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Hotel Signature Scents

Hotels tap into aromatherapy to evoke local atmosphere and brand identity

by [Beth Vrabel](#) | July 2013



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When Hans van Wees, general manager, Hotel Vermont in Burlington, set out to create the perfect welcome for guests, how the new boutique hotel should smell was one of the most debated decisions.

“The moment you walk into a building, you get a sense of where you are,” Van Wees said. “And part of how you get that sense is what you see, what you hear, how people approach you and what it smells like.”

The brand-new 125-room hotel needed a fragrance that reflected its contemporary but timeless design, one that reflected its emphasis on local ingredients and New England culture. “We’re not trying to be trendy,” Van

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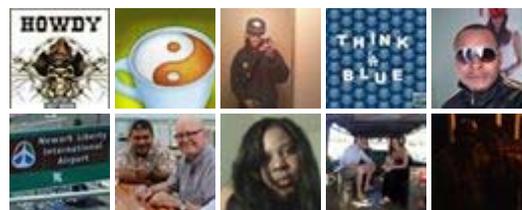
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Wees said. “We’re not trying to be exclusive. We like to think of ourselves as thoughtful in terms of design as well as services we offer.”

The hotel was still narrowing in on the perfect scent pairing a week before its May 2013 opening. Not appreciating smell, Van Wees said, would be like sitting down to a gourmet meal and fine wine and not pausing to breathe in the aromas.

Hotel Vermont is just one of many hotels that have turned to aromatherapy to create ambience for guests, whether to evoke a sense of space like Hotel Vermont’s woody, natural locale or a sense of luxury, such as the ginger flower fragrance of all Langham hotels.

It’s a flourishing industry. The aromatherapy market in the United States experienced a 17.7 percent increase in 2012 from the year before, according to a report by Dorene Petersen, president of American College of Healthcare Services. The market earned more than \$31.9 million in retail sales in 2012, according to the report.

And the trend of tapping into this booming industry isn’t dissipating anytime soon, as hotel managers — and the aromatherapists with whom they work — have touched upon a way to bottle up the experience of staying in a luxury suite.

Sense — and scent — of space.

Boutique hotels tend to turn to aromatherapy as a way to evoke local atmosphere. That’s why Van Wees turned to Lunaroma, a Burlington, Vt.-based aromatherapy shop, to customize Hotel Vermont’s spa amenities and hotel fragrances.

“The quality and the product specifications needed to be there, but it absolutely in our mind had to be local,” Van Wees said. “And I think what you start to see more or that we are sensitive to is that memories are created not just by visual and auditory senses, but all the senses.”

Likewise, Dukes St. James, London, also an

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independent luxury boutique hotel, went ultra-local. Steps away from the hotel at 89 Jermyn St. is Floris, a perfume shop that dates back to the 1700s. A favorite among royals, Floris was a natural choice for Dukes general manager Debrah Dhugga.

Floris describes its hyacinth-and-bluebell-scented candles: “Fresh leafy notes accent the floral accord of spring flowers, dominated by hyacinth and bluebell and spiced with a touch of carnation. Heliotrope and ylang ylang sustain the floral theme which is underscored by a soft balsamic and woody base in the cool green floral fragrance.”

Dhugga sums the scent more succinctly as the smell of “walking through the English countryside.” And considering how many guests Dhugga directs down the street to Floris, she knows it’s a perfect pairing. Dukes’ Duchess rooms use fresh freesia bouquets to add a note of femininity.

Larger hotel groups, however, turn to aromatherapy not to evoke a sense of town but brand loyalty. Bob van den Oord, vice president of brands, Langham Hospitality Group, said The Langham has never changed its signature fragrance. “Our guests can relate the specific fragrance to a sense of place, also scent of place. They could instantly know that they are right in The Langham when they smell the signature ginger flower fragrance, no matter they are in London, Hong Kong or Shanghai,” he said.

The Flavour of Langham, available as a bottled room scent in gift shops, is piped through the hotel via the central air-conditioning system.





Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group's signature scents © Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group

Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group finds a middle ground. Its fragrances share citrusy tea notes but vary based on a unique sense of place and identity, according to Andrea Lomas, head of group spa operations.

