



The Spas of Hawaiian Paradise

Mark Twain called Hawaii, “The loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean,” and indeed, the Aloha State has long been synonymous with a kind of paradise.

According to local filmmaker Edgy Lee’s documentary *Waikiki, in the Wake of Dreams*, the sandy enclave facing the Diamond Head volcanic cone was “a special spiritual haven for ancient Hawaiians and a place of healing and special power.”

Today’s Hawaii is where East meets West meets island, while Waikiki—an urban beachfront tourism mecca—is a nerve center for spas and treatments bearing Polynesian and Asian accents.



Moana Lani Spa's carefully selected product offerings help to heighten treatments.



The Ocean Massage at Spa Pure utilizes the soothing elements of water and touch for a refreshing experience.

Spa Pure

The Wyland Waikiki Hotel in Honolulu is unique, an art-themed hotel featuring marine life sculptures and graphics of scuba diver-cum-painter Robert Wyland. Internationally renowned for his “whaling wall” murals in Honolulu, Hollywood, Japan and other locations, Wyland’s pieces depict cavorting humpbacks, orcas, manatees and dolphins.

With this maritime artwork backdrop, the Wyland Waikiki is a perfect setting for Spa Pure, which, appropriately enough, offers a signature Ocean Massage. Spa director Dennis Miller devised this liquidy relaxation technique after observing California hot springs therapies, and it is performed outdoors in a heated saltwater pool on the Wyland Waikiki’s grounds reserved for spa guests. The immersion in water is especially soothing, with the swirling motion enhancing a sense of antigravity as Miller gently stretches muscles and applies pressure point therapy for 30 minutes. Also available as a 50-minute option for \$120, the 30-minute services cost \$60.

Clients can also combine the Ocean Massage with other treatments or enjoy them separately, partaking of services inside the intimate health facility. Spa Pure includes couples’ and individual massage rooms, as well as a cabana for poolside massage.

Among the spa’s staff is massage therapist and esthetician Rea Cormick. For my facial, which typically lasts 60 minutes and costs \$120, Cormick cleaned and removed the dead skin from my face, performed a peel to help minimize fine lines, then applied a moisturizing mask using a sugar-based seaweed wrap to detoxify the skin. Next, spa director Petula Miller led me to a room with

showers and two *ganban yokus*, which is Japanese for “stone bath,”—personal saunas on a domed granite table. For 30 minutes, infrared light and steam induced sweating and stimulated my collagen. The steam treatment includes herbal therapy with clients able to choose from various scents, including chamomile, peppermint and lavender.

To soothe my well-used muscles, Cormick also spent 60 minutes using a combination of Swedish, sports and deep tissue massage on me, applying body butter to my forearms, elbows, fingers, neck and upper back on my left side. “I tried focusing on getting circulation around those areas, loosening up the muscles that were tight, pulling on the tendons,” relayed Cormick. “Afterward, I moved through the body to see where you were energetically blocked. Then I used some hot stones to put heat on areas that were too tight in order to help open them. After that, your body seemed to relax more and do its own healing.” These soothing, customized massages can range in time from 30–120 minutes and cost from \$60–220, and they match just right with the serene, relaxing calm that Spa Pure offers.



Traditional lomi lomi massage, a Hawaiian signature, is often performed with warmed stones, as it is at Waikiki Plantation Spa.

Waikiki Plantation Spa

Boasting an exceptional view as one of Hawaii’s only spas in a penthouse, the Waikiki Plantation Spa is partially located on the 18th floor lanai, or veranda, atop the Outrigger Waikiki on the Beach hotel, with expansive vistas stretching from the Pacific to the Ko’olau Mountains. According to the assistant spa director Kerri Aybar, Waikiki Plantation Spa has 20 spa therapists and six estheticians in a 5,000-square-foot, two-story facility with six treatment rooms and a poolside cabana for seaside massages.



Spa Pure's Japanese ganban yokus purify the body with steam, infrared light and herbal scents.

Plantation Spa's extensive menu includes signature *pitta*, *vata* and *kapha* ayurvedic facials; body polishes and wraps; a fitness package; and bridal party options combining treatments with food and drink. Its *Lomi Pohaku* signature massage emphasizes Hawaiian-ness, and Aybar notes, "Everyone coming here wants the Hawaiian experience. This is a combination of hot volcanic rock and lomi lomi, a traditional Hawaiian rhythmic massage using forearms and elbows instead of fingertips. Lomi is more of a continual rubbing and friction massage."

