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A SENSE OF SERENITY

Searching for perfection at
Pine Cliffs Resort, Portugal

HOUSE OF WELLNESS

Villa Stéphanie at Brenners
Park-Hotel & Spa, Germany

SALUS PER AQUAM

Inside Kohler Waters Spa at
the Old Course Hotel, Scotland

SLEEPING POTENTIAL

Advice from our Wellness 360°
experts on this pillar of health

Spa Pine Cliffs Resort, Portugal



Clockwise from far top left: Pine Cliffs guests may opt for outdoor treatments during the summer season; decorated in gold leaf and illuminated by a Swarovski chandelier, the Aurum Suite is a 'spa within a spa'; a foaming ritual in the contemporary marble hammam; Pine Cliffs Resort aims to position itself as a holistic pioneer in the Algarve

The search for Serenity

In developing its own wellbeing brand, Pine Cliffs Resort, on the Portugal's Algarve, is looking to establish itself as an avant-garde retreat for the whole of Europe

REPORT BY IAN PARKES

Commanding breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean from its lofty position overlooking the western end of one of the longest beaches in Portugal, Pine Cliffs Resort has positioned itself as a holistic pioneer for the Algarve.

The consortium of whitewashed properties that comprises Pine Cliffs – a 217-room hotel, 148 Ocean Suites, 154 Residence apartments and the soon-to-be-completed 84 Gardens apartments – are spread across 178 acres of luxuriant, impeccably-manicured land.

The Gardens apartments represent the final piece of a jigsaw that has taken 26 years to complete since IFA Hotels & Resorts (IFA HR), a Kuwaiti-owned, Dubai-based company that runs a further 18 hotels globally, purchased the prime plot, located six kilometres from Albufeira.

Pine Cliffs is viewed as the flagship property of the IFA HR portfolio following a multi-million euro redevelopment that took 18 months to complete prior to re-announcing itself on the

Portuguese hotel scene in the summer of 2016.

At its heart is a €4 million (£3.5 million), 1,100sqm state-of-the-art spa with an in-house wellness brand entitled 'Serenity – The Art of Well Being'. This was primarily developed and overseen by spa director Maria D'Orey, who also conceived its lotus flower logo as a representation of the purity on offer and the spiritual awakening that awaits.

"When we first started to explore the idea behind Serenity we discovered there was a gap in the market in Portugal," says D'Orey, who is also spa director at the second of IFA HR's Portuguese hotels, Sheraton Cascais Resort, where the brand is also positioned. "We discovered there were spas offering regular treatments to relax, but there was nothing really beyond that.

"For us, Serenity is much more than that. We see it as an umbrella under which sits the spa; our treatments and therapies, using some of the world's leading spa products; our signature treatments, which use ingredients indigenous to the Algarve; and a range of programmes to improve mind, body and soul.

"Serenity is also about fitness," she continues. "We have fantastic facilities here; it is about the Zest restaurant, in which guests can enjoy healthy, organic food; and it is about the environment and this location – the green spaces, the beautiful beach and sea. We have everything here."

Clearly there is ambition behind the recent

"With regard to Pine Cliffs, we are trying to show that the Algarve is not just a golfers' paradise, but it can also now be a destination for spa, just like Kamalaya or Chiva Som." **Maria D'Orey** Spa director





Clockwise from above left: A male guest relaxes during a facial treatment; a pine tree-lined walkway descends down the cliffs to Falésia beach on the Atlantic coast; a glowing glimpse of the spa's Himalayan salt sauna

investment. "With regard to Pine Cliffs, we are trying to show that the Algarve is not just a golfers' paradise, but it can also now be a destination for spa, just like Kamalaya or Chiva Som. As with those incredible places, it is my goal to take care of people," pledges D'Orey.

In the lap of luxury

Pine Cliffs is owned by United Investments Portugal (UIP), a member of the IFA HR corporation, and managed by Marriott International, Inc., under The Luxury Collection brand. Last year it won the accolade of 'World's Leading Luxury Resort' at the World Travel Awards.

In addition, D'Orey, herself, collected the 'Best Spa Manager for Portugal' accolade at the World Luxury Spa Awards 2017, a vindication the Serenity brand is a success.

"I would suggest we have become something of a pioneer for the Algarve," D'Orey says. "Other places are now starting to follow, and that is important because we want the Algarve to be seen as a potential destination for spa breaks."

