

# Comfort Zones

Today's most indulgent—and wonderfully exotic—spa treatments hark back to ancient times.

PHOTOS BY GENTL & HYERS

**W**ith the seemingly endless supply of exotic new spa treatments that have cropped up over the last few years, it would be easy to conclude that the folks in R&D have been working overtime. But many of the techniques actually date back thousands of years. *W* traced six popular treatments to their origins and discovered that, for the most part, practitioners have remained true to the processes—give or take a new-fangled ingredient here and there.

## Thai Massage

If the thought of being pulled, stretched and twisted like a hot New York City-style pretzel sounds blissful, then you're in luck, as Thai massage has hit Stateside in a major way.

"Thai massage doesn't primarily work with the physical body, but with the energy body of man," explains Jongrak Intatha, a Thai

masseuse and massage trainer who is relocating from Bangkok to practice at the Spa at the Mandarin Oriental hotel in Miami.

Because of its gentle rocking motions and deep stretching, all performed on a floor mat, Thai massage is often referred to as the "lazy man's yoga." But unlike yoga, the client need do nothing but relax and enjoy the experience.

Believed to have been created by a doctor to Indian royals thousands of years ago, this form of massage also incorporates elements of Chinese healing, including acupressure on key energy points in the body. The technique traveled to Thailand around the time of the rise of Buddhism, and since then Thailand has become the capital for teaching the intricate practice.

"Imagine having someone move your body like you never thought it could be moved," says Bruce Schoenberg, owner of Oasis Day Spas in New York. "It's phenomenal."

Other New York day spas, such as Prema Nolita and Paul

