



Relax for a day, or much longer, at the new all-suite, waterfront Hyatt condo-hotel.

BEAUTY AND THE BEACH

BY KATHY SAUNDERS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD

THE SUITE SPOT: The Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach Resort and Spa opened in December as the centerpiece of Clearwater Beach's Beach Walk, a new \$30 million revitalization project featuring a half-mile active pathway for shopping, dining and entertainment. The four-star resort boasts 250 deluxe, one- and two-bedroom suites featuring Hyatt Grand Beds, 42-inch flat-screen televisions, full kitchens and oversized private balconies overlooking the gulf.



CASUAL ELEGANCE: All 250 guest rooms and public areas are decorated in a classic and contemporary West Indies style, including this air-conditioned poolside cabana complete with flat-screen television and wet bar, one of 20 that highlight the eighth-level pool and resort deck.

Visitors to the new Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach Resort and Spa are encouraged to shed their worries. One of the rituals promoted at its Sandbar Spa involves having guests write their intentions on a sand slab that is hand-carried back to the beach each evening. The back-to-nature theme continues throughout the treatment menu, whose offerings include a foot scrub with "purified" sand from the beach across the street and a massage using "sun-warmed" shells from the shoreline.

Spa services, called journeys, relate to the themes of restoration and enlightenment.

Retreating from the spa to one of the hotel's 250 guest rooms is a short journey to another type of relaxation. Each room is a West Indies-style condo-hotel suite with a fully equipped kitchen and a balcony overlooking the Gulf of Mexico.

The resort by Neil Rancourt and NJR Development opened in February in the heart of Clearwater Beach. Hyatt's first waterfront hotel on Florida's west coast dominates the city's \$30-million Beach Walk project to revitalize its waterfront.

Although it's a towering, 17-story complex, the resort, also called Aqualea, has "a smaller, more boutiquey feeling than most of our hotels," sales manager Sarah Kennedy says. "I would say it's a little more upscale, too."

All Aqualea's units, ranging in size from 600 to 2,000 square feet, are available for purchase. Owners can live in their own condominiums for up to 60 days a year and have Hyatt lease them to hotel guests other times.

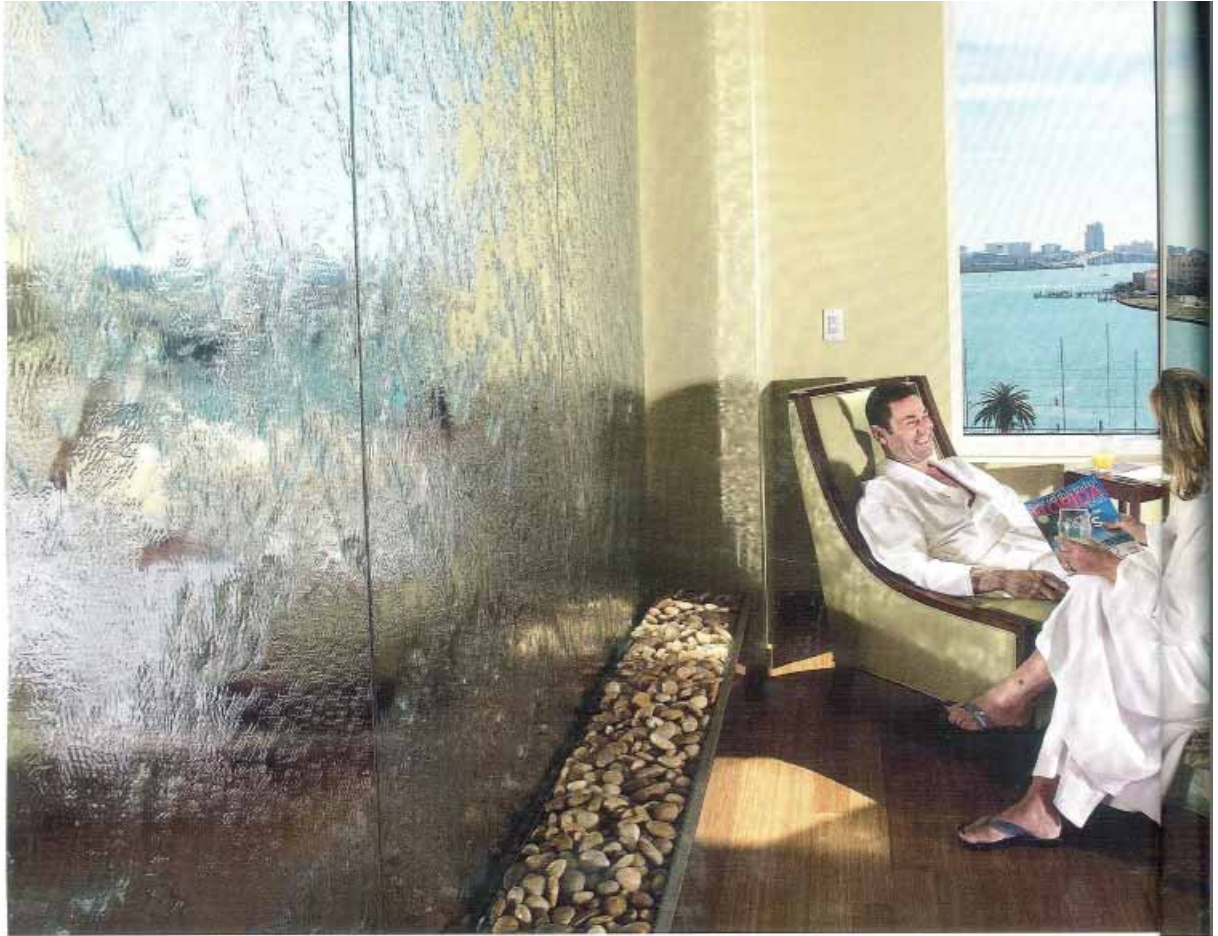
"It's the only hotel of its kind in our portfolio," Kennedy says.

