



As a freelance travel writer I've had the opportunity to experience quite a few luxury spas during my travels. Below are three of my all-time favorite spa experiences.

Laniwai Spa at Disney's Aulani Resort in Hawaii

My #1 favorite spa adventure is Disney's Laniwai Spa at Disney's Aulani Resort & Spa in Olina, Hawaii. The word laniwai means "freshwater heaven" in the Hawaiian language and this spa truly delivers that for guests. The 18,000-square-foot indoor spa area includes a Mikimiki Fitness Center, 15 treatment rooms, men and women's dressing rooms with eucalyptus-infused steam rooms, dry saunas and relaxation rooms.

In the ladies relaxation room, I couldn't resist the chocolate covered blueberries and raspberries from the Honolulu Chocolate Company. My manicure/pedicure was in the salon area where I relaxed in a massage chair while sipping Mamaki Tea (local Hawaiian tea) and eating a carrot zucchini muffin.

Next, I chose to have the traditional LomiLomi massage that is unique to Hawaii. This heated stone massage combines rhythmic gliding with soothing hot stones to relax the muscles.

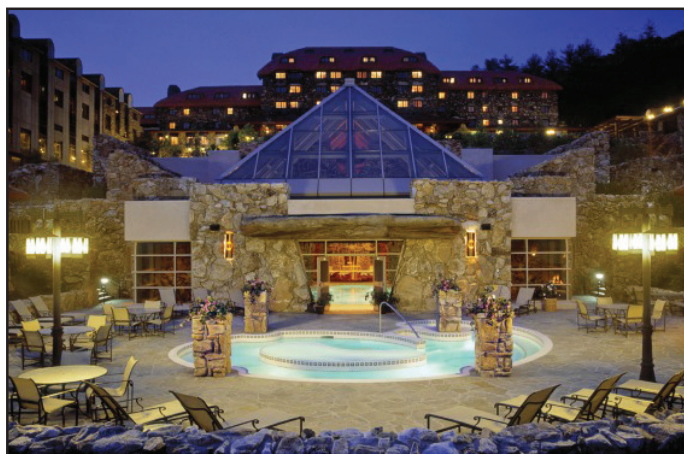
The 5,000-square-foot Kula Wai Hydrotherapy Garden featuring vitality baths, herbal pools, a reflexology path and six unique Waterfall Rain Showers is my very favorite part of Laniwai. There's also a Pula Bar (outdoor mixology station) where I combined herbs and essential oils to make a customized body polish/scrub to take home with me as a remembrance of my visit to Laniwai.

Also, Laniwai is a trendsetter offering the first teen spa in Hawaii, Painted Sky. The separate spa area features a yogurt bar, perfume bar, massages, manicures/pedicures, body therapies and teen events.

The Spa at the Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville, NC

My second favorite spa is in my very own home state of North Carolina. Located in the mountain town of Asheville, the 100+ year-old, AAA Four-Diamond Omni Grove Park Resort & Spa is known for its elegance and southern charm.

The 43,000-square-foot unique subterranean spa has twenty water features including numerous mineral-based pools, underwater music and cavernous rock walls and arches. The large outdoor whirlpool overlooking the Blue Ridge Mountains was a surreal experience, especially in the winter with snow falling all around.





One of the spa's signature services is the Mountain View Massage offered in their outdoor pagoda overlooking the mountains. Another signature treatment is Fire, Rock, Water and Light, a rejuvenating full body exfoliation, softening soak, healing body masque and Vichy waterfall massage. Even if you're not staying at the resort, weekday spa passes can be purchased. A day lounging in this unique spa is one of my favorite things to do.

The Spa at Travaasa Hana, Maui, HI

We head back to Hawaii to the island of Maui and to the small town of Hana, one of the "last truly Hawaiian places" for another favorite spa adventure. The beautiful setting and low-key atmosphere of this resort is what makes it my third choice.

After a long day's scenic drive over the famous Hana Highway, I arrived at Travaasa Hana and was escorted from my private ocean bungalow to the spa via a golf cart (the only mode of transportation throughout the resort). The most stunning aspect of the spa is the lava-rock whirlpool and garden setting with lounge chairs that overlook Hana Bay. After a soak in the whirlpool, I sank into the comfortable lounge chair and was almost lured asleep by the quietness of my surroundings.

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Several spa services are available but one of the most popular is the rejuvenating rose ritual named after the state flower of Hawaii, the Lokelani rose. This luxurious body treatment uses organic roses and decadent rose scented oils. It begins with a gentle exfoliating milk scrub followed by a relaxing massage and rejuvenating facial mask.

When I returned to my cottage, I caught a whiff of a plumeria flower that had been placed by my bedside along with a postcard-size relaxation card that encouraged me to take 10 minutes for meditation before bed. As I slipped beneath the organic linens on my bamboo platform bed, I felt the gentle trade winds blow through the cottage. Soon, the nightly tropical rain showers lured me to sleep where I dreamed of staying in this idyllic place so far removed from the hustle and bustle of the world.

Publisher of www.Southern-Traveller.com, Sandra Chambers is a freelance writer for several regional and local lifestyle publications, and is a member of the International Food, Wine & Travel Writer's Association. Sandra has been both a writer and an educator for most of her life. In addition to travel writing, Sandra has written hundreds of cover stories, features, profiles and news stories and taught journalism in high school.