The certified neuromuscular therapist Dana Barthlow adds, "We use heated stones to relax muscle tissues so it's easier to release tension doing lomi lomi." Barthlow, who learned her lomi technique in Kauai, continues, "Clients should definitely not be sunburned when they get this treatment." Luckily, I wasn't sunburned during my 80-minute Lomi Pohaku treatment, which was immensely relaxing and cost \$175. Post-service showers with multiple jets and steam enhanced the experience.

The Outrigger hotels and resorts are locally owned, and as part of Plantation Spa's Polynesian allure, its product line includes hydrating botanical oils derived from kukui, macadamia and other Hawaiian nuts. Also, by June 2009, Plantation Spa's sister Serenity Spa is expected to reopen at the nearby Outrigger Reef on the Beach resort.

SpaHalekulani

SpaHalekulani is located off the courtyard pool of one of Waikiki's oldest properties, the Halekulani Hotel. It is comprised of a lush terrace, two couples' and five individual treatment rooms,

and oxygen machines for facials that combat jet lag. It also offers a Hawaiian scents product line, and, according to spa director Gloria Ah Sam, the facility employs 28 massage therapists and estheticians, as well as hair and nail care staff members who work in the salon area.

The SpaHalekulani's signature massage is the Polynesian *Nonu*, a Samoan-inspired treatment incorporating lomi strokes and warm stones. "We use *noni* gel to coat the stones," notes Ah Sam. Noni is a plant that grows in the South Pacific and is believed to have healing properties. Aromatherapy also accompanies each massage.

Massage therapist Laura Tefft began my Nonu treatment on the terrace, spraying manoa mint mist into the air and gently pounding my feet with coconut fronds. Inside the massage room, a lovely Polynesian offering of leaf, orchid and oil sat on the table, and Tefft used her forearms and the heels of her hands to massage, "... following the rhythms of the ocean for a very soothing, relaxing massage." While I was facedown, she lifted my arm over my head to give my body a stretch, and the smoothed lava stones that she slid over the body are "kept comfortably warm in a hot water bath to soothe the muscles; we dip them into cooler water to cool them off. The heated stones give a deep warmth that enhances the effects of lomi lomi, relaxing muscles," Tefft explained.

Rich facials, body treatments and experiences, hair care, and manicure and pedicure options round out SpaHalekulani's menu, as well as a section that's specially designated for tweens and teens. These renewing, healing services certainly reflect the spa's atmosphere of a oasis in paradise.



Fresh ingredients aid in providing healthy, healing services for the skin, body and soul at Waikiki Plantation Spa.



Hydrotherapy treatments at the Moani Lani Spa play off the facility's water-centric location.

Ville de Coco

The accent is Asian at Ville de Coco spa and salon, owned by general manager and executive manicurist Coco Hayano and located in the Outrigger Luana Waikiki. Sleek and white, the facility has custom-made furniture in its peaceful reception area, one massage room and one facial room, a large manicure-pedicure space and a private VIP room with an Italian pedicure chair. It is staffed with three spa therapists, two estheticians and five nail technicians.

Spa therapist Michyo Aoyama's lomi lomi massage was from powerful hands that belied her petite size. The highly refreshing massage was 60 minutes in length for \$115, but can also be performed for 90 minutes for a cost of \$150. It was performed atop a table covered with kimonolike fabric, and Aoyama and the spa's team members also perform deep tissue, light touch, hot stone, aroma oil and the signature 90-minute Deluxe Ville de Coco massage that combines various techniques with flowery aromas.

Paul Brown's Spa Olakino

Paul Brown's Spa Olakino and Salon has special ties to tropical ingredients such as coconut, mango and seaweed through its namesake owner's hair product line, and according to spa director Jasmine Ai Shinozawa, a licensed massage therapist, "*Olakino* means 'a state of well-being and health.'" Located in a 6,000-square-foot facility in the Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort overlooking the waves across Kalakaua Boulevard, the spacious spa has six individual massage rooms, two dual massage and facial rooms, two wet and dry treatment rooms, and five steam showers with 40 spa and five salon staffers.



Indigenous Hawaiian ingredients are staples of facials, massage and body treatments at Spa Pure.

Treatments stress the Hawaiian nature of the spa, with noni-and-aloe body wraps and papaya-and-pineapple enzyme or chocolate-and-macadamia scrubs available. Spa Olakino's Magic Island signature massage treatment "combines four modalities: traditional Hawaiian kneading with a kukui nut oil scented with ginger root, Thai stretching, shiatsu pressure points, and reflexology hands and feet point stimulation," Ai Shinozawa says. Available at \$160 for 80 minutes, the treatment aims to combine the various elements for ultimate relaxation.

