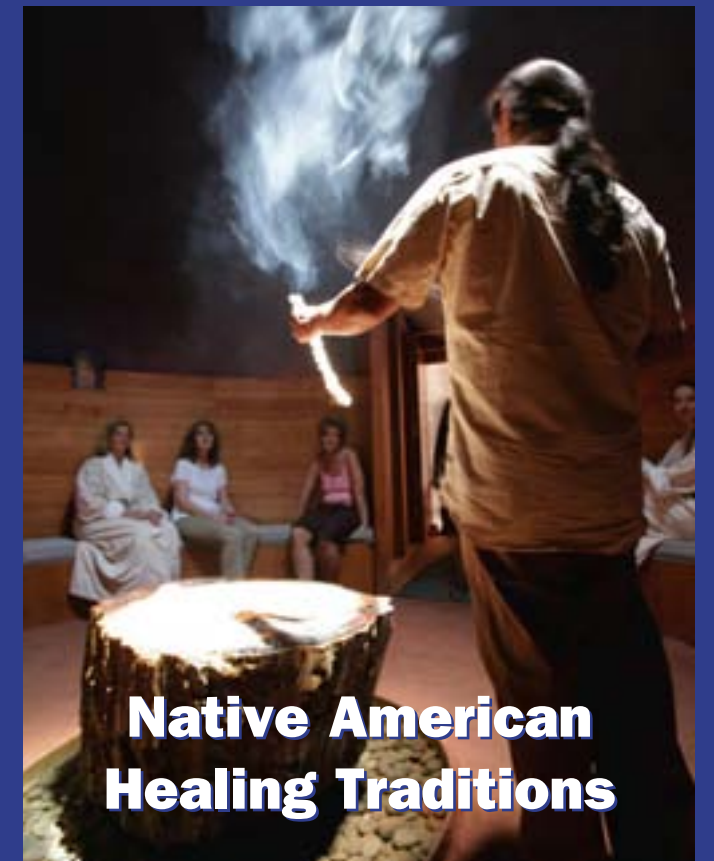


Bliss

Sacred Boynton Canyon near Enchantment Resort & Spa. Above right: Native American sweetgrass smudging ritual



Native American Healing Traditions

They come from the Great Mystery, and unto Spirit goes the honor – and the gratitude – for the miracles they bring forth – if not of healing, at least of peace and well-being. They are the healing traditions up to 40,000 years old of this country's more than 500 Native American nations (or tribes) – the herbal remedies, cleansing rituals and spirituality-based ceremonies like the sweat lodge and the vision quest, that lately have been inspiring progressive spas everywhere to embrace their meaning and practice. What does this mean to today's eager, if not ecstatic spa-goer? Bliss, pure and simple: Bliss

Continued on page 41



The Path of Enchantment

Architecturally spectacular. Confidently “out there.” Impressively...impressive. Mii amo is a spa that turns classic Sedona “New Age” pursuits like chakra massage and vortex walks into a five-star experience where luxury and highly spiritualized healing rituals create bliss within the beauty and grandeur of the Red Rock/Secret Mountain Wilderness – sacred to Native Americans for generations. From the moment you step into its Crystal Grotto, the circular space used for meditation, “daily intentions” and small classes, you know you have entered a cathedral of the spirit. Once you exchange everyday clothes for the sumptuous robe you likely will live in for the next three or four or seven magical days, the soul of Mii amo will transform you with cutting-edge treatments far, far beyond the ordinary. Here, a massage is never simply a massage. Rather, and especially with respect to the Native American-inspired healing rituals, “all is authentic,” says R.J. Allen Joseph, Mii amo’s Native American Program director and a Native American himself. “We capture the essence of Native American ceremonies and apply them in a spa setting.” Emerge from your stunning Anasazi-style casita on the banks of a quiet stream and be prepared to experience marvels you had no idea existed, though many once-secret rituals have been passed down from, among other tribes, Navajo, Yavapa-Apache and Havasupai healers.

