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'FEEL GOOD AGAIN'

St Michaels Resort's new focus on wellbeing in Cornwall, UK

FINNISH SAUNA

How the country's passion is spreading around the world

A SENSE OF PLACE

Parisian luxury at Rosewood's Hôtel de Crillon, France

TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

Our Expert Guide to the best spa management software



Clockwise from far left: One of the spa's ten new treatment rooms is a double; the stunning hydrotherapy pool is equipped with 21 massage stations; St Michaels aims to offer guests a service unrivalled in Cornwall; a Harvia heater warms the traditional Finnish barrel sauna

'Feel good again'

The mission statement of St Michaels Resort in Falmouth has been brought to life by the creation of a new spa in the first part of a significant investment programme

REPORT BY IAN PARKES

Commanding spectacular views towards Gyllyngvase Beach, one of the finest stretches of sand in Cornwall, St Michaels Resort in Falmouth was purchased by Nigel Carpenter in 2001. Now, following the completion of a £10 million (€11.2 million) redevelopment programme, according to Carpenter, the once "tired, run-down hotel" has been transformed into a four-star oasis of health and wellness where visitors can "feel good again".

In 2012, the original St Michaels was already running a profitable, albeit somewhat cramped, spa and health club, with the latter hitting a peak of 1,200 members. However, Carpenter says: "We were constantly managing the potential conflict between those enjoying a relaxing spa day, gym members working out, and parents and children staying at the hotel."

In April that year, a neighbouring hotel property, Falmouth Beach, was destroyed by a fire. Recognising the need for expansion to realise St Michaels' potential, Carpenter purchased the razed site from owners Best Western.

"We had to develop a masterplan, the key component of which has allowed us to become a full resort, playing to our success in wellbeing and wellness," says Carpenter. "We had the opportunity to create a very large, very well fitted health club on the one side, and also a completely new spa on the other."

It was not without its trials and tribulations though, and with both still in the planning phase Carpenter opted to put the property up for sale in 2015 for £20 million. It was only after securing three separate tranches of investment from CBRE Global Investors, BH Group and Acorn Property Group, that he opted to see the plans through to fruition.

"Our tagline as a business for the last eight years has been 'Feel good again'. That rings even more true now in light of the redevelopments."

Nigel Carpenter Owner

On the site of the old Falmouth Beach hotel now stands the Beach House, containing 32 beautifully appointed rooms. Beneath it, opened last year, is a 1,000sqm health club with a 17m swimming pool, a sauna, a steam room, experience showers, a heated relaxation area and a sun terrace.

The health club's 350sqm fitness suite has cardiovascular and resistance equipment from Technogym, Matrix, Escape, Concept2 and Keiser, along with three studios for spin, rowing and fitness classes. Its 100 instructor-led classes each week run at 80-90% occupancy and club membership currently stands at 2,000, with a ceiling of 2,500.

Follow the yellow brick road

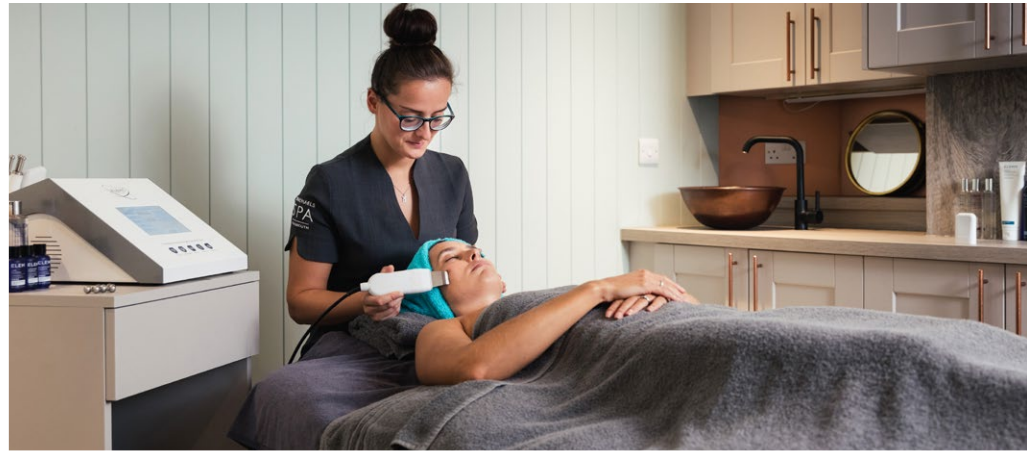
In conjunction with the opening of the Beach House has been the refurbishment and redevelopment of the core of the 52-room hotel, now known as The Main House, with the two buildings linked by what has playfully been termed 'The Yellow Brick Road of Wellness' by spa manager Lucy Mingo, due to the yellow pathway that runs from one to the other.

Alongside two new restaurants, Brasserie on the Bay and the Garden Kitchen, and the impressive Wine Vaults private dining room, has been created a stylish 800sqm spa. Here, the pièce de résistance is a 14m hydrotherapy pool, designed by Apex Pool Engineers, which is heated to a constant 35°C and offers 21 massage stations and seven different experiences.

