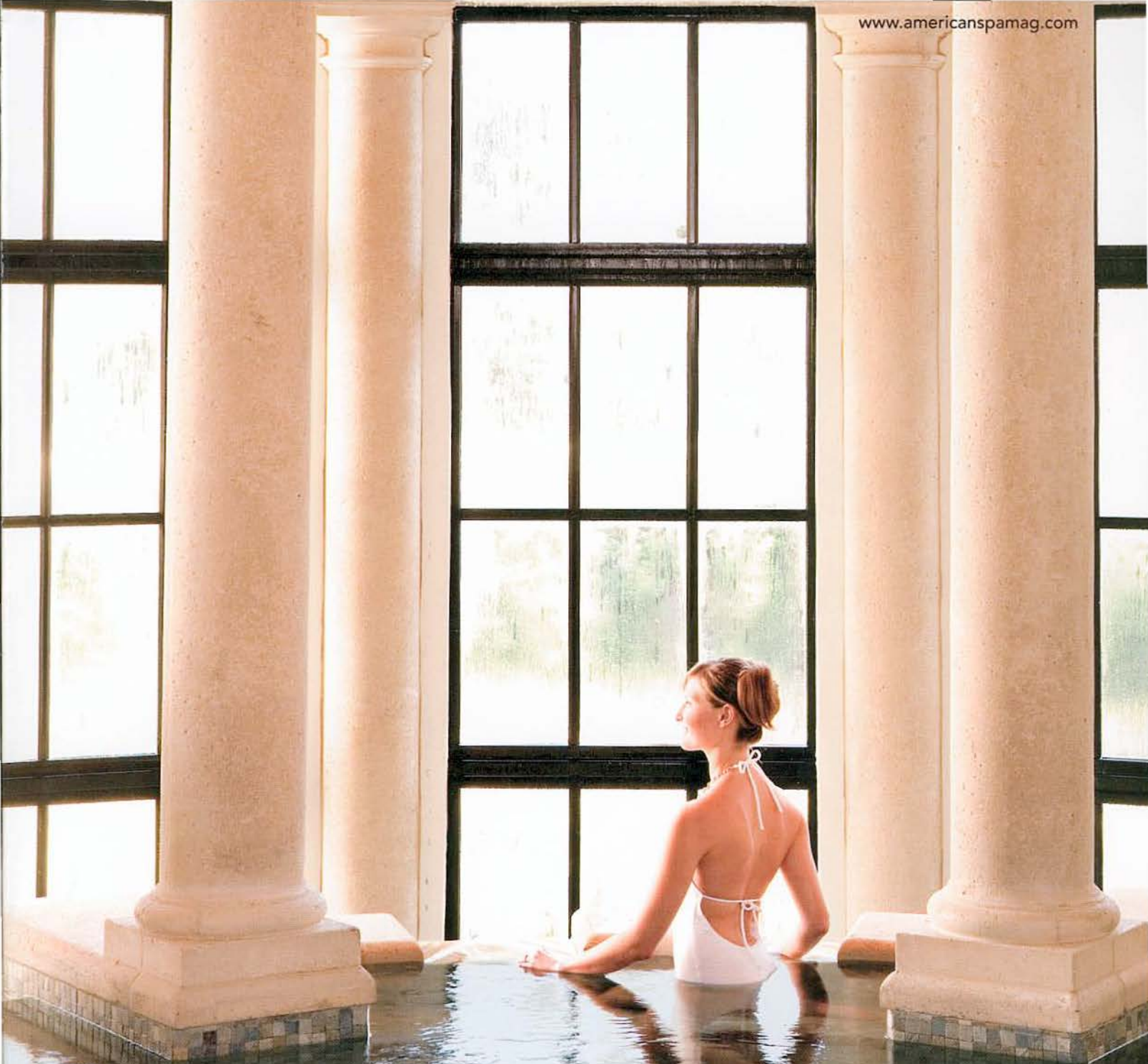


MARCH 2007

THE SPA PROFESSIONAL'S CHOICE

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## ISLAND OASIS

THE SPA AT SEA ISLAND, SEA ISLAND, GA



The spa's vast, high-ceiling swimming pool is an ideal spot for relaxing and the site of water aerobics and swimming classes.