Within the Pine Cliffs spa, conceived by German company Dau Design, is the Thermal Oasis, comprising a hydrotherapy pool with mosaic-tiled bubblejet loungers; a Himalayan salt sauna; a herbal sauna; a steam room; a Kneipp therapy pool; experience showers; an *al fresco* Jacuzzi and extensive indoor and outdoor relaxation areas.

The spa's 13 treatment rooms are named after indigenous

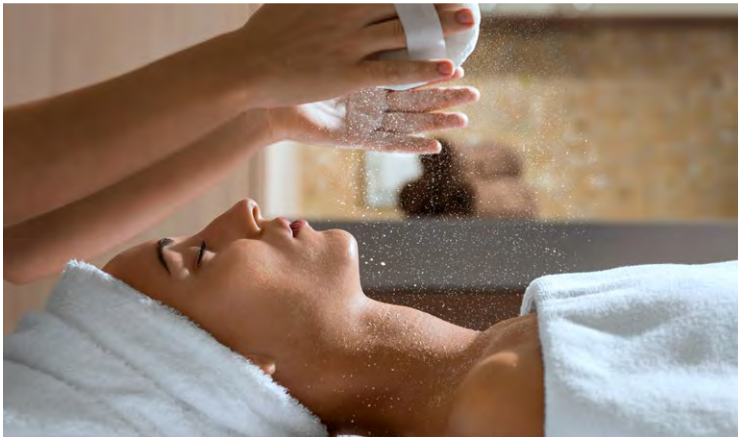
plants or fruits and include a Japanese-inspired Sakura for oriental treatments, such as Shiatsu; a hydro bath; a Gharieni dry flotation bed; and a marble hammam.

Described as a 'spa within a spa', the Serenity Aurum Suite, decorated in gold leaf and illuminated by a Swarovski chandelier, offers an indulgent experience for couples or small groups, comprising its own treatment room, Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room and experience shower.

The power of seven

D'Orey has opted for a total of seven product partners, including ila, Thalgo, Sensai, Charme D'Orient, Gentlemen's Tonic, Margaret Dabbs London and The Organic Pharmacy. In addition, Kérastase is the main haircare provider in the separate Style – Hairdresser & Barber Shop, resulting in a busy retail area next to the spa reception.

Regarding the numerous brands on offer and a menu of 100 treatments, D'Orey explains: "I wanted to provide our guests with a personalised response. Each of our partners specialises in a particular area, and it is important for our guests to experience this."



From top: A Sound Healing Experience takes place in a garden overlooking the Atlantic; among the other treatments on offer are luxurious facial rituals from Sensai

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“For example, Sensai provides luxurious facial treatments that leave your skin feeling like silk; ila is a natural, organic brand that provides exceptional treatments; and Thalgo uses natural algae that offer amazing results for firming and combatting cellulite.

“Charme D’Orient and Gentlemen’s Tonic are exclusive to Serenity in Portugal; The Organic Pharmacy, although another organic brand, has homeopathy at its core; while Margaret Dabbs is simply the best partner for manicure pedicure treatments.”

She continues: “I believe what we offer is unique, providing the best ingredients and the maximum health benefit for our guests. My team are also expertly educated. Each member is trained twice a year by each of the brands to ensure they are up to date with products and methods. This then has a positive benefit for the guests.”

There are five core itineraries that are an integral part of Serenity’s portfolio. These include a two-night Digital Detox; a seven-night Yoga and Harmonisation of the Chakra programme; a five-day Fitness Journey; a three-night Self-Healing experience; and an Awakening of the Senses package, spread over five or six days.

Recently added to Serenity’s list of therapies is a

A sense of the Algarve



Catarina Quaresma

With Falésia beach at the foot of the cliff on which Pine Cliffs Resort stands, and with an abundance of natural vegetation and produce on its doorstep, Serenity Spa has turned to indigenous ingredients for its signature treatment.

Entitled ‘Senses of the Algarve’, the 80-minute, four-stage regimen commences with an invigorating exfoliation utilising sand from Falésia and sea salt from the Atlantic Ocean, all prepared by Serenity therapists.

That is followed by a carob body wrap, drawing upon a plant native to the region, which is rich in antioxidant selenious and gallic acid, to promote elimination of unwanted toxins from the skin and help balance the thyroid.

A full-body massage using Algarvian orange essential oil, which is also abundant in antioxidants, helps intensify the effects of the wrap, fighting free radicals and assisting in the prevention of premature ageing.