In addition, there is a herbal Finnish sauna, a rainforest steam room and the world's only Cornish Sea Salt steam room, the delivery of which was all overseen by Anapos, based in Wigan. Two different sets of experience showers, four thermal loungers, the 'Ice Bucket Challenge', a four-poster cabana and various loungers complete the indoor offering, while outside on the south-facing relaxation terrace, with views over the bay, there is a Red Cedar hot tub and a Finnish barrel sauna with a heating system from Harvia.

As Carpenter explains, there was a clear case for the development of both areas. "We'd built up a very successful spa business, but we were completely at capacity with the four treatment rooms. We'd also developed a very successful





Clockwise from above: St Michaels will see a further £30 million investment as part of its redevelopment; a guest enjoys a high-tech treatment; the Anapos-supplied thermal suite; OPI is the product partner for nail care; the health club's high-end, fully equipped gym; the outdoor Red Cedar hot tub and Finnish barrel sauna; a refreshing hydrotherapy pool experience

lot more spa breaks. The spa will help us to run at more than 80% occupancy all-year-round.”

With the aforementioned trio of investors on board, phase two of the development masterplan, which is expected to cost around £30 million (€34 million), will see the creation and sale of 53 self-catering apartments, with the resort offering a total management service to the new owners. An additional four eco-spa lodges and a new access road into the overall site are also due to open in the spring.

Something for everyone

Anapos further developed the rasul, which houses a traditional Moroccan steam chamber with exfoliants, muds and clays supplied by Natural Spa Factory. Meanwhile, Natura Bissé, Elemis and ishga cater for the majority of the broad offering in the 10 treatment rooms – one of which is a double – and there

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health club, but again that was straining at the seams.

“We knew that if we could build a national-standard health club – one that would not be out of place in London, but in a Cornish environment – then it would be very difficult for anyone in this area to match.

“For the resort, the creation of the destination spa was really important from the point of view of being able to deliver a truly relaxing spa break, which wasn’t completely possible while it coexisted with the health club. The atmosphere is different. In one, you’re pumping people up; in the other, you’re chilling people down.”

Describing the ambition that drove the development, Carpenter adds: “In Cornwall, there’s been a big growth in spa. We were one of the first to come along and put a spa into a hotel, but then we needed to leapfrog to the top of the pack again to ensure we delivered a very special experience.

“We feel we have achieved it, which means that going forward we have the opportunity to sell a



“As the spa is still new, the menu will be refined and adapted over time as we discover what our clients like, what’s selling and what’s less popular.”

Lucy Mingo Spa manager



is also a capsule collection from Made for Life Organics. Complementing those brands for use in the nail bar's three manicure and pedicure stations is OPI's ProSpa skincare range and tanning products are supplied by MoroccanTan.

Discussing the treatment selection, Mingo says: "As Elemis was our brand partner in the previous spa, and given they are an incredibly well-known British brand, it was an easy decision to retain them.

"But we wanted to offer something for everyone. In particular, we wanted something truly exclusive, like Natura Bissé, who are pioneers in terms of development. They provide us with something different and unique.

"As for ishga, given our location by the sea, we wanted our signature treatments to be organic and to showcase a seaweed base, which has allowed us to be more tailored to individual preferences. We have created treatments together that are unique to us.

"With Made for Life, their Cancer Touch treatments are very special, and, of course, they're Cornish. As for Natural Spa Factory, they are such an easy brand to work with, and their rasul products are amazing.

"As the spa is still new, the menu will be refined and adapted over time as we discover what our clients like, what's selling and what's less popular."

Making people happier

For now, Carpenter is simply delighted that the property he bought 17 years ago is thriving. Given its location and the range of facilities on offer, St Michaels Resort is in a position to attract a wide demographic across a number of facets of the business – from local health club members and spa break couples, through to families.

Abiding by the hotel's motto, Carpenter says: "Our tagline as a business for the last eight years has been 'Feel good again'. That rings even more true now in light of the redevelopments. Whether you've had a drink in the bar, lunch in the Garden Kitchen, a workout, or a three-night luxury spa break, we want to send people away restored, relaxed, feeling a little better, and a little happier than when they came in. That's what we try to live by." ●●●●●

St Michaels Resort

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Owner: Nigel Carpenter **Investment:** £10 million **Spa size:** 800sqm (plus an additional 1,000sqm health club) **Spa team:** 21

Treatment rooms: 10 **Product partners:** Elemis, Natura Bissé, ishga, Natural Spa Factory, Made for Life Organics,

OPI, MoroccanTan **Thermal and wet spa design and supply:** Apex Pool Engineers, Anapos **Other suppliers:** Gharieni, BC Softwear, Harvia, Ellisons, Cornish Sea Salt Company, Technogym, Matrix, Escape, Concept2 and Keiser