# S

SOAKING UP  
Serenity

The new Spa at Sea Island brings simple, lavish luxury to the well-heeled guests of the historic island retreat.

**WRITTEN BY JULIE KELLER**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY BY KARYN MILLET**

FOR NEARLY EIGHT DECADES, SEA ISLAND, GA, HAS BEEN A BELOVED VACATION destination for an unpretentious yet affluent populace seeking family-friendly relaxation and inspired rejuvenation. The privately owned five-mile island boasts glistening white-sand beaches, a picturesque salt marsh nature preserve, a landscape dotted with mysterious, moss-draped oak trees, and temperate weather year-round. It is also home to The Cloister, a posh, historic hotel that blends Mediterranean and Spanish styles with Southern charm and is the heart of the pristine beach enclave. The timeless 157-room hotel was recently rebuilt, and at the centerpiece of this restoration and renovation is **The Spa at Sea Island**, a 65,000-square-foot, 23-treatment room haven that opened in November.

The spa building reflects the distinctive appearance of the original Cloister that was designed by famed architect Addison Mizner, best known for The Breakers in Palm Beach, FL. It is composed of an assortment of outdoor courtyards and indoor sanctuaries and is filled with imported woods, intricate mosaics, and hand-woven fabrics. Jim Root, general manager of spa operations and the new chairman of the International Spa Association (ISPA), says the architecture encourages the spa's mantra of "Rest, Restore, and Reunite" and "nurtures a sense of the sustainable and the contemplative."

In spite of the ornate beauty of the building, Root says he has kept the menu uncomplicated to create a spa experience that evokes a "simple and satisfying restfulness." Included is basic massage, which is the favored treatment among clients, as well as body therapies, bathing traditions, skincare, a kid's menu, and a variety of ocean-inspired offerings, such as Replenish From the Sea (\$220, 90 minutes; \$290, 120 minutes), a body session that incorporates a sea plant-infused wrap, and the Sea Creations (\$240, 90 minutes) facial, which uses pearl proteins and sea milk. "We try not to be overly creative or make promises about miracle cures," explains Root. "We truly have created a high-touch, low-tech environment."

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Skincare and body care products, as well as gift and collectible items, are available at the expansive spa boutique.

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Babor and Repêchage products, two long-time Sea Island skincare partners, as well as botanical-based Red Flower and Sodashi, two lines that Root introduced to his guests upon his arrival, are utilized in treatments. The Red Flower products are used in all of the bathing traditions, which include a Japanese Basu (\$290, 120 minutes) and a Turkish Hammam (\$290, 120 minutes), both of which use a seven-step bathing process that includes a bath and a body scrub, a body polish, another soak, a light misting, a massage with oil, and a lotion application. Other water-inspired elements include the 80-degree Water Atrium with a waterfall wall; the vast vaulted-ceiling pool area; and the Garden Atrium, which is an ideal spot for guests to socialize while dipping their feet in the picturesque pools. Root says water is an important influence at the spa for two reasons—the inspiration of its seaside location and the fact that water is life. “We have a central fountain in the spa with channels that go to each part of the building,” he says. “Symbolically, the water carries life from the fountain to the different areas, bringing them alive.”

Another important aspect of the spa is its family focus. Spa-goers of all ages, from newborns to those in their 80s and 90s, are welcome. “Mothers are now less likely to leave their children to go away on a spa vacation than at any point in the history of the American spa movement,” says Root. “The Sea Island tradition of hospitality

has always included extraordinary children’s programming. Now the Spa at Sea Island deepens that commitment to family by offering a family spa experience.”

The KidSpa program is for spa-goers ages eight to 15. It gives younger clients a foundation for personal care via such programs as Skin Care 101 (\$110, 45 minutes), which includes a cleansing, skin analysis, facial mask, massage, and recommendations for proper home care, and the Head, Hands and Feet Massage (\$110, 45 minutes), a kid-friendly soothing session. Additionally, children can partake in cooking classes, lessons on playing sports more safely, and parent-child yoga classes and nature hikes.

Outside of the treatment room, The Spa at Sea Island offers guests a true destination spa experience complete with a host of fitness and wellness opportunities. Nearly half of the spa building is dedicated to fitness, with five studios for Pilates, yoga, personal training, traditional

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The Cloister (pictured above) and the spa building blend Mediterranean and Spanish design styles.