To complete the relaxation process, lemongrass grown in the hotel’s gardens provides a delicious tea.

“This treatment was created based on the knowledge of the products we have in the region,” explains head therapist Catarina Quaresma. “It is like a welcome card to Serenity.”

“This is what makes the treatment unique. It is not something we have ordered – it is all local and we have been sensitive in picking the right ingredients, with the main one being the carob, which is totally organic, with no additives.”

Sound Healing Experience, which takes place in a garden overlooking the Atlantic, incorporating sun salutations, yoga and periods of restfulness to the sounds of flutes, shamanic drums and tuning forks.

“The wellness packages are key to the Serenity strategy, with yoga our best seller, but they all allow a guest to switch off and truly discover themselves,” insists D’Orey.

Staying active on the Algarve

Positioning itself as a lifestyle destination, the resort’s all-encompassing wellness experience includes the ‘Pine Cliffs Goes Active’ concept that focuses on fitness.

Independent of the spa there is a 414sqm gym, equipped by Technogym, that has floor-to-ceiling windows on two sides with sea views. An additional health club boasts a sauna, a

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Clockwise from top right: A seven-night Yoga and Harmonisation of the Chakra programme is one of the spa's five core itineraries; the Thermal Oasis offers a Kneipp path as part of its extensive range of hydrothermal experiences; loungers are set into the sunlit hydrotherapy pool; a therapist prepares to perform a hammam ritual

▷ steam room, changing areas and a fitness product retail space. There is also an additional 247sqm gym in the Residences, with equipment provided by Precor and Nesfit.

Elsewhere, a 381sqm space is given over to a 16m indoor pool, heated to 28°C, and a Jacuzzi. The pool is one of seven in total across Pine Cliffs Resort, which also boasts a nine-hole golf course and a golf academy, as well as the Annabel Croft Tennis Academy that features five full-size ATP floodlit courts – three acrylic and two red clay.

Expanding on the fitness offering, fitness supervisor Josué Rosa says: "We have a range of daily activities – personal training, fitness training, as well as classes for Pilates, yoga, Zumba, Latin dance and Tabata.

"As you can imagine, given the weather from March through to October, these classes take place outside because that is the preference of our guests, further enhancing their wellness experience. In the pool there are further activities – on the hydrobike, swimming lessons, aqua Pilates.

"The schedule for all our classes fluctuates depending on seasonality as we try to match our classes to our in-house guests. During the summer we are more family-oriented, while during the winter we cater for slightly older guests."

Membership boost

As part of its business strategy, Pine Cliffs ushered in a membership programme in March, in a bid to attract local guests into the spa and gym by offering silver, gold and platinum packages, dependent on gym usage, Thermal Oasis access and the number of spa treatments taken.

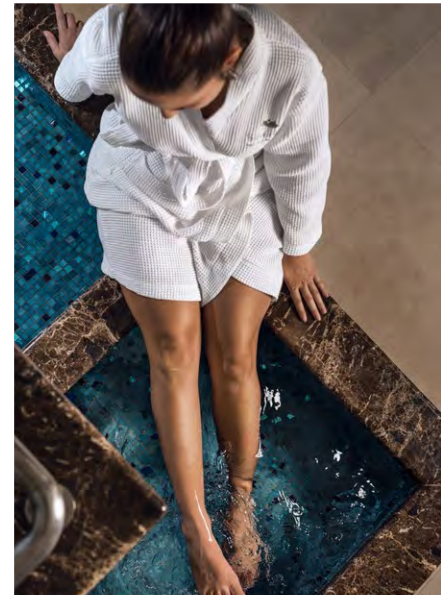
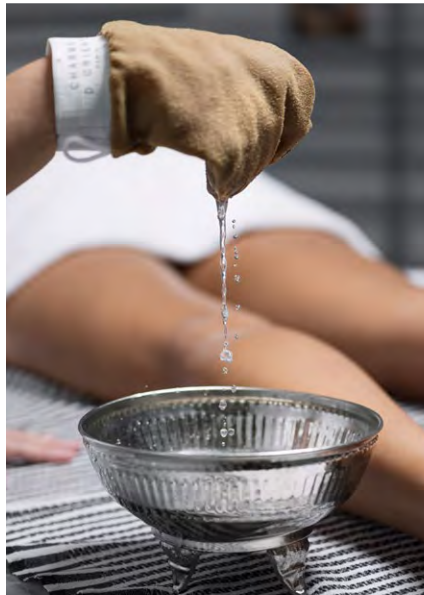
During the peak summer months of July and August, Pine Cliffs can accommodate up to 3,000 guests, with the gym, in particular, attracting 350 people per day, but dropping to around half that during the winter.

