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MEXICO

Behind the Scenes: Creating Spa Matilda



When hotelier Harold Stream decided to open a spa at his new **HOTEL MATILDA** — an eclectic 32-room boutique hotel in the heart of San Miguel de

Allende, Mexico — he brought in one of the best: Under a Tree Consulting, a branch of award-winning spa and wellness consultancy Amy McDonald and Associates. We joined Amy on a recent trip to Hotel Matilda, where she spoke about the creative process behind it.

How did your input affect the spa?

When we saw the hotel under construction, they'd only set aside two small rooms for treatment areas. We told Mr. Stream that he needed to devote more space in order to offer a facility reflective of a world-class property. By opening day, we had four treatment rooms, plus a private hammam room, indoor/outdoor relaxation lounge with fireplace, fitness studio and a small but well-stocked retail boutique.

Hotel Matilda has amazing interior design. Did that affect the spa?

Definitely! Hotel Matilda is named after Mr. Stream's mother, who was painted by Diego Rivera. It's filled with amazing artwork by leading Latin artists, and attracts a high-end, culturally minded clientele. To reflect that, we brought in unique features like the tiled water room, for personal hammam-style treatments, and unexpected furnishings such as wall-sized mirrors from a local design shop to decorate the multifunctional treatment/yoga room. The lounge area has an outdoor component so guests can enjoy the wonderful climate between treatments. Product lines such as Barcelona's

Natura Bissé, for high-performance skincare treatments; Primavera, a certified organic line from Germany; and Malin+Goetz bath amenities reflect our integrated philosophy and appeal to the hotel's sophisticated audience.

What elements of Mexico did you want to bring to Spa Matilda?

We wanted to reflect San Miguel's vibrant community. Inspired by apothecaries, we created organic local body preparations like our Energize line, using cornmeal, sage and lime; they're hand-blended by the treatment team, and packaged in mason jars. We'll also offer cultural programming: local artists showing their work, trunk shows by local jewelry designers, talks on the music and folklore behind mariachi.

Can you explain the concept behind Spa en Vivo?

The area has many natural hot springs, which are popular with the people that live here; they'll come out with friends and family, bring picnic lunches and spend the day soaking and socializing. We wanted to include that in the spa experience, but in a more private way. So we found a privately owned spring, and negotiated exclusive access for Spa Matilda guests. It's about giving the experience of both worlds — a modern, contemporary spa that also gets people out under the sky, breathing fresh air and connecting to the earth. We try to bring that into every project we work on. *Rooms from \$319, hotelmattilda.com*
— Susan Moynihan

