

MAKING *waves*



During one of the toughest ever years for the industry, multimillion-pound Wave Garden Spa has opened in Snowdonia, with hopes to become one of the UK's leading wellness destinations. **Amanda Pauley** gets the lowdown

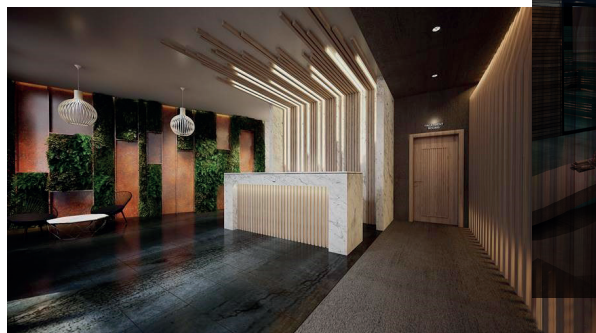
Despite it being an extremely difficult year for the spa industry due to Covid-19, the new £1.25 million-pound Wave Garden Spa is opening in Snowdonia, North Wales, with plans to make the area one of the hottest wellness destinations in the UK.

Located within the grounds of the scenic Adventure Parc Snowdonia in Conwy Valley, the 6,996sq ft spa is making the most of its beautiful surroundings, boasting wellbeing services in one-of-a-kind views of the surf lagoon, forest and mountains, alongside the opportunity to take part in thrill-seeking

activities such as coasteering and paddle boarding – a standout USP for this new kid on the spa block.

"It's a really unique destination because we have the established Adventure Parc Snowdonia next door, so we can offer a little bit of everything for everyone. If the client wanted to do some caving and follow it with a spa day then we can do that, and that blend is very one-off," says spa manager Kait Dunne.

"The spa garden even has a zip line that goes over it, so one guest can be on the zip line while their partner is chilling in the pool watching – what's not to love about that." The business is primarily a resort with an onsite hotel, "so the main focus has to be on



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hospitality and tourism,” says Dunne. “The two businesses will work together, offering indoor and outdoor experiences, which not only makes us a weather-proof destination but gives us greater appeal. For example, the Adventure Parc already offers corporate packages for businesses and hosts stag/hen dos, so it fits nicely to encompass the spa into these group bookings.”

The spa was originally meant to open in March 2021 but due to coronavirus restrictions in Wales, the launch date was pushed back until May 18. “The delay was due to lockdown, but we also pushed the date back past April 12 (the reopening date for treatments in Wales) because hotels couldn’t open until the next phase and we wanted to open everything at the same time,” explains Dunne.

Unsurprisingly, the spa is over budget – “but what big project isn’t?”, says Dunne –

and when you look at the scale of the site, you can see why. No expense has been spared, with features inside including a vitality waterfall pool, steam room, Himalayan salt sauna, foot spas, hammam and four treatment rooms (one of which is a couple’s room); while outside in the spa garden there is a hydrotherapy pool, loungers, relaxation pods, fire pits, traditional wooden barrel sauna, yoga studio and a fragrant herb garden.

Green pledge

The business worked with architect Curveline Design and construction company HH Smith on the build to create a modern, nature-infused spa environment with a real eco-friendly focus. “The spa has been built with sustainability in mind,” says Dunne. “We’ve gone with local ingredients and materials, where possible, and we won’t be using plastics – for example, we won’t be using single-use sample sachets or anything that doesn’t come in sustainable packaging.” Clients will also be able to bathe in pools fed with chemical-free water.

The supplier used for the spa garden is local and the plants in the space are grown in nearby Glan Conwy, where the wood used for the décor was also sourced. Some of the plants found in the herb garden have also been infused into a balm product, which will be used in a signature treatment created especially for the spa, containing eucalyptus, rosemary and lavender.

“We’ve partnered with brands that have similar ethics to us and whose products aren’t bin-able,” says Dunne. “It was spa brand Thalgo’s sustainability pledges and reduction in carbon footprint that drew us to them. They do a lot of ocean clean-ups and because we are a water-based business, it aligned with our values.”

The spa has also partnered with artisan Welsh brand





Tribe 517, based in Cardiff, which has created signature 55-minute treatment Hot Wave, using the herbal balm mentioned earlier. "It's always good to support local brands, but it was also the company's sustainability credentials and quality of treatments that made us want to partner with them," adds Dunne. "Tribe 517 uses glass bottles for products that are sustainable and recyclable and that was important for us."

Finding the right people

However, it wasn't just finding materials and partners that align with the spa's vision that was challenging; being able to source items during lockdown was tough "because businesses have been finding it harder to get everything and to deliver it on time", says Dunne.

"Luckily, all the fundamentals are in, such as the treatment beds and equipment, we're just trying to make sure that everything we've left to the last minute to buy is going to turn up on time, like hand dispensers and dryers," Dunne told me when we spoke in late April.

Finding the right people to be the face of the spa has also been tough and this is because of new issues surrounding recruitment brought on by the pandemic. "We've had a few setbacks because a lot of people haven't wanted to leave a job where they were getting furlough to then be a new employee who may not be eligible for it," explains Dunne.

"In Wales, we've had a lot of lockdowns, so the money side of things has been a big factor because people don't want to leave a job without security. However, once candidates who have applied for a job come to see the place and the amazing environment they would be working in, they've then been happier to take the risk."

The spa will be opening with seven staff: Dunne, a senior

therapist, two full-time therapists, two part-time therapists and a spa host. "I've only gone for people who have been in the industry at least three years – therapists who know how to deal with clientele confidently and have experience in operating a spa. Once we've got through the pandemic, I'll then look at taking on some new therapists and training them up," says Dunne.

Local reputation

Despite the spa working in tandem with Adventure Parc Snowdonia on larger client bookings, Dunne also wants to tap into the local market and get them to see the spa as a must visit. "I really want it to be a spa that welcomes everyone because that's what it's all about. We're in a really nice, friendly community here, so it would be good for the locals to come and see us regularly," says Dunne.



Kait Dunne

She plans to target this group via a loyalty system – "a bit like a Boots card, but nicer, where they get access to exclusive offers," she says. "If you have a client who comes and sees you once per month or every other weekend, for example, then you should reward that person for their loyalty."

Of course, the pandemic has impacted the business, with Dunne stating that the plan for this first year is "to survive, but also we need to make money back for the outlay". However, getting a Good Spa Guide rating in the next six months is on the wish list, as well as entering industry awards so the business has some accolades under their belt. "For this year though, I just want to make sure we're doing OK and that everyone is happy," adds Dunne. **PB**

Fast facts

Size: 6,996sq ft
Staff: seven (five therapists, one spa host and Dunne)
Brands: Orly, Thalgo, Tribe 517
Estimated cost: around £1.25m