

The Espace Balneae is a totally new environment (unique in France), for relaxation, meeting others and for enhancing creativity.

From 1st June 2006 the seminary participants of Châteauforn' la Princesse (the chateaux of Mello-Oise) will be the first to discover the latest Châteauforn' innovation – the Espace Balneae.

Tepidarium, caldarium, laconicum, Jacuzzi bathtubs, seaweed baths...find out how the Espace Balneae is set-out and works and, above all, what it adds to your seminars.

Katy Horovitz, Interior Planning Manager at Châteauforn', tells us:

Cf: We are all aware of thalassotherapy, Jacuzzis, hammams and saunas, Thai and shiatsu massages, amongst others, but how did you come up with the idea of baths or balnea?

KH: With the modern craze for alternative medicine and sea or spring water hydrotherapy, there is definitely a call nowadays for urban balneotherapy. Sometimes called a spa, balneotherapy is a form of hydrotherapy, different from thalassotherapy because of its use of freshwater rather than seawater. It can be considered as alternative medicine because of its naturally soothing effects, which is an obvious reason for integrating this new form of relaxation into our seminary locations.

The original idea was quite simple: when you go to a hotel and you feel like having a relaxing massage, it is so often not possible because hotel health centres are frequently only open by day just when people are working, and function on a non-reservation basis. Then if they are open in the evening, it is difficult to get an appointment.

We wanted to create an area in which one could relax and also have a massage after a long day of training, and just when you really need it! The aim was to try and find 40 people interested in massaging 40 participants from 6pm until 10pm, but it turned out not to be possible. So we then looked for massage and relaxation activities that our participants could use on their own, such as our bathtubs with their 150 nozzles and jets with 20 different programmes to allow you to be massaged from head to foot in just half an hour!

Cf: Amongst all the different types that exist, what will the Château de la Princesse baths offer?

KH: Directly inspired from Roman baths, the baths at the Château de la Princesse will offer much the same as the public baths of antiquity:

- Perfect cleansing of the skin and respiratory passages
- Revitalisation and purification
- Relaxation
- and relaxation to music with themes
- Body detox
- Contribution to elimination of stress and negative environmental effects
- Stimulation of the metabolism and blood flow.

Cf: Will the participants be able to manage on their own?

KH: The principle of “like at home” applies to everything on offer at our Châteauform’ locations.

This also applies to the Espace Balneae. We wanted to create a pleasant, friendly environment in which everyone could really relax without having to call on the expertise of a professional. This independence is all yours, but rest assured that you are not left entirely on your own. If you need it, a Châteauform’ member of staff will be at your disposition to guide or assist you. Independent – yes, but abandoned? No.

Cf: Will the baths be mixed?

KH: Since antiquity, thermal baths have been open to men and women alike, but at different times of the day. La Balneae de la Princesse will be open to all. Certain teams will want to enjoy them all together, but the two tepidaria, the 16 bathtubs available in four different sizes, or the laconica and caldaria could also be easily divided between different teams or between men and women.

Cf: Will it be freely accessible and included in the Châteauform’ all-inclusive price?

KH: Of course! Every location has something special to offer: from Suduiraut you can visit the famous local wine cellars, you can learn curling and enjoy the hot springs from the Chalet de Champéry or enjoy the swimming pools of Fief des Epoisses or Les Prés d’Ecoublay. Now the Mello châteaux offer their own selection of relaxation activities and this superb environment in which to relax.

Cf: How would you describe a typical way in which a participant could make the most of the baths? Once in, what happens next?

KH: There is no formula. Everyone is free to enjoy the various baths as it suits them best:

- the caldarium and laconicum, at 40°C and 50°C respectively;
- the jacuzzi that can aim its jets at one or several parts of your body so that you can be massaged from head to foot in 20 to 30 minutes!
- the seaweed baths comprising tiled benches where you smear yourself with seaweed and then wrap yourself up in an electric blanket;

You are free to try each bath in which ever order you like. You can thus spoil yourself according to whatever takes your fancy or what would be best for your aches and pains.

Just a word of advice: round it off by the tepidarium, then listening to music in the relaxation rooms sipping a jasmin tea.

Cf: The atmosphere, architecture and interior decoration in every Châteauform’ location are always warm, comfortable and original. How are the baths designed?

KH: The Château de la Princesse has a huge area of more than 550m² beneath the Orangery whose vaulted ceilings naturally offer a kind of intimate atmosphere. It was the obvious area to adapt as a convivial place for relaxation.

The feeling of well-being in the baths is linked in with the ‘like at home’ concept. In order for everybody to be able to enjoy them and, taking into account the busy training programmes and seminars, the baths will be open everyday from the end of the afternoon through to the end of the evening. There is a cosy, private space of two rooms filled with cushions, where, wrapped in a soft towel, you can go and have a tea or squeeze yourself a fresh orange juice. To stay on a while longer, there are home-made soups available to guests in the kitchen from 6pm onwards, which you could enjoy together with your friends.

Cf: How can one include these extraordinary amenities within a company's seminary objectives?

KH: The Romans would go to the thermal baths for health and beauty reasons, but these places also had an important social function. They were an integral part of city life in Roman times; it was there that they went to wash, but also, where they would meet with friends, eat or even discuss business.

A '3 year strategy' meeting or a seminar of team building following a merger or a change in management can often be conclusive and stressful. The Châteaufort' locations are chosen for their rural beauty and relaxation is strongly encouraged by us, as it can be forgotten in planning busy seminars. However, it is often during these informal moments that links are established, ideas formed or decisions taken. That is why, to give you an example, we have set out baths in groups of 4 facing each other so that you can continue a discussion whilst being massaged!

Take the time to take care of yourself after a busy day of meetings – it is ideal for relieving stress, or simply allow your participants to enjoy themselves by combining what is useful with what is pure pleasure!

Cf: Do you foresee relaxation areas for other Châteaufort' locations in the future?

KH: Certainly! If the location suits! For example, we are awaiting the opening of the Rochefort en Yvelines site in 2007 which is an ideal site for relaxation as this superb château is situated on an 18 hole golf course!

Thank you and see you soon.