Try the wondrous Mii amo Spirit, a 60-minute experience designed to connect you with your own spirit that involves a sage “clearing” of your treatment room followed by an almost ceremonial choreography of aromatherapy, sound-therapy (the gong and singing bowls) and oils applied to your body’s chakras, or energy centers. The “Spirit” is said to be an extremely subtle method of restoring your body’s energy “flow,” clearing your mind, and opening your heart. Ask someone who has been blissed by it, however, and they, profoundly soothed and rejuvenated, likely will have

trouble verbalizing its power other than by whispering, wow. The spa’s Blue Corn Polish (see box) is another Mii amo marvel that expresses the perfection of how here, practitioners more shaman than therapist perform their body-loving arts with a seriousness of purpose that is contagious. You, too, will emerge from your immersion in Mii amo’s mind-expanding and spirit-soaring program of Native American healing rituals – all woven into its spa menu with the authentic beauty of a Navajo blanket – swept up in the sense that true transformation is possible. Talking circle, medicine walk, storytelling,

flute-playing meditation – these and other native-originated gifts to today’s spa guest make the Mii amo experience a singular adventure really to treasure.

Of course, it doesn’t hurt that the spa’s other wondrous joys, from its gourmet restaurant (dress code: spa robe) to its gorgeous pools to its dazzling, luxurious design also conspire to transport you to nirvana. Here, beside the red-rock wonderful awe of sacred Boynton Canyon, everything important to its Spirit Keepers, who are said to have given their blessing for its construction, Mii amo honors all



The Blue Corn Polish

Submit to 60 minutes of Mii amo bliss, sweet bliss. For ages, Native Americans have used ground corn to cleanse and purify their skin, and this inspired body polish does the same – and then some. Blue corn, mineral salt crystals and Aloe Vera are blended into a vigorous scrub that works its miracle while you relax on a special table as the continuous stream from a seven-head Vichy shower (decadent!) warms you, soothes you, rinses away anything tired or old. Freshly cleansed, exfoliated, detoxified and nourished body and soul, a you now as soft and refreshed as the earth after a thunderstorm is slathered in a sumptuous hydrating lotion that when all is said and done finds you the embodiment of joyful rejuvenation.



Haven for the senses: Avanyu spa

The Way of the Water Serpent

Avanyu. It is the Tewa name for a mythical water serpent that represents the restorative and life-giving power of water. Cleansing, healing, nourishing, sacred – natural mineral springs are where the first spas were born, as Native Americans gathered there for their healing rituals. Today, Avanyu spa at glorious La Posada de Santa Fe in downtown Santa Fe, is the retreat for an experience of *ahhh*. A sensory heaven, a sanctuary of touch, Avanyu is informed by the healing rituals of many native nations, among them the local pueblo Indians who since the 13th century have inhabited this region of New Mexico. The tribe's ancient cliff-dwellings, petroglyphs and kivas (ceremonial structures) today can be seen nearby among the pink mesas and sheer-walled canyons of the Bandelier National Monument.

Six acres of soothing, rejuvenating beauty only two blocks from Santa Fe's historic plaza and its shops and galleries, Avanyu is nonetheless a world apart. "We are not just using Native American ceremonies and Native American ingredients," says spa director Dan Mohr, himself Native American, "we are honoring our traditions." The ever evolving spa menu of services, from the Rolling Thunder massage (deep tissue) to the Chocolate-Chili Wrap (detoxifying), are designed after careful consultation with local native elders. "These treatments are not a gimmick," says Mohr. "There's a level of respect that goes on here," a level of serious regard for traditions revered throughout generations of spirit-attuned people whose most sacred rituals even today are kept secret, passed along from one healer to the next.

Submit to Avanyu's Adobe Mud Wrap. Let yourself be brushed to a glow and slathered with rich, hot mud that cocoons you in comfort while the therapist massages your head. Heaven. Or indulge in the Honey-Mesquite Wrap and as you like on a heated table, let the profoundly moisturizing, nurturing properties of indigenous

mesquite soothe you into a swoon. The Spirit of Santa Fe (see box) is an Avanyu specialty so blissing you will be amazed that many of its delicious elements were likely known even by the 13th c. cliff dwellers – Native American traditions here can be that authentic. "Most practices (among Native Americans) are very private, very quiet," says Mohr. "The same thing goes on here."

Within the adobe walls of lovely Avanyu, indeed, nurturing, nourishing pleasures are many. The spa's sumptuous robes, exotic

teas, and suites with not one but *three* wood-burning fireplaces will keep you well-coddled in lovely luxuries – the best of which are inspired by the medicine wheel. This Native American symbol for an individual's life journey, used in many rituals and ceremonies, embodies the belief that every inch of earth holds an energy connection to life, a connection that must be honored. At this magic Santa Fe escape, many of the healthy, happy, joyous gifts that may be found along the "wheel of life" are given with an oh-so-generous spirit.



