



SEEDONA

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**Rejuvenate!
Sedona's Top Spa Therapists**

After years of spa treatments, we've found it's not what you know but who you know. meet six local BODY AND SKIN wizards who time and again will make you feel like a million bucks.

BY ERIKA AYN FINCH; PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBBIE WEINKAUFF

WE'VE COME TO A CONCLUSION ABOUT SPAS: No matter how good the treatment, it's the therapist who matters most. That's why we've dedicated this year's annual Sedona Monthly spa issue to introducing you to six spa therapists who stand out in a town blessed with many talented practitioners. After years of spagoing, we find we return to this group again and again to help us look and feel our best. Three have private practices (advantage: intimacy); three work at local spas (advantage: pampering). Meet Thea Draaisma, who performs out-of-this-world massages and body treatments; Alicia Lyons, who (literally) wrote the book on nail care; Jim Waddington, whose compassion and concern comes through in his massage; Katharine Stewart, Chinese medicine guru; Elke Waehrisch, spa industry expert; and Katherine Doerner, an esthetician who brings out the best in your skin. You'll have to book your treatment weeks in advance, but we know it'll be worth the wait.

Thea Draaisma: A Spa for You Sedona Day Spa

Don't let Thea Draaisma's petite stature fool you: You'll be feeling the powerful imprint of her cool, strong fingers for days after your massage. Thea was born in Holland and came to the U.S. when she was 26. She'd visited Sedona in 1990, and in 1996 she recalls waking up three days in a row with an image of the red rocks in her mind. A few weeks later she loaded up her Ford Escort, left New York and her job as a corporate travel agent, and parked for good in Sedona. Her interest in bodywork began in 1978 with a three-day massage course in India. In 1988 she studied reflexology in New York, then enrolled at the Trager Institute where she became a certified Trager practitioner (the Trager Approach involves movement techniques geared toward relaxation, physical mobility, and mental clarity).



As a NCBTMB certified therapist Thea was formerly the lead massage therapist at Hilton Sedona, working at the resort until September 2006 when she left to open A Spa for You in West Sedona. "I had a lot of ideas I wanted to explore after being [at the Hilton] for seven years," she says. "I wanted to develop an affordable program for locals and place where therapists would love to work."

A Spa for You is located in a quiet neighborhood off of 89A, offering a serene interior with pale blue décor, soft abstract art on the walls, and a trickling fountain. Thea and her therapists also will go to visit clients in their home, B&B or hotel room. Signature treatments include the Sedona Experience, which incorporates chakra (the seven main pulse points on the body) balancing and a combination of Trager, Swedish, therapeutic, and connective tissue massage incorporating hot rocks, cool marble stones, and even a 10,000-year-old fossilized mammoth bone. Thea also recently became certified in Japanese facial massage technique and is working on adding Jin Shin Jyutsu to her repertoire.

Soft-spoken Thea says owning her own spa has made her realize how important it is to take care of herself – she gets regular massages too. "It never stops when you own your own spa," she says, her blue eyes shining. "There has to be a balance, which is what we teach others but we also need to do it ourselves. I want to do it all but I have to remember to take care of myself."

"Trager is the foundation of what I do," explains soft-spoken Thea, her Dutch accent still detectable. "It's about respect toward the body and inside out body work. When the nervous system relaxes the body's own intelligence does its work and we facilitate the healing. That's the joy of bodywork – I can feel the tissue changing under my fingers. It's art."

Thea Draaisma

A Spa for You

28 Kayenta Ct., Suite #2 in West Sedona

928-282-3895  928-282-3895 FREE

www.aspaforyou.com

Spa appointments taken seven days a week from
8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Massages, wraps, Ayurvedic treatments, chakra balancing and Japanese facial massages

Alicia Lyons: Amara Resort and Spa

"I'm sort of the OCD nail tech," says Alicia Lyons as she carefully examines an expertly filed fingernail. "I'm detail-oriented and I'm here to educate clients on their nails – the best way to treat them and take care of them."