The landscape inside the coral-painted building mirrors the outside, with soothing yellow and beige color schemes.

Water is in every view from the hotel. The rooms are layered between the eighth and 17th floors. The pool is on the eighth floor, surrounded by lounge chairs with individual call buttons for food and beverage service. Sunbath-



WIDE-OPEN SPACES: Soaring ceilings give the lobby of the new Hyatt Regency Clearwater Beach Resort and Spa an open feel.



SOOTHING SURROUNDINGS: Kenneth and Andree Kocian, of Gainesville, unwind in the Sandava Spa's relaxation lounge before their spa treatments. The couple, on vacation in Clearwater Beach, were waiting to experience Swedish massage and reflexology treatments.



ers can click for service from Swim, the poolside bar and grill. A hot tub overlooks the beach and all of downtown Clearwater from the 16th-floor rooftop.

The resort is flush with terraces, private meeting rooms, conference rooms, a promenade and a grand ballroom for weddings and other private gatherings. The 20 poolside cabanas, available for half- or full-day rentals, have air conditioning and heating, private restrooms, seating areas, tables, wireless Internet service and flat-screen televisions.

The hotel has a 200-seat restaurant, Shor, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as a lobby bar and coffee shop. Canada-born executive chef Brad Gillespie uses seasonal ingredients from within 100 miles to prepare American seafood-themed creations in an open kitchen.

As many of the ingredients on the dinner menu are organically produced, the Sandava Spa offers similar products to "activate, nurture and inspire."

Kennedy says the amenities, including a 24-hour gym and a covered and gated children's pool, were designed to attract families from outside the area as well as those within the city limits. Also designed to lure local traffic are 400 public parking spaces — and a membership-only club with its own waterfront lounge. ©

Carrie Streets, vacationing from Chattanooga, Tenn., gets a kiwi body polish treatment from therapist Miriam Lopez, of St. Petersburg, at Sandava Spa. The spa offers individually crafted spa experiences with the intention of connecting guests with the sea, the shore and the power of personal wellness.



Refreshments available in the Sandava Spa's relaxation lounge include fresh fruit and parfaits (top).

A kiwi body polish treatment, one of the services available at the spa, uses fine kiwi seeds (above) followed by the application of a firming oil.