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New spa carts add relaxing treatments to room service menu

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Enlarge Vasiao Life Spa

With the new spa on wheels, guests at the JW Marriott in Grand Rapids can get a range of treatments wheeled right into their hotel rooms.

By Kitty Bean Yancey, USA TODAY

In-room spa services are on a roll.

Newly designed carts that hold everything needed for facials, massages and more are bringing treatments to guestrooms at Michigan's JW Marriott Grand Rapids. Even better, prices are no more than in the hotel's spa.

The spas on wheels — which may soon be seen at more hotels — can turn each of the JW Marriott's 337 rooms and suites into a sanctum "where guests can crawl off the table and get into bed," says Vickie Bennett, whose Vasiao Life Spa provides the hotel's spa services. She designed the carts with husband Victor to expand on the tiny spa area and in response to guests who crave privacy or hate to get dressed and toddle back to their rooms after relaxing treatments.

"It's inconvenient" for therapists to gather equipment and head up to rooms, Bennett adds. Her "Suite Spa" carts (whatissuitespa.com) can carry machines for facials, materials for scrubs and manicures, plus all sorts of lotions and potions. Heated compartments warm towels and hot stones used in some massages. Carts even have music players.

"We can perform most any and every spa service," she says, including a 50-minute ginger/seaweed body wrap (\$110) and \$98 pumpkin enzyme facial at the Marriott.

"Our guests are absolutely loving it," says Brian Behler, the hotel's director of rooms. "They think, 'I'm in my room, and they'll come take care of me.' And it builds revenue."

Bennett is planning to franchise carts and expand to more hotels, maybe condo buildings and golf clubhouses. Suite spas have appeal in sour times when "a lot of hotels don't have the money to build new spas," she says.

However, she'll be vetting prospective cart purchasers carefully. No escorts, please.

"Going into someone's room is a very private thing," Bennett

says. "We want to make sure (franchisees) follow our prototype and don't want to hear that anyone did something improper."

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