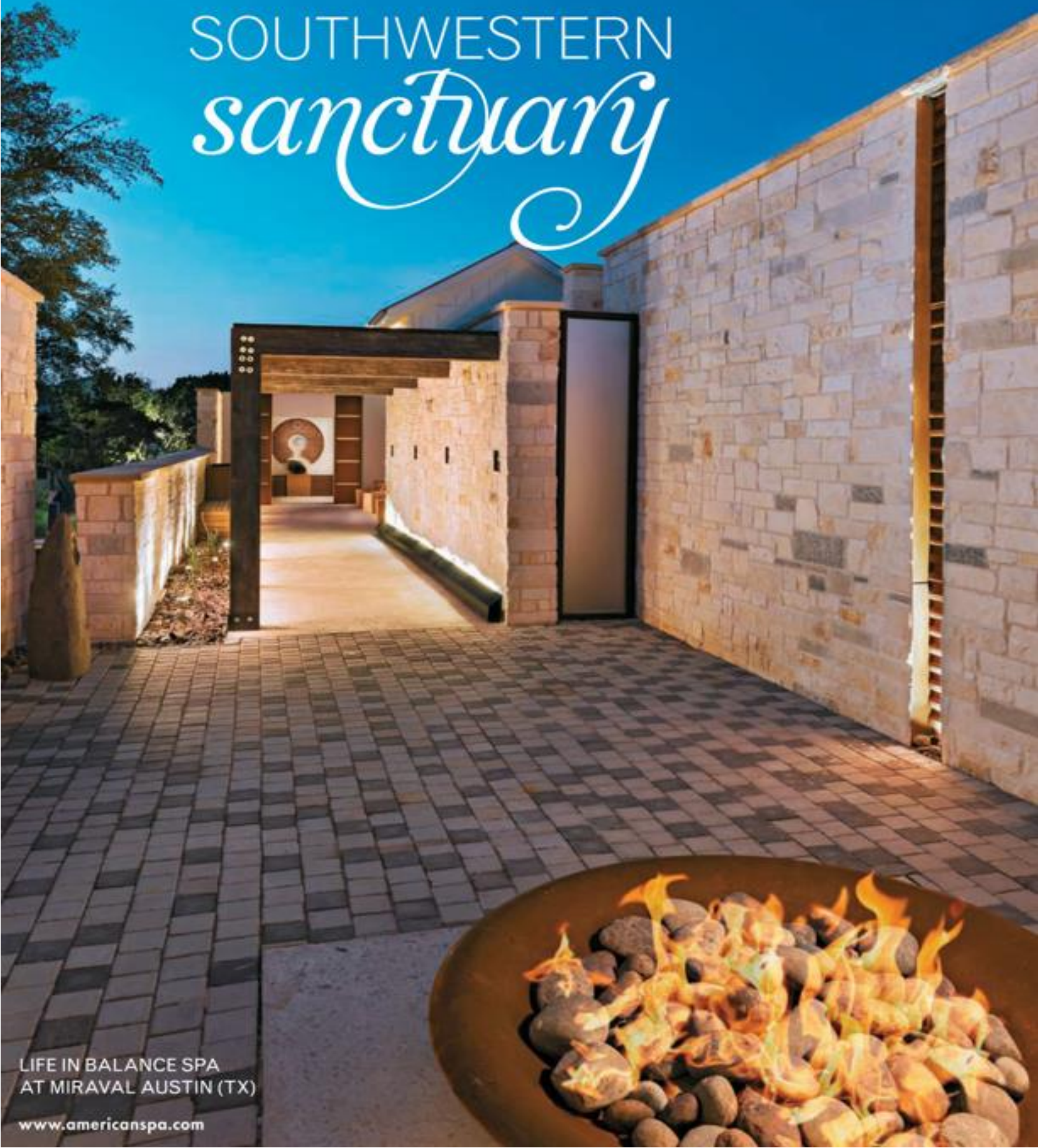


THE SPA & WELLNESS AUTHORITY

american spa

JUNE 2019

SOUTHWESTERN *sanctuary*



LIFE IN BALANCE SPA
AT MIRAVAL AUSTIN (TX)


www.americanspa.com



Hill Country Healing

Spreading its message of mindfulness, Miraval debuts a new destination spa in Austin, TX.

BY HEATHER MIKESÉLL



SINCE BEING ACQUIRED BY HYATT IN EARLY 2017, the Miraval Group has been busy expanding the reach of the beloved destination spa brand. In late 2016, before it had even finished the deal to acquire the Miraval brand from KSL Capital Partners, Hyatt purchased Travassa Austin with the idea of redeveloping the property into another Miraval destination spa. In February, the company unveiled Miraval Austin, which encompasses 220 acres in the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve. In the heart of Texas Hill Country, the spa is meant to serve as a catalyst for change, providing the offerings and tools guests need to transform their lives.

According to spa director David Preslar, guests are in search of experiences that are authentic and real. "In other words, they come to Miraval, because they know that we don't follow the latest trends but are rather highly purposeful and intentional in our spa experiences," he says. "People come to Miraval not only to relax but also to have experiences that are beneficial for their overall wellbeing."