Alicia, cosmetologist and senior nail technician at Amara Resort and Spa, began doing nails in 1982. She attended beauty school as part of high school in Pennsylvania and became a licensed cosmetologist. She's seen every trend in the nail industry come and go, competed in New York and Las Vegas in acrylic and gel nails, and recently finished writing a book titled *The Secret of Beautiful Natural Nails or How to Say Goodbye to Artificial Nails and Peeling Nails Forever*. She moved to Arizona six years ago and has been at Amara since October 2006, two months before the spa opened.



Alicia says the results of her manicures (up to 60 minutes) can last up to two weeks while her pedicures (up to 90 minutes) last four to six weeks. If you aren't capable of taking care of your own nails (Alicia sees a fair amount of elderly customers), she says it's a good idea to see a professional once a week. Alicia gives herself manicures and pedicures on a regular basis. In this warm, sunny climate, she gives manicures and pedicures all year round and often works on men trying the services for the first time. Alicia, her long red hair pulled back from her face, smiles at that, adding, "It certainly won't be their last manicure or pedicure."

Alicia feels strongly about knowing your nail tech – she's not a fan of the discount shops that have become popular over the past ten years. She says it's a challenge to educate clients on the risks of visiting a nail salon that doesn't properly sanitize its instruments – Alicia sanitizes all her implements and uses new nail files and foot files on each person. If a spa pedicure like those offered at Amara doesn't fit your budget, she advises to do your own and invest in high-quality cuticle oil, a good top coat, and, if you have foot problems, a foot file to get rid of calluses. For polish, Alicia says you get your money's worth with brands such as OPI, Creative Nails, and Orly.

After more than 25 years in the nail-care business, Alicia says the manicures and pedicures at Amara are the best she's ever done. "They are the most hydrating and nourishing treatments for your hands and feet, especially the deluxe manicures and pedicures using Elemis products. Maybe you've had a pedicure with a paraffin wax – that's the Cadillac of pedicures – but if you're looking for a Rolls-Royce you come here."

Alicia Lyons
Amara Resort and Spa
310 N. Hwy 89A in Uptown Sedona

928-282-4828  928-282-4828 FREE

www.amararesort.com

By appointment,

*Wed. to Sat., 8 a.m.
to 8 p.m.; and
Sun., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Manicures, pedicures, makeup application, and facials*

Jim Waddington: Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women made up 84 percent of the massage therapist work force in 2006. So how does a man who has been working in the field since his graduation from Phoenix Therapeutic Massage College in 1995 fare? Jim Waddington smiles at the question. "I think in the beginning it was harder because I was self-conscious about it, but it's changing. Now people want me because they think I'll apply more pressure, though that's not necessarily true. If I can get a woman who's apprehensive to the table I can usually convert her."

Jim became interested in massage via a girlfriend who was a therapist – previously, he owned a roof-trussing company in Illinois, painted houses, and worked as a cook. After completing his schooling in Phoenix and practicing in the Valley for a few years he was hired at The Ridge Spa and Racquet Club in 2000. When Hilton Sedona Resort and Spa bought the club in 2001, Jim stayed. He now works at the Hilton three days a week and divides the rest of his time between his private practice (he travels to see his clients, and is building a studio at his 100-year-old Clarkdale home), making house calls at local B&Bs, and volunteering at Sedona Winds retirement home. His specialties include therapeutic, Swedish, deep tissue, pre-natal, and sports massage, and he's taken an interest in craniosacral therapy, where pressure is applied to specific points on the head for utter relaxation.




"My specialty at the Hilton has to be the Integrated Massage, which uses Swedish and deep massage techniques," Jim says. "It's very therapeutic but intention is more important than pressure. Once the muscles are warmed up the pressure is involuntary and you are drawn to certain parts of the body for release. It's important to work with someone who isn't resistant and who works with you. If you're working against the grain the person can get hurt."

Jim is a firm believer that massage isn't just a luxury for well-to-do spa goers but a necessity for everyone. He says in his private practice he sees everyone from a client with Parkinson's to a woman who's had a standing weekly appointment for five years. He cites benefits such as improved circulation, detoxification, and, perhaps most often overlooked, taking time out for yourself. "When you're on the table it's your time, no one else's. Bob Hope once said all he needed to be happy was laughter and massage therapy – he had a massage therapist on his staff – and I think that says it all."