The Garden Atrium is a hydrotherapy haven for guests looking to relax and socialize pre- and post-treatment.



Water flows from the spa's central fountain to each part of the spa building.

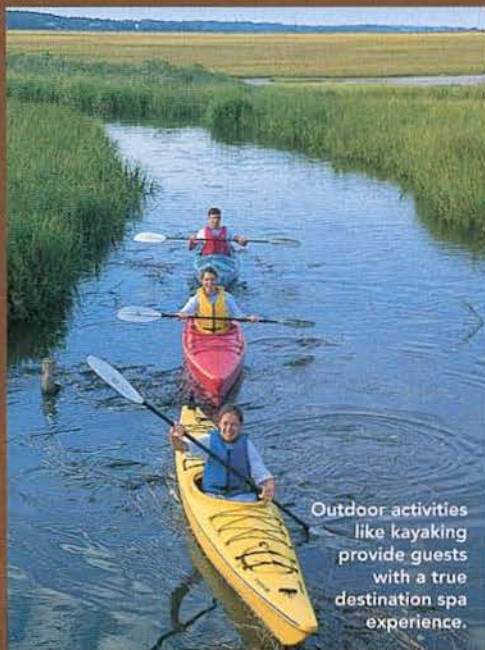
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fitness classes, and strength and cardio training. There are also squash courts, tennis courts, three golf courses, and a variety of beachside activities like boating and windsurfing. The Institute of Optimal Performance is a program tied into the golf school, which helps guests work with core flexibility and strength and offers sessions in functional fitness and optimal aging, while the resort's signature fitness and lifestyle program, called Intentions Into Actions, pairs guests with a spa guide who helps them get a kick-start on their fitness goals. Wellness-inspired cuisine created by chef Laurie Erickson, formerly with Canyon Ranch, is available at any restaurant on the property, thus furthering guests' ability to achieve a healthy, well-rounded experience.

Visiting the spa is an exclusive experience. The spa is a haven for Cloister guests and guests of The Lodge at Sea Island, the resort's 40-room sister property located on St. Simon's Island. It is also available for the residents who own private homes on the two islands and are members of the Sea Island Club. "The only way to get to Sea Island and partake in the spa is if you are a guest or a member," explains Root. "There is no such thing as a day guest at Sea Island."

To keep this discerning clientele happy, a full-time staff of 125 is on hand year-round and can accommodate up to 200 clients per day at full capacity. Moving forward, the main goal of

Root and his team is to continue to exceed the expectations of the Sea Island guests who have come to expect excellence throughout the past 78 years. "There is a tradition of stewardship and sense of place here that defines what it means to be a guest in a spa that is fourth-generation family-owned and run," says Root. "The Spa at Sea Island is an expectation, not an amenity, for our guests. We have made a commitment as a destination, and that is a responsibility that we don't take lightly." ■



Outdoor activities like kayaking provide guests with a true destination spa experience.

#### THE SPA AT SEA ISLAND

(Sea Island, GA)  
OWNER: Sea Island Company  
GENERAL MANAGER OF SPA OPERATIONS: Jim Root

#### SPACE

65,000 square feet;  
23 treatment rooms

#### CLIENTS

50% female  
50% male  
ages 8 and up

#### SERVICES

- body treatments
- craniosacral
- facials
- fitness
- hydrotherapy
- makeup
- manicures and pedicures
- massage
- packages
- reflexology
- reiki
- salon services
- waxing

#### MOST POPULAR

Sea Island Essential Massage (\$145, 60 minutes; \$220, 90 minutes; \$290, 120 minutes)

#### PRICE RANGES

\$145 for the Sea Island Essential Massage to \$640 for the two-person, 120-minute Reunite, The Together Suite package

#### PRODUCTS

- Babor
- Chadsworth & Haig robes
- Red Flower
- Repêchage
- Sodashi

#### EQUIPMENT

- Cybex
- Kohler
- Living Earth Crafts
- Paramount
- Power Plate
- Precor
- True Fitness
- Waterworks

#### ARCHITECT

Peter Capone (Sea Island, GA)

#### INTERIOR DESIGNER

Hughes Design Associates (McLean, VA)