Designed by Clodagh, the **Life in Balance Spa** is inspired by the surrounding nature preserve and incorporates a variety of natural elements, such as rope and wood. One of the spa's highlights is the new quiet lounge, which offers views of Lake Travis through floor-to-ceiling windows. In addition to spacious treat-

ment rooms, the spa also features a water-therapy pool, which is used for signature treatments like Vasudhara (\$285, 50 minutes). It blends the weightlessness of water with relaxing Thai massage stretches. According to Preslar, the nature preserve inspired much more than just the design. It also factored into the creative process involved in designing the spa services. *Pranayama dina*, for instance, means flying breath and is inspired by two bird species on the nature preserve. As part of the Pranayama Dina Massage (\$285, 50 minutes), guests lay in a hammock, which feels like floating in a nest. They're also treated to the sounds of bird calls, which set the stage for the treatment. "We worked for more than a year to create services that are unique and highly effective," says Preslar. "In some cases, there were five or six people collaborating on a service for several months until we had refined it enough to be ready for guests. For every service, we have to test and retest it several times before it is perfect."

Fortunately, creating transformational treatments is exactly how Preslar enjoys spending his time. "What excites me most about my role here at Miraval is the treatment development aspect," says Preslar. "I love to work with our talented and creative staff to develop treatments that exceed our guests' expectations and enhance their overall wellbeing." One treatment that is exceeding

continued on page 74



FROM TOP LEFT: Set in Austin's Hill Country, the spa features an inviting lounge, a labyrinth, the Solidago Sanctuary, a walkway designed with reclaimed wood, and an enticing spa pool.



OWNER
Hyatt

SPA DIRECTOR
David Preslar

OPENED
February 2019

CLIENT BASE
80% female
20% male

SPACE
20,000 square feet;
30 treatment rooms

PRODUCTS &
EQUIPMENT
Body Bliss, Deborah
Lippmann, Kavella,
Laurel, Living
Earth Crafts, Maya
Chia, Oka-B, Paragon,
Red Flower, Resort
Suite, Silhouette-tone,
Technogym,
Urbana Spa

ARCHITECT
Hart Howerton
(New York City and
San Francisco)

INTERIOR DESIGNER
Clodagh
(New York City)

LEFT TO RIGHT: Guests can enjoy the spa's water features and indulge in the Jade Meridian treatment, which relies on jade stones.



continued from page 72

all expectations is the Jade Meridian (\$195, 50 minutes), which is proving to be the spa's most popular treatment so far. It balances the dueling energies of yin and yang and incorporates traditional Chinese practices to restore flow and vitality to guests' essential life force, also known as qi. After a breathwork ritual, jade stones brushed with warming ginger oil are glided over the Chinese meridians. Techniques inspired by gua sha are also used to open qi energy channels. Warm towels steeped in Chinese herbs are also incorporated to comfort the body.

When it came time to select product lines, Preslar and his team did a great deal of homework on the subject, considering how the ingredients would affect both the guests and the therapists. It was also important to choose products with the "cleanest" of ingredients. Ultimately, Body Bliss, Laurel, and Red Flower made the cut. Products and treatments also incorporate herbs and botanicals from Miraval's 10-acre Cypress Creek Farm.

Beyond the treatment offerings, guests also have a variety of experiences from which to choose, such as Creative Expression, Equine, Farm & Garden, Meditation, Wellness Counseling, Yoga, and more. They can opt to take part in The Power of Intuition (\$55, 90 minutes), Crafting a Peace Passage (\$55, 90 minutes), or Cultivating a Healthy Mindset (\$55, 90 minutes). The spa also offers a number of complimentary offerings, including Qoya, a movement practice for women; Fire & Folklore, involving an hour of acoustic guitar and storytelling around an outdoor fireplace; and the Labyrinth Journey, a mindful barefoot walking meditation. "The most challenging, yet exciting, part of my job is to create experiences that are meaningful to people and then deliver on those experiences at a very high level every day," says Preslar. "We want to exceed our guests' expectations. The most rewarding part is when guests tell me that their experience at Miraval changed their life, and that they are different because of what they experienced at Miraval." ●

SPA TALK *with* David Preslar



Meet spa director David Preslar, who joined the industry in 1995.

What was the path that led you into the spa industry?

My parents both suffered from lifestyle-related illnesses, and unfortunately, they passed away at a very early age, because they didn't take care

of themselves. When they passed, I was working in the hospitality industry, but I was inspired to shift my focus to spa. I wanted to work in an industry that helped people find a path to wellbeing.

Where do you think the industry is heading?

I think that spa experiences are going to become more personalized for guests. At Miraval Austin, we're seeing

a great deal of requests for private sessions, and our spa treatments that offer a more customizable experience are becoming extremely popular.

What is the most bizarre treatment you've had?

Our Vasudhara treatment was the most unique spa experience I have ever had. During the treatment, you are blindfolded and floating in a heated pool while a therapist performs Thai massage stretches. The pool also has

underwater speakers playing otherworldly music. The end result of the treatment was extremely transformational. I was brought to tears by the experience.

How would you sum up your personal philosophy?

I approach every day by being very grateful for the things I have and the opportunities I've been given.

For our full interview, visit www.americanspa.com.