Jim Waddington

Hilton Sedona

90 Ridgetrail Dr. in the Village of Oak Creek

928-284-6900  928-284-6900 FREE

www.hiltonsedonaspa.com

Jim works at the Hilton Thurs. to Sat. from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Massages, wraps, scrubs, LaStone Therapy, chakra balancing and Ayurvedic treatments

Katharine Stewart: Katharine Stewart Acupuncture

Does acupuncture belong in a spa? Katharine Stewart, who practices the Chinese medicinal technique from her home studio in Uptown and at Sedona Spa at Los Abrigados, has no doubt. "It's a safe environment and it allows the therapist to tell you how acupuncture reduces stress and makes you feel rejuvenated," she says.

Acupuncturists insert ultrafine needles into specific body points, adjusting the flow of energy (Qi) to restore harmony. Katharine was introduced to it in her early 20s while suffering from chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia. Even though she says the needles unnerved her – "I was shaking the first time," she admits – she tried acupuncture treatment at the urging of a friend. After two to three sessions a week for six weeks she felt a lot better and was sold on the benefits. In 1990, she graduated from the Santa Barbara College of Oriental Medicine and opened her own practice. After ten years teaching acupuncture in Phoenix she moved to Sedona in 2005. Her soothing home studio is painted seafoam green and cream with Chinese lanterns hanging from the ceiling.

Most patients seek pain relief but Katharine also treats allergies, asthma, PMS and menstrual problems, digestive issues, and colds and flus. Katharine is also an herbalist with a fully stocked pharmacy and she practices cupping, a Chinese healing technique using heated cups.

Katharine is quick to say acupuncture does not cure all problems for everyone, but she has amazing stories of how it helped a pilot who could barely walk and a woman with fertility problems. She says most ailments can be cured in five to ten sessions and often she will counsel clients on changes in diet, especially if they are suffering from an inflammatory illness. Others come to Katharine when they have a general feeling of malaise – when's the last time you were able to see your doctor when you were just feeling icky? "It's easier to treat something before it turns into a disease," says Katharine. "In China they have seasonal treatments to keep the body from getting sick – we don't value that as much here in the West."

that brings deep stagnation, trauma, and tension in the body to the surface using "fire cups," glass cups heated to create a vacuum and then placed on the patient's back. They leave nasty-looking welts that apparently became all the rage several years ago when actress Gwyneth Paltrow wore a backless dress to a New York premiere, showing off her dark purple circles. "Everyone started calling," laughs Katharine.

Clients also come in for regular stress relief and maintenance.

Katharine Stewart

Katharine Stewart Acupuncture



928-284-1872  928-284-1872 FREE

Appointments taken

Mon. to Fri., from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Acupuncture, acumassage (acupuncture coupled with Swedish massage), cupping, and herbs

Elke Waehrisch: Sedona's New Day Spa



Elke Waehrisch, better known as Ritmo to clients of New Day Spa, moved to Sedona from Germany four years ago and immediately immersed herself in the local spa scene. She became co-owner of Body Bliss, the local company that produces organic products used at many spas in Red Rock Country, including New Day Spa, where Elke began working part-time. Elke took a weekend course in massage when she was young and spent several months learning deep tissue massage and structural balance in Italy, eventually opening a private practice in Germany. But she says she didn't fully understand the spa business until she began working at New Day Spa.

"I learned there are different elements to a spa here in the U.S.," she says, her German accent still audible.

"It's not just about the products or the treatments but the details. Clients want to relax from the beginning. They want a beautiful space with a friendly staff – they need to be pampered and treated like a queen but still have fun. I enjoy how much fun people have at a spa and I think the relaxation they achieve is a miracle."

