

SAMUI HOLIDAY

MAGAZINE



RUN FOR IT

The annual Four Seasons Cancer Care
Charity Fun-Run

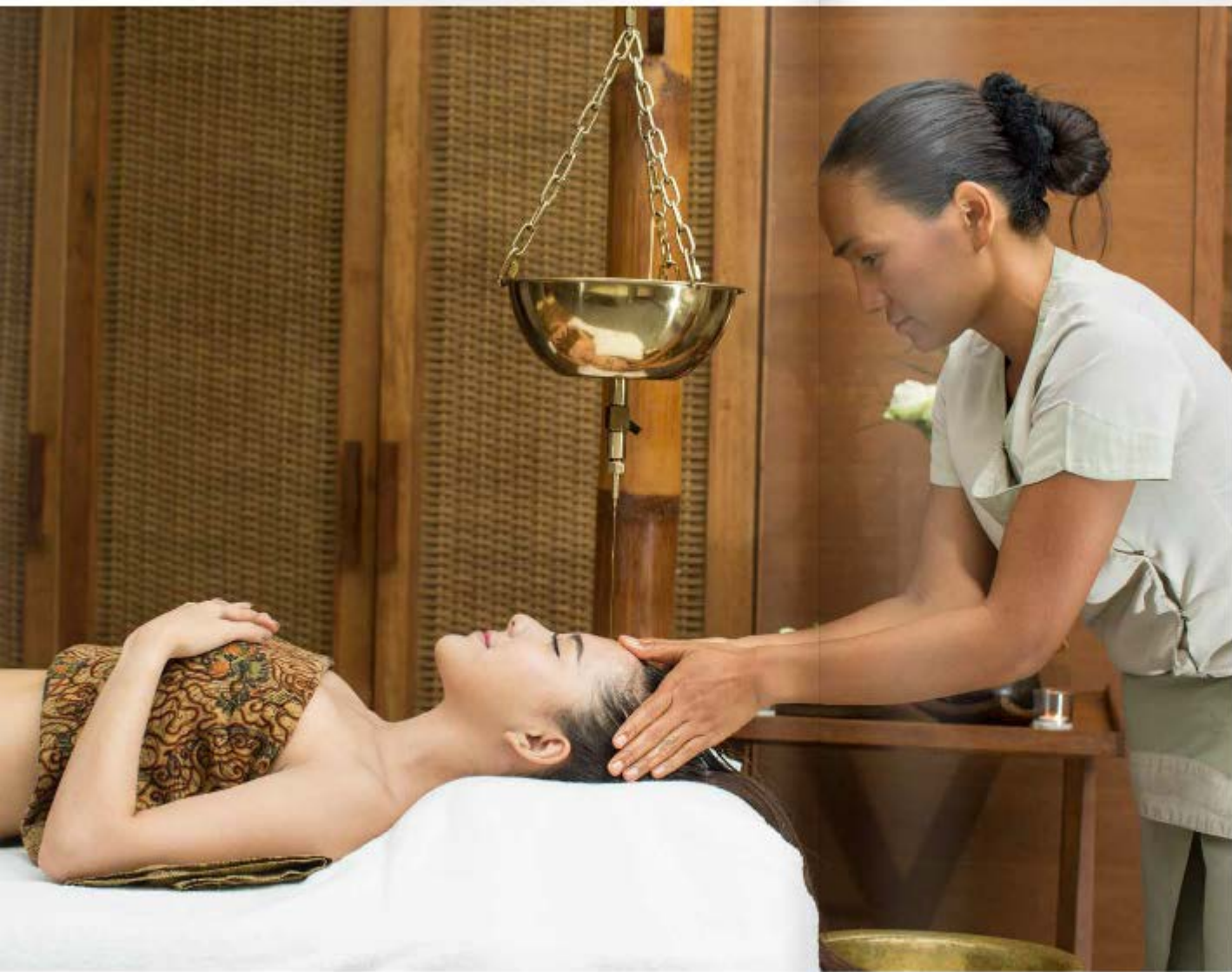
MYSTIC MOUNTAIN

Up in Samui's hills, the Magic Garden is a place
where myths have literally become rock-solid.



OUT OF THIS WORLD

This special spa package at **Hansar's LUXSA Spa** will lift you right out of your body!



There are all sorts of spas. Some will offer a sauna, a facial, and you can get a manicure or massage, too. Others are more holistic, touching onto ancient Chinese or Ayurvedic approaches, predating to be aware of your whole body, not just your aching feet, and pointing to re-energise and balance your chakras. The thing is – what to believe. Just check the number of roadside massage shops offering ‘reflexology’ when all they’re really doing is a foot rub. Sauna control therapy? A head massage. But not at Haniwa.

