, the Metropol’s lounge and bar, is the next floor up, we’ve had several functions that have incorporated spa services; social spa-ing is very much a part of Isika’s concept.” This is further enhanced by the Spa Suites—studio-style apartments embedded within the spa wing. Isika embodies the new trend of urban wellness retreats now in vogue in New York, London and Los Angeles. “We can provide a full wellness program, including yoga, treatments, detox, cuisine—whatever is required. Isika and Crown Spa have the enormous benefit of being able to share therapists and wellness consultants, which means we can offer clients a wide range of expertise.”

LEVEL 27, CROWN METROPOL, 8 WHITEMAN STREET, SOUTHBANK. CROWNMETROPOL.COM.AU

Japanese Mountain Retreat Mineral Springs and Spa

Mineral springs are central to spa-going in Victoria, and Japanese Mountain Retreat in the Dandenongs extends that repute. “We drilled for water back in 2008,” says owner Deborah Quitt. “The water was categorised as mineral water following analysis due to the amount of dissolved solids and minerals present.” The first iteration of Japanese Mountain Retreat was opened in 2002 but has only recently incorporated the mineral bathing experience. The Japanese theme is delivered in the accommodation style and spa fittings, such as the ofuro soaking tub. Deborah chose Red Flower products for treatments due to the

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Regent Club Spa's inner-city oasis combines fitness, dining, bar and cigar lounge with spa facilities in every suite.

brand's philosophy of harmony with nature and the use of organic ingredients. Additional mineral springs bathing options will be added to the property in the near- to -mid-term. 14 MOUNTAIN CRESCENT, MONTROSE. JAPANESEMOUNTAINRETREAT.COM.AU

Regent Club Spa

An innovation on the spa scene, Regent Club Spa is very urban (situated in the heart of Bourke Street), very discreet and very appealing. If you've ever hankered after that *Cheers* feeling (where everybody knows your name), then Regent Club Spa will appeal. A membership-based structure that takes its model from Hong Kong, Regent Club Spa is looking to attract Asian business travellers. While there are treatment rooms (inclusive of ceiling-mounted bars for ashiatsu barefoot massage) the key attraction is the hotel-style rooms equipped with luxurious spa-style baths, saunas and steam, wet and dry treatment tables, and plenty of extra space to chill out. If inclined, guests can stroll down the hallway to the restaurant or licensed bar and piano lounge. For those who come for the afternoon and simply can't bear to leave, there are silk pajamas in the wardrobe. LEVEL 3, 206 BOURKE STREET, MELBOURNE. REGENTCLUB.COM.AU