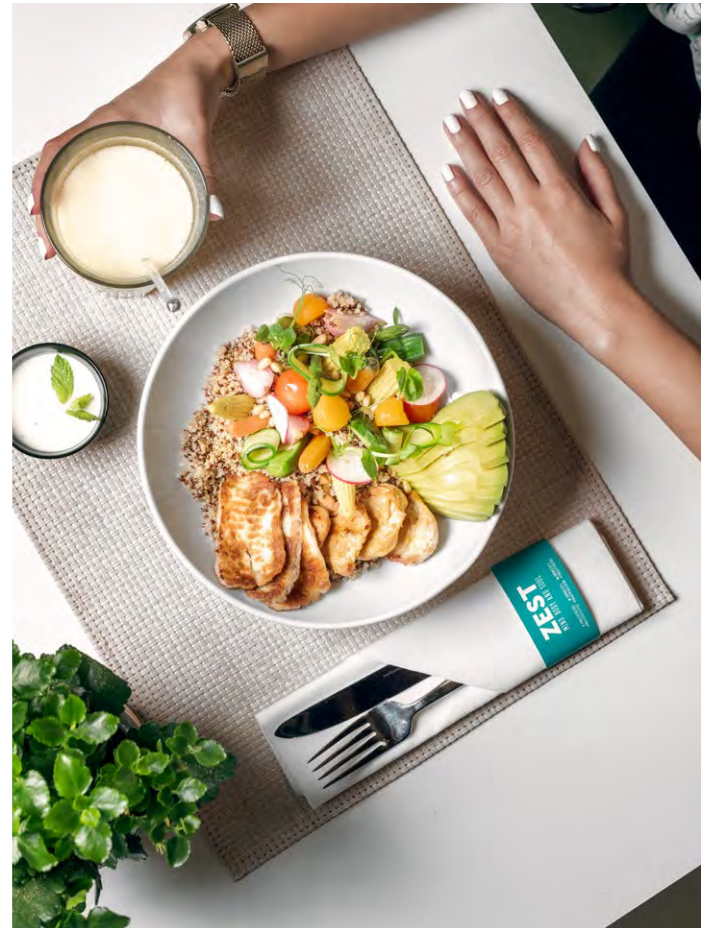
Explaining that Portugal as a whole is still relatively new to the spa scene, general manager Thomas Schoen says: "Our spa is still only one-and-a-half years old, so our overseas clientele are probably educating us in terms of feedback. In turn, we are educating the local community.

"For the Portuguese, even for those in the big cities of Lisbon and Oporto, spa and wellness are not yet in their minds as much as for those in the UK or Germany, where people are very well educated about different wellness approaches. Here in Portugal, education is still growing, so for us to attract a local membership is very important." ▷

"We have a good opportunity to grow substantially because we have great facilities, so why shouldn't we bring in more people? I think we are unique in what we can holistically offer."

Thomas Schoen General manager





Clockwise from top left: A guest enjoys the sunshine with some 'grab-and-go' refreshment from the Zest restaurant; Zest offers a mainly vegetarian and organic range of food to complement guests' healthy regimes; the Thermal Oasis was conceived by German company Dau Design

Ocean of opportunity

Properties in the Ocean Suites, Residences, Gardens and Villas are all privately owned investments that are rented out under a 'caretaker' partnership with Pine Cliffs to ensure they are maintained to five-star standard.

Owners are guaranteed an annual rental return of 5% within the first five years and Schoen, who joined Pine Cliffs in May 2016, just prior to the re-opening of the hotel and grand opening of the Ocean Suites, Serenity spa and Thermal Oasis, believes this aspect of the resort's offering provides something truly unique.

"These individuals have given us their trust, and the responsibility, that when they are not occupying their own unit we are renting it to regular guests," declares Schoen, who has worked in Starwood properties for 27 years.

"What we are doing here is providing a constellation of properties where a diverse range of customers feel comfortable. It's a challenge, but the uniqueness of Pine Cliffs and the opportunity here is greater than that challenge."