Haniwa Samsat is a 3-star resort, located on the beachfront at Bophut, at the far end of the popular Fushanani Village. It’s one of the new wave of luxurious holiday resorts, where the abstracted goldleaf and marble has given way to serene understatement. Natural timber and fabric abound, carefully complemented by quiet and elegant ethnic artwork. There is a gourmet restaurant with a world-class chef, but you’d walk right past it unless you were aware, the entire resort has a quiet confidence that doesn’t need shouting about. And that applies to its world-class spa, too.

The Haniwa Hospitality Group is a small and independent organisation, with just six such exclusive resorts and hotels in Thailand. The emphasis is on the quality of service, the relaxed luxury of their rooms, the top-notch restaurant, plus each has its own spa, all of which go under the brand name of ‘JUNSA’. This prompts the assumption that all the spas are the same, use the same products, and offer the same kind of programs. This just couldn’t be further from the truth.

Khun Jen has been the spa manager of the Samsat JUNSA ever since it opened. And it’s a measure of her integrity (and that of the entire resort) and the way it all works that when I asked her about the superlative now-combined treatment package and how it was put together, she modestly replied that it was all down to teamwork. This program isn’t something you’ll find elsewhere on the menu of the other spas. It’s been created by Khun Jen and her team, here at Samsat. And if you need any more affirmation of the excellence of the Samsat spa, it not only won the World Luxury Spas Award for all of Asia in 2014, but it came in a runner-up position last year, only managing to be judged the ‘Best in Thailand’!

“This combined package of treatments lasts over two and a half hours,” Khun Jen explained. “It creates a flow of energy which begins with the foot reflexology, with nerve and energy centres on the feet being triggered, then continues into the ‘Sensitiser’ massage of the intestine and stomach, releasing further stored tension and adding to the initial emotional release of the reflexology. Then finally there is a period of ‘Shivohara’. This induces a semi-trance-like state where the mind releases fundamental emotional images stored in the limbic system of the cortex, allowing release and a purging of these trapped energies – the result is a tranquil sense of well-being and the restoring of the energy equilibrium that we all need to be centred.”



Right then! If you've never experienced an Ayurvedic treatment before, you'll probably want to reserve judgement. And correctly so, because such claims are easily made. Beware of any place that simply brings you in and lays you down. You need to be assessed first. Your heart rate and blood pressure checked. Do you have any medical conditions? Allergies? Injuries? Any areas of the body that are sensitive? Are you taking any medication? And then there's a personality typing to determine what is your dominant element, earth, fire, air or water! And properly done, it will not achieve this by classing you as 'fire' merely because you like the colour red!

At Harori, this evaluation determines what mixture of essential oils will be used to harmonise your treatment. And it all begins in a cool, quiet room (ask to call the pre-recorded spa tape if you want) with a highly capable masseuse. She'll work gently to begin with, stroking and flexing your feet. You'll relax. Then she'll gradually vary the pressure, seeking out the pressure and nerve points, and your fingers and arms will twitch and tingle in response. This foot massage is a whole different thing, superficial and mechanical, and needing little in the way of sensitivity or

awareness. This reflexology treatment is noted with and complementary to what is about to follow.

Then to the energy centres in the stomach and gut. This is not relaxing. This is the Ayurvedic equivalent of scratching your head at a really annoying tick. It's a great relief, but it's on the edge of hurting. Her thumbs will probe and locate tension points, then dig in and smooth them out. But while your body is instinctively tensing, you'll also find that your mind is starting to float.

And so to the Shirosana. Done properly, this will send you to a mental place somewhere between your forehead nerves and the stars above. You won't fall asleep, you'll be aware of the hum of the air conditioning, the occasional voice outside and the whir of clothing as your masseuse moves. But you'll be having waking dreams at the same time. Flashbacks to times in your past – the face of a forgotten lover, or image of your baby daughter's toy – a flow of scenes melting into each other. You'll be aware of the feather-touch of her fingers on your head – but realise you can't distinguish between this and the steady fall of body-

temperature of hot air thickly steaming onto your forehead. She'll reach under you, from behind to direct the energy from your gut, via your shoulders, sensing and working gently on the muscle knots, and conveying her physical touch with your psychic state. All of this really works. It's utter bliss.

And then into the steam room. The mental displacement continues. Wrap your towel around you and you'll suddenly be in warm, comforting sunshine. But don't close it down at this point. Don't go back and watch television. Don't take a shower or scrub the oil out of your hair, or go on Facebook, or go to a disco, or drink cocktails in the bar. Leave that till tomorrow. Make the absolute most of finding yourself, for a time, totally out of this world!

Rob De Wet

For reservations or further information, telephone 0 7724 3511
www.harori.co.za