The Spirit of Santa Fe

A journey of the senses, an adventure of the soul. Avanyu's 80-minute indulgence inspired by the Native American Medicine Wheel begins with desert sage smudging ceremony to purify the body and mind of negativity. After creating a "prayer tie" of wishes and desires, and drawing an animal totem to befriend you on your journey, you are led around the Medicine Wheel's four direction via heavenly rituals and treatments. With a nod to the East, a blue cornmeal and tobacco body scrub; to the South, a purifying shower rinse and drink of desert sage tea; to the West, a full-body massage with sacred cedarwood oil; and to the north, an herbal wrap of tea of precious sweetgrass. All along this sense-stirring round, your therapist/guide will share the powers, animals and gifts of each direction, empowering you with insight and knowledge as you thrill to a sensual and spiritual adventure.



Southwest stunner: Aji spa

The Journey via Sanctuary

Aji Spa, found in the glorious butte-and-spire spectacle that is the Sonoran Desert, is a splendor of a refuge owned and operated by, and situated on land belonging to Native Americans who have considered the area, at the foot of Aji Mountain, sacred for generations – the Gila River Indian Community. On this beautiful land thousands of wild horses run free, just as unfettered as you can feel after indulging in Aji's fabulous array of massages, facials, body wraps and baths, all of which reflect healing traditions sacred to the local Pima and Maricopa. Be awed from the moment you enter the spa. It is a stunner, with a soothing stone waterfall, colorful butterfly mosaic (signifying metamorphosis) and private rain showers. But before abandoning yourself body and soul to such ingeniously-designed treatments as the 70-minute Hot Rock Pedicure, a completely decadent adventure that includes a foot and calf massage with warm, naturally smooth Gila River rocks followed by a cooling, intensely hydrating white tea skin treatment, a horseback ride around Aji Spa's beautiful environs might be the perfect prelude to the pleasures of the treatment room.

With two golf courses, equestrian center, four pools with cascading waterfalls, a waterslide that imitates ancient Casa Grande ruins, and a replica of the Gila River (upon which boats putt-putt their way to a casino somewhere off in the distance), Wildhorse Pass does not lack for things to do. It is the non-doing you can access at Aji Spa, however, that seduces. Try the *Stoha*, or White Clay Wrap and let an aromatic blend of indigenous white clay and essential oils coddle your body in bliss while you enjoy a wonderful scalp and face massage. Pima/Maricopa legend says this very white clay was that eaten by First Mother before she gave birth to twins – the sun and moon. You, too, will feel its nourishment deep within any achy muscles or jangled nerves. Or indulge in a *Ho'dai* Gila River rock deep tissue massage – 80 minutes of intense, immense *ahhh*

involving techniques used for centuries by Native Americans to alleviate pain and soothe the soul. The Blue Coyote Wrap (see box) is especially impressive. Not only does it send you to something like heaven with its beautiful blue Azulene mud and warm steam treatment, but it reveals how Aji Spa's expert use of ingredients precious to natives for generations (whether red clay from the Gila River or Cholla cactus bud from the Sonoran Desert) helps bring Native Americans' unique gifts to today's delighted spa-goer.

Relax in Aji Spa's gorgeous gardens. Delight in its collection of striking Native Amer-

ican art. Even become so immersed in its wonderful storytelling rituals that you arrive a little late for dinner. In the resort's Kai restaurant, the award-winning cuisine and extensive wine list seriously excite. In this stunning desertscape where tranquility reigns, a plethora of indoor and outdoor pools, Vichy (many-headed) showers and a Watsu pool provide an array of "magic lakes" in which to bathe. Just like precocious Coyote before you, should you choose to take a dip in one or all (and you will for their allure is irresistible), you too will emerge transformed. That is what it is all about, the joys of Aji Spa.



The Blue Coyote Wrap

Become blue to be beautiful. The soothing, nourishing, healing power of Azulene mud, whose vivid pigment derives naturally from a plant essence, has been known to Native Americans for generations. Indulge in Aji Spa's wonderful bahn, or wrap, and let your body be dry brushed to a glow before being slathered in blue, blue Azulene mud. Relax in a specially-designed, warm steam capsule, you are pampered with a scalp massage while the steam and mud together draw out every unwanted toxin, making your skin as soft and beautiful as Bluebird's natural hue. After the rinse that follows, your newly radiant self is further indulged with a full-body massage with luscious cedar/sage oil. With 80 minutes of this, the only thing left of you is bliss.