So Mandarin Oriental, New York features a scent from the Profumi d'Ambiente range by Italian perfumer Lorenzo Dante Ferro. "While not specifically created for the hotel, the scent embodies the hotel's signature Mandarin Blossom tea, which is served to guests upon arrival," Lomas said. "Notes of orange, tea and cypress filter through the corridors of guestroom floors."

Mandarin Oriental, Las Vegas uses scent sticks which begin with a crisp citrus and later transform to melon rind and green floral notes and then bamboo woods. The Landmark Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong uses a signature diffuser in the lobby, spa and corridors to release a blend of lemon, orange, bergamot and lime mixed with ginger, black pepper, juniper berry and exotic floral notes of iris on a woody base.

While Langham Hotels won't change its signature fragrance, it is updating its spa offerings. "We are collaborating with Laura Tonatto, one of the most esteemed and award-winning 'Italian noses' in the world, to launch our new series of in-room amenities with a tailor-made fragrance," said Van den Oord, who added the selected scent is inspired by the five elements of Traditional Chinese Medicine: metal, wood, earth, water and fire. It has a base of bergamot.

Hotel Vermont's team took more than a year to select the perfect scents to be piped through the hotel lobby and just the right fragrances for guest amenities, but Van Wees described the selection process as "a fantastic

experience.”

First, hotel employees talked with the Lunaroma aromatherapist about their priorities, including keeping the fragrances as indigenous as possible. Lunaroma prepared about 16 scent combinations for Hotel Vermont to test.

“We literally sat around a table with strips of paper, just scenting these aromas,” Van Wees said. Between sniffs, employees cleared their noses with freshly roasted coffee beans. They then narrowed the combinations to about five and continued to work those down to two or three.

The end result: a hotel-wide fragrance of cedar and lavender with evergreen; lemon- and eucalyptus-scented shampoo; rosewood-bergamot-scented conditioner; and lemon-grapefruit-orange-blended shower gel. The hotel’s bedtime menu includes aromatherapy treatments to naturally ease guests to sleep. “Vermont is a great place to get a good night’s sleep,” he said.

Signature Scents

Located in the cultural and commercial heart of Istanbul, the new Marti Istanbul Hotel turned to local, Turkey-based scent company SCENTLINQ to find the perfect aroma for the glamorous hotel. They chose a white tea scent with hints of freshness and sweetness for a clean, calming fragrance that is diffused throughout the hotel using unique technology developed by SCENTLINQ.

Gramercy Park Hotel in New York features a signature Cade 26 scent from Le Labo. The intoxicating scent with smoky notes was created exclusively for the hotel and is available for purchase.

Lungarno Collection’s fragrance line, Tuscan Soul by Salvatore Ferragamo, pays tribute to the heart and soul of Tuscany. The ingredients, which include tangy citrus, exude freshness and are delicately blended with refined floral and precious woody notes. The scent is available exclusively for suite guests in Florence and Rome.

The Renaissance Blackstone in downtown Chicago uses a shiso tea leaf scent, combining tea, lemon leaf, lime, white mint, tuberose, jasmine, gardenia and lily of the valley to create a distinctive and welcoming aroma.

Guests of the Dolder Grand in Zürich experience a journey through scent via specialty scent boxes. The Event Scent is placed in the halls of the main building, and local Swiss company Farfalla creates an exclusive fresh lemon scent in the Dolder Grand Spa to help guests relax and feel refreshed.

The Springs Eternal Spa at Pennsylvania's Omni Bedford Springs Resort worked closely with Soy Beam, Inc. to survey the indigenous plants growing on resort grounds including berries, trees, flowers, herbs and greens. The end result was the signature honeysuckle-cucumber blend, created using only indigenous plants, herbs and flowers.

The sexy and sophisticated Four Seasons Buenos Aires greets guests in the lobby with its new signature Bayo scent, created exclusively by Fuegoia 1833, a fragrance composed of organic and native ingredients that reflect the diversity of Argentinean ecosystems, from the cold Andes to the warm Pampas. The light and ethereal perfume, specially designed with an aromatherapy functionality, is representative of the sophisticated lifestyle of the local Porteños and their love of nature.

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