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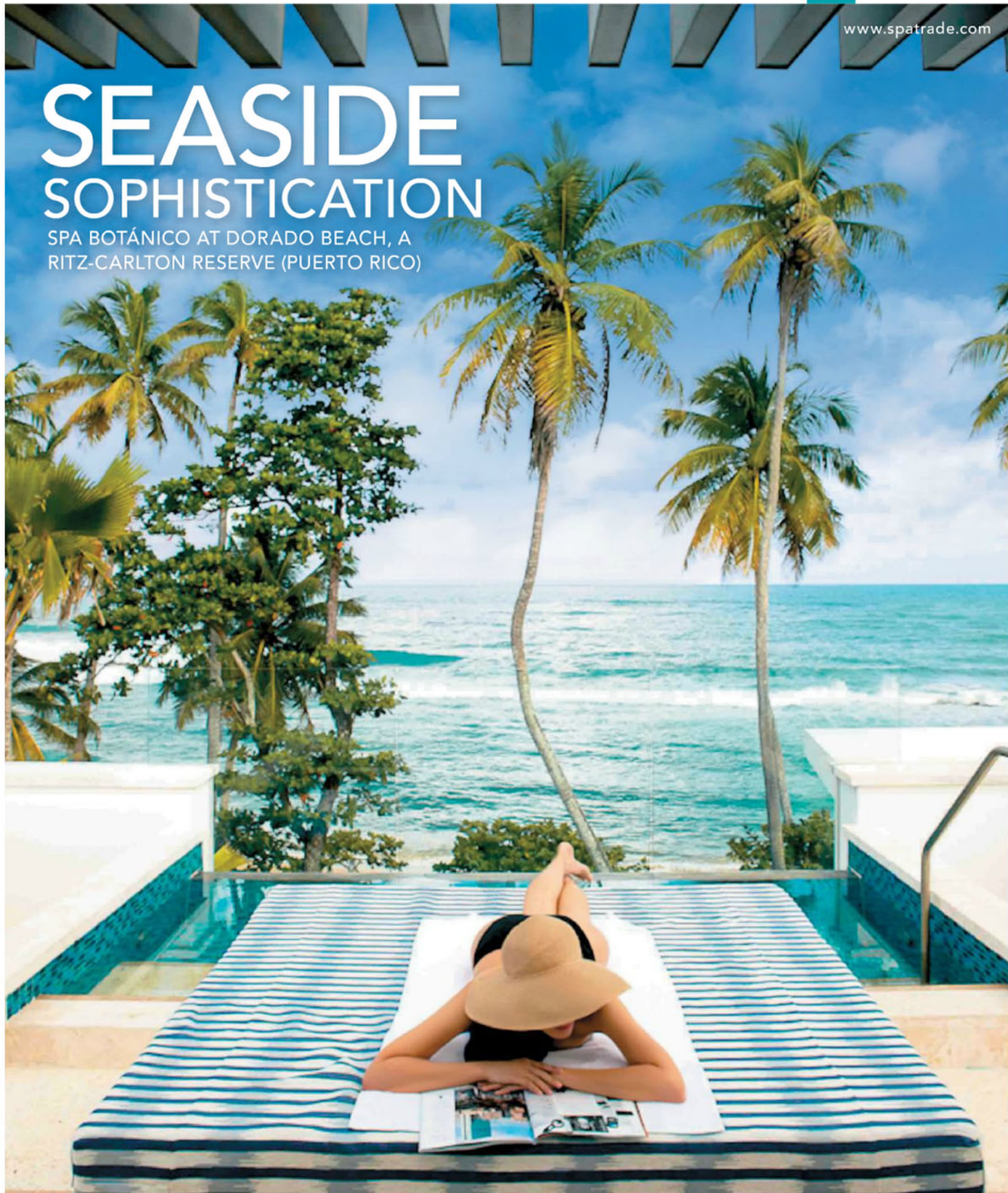
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## SEASIDE SOPHISTICATION

SPA BOTÁNICO AT DORADO BEACH, A  
RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE (PUERTO RICO)



[ eye on bridal ]



## Bridal Bliss

Every bride and groom wants to look and feel their best for their Big Day. Here's how your spa can help them.

**GOOD NEWS FOR SPAS: BRIDES HAVE** always been big spenders. From the invitations to the wedding cake to the flowers, couples plan their weddings down to the last detail and wield more-than-your-average everyday budgets. "Brides are a fairly untapped market in the spa industry, though they have been big spenders in the salon world for years," says Jessica Timberlake, spa director at **The Spa at Laguna Cliffs** at the Laguna Cliffs Marriott Resort & Spa (Dana Point, CA). According to many estheticians, the soon-to-be-wed have gone beyond booking standard manicures, makeup, and hairstyling. The trend has extended to pre-ceremony fitness regimens, bridal party packages, and post-wedding pick-me-ups. Many spas, in a bid to capitalize on the sector, are getting creative about picking up a slice of the pie.