A Zest for nutrition



Stuart Sage

As one of 12 restaurants on site at Pine Cliffs, Zest has been created to cater for those guests seeking a health-conscious offering to complement their wellness experience.

The menu serves largely vegetarian and organic-based foods, with the added benefit of nutritional information, provided by the ADACO system, alongside each juice and dish, including calories along with carbohydrate, cholesterol, calcium, sodium and vitamin C counts.

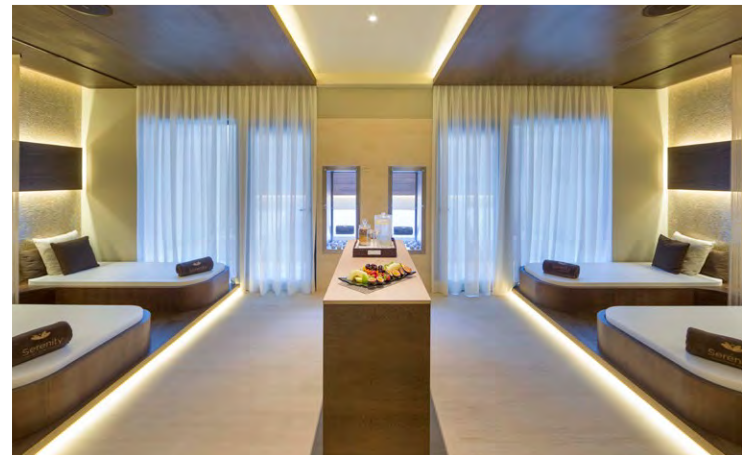
You can still order a glass or bottle of red, white or blush wine, but even that is 'bio' as it is produced by an organic farm management system.

Zest even offers a grab-and-go service of healthy drinks and snacks for those who do not have the time to sit and dine. Certain suites across the resort also provide an in-room Zest minibar.

"With all the dishes, we've taken into account the vegetables, the minerals, we've looked at the carbs and the balance of the dish because with healthy eating you want to feel sustained, not still feeling hungry," discloses executive chef Stuart Sage.

"We also have sous-vide machines, to control the cooking, to retain the minerals and proteins inside. But for Zest, the key is the products. We have beautiful produce that really makes the menu stand out.

"For us, the feedback from the guests is paramount. The more we communicate with them, then we are constantly going to grow and build the brand."



Clockwise from top: A sunset yoga session rounds off the day for a group of Pine Cliffs guests; carefully considered lighting highlights the care taken over the interiors in a relaxation room; a wide range of products are available in the reception area

A holistic lifestyle resort

What has particularly delighted Schoen has been the influence of the spa itself, which has so far produced a capture rate of 3% of all guests, with the target to rise to 4% over the coming year.

“The spa has definitely had an impact”, he states. “When the decision was taken to include the Serenity spa, it was clearly envisaged that it would open up another segment for Pine Cliffs as the resort was missing this kind of facility.

“A resort of this size needs a really good world-class spa. From the feedback we have received so far, on the design, the look, the feel, the service and the treatments we offer, it is pretty much on a par with the best spas around the world.

“For what we are trying to achieve, people tell us that Maria and her team are doing a really good job and I’m obviously happy to hear that.

“Because we are busy in the summer, what we are now working on, and where our target lies with the wellness

market, is from October to April, where we believe the spa, and our whole range of services and activities can collectively work to provide an attractive holistic offering.”

The primary target for D’Orey is for Pine Cliffs to become “the best European lifestyle resort”, an ambition Schoen concurs with as this Portuguese enclave pushes the boundaries in terms of its market and seasonality.

“We need to convince people this is a good destination,” says Schoen. “We need to get the message out there, to build trust and relationships with people. Then, hopefully, they will come again and again. That would be the best feedback we could possibly receive and also the best advertisement a spa can provide.” ●●●●●

PINE CLIFFS RESORT, PORTUGAL

+351 (0) 289 500 100 | www.pinecliffs.com

Owner: United Investments Portugal **Investment:** €4 million

Spa size: 1,100sqm **Spa & fitness team:** 30 **Treatment rooms:** 13

Product partners: ila, Sensai, Charme D’Orient, Thalgo, The Organic Pharmacy, Margaret Dabbs, Gentleman’s Tonic, Kérastase, CND Shellac, Basto Viegas **Thermal spa design and supply:** Dau Design

Wet spa design and supply: Dau Design **Other suppliers:** Gharieni, Technogym, Precor, Nesfit, Taiji, Naiper