

Recharge

LIFE BEYOND WORK

EDITED BY SUSAN SKELLY

Travel

BY RACHAEL OAKES-ASH

Spa FOR THE COARSE

THERE'S NOTHING like a steam, scrub and cleanse to wash away jetlag after a long-haul flight but until recently, the world of pampering has been a female domain.

While men were happy to pay a fortune on their Mustang convertible, they made do with soap and water when it came to personal maintenance.

Not any more. According to the recent *Spa Industry Profile Australia Report*, the male grooming and spa travel industry is big business, and projected to get even bigger. In Europe, Datamonitor reports the industry is expected to rake in €24bn (\$40bn) by 2008.

Real men, it seems, need as much de-stressing as women. But the marketers have made them feel more at home in the world of pampering with some language finessing: "sensual" becomes "sophisticated", girly jargon is out as are references to beauty. Interiors of these new "men's spa clubs" sidestep pink for manly chocolate browns and black leather.

Makeover series such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *The Biggest Loser* and *Extreme Makeover*, as well as David Beckham's metrosexual persona, have helped legitimise male grooming. Touch down in Sydney and take your pick of male-only day spas for the urban executive just a taxi ride away. Mankind in inner-city Surry Hills (www.mankind.com.au)

caters to stressed businessmen who know their Armani from their Arnettes. On the menu? "The Great Escape", a two-and-a-half hour treatment including massage, facial and hand and nail treatments, or the "Hair of the Dog", two-hour treatment to cleanse away the night before.

Detail for Men in Sydney's CBD (www.detailformen.com.au) is pure *Ralph* magazine meets *Wallpaper** - their brochures feature hot female models blowtorching buffed men in suits. Playing on the auto-detailing theme, the "salon" focuses on the total body workshop. Hair colour treatments are referred to as "camo" and facials as "face details", plasma screens broadcast the sports channel and blokes can even grab a beer while they're under the dryer.

Melbourne recently opened its first guy-centric spa called Zipt Grooming for Men in Collins Street (www.zipt.com.au) which caters to "mid-teens to mid-60s: barristers and tradesmen, accountants and shop assistants, truck drivers and actors, office workers and farmers".

Across the Tasman, Auckland boasts its own Men's Works (www.mensworks.co.nz)

Men are embracing day spas for a spot of business body detailing. Just don't call it a facial.



“There's something about being slapped around with a steam towel by a man in a white coat”



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PALM OASIS High flyers can find earthly relief at H₂O The Male Spa in Dubai

for men wanting to soften those rough edges with classic shaves, Japanese massage and packages called "Corporate", "Executive" and "Presidential". The names may be more suited to a hotel suite than a spa treatment but the average male business traveller is more comfortable asking for the "Presidential" than the "Mystical Inner Bliss Frangipani" package.

Men in the US embraced the industry in 1999 with the launch of the Grooming Lounge website (www.groominglounge.com) offering mail order male skincare purchases and tips on "embarrassing issues" such as nasal hair, teeth whitening and oral hygiene. They went off-line in 2002 with the opening of two retro barbershop-inspired stores in Washington DC and Virginia. There's something about being slapped around with a steam towel and a wet shave by a man in a white coat that soothes the male soul.

The men of the Middle East have jumped on board with H₂O (www.jumeirahemirates-towers.com/h2o_male_spa), the Dubai-based male-only spa in the swanky Jumeirah Towers complex where highfliers can counter the effects of jetlag with the pure Oxygen Bar, inhaling oxygen from cannisters while sitting in massage chairs.

Savvy business spa group, Nextar and The Grooming Company, own Dubai's NBar nail bar and JetSet hair bars for women and added 1847 men's grooming bars to their portfolio in 2004. Outfitted like a private gentleman's club, 1847 features LCD screens and personal DVD players for clients to remain entertained while being pounded, pummelled and shaved.

At London's Heathrow Airport, 75 square metres are dedicated to duty-free men's grooming products. Across the Channel, Charles de Gaulle airport launched the Men's Lounge in Terminal 2D in 2006 to capture the 64% male market share of passengers. Express treatments offer transit passengers pre-boarding pick-me-ups, fragrances are categorised into five profiles including Urban Moderne and Rebel Attitude, and an interactive Skincare Bar allows customers to personalise their facial products. Very French. ●



PRESSURE JOINTS The oxygen bar in H₂O The Male Spa in Dubai, below far left; Details for Men salon in Sydney, below left; and Mankind shows off its male exterior in Sydney, below