For starters, spas are tapping into the market far ahead of the Big Day. **ESPA** at The Ritz-Carlton, Powerscourt (Enniskerry, Ireland), for example,

launched an overnight bridal boot camp that includes a personalized fitness assessment, a nutritional consultation, and choice of a fitness class such as kettle bells, aqua aerobics, or spinning. More than just a crash course or a quick fix, the package, best booked four or five months before the wedding, provides lifestyle recommendations to be practiced right up until the day of the ceremony. That fit look that the bride is sporting? Not an overnight phenomenon, according to spa manager Kellie Ann Hayden.

Bachelorette or bridesmaid spa parties not only have the potential to grow into robust revenue generators, they can also be good ways to get future wedding referrals and day spa business, according to Laura Parsons, director of **ZaSpa** at the Hotel Zaza (Houston, TX), who has organized everything from intimate gatherings with just two or three participants to more lavish days with 15 to 20 attendees,

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"Brides are a fairly **untapped market in the spa industry,** though they have been big spenders in the salon world for years."

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each with four or five appointments. “Spa sessions during the day of the wedding are a great option,” adds Bonnie Baker, spa director at the **Hacienda Spa** at the Hacienda Beach Club & Residences (Cabo San Lucas, Mexico). “They promote the spa as a broader resource and make it an integral part of the wedding experience.” At Hotel ZaZa, Parsons moved away from group discounting and instead decided to focus on added value. This year, she introduced branded party favors at \$10, \$20, and \$25 price points that she’ll throw in with the spa’s compliments for some of her best customers.

Authenticity and customization are key when catering to the bridal market. “The biggest mistake that spas can make is to do what everybody else is doing,” says Maggie Wagner, senior director of spa and retail of the Travaasa Experiential Resorts (Hana, Maui, and Austin, TX). “Tried-and-true methods are tired. People want something new and fresh.” The Travaasa Spas build personalized packages from a menu of unique treatments, such as the Rejuvenating Clay and Aloe Wrap (\$180, 80 minutes). Even in “wedding mill” destinations like the Caribbean, bridal customers are seeking

more intimate and pared-down events. The new Trident Hotel, in Port Antonio, Jamaica, follows the “not-one-size-fits-all” model. Besides offering buy-outs of an eight-room chateau, the hotel starts its wedding packages with the knitty-gritty basics (bouquet, cake, hairstyling, makeup), then adds onto the services according to client demand.

That said, at destination wedding resorts, bridal packages can be a big selling point. Couples flying in from out of town—especially to unfamiliar destinations—are looking to resorts for the no-hassle, one-stop wedding shop. “Couples won’t know the local vendors and would prefer if the resort makes all the arrangements, according to Christina Yumul, public relations director for Grand Wailea (Maui).

Spas at destination weddings resorts supplement their businesses by targeting customers closer to home, and likewise, local spas dip into some of the resorts’ wedding business. Spa director Donna Mastrianni of **The Spa at Sea Island** (Georgia) recommends that local spas connect with hotels with wedding services. “Relationships make the wedding world,” she says. “If people hear about

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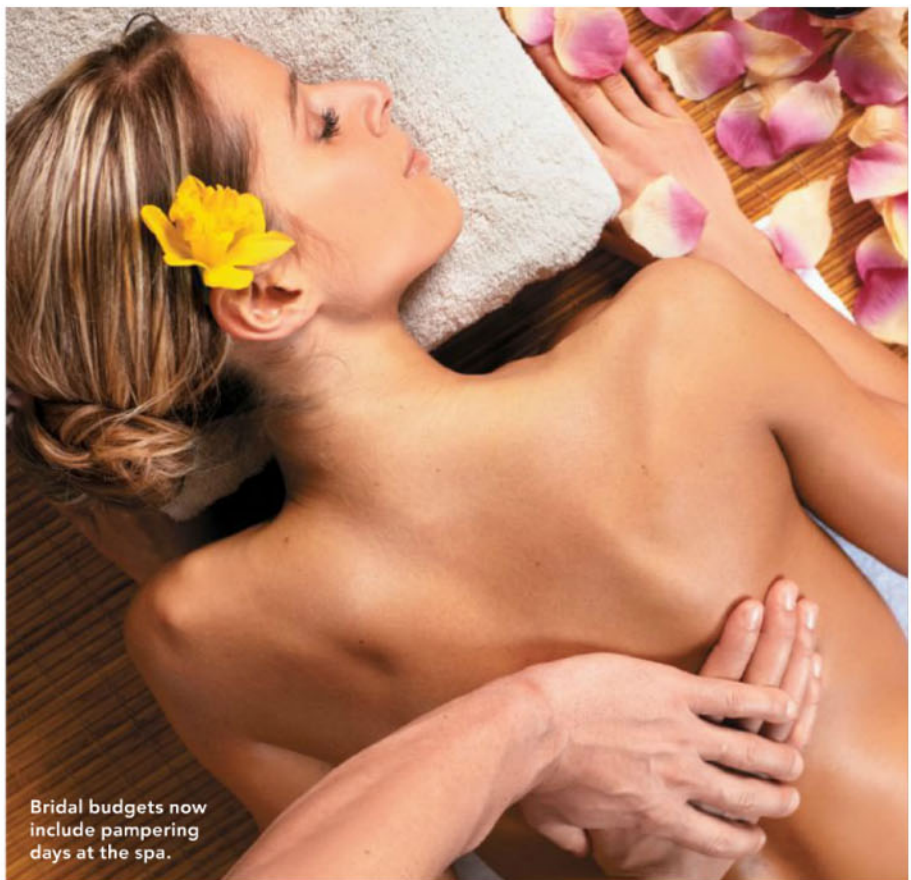
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## [ eye on bridal ]

