

Sea Scape

Finding serenity on the Outer Banks

by Petula Brown

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Crossing the Currituck Sound to reach North Carolina's easternmost beaches, you can't help but relax when confronted by the combination of salt air, natural beauty and picturesque cottages. But throughout the Outer Banks, visitors who want a bit more intensity to their relaxation have another option: spas.

Situated between the northern beaches of Duck and the Currituck Sound is The Sanderling, an 88-room resort and conference center that premiered an expanded spa facility in May, 2004. With its beachfront cottage exterior and numerous treatment rooms with views of the Sound, the 8,000 square foot Spa feels like a second home. Spa Director Susie Fahy Hammer credits The Sanderling's "intimate, cozy atmosphere and one-on-one customer service" as the key reasons for the resort's accolades from publications such as Travel + Leisure and Conde Nast Traveler.

With its sea theme, the spa continues this attention to detail with its spa services. The Sanderling consciously sequences spa treatments so clients receive the maximum effect possible. The 90-minute Serenity Ritual uses a combination of hydrotherapy techniques (pine-infused tub soak, Scotch hose massage, Vichy shower) and body treatments (facial, cold stones, salt rub, mud wrap) completed

by two therapists so clients receive a multisensory aquatic experience. (Tip: When receiving water-focused spa services, expect to get wet; schedule hair appointments after such services).

Even shorter treatments illustrate a thoughtful approach to serving clients. The Spa's Signature Massage is a multi-step process that begins with massage oil that is removed using hot steamed towels so clients are not subjected to greasy residue, according to Hammer. The massage ends with application of the Spa's signature Russian Oil lotion made exclusively for The Sanderling Spa using plants native to the Outer Banks.

A different experience awaits spa-goers about 30 miles south of Duck on Roanoke Island. The island, which was home to a colony of freed slaves during the Civil War, now has an idyllic waterfront community of shops in Olde Towne Manteo that includes The Waterfront Salon and Spa. Visitors may feel somewhat deceived when entering the spa's main level, which houses hairdresser and manicurist stations brimming with energy reminiscent of a Saturday morning beauty shop. However, a trip to the second level of the three-story spa for facial and massage services is another world. Low key and peaceful, the treatment rooms emphasize complete relaxation.