Seeking the Native American Way



Mii amo Spa

Where: Enchantment Resort & Spa
Outside Sedona, Arizona

Why: Because here, at this enchanted Sedona retreat, the journey to beauty, health and bliss feels as sacred as its neighbor Boynton Canyon. What's more, the Blue Corn Salt Polish is absolutely wonderful.

When: How fast can you pack?

How: Fly Sedona Airport (SEZ) and let the spa's driver come fetch you.

To go: enchantmentresort.com (800) 826-4180

Avanyu Spa

Where: La Posada de Santa Fe Resort & Spa
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Why: Because in this Shangri-la of the senses two blocks from the historic plaza, six garden acres of paradise await. Get ready for the all-new Spirit of Santa Fe, it is four Native American spa treatments in one, debuting Spring 2007.

When: The second the engines shut down.

How: Wing-in to Santa Fe Municipal Airport (SAF) and rent a car for the 30-minute drive downtown.

To go: laposada.rockresorts.com (866) 331-7625

Aji Spa

Where: Wildhorse Pass Resort & Spa
Outside Phoenix, Arizona

Why: Because at this sanctuary located on Native American land, tribal rituals are translated into treatments of true rejuvenation of body, mind and spirit. FYI: the Blue Coyote Wrap is as delightful as the Pima legend for which it is named.

When: Not a moment too soon.

How: Alight at Sky Harbor International (PHX) and await pick-up by Aji's car (for a nominal charge)

To go: wildhorsepassresort.com (602) 225-0100

Continued from page 33

Come experience what, exactly, this is. "The First Nations knew the wisdom of the mind-body-spirit connection. For them, the human being has always been one with Spirit, with earth and everything on it, and with each other," says Judith Lazarus, an expert in Native American healing traditions. Rituals that rely on the natural bounty of Mother Earth – plants, flowers, grain, foods and herbs – are, she says, the center of treat-

ments and ceremonies that also may make use of mud crystals, gems and stones (each with its own meaning and energy); these, according to native wisdom, promote health, healing, protection and guidance. Says Lazarus: "Spirit is also channeled through prayer and drumming, chanting, signing, playing flutes and pipes, rainsticks, dancing, sand-painting and the medicine wheel."

Come experience this adventure in well-

being. Because the country's hottest spas are weaving Native American healing traditions into their programs for body-mind-spirit renewal with all the excitement of a Sun Dance, and all the dedication of a Pipe Ceremony, *Flying Adventures* has taken flight to three of the best – all in the spectacular southwest. These spas reflect the body-blissing, mind-soothing, spirit-stirring wonders these traditions express by spas that honor them well – and by extension, you. ✕

NATIVE AMERICAN SPA AIRPORT INFORMATION

SEDONA AIRPORT (SEZ) SEDONA, ARIZONA

AIRPORT DATA

Elevation: 4,830'

Runways: 3/21 5,129/1,5637

Approaches: VOR, RNAV

ASOS 928.282.1993

FIXED BASE OPERATIONS / FUEL / SERVICES

Red Rock Aviation 928.282.1046

TRANSPORTATION

Enchantment Resort (Courtesy) 928.282.2900

SANTA FE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT (SAF) NEW MEXICO

AIRPORT DATA

Elevation: 6,348'

Runways: 2/20 8,342/2,543 15/33 6,307/1,922

10/28 6,300/1,920

Approaches: VOR, ILS, LOC, RNAV

ASOS) 505.474.3117

FIXED BASE OPERATIONS / FUEL / SERVICES

Santa Fe Air Center 505.471.2525

Million Air Santa fe 505.471.2700

TRANSPORTATION

Hertz Rental Car 505.471.7189

SKY HARBOR AIRPORT (PHX) PHOENIX, ARIZONA

AIRPORT DATA

Elevation: 1,135'

Runways: 8/26 11,489/3,502 7L/25R 10,300/3,139

7R/25L 7,800/2,377

Approaches: RNAV, VOR, ILS, LOC

ASOS 602.231.8557

FIXED BASE OPERATIONS / FUEL / SERVICES

Cutter Aviation 602.273.1237

TRANSPORTATION

Wild Horse Pass Resort 602.225.0100