Spa massage therapist Suzanne Granelli says, "You can only experience the Magic Island in Hawaii, because we're on a healing island, right by the ocean. It's a truly unique healing experience. As massage therapists, we're trying to get the person to relax so the body can heal itself, and get all of its *mana*—or 'energy'—flowing."

Mentored by an indigenous massage practitioner, Granelli explains, "Lomi lomi is inspired by nature. *Nalu* is a wave, a very soothing motion. *Makaha*—named for beaches across Oahu with big waves—is a very fast motion with forearms and elbows going up and down the back, like you're traveling up and down the body with big waves. The *puhi*—cel—glides on the lower back."

Spa Olakino also includes facials, body treatments, more massage and a variety of other offerings on its spa menu, allowing clients an array of choices to experience, and a chance to take a time out to soak up the rejuvenating environment.

Ihilani Spa

Ihilani Spa is located about 25 miles northwest of Honolulu, on Oahu's spectacular Waianae Coast in the seaside Ko Olina complex's Marriott Ihilani Resort & Spa. Its exceptional treatments feature hydrotherapies, such as the Thalasso massage, which includes saltwater pumped in fresh from the ocean, vivid colors and essential oils. During this signature offering, clients are submerged in a high-tech



Couples' treatments, nourishing treatments and peaceful solitude make the experience at Moana Lani Spa unforgettable.

tub contoured for the back and neck as 200 water and air jets rhythmically massage the body with warm water. Meanwhile, the room's mood-enhancing lights change hues.

Throughout my Deluxe Thalasso Therapy treatment, priced at \$75 and lasting for 25 minutes, spa technician Curtis Fowler would reappear, checking my progress and gently using a grand jet showerhead to spray and massage my hands and feet. Afterward, fresh water from 16 jets surrounding me in a needle shower rinsed the salt away.

Ihilani's ample facilities also feature a eucalyptus steam room, overhead Vichy shower, 104°F Roman pool, 56°F cold plunge pool and other water facilities. All this hydrotherapy soothes stressed-out souls at the tranquil spa, where the facilities are divided by gender and other spa and salon services are also available, including a *ti* leaf wrap for sunburn, hula fitness lessons and well-stocked scrub bar.

Moana Lani Spa

The gracious Moana Surfrider Hotel, now a Westin Resort & Spa, opened on Waikiki Beach in 1901. For decades, the *Hawaii Calls* radio show was broadcast live from the Moana's stately Banyan Court. Now, with the hotel's new Moana Lani Spa debuting in October 2008, this facility has become one of the newest additions to the 50th state's spa scene.

Perched just above sand, surf and catamarans, the 18,000-square-foot Moana Lani Spa offers splendid seaside vistas, two beachfront suites with Diamond Head views, three custom facial rooms, one Vichy shower,

a custom body treatment room, nine massage rooms and a fitness center, according to spa director Lena Mossman. The gender-divided facilities have whirlpools, steam rooms, dry saunas and restful lounges, with approximately 20 massage therapists and estheticians on staff. Mossman, a Hawaiian trained in indigenous massage, notes with pride that traditional practitioners provide lomi lomi massage at Moana Lani.

I partook in the spa's 50-minute, \$120 Heavenly Massage treatment, which Mossman says is, "customized to clients' needs, using a warm herbal pack placed on the back." Also available as an 80-minute service for \$180, my massage was administered by therapist Tamoko Omoto, who describes this signature treatment as, "combining Swedish, deep tissue and lomi with aromatherapy oil." Sea salt, an *ipo*—or gourd—and a seashell lie on green ti leaves atop each massage table. Omoto says, "I have passion for massage. I want to give to clients from my heart. Massage is deep; it's connecting with clients. Even if I'm tired, I get energy from clients. Always when I finish, I feel better and so refreshed. I love massage."

Moana Lani Spa's menu selection also includes unique, tranquility-inspiring body and skin care treatments called Escape Packages, body rituals, wraps and polishes, glow-inducing facials, and options for hands and feet. Continuing the peaceful, exotic atmosphere exuded by the island, this spa helps nourish and heal the body and soul.

Close to heaven

Lani, a word reappearing in the names of several these Oahu oases, translates as "heaven." How apropos, as all of these spas are healthy Hawaiian havens in a Polynesian paradise of pampering and well-being. Between the lapping waves, warm breezes and skilled touches of the island's estheticians and spa therapists, Hawaii could easily be taken as a heaven on earth. ✕

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