Elke now spends much of her time training the 15 therapists at New Day Spa, which completed a major remodeling and expansion a few months ago. It now includes a large, contemporary waiting room with a free snack bar, a women's lounge with showers and a sauna, and a state-of-the-art vichy shower room. Elke says the entire staff comes up with new treatments – the spa debuted a brand-new menu last month. She says she loves giving body treatments because it calms her almost as much as it calms her client. "It's just me and [the client]," she says. "It's relaxing and calming to be present in what you are doing."

Elke says she receives massages about once a week through the training she conducts at New Day Spa. If you have aches and pains, Elke recommends massage every two weeks. Otherwise, she says, "come as often as you like." When asked whether massage and spa treatments are a necessity or luxury she smiles and admits it's a hard question to answer. "For a lot of people it's a luxury," she says. "I personally think it's a necessity. It's necessary for me because, even though I try to eat good and work out, I still feel tension. Massage helps me relax, get rid of pain, and move energy."

After years of working in a spa, developing spa products and training therapists, Elke has a strong sense of how a person should spa. She recommends you show up early to sit, relax, drink tea, and use the sauna ("a space of relaxation where your problems fade away and your muscles relax"). Don't make any business appointments after your treatment so you can "stay in the mood." Wear sports clothes or anything that makes you

feel comfy and cozy.

It's obvious Elke is a bit shy about being singled out as one of the premier therapists in town but she's enthusiastic when it comes to describing treatments offered at Sedona's New Day Spa and the therapists she works with. "Everyone here has so much training and they are each fantastic at different modalities," she says. "It's such a joyful place to work."

Elke Waehrisch
Sedona's New Day Spa
1449 W. Hwy 89A
in West Sedona

928-282-7502  928-282-7502 FREE
www.sedonanewdayspa.com

The spa is open seven days a week, 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Elke's hours vary. Massage and body treatments including wraps and scrubs

Katherine Doerner: Skin Care By Katherine



A general rule of thumb: Always choose a hair stylist with a great 'do and an esthetician with great skin. Katherine Doerner's glowing complexion tells you all you need to know (though she'll undoubtedly blush when she reads this). Katherine worked at Complexions Day Spa in West Sedona for more than three years before opening Skin Care by Katherine at her home in the Village of Oak Creek – it has better red rock views than many resort spas in town. The cozy space, disconnected from the main house, has a bright purple ceiling, cherry wood furniture, potted orchids, and a big poster of Marilyn Monroe hanging on a wall. Katherine flashes her pearly whites in her surroundings and says she couldn't be happier.

"I wanted to work from home to be more available for my children and just for the convenience," she says. "I am blessed but truly I pictured it this way – I manifested what I needed and knew I could do. It's only going to get better."

Katherine began as a part-time Lancome makeup artist in Santa Barbara, Calif., while working as a contract flight attendant. At the Lancome counter she saw an esthetician give a facial for the first time and she was sold. She enrolled in the Lu Ross Academy in Ventura and received her esthetician's certificate and license in 1990. She moved to Sedona in 2003 for the "beauty, clean air, different pace, and for my kids."

Skin Care by Katherine doesn't offer a traditional spa menu – most facials are tailored to the client. Waxing is a specialty; Katherine was trained in the art of eyebrow shaping by Anastasia Soare, the Beverly Hills eyebrow guru who sculpts the brows of J. Lo, Oprah, and Madonna.

"I think if a client is going to spend their time and money, the treatment should make a

difference," she says. "My clients range from men who don't want to go to a salon or spa to teenagers wanting eyebrow shaping to women looking for age-defying solutions."

As we spoke, Katherine was preparing for classes on acupressure facelifts, a non-invasive procedure using massage to encourage facial circulation. She says she's come to view facials as more than pampering. "It's always been a bit of a luxury, especially in this country, which is unfortunate," she says. "In France, it's part of your health care.

I believe facials help you maintain good health as well as educate you about your skin and what feels good. It's all part of good grooming, an example you pass on to your children."

Katherine Doerner

Skin Care by Katherine

928-301-3260  928-301-3260 FREE

Email her at gkdoerner@msn.com

Appointments taken Mon., Tues., Thurs., and Fri. from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

(later appointments may be able to be arranged) Facials, waxing and eyebrow shaping

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