

## SPA HOPPING

By Camille Hoheb

# Hard-core Healing

Wellness is a way of life at Kurotel Longevity Center and Spa in Gramado, Brazil.

WHAT I REMEMBER MOST ABOUT MY STAY AT Kurotel Longevity Center and Spa ([kurotel.com](http://kurotel.com)) in Gramado, Brazil, is the sense of intimacy and community. Strangers stopped me in the hallways of the sprawling 6,000-square-foot facility to tell me about their great experiences. Others joined me during meals, and we'd eat, laugh and compare notes on our outdoor activities and spa treatments.

That familial atmosphere set the tone for my entire trip.

### The Journey

After a long flight, I was thrilled when I finally boarded my last transfer plane from São Paulo to Porto Alegre. This was the moment my trip turned from exhausting to exhilarating. We had an hour-and-a-half drive to go to reach Gramado, but the time flew by as I watched the landscape change from urban city life to lush, green valleys and mountains. It was fall, the maple leaves were turning a fiery red and temperatures were in the 60s.

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world, and it's known for its lively music, beaches and bikinis. But where I was headed, it would be a totally different experience.

The Kurotel is named after the Kur Method, based on 19th-century Bavarian priest Sebastian Kneipp's pioneering system of healing. The practice centers on hot-and-cold water therapy, used to boost circulation and strengthen the immune system. Kurotel founders Neusa Silveria and Luis Carlos Silveria, M.D., opened the center in 1982 as a place for clients to work on their health and happiness through these therapies.

The facility also offers modern medical and holistic treatments. "Their idea was to construct something that would have the sophistication and resources of a hospital, without a clinical feeling; the comfort of a hotel, without being a traditional one; and the structure of a beauty clinic and fitness center, without the focus on weight reduction and external beauty," says Evelise Silveria, who runs the day-to-day operations with her family.

The Silverias' passion for health and beauty has resulted in a franchise. The Kur brand includes a cosmetics line, pharmacy and day spa. The Silveria family also owns a ranch, called Quinto do Alpha, which provides the eggs, milk and organic vegetables served throughout the resort. "We believe preventive medicine promotes wellness by facilitating our clients' commitment to leading a healthier life and making positive changes for good," says Rochele Silveria, who serves on the board of directors.

The typical duration of



Kurotel Longevity Center and Spa is famous for its hydrotherapies, including this outdoor, cold-water walking pool.

## SPA HOPPING



Kurotel's water therapy is central to the spa.



a stay at Kurotel is five to seven days, with prices ranging from about \$3,000 to \$12,000 for the week. The fixed rate covers accommodations and the myriad services the center has to offer—including weight loss and smoking cessation programs, water therapy and spa services, and consultations with a physician, nutritionist, psychologist, exercise physiologist and skincare analyst.

### Personalized Service

The people I met during my stay were nice, but the staff acted like long-lost friends. With a 3:5 staff-to-guest ratio, every visitor receives V.I.P. service. And with international visitors flocking here from around the world, guest relations manager Arline Maldaner ensures every one of them has a comfortable, satisfying stay. Each department has at least one staff member who's bilingual in English and Spanish. Plus, Kurotel provides continuing education for its staff, constantly adjusting the

curriculum depending on needs that arise from guests. "It's gratifying to know that we create memorable experiences for them," Maldaner says.

Upon my arrival, I was welcomed by Kurotel's international representative, Adriane Kinzel. She coordinated my busy itinerary. The first stop was the doctor's office. Like every guest, I met with a staff physician to review my health status and develop a custom treatment plan. With a recent back injury, I was concerned about being excluded from certain classes and services, but my fears quickly were abated.

During my first afternoon alone, I met with the doctor, ate a healthy lunch, consulted with an esthetician and enjoyed a massage. I also indulged in the many water rituals available at the Kur Water Station and Spa. All spa services are included in the package rate, and it's easy to get your money's worth. The menu boasts dozens of body treatments, massages, facials, energy therapies

## SPA HOPPING

and water rituals. Some signature standouts include the Cleopatra Body Hydration (40 min./\$165), which involves an application of aromatic oil followed by a special exfoliation, and a goat's milk and cinnamon moisturization; Kur Vital Energy Stimulating Therapy (40 min./\$175), a four-handed massage that focuses on simultaneous, rhythmic movements

During my first evening at dinner, I learned some hard lessons about Kurotel's expectations. Feeling dehydrated from my travels, I asked for a glass of water and was politely told, "no." No? At Kurotel, water and beverages are not served during meals because the liquid interferes with digestion. It took me several days to get used to this new way of eating.

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to relax muscles, and stimulation of acupuncture points to achieve physical and mental balance; and Wine Therapy and Grape Seed Exfoliation (45 min./\$160), an antioxidant-dense treatment for dry skin.

All this followed by dinner and a movie. Talk about a dream day! I quietly celebrated with a solid night's sleep.

### Hard Work Pays Off

It's said that a person's exterior is a reflection of her interior. But sometimes the two aren't quite in sync.

It was also difficult adapting to a diet of 800 to 1,200 calories per day. While I mourned the box of emergency chocolates I packed in my suitcase, I learned to love the Kurotel diet. Well, at least the results. It's a custom cuisine of freshly prepared, organic meals which are pleasing to the eye and palate. Snacks are provided four times a day, which include a few dried apricots or nuts, or maybe a couple ounces of a fruit smoothie. The small portions help curb headaches and hunger pangs.