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a premier spot, they are going to go to it.” At 40,000 square feet, the **Spa Grande** at Grand Wailea is exactly that. Though not everyone opts for a ceremony at the property, many choose to book their spa treatments there. Additionally, the Grand Wailea hosts an annual bridal event on its premises, which showcases photographers, florists, and other vendors to the local market. For out-of-towners, the property runs a national promotion with *The Knot* and Marchesa, a high-end bridal dress designer. The winner—culled from the databases of the three sponsors—gets a destination wedding and gown. The investment, though costly, goes a long way, according to Yumul, as the resort can promote the winners for up to a year, and it cultivates brand awareness to brides who may not have previously considered the Grand Wailea.

Grooms are also a part of the Big Day, and they are partaking in spa services in increasing numbers. “After receiving phone calls for pre-wedding services, we knew we had to create a male answer to our bridal spa package,” says Clint Wall, spa manager of **Spa Aiyana** at Carmel Valley Ranch (Carmel, CA), whose Hot Husband package (\$130, 2 hours) includes in-suite hot shaves and a Bloody Mary bar. “The upswing in interest has been because of a growing social acceptance for male spa treatments, as well as an



Bridal budgets now include pampering days at the spa.

increased awareness for overall health and wellness for both genders,” he says.

Finally, to start off the nuptials right, many spas have kicked off honeymoon treatments, essentially souped-up versions of couples services, such as the Love the One That You’re With (\$495, 80 minutes) at the **Guerlain Spa** at Waldorf-Astoria (New York City). After the flurry of activity leading up to the wedding, what bride and groom wouldn’t need the pampering?—*Lisa Cheng*

## I Do, I Don’t

One spa faux pas could ruin the Big Day. We asked spa directors at resorts around the world on how to advise their brides on pre-ceremony services. Here’s what they tell them.

“Don’t have a facial the day before or day of the wedding. The deep cleanse of a facial brings toxins out of the skin. Some skin types might show signs of irritation.”—**Jody Plouffe, spa director, Blue Harmony Spa at Wyndham Grand Orlando (FL)**

“Don’t schedule a mani/pedi the morning of the wedding. Try booking the day prior, and if a nail chips, you can always schedule a quick polish change. Consider a Shellac manicure that will last through your ceremony and honeymoon. Also, don’t start a fitness program a few days prior to your wedding date.

You don’t want to be sore for your special day.”—**Mary Gunderson, spa director, Allegria Spa at the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Resort & Spa (CO)**

“Don’t schedule a waxing the day of the wedding. We recommend that brides plan these treatments 10 to 14 days in advance.”—**Carolyn Doe, spa sales manager, Umstead Spa at Umstead Hotel and Spa (NC)**.

“Don’t go for a look that is too far from who you are. Make sure you feel comfortable with your hairstyle and makeup and that it still reflects your

personality.”—**Laila Medina, spa director of the Sandos Mexico Resorts.**

“Don’t book only online. Misunderstandings happen. Be sure to speak to the spa receptionist or manager in person so you can be sure to explain exactly what you would like.”—**Mary Ann Girvan, spa manager of the Geejam Collection (San Antonio, Jamaica)**

“Don’t do anything for the first time the day of your wedding. It is important to first know how your body is going to respond to any kind of treatment.”—**Sylvia Heinonen, spa director, Mayacama Spa, Mayacama (Santa Rosa, CA)**.—*L.C.*

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