Guests participate in a variety of fitness activities daily.

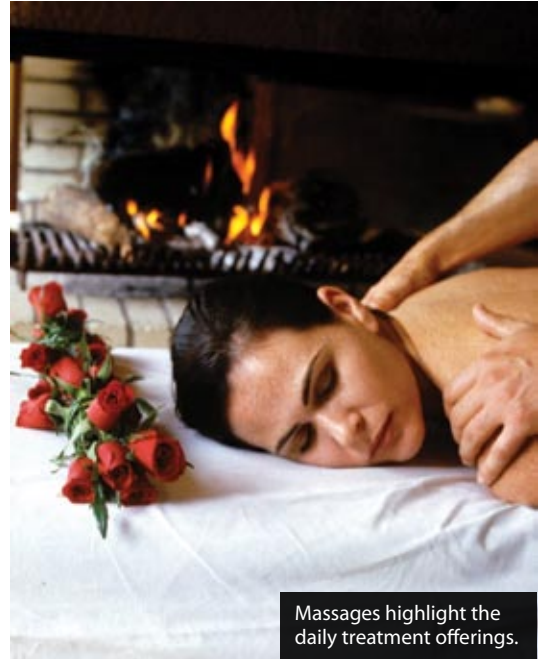
## SPA HOPPING

Just because my calories were restricted didn't mean the exercise portion of the program would be lighter too. I had my fill of aqua therapy, dance, yoga and fitness classes. I estimate I exercised about two to three hours each morning. "Exercise is an option of pleasure, not sacrifice," says clinic administrator Marcio Vaz, who's worked as a fitness expert at Kurotel for seven years. I tried to keep that in mind.

Not all fitness activities were rigorous. Morning walks offered an opportunity to get to know other guests while enjoying the beautiful surroundings of Gramado.

We were bused by minivan to Lago Negro (black lake), home to swans and ducks, paddleboats and a walking trail. I then spent the remainder of each day in medical consultations, or enjoying spa treatments.

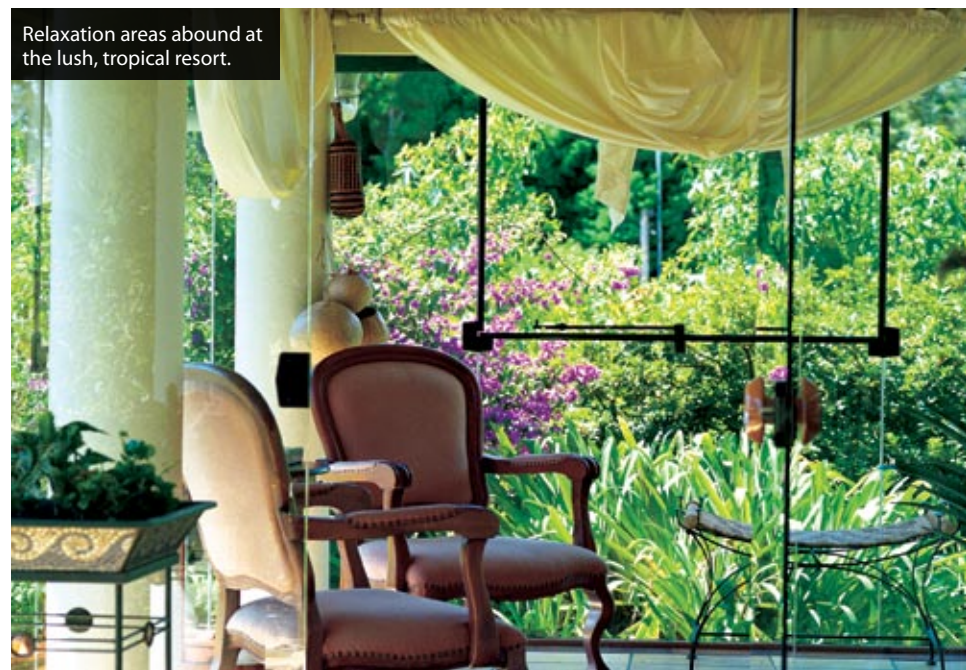
Recently remodeled, each of the spa's four relaxation areas offers a unique experience. The quiet-time services make all the workouts and tiny meals worth it. "Relaxation is an important ally for our clients," Vaz



Massages highlight the daily treatment offerings.

says. "It helps with stress and anxiety." A guest favorite in one relaxation area includes a "NASA chair." It reclines at a 90-degree angle and rotates gently to simulate weightlessness. To add to the celestial experience, the lights are turned off, and images of stars and constellations are projected onto the walls and ceiling while soft music plays.

A key element to relaxation and recovery was my daily dose of massages.



Relaxation areas abound at the lush, tropical resort.

## What began as an intimidating itinerary of physical and mental obstacles turned into an incredible experience.

During each session, I was rubbed from my ears to my toes for an hour. I was surprised when my abdomen was massaged, but I learned this aids in digestion.

After each massage, I received a fango treatment—a type of organic heating pad made from mud harvested on the family farm. The mud is sifted, boiled and treated with glycerin to form a thin rectangular brick. The brick is placed in a specially ordered German oven, and then applied to sore muscles. The heat and earth minerals ease tension and offer pain relief.

At the heart of all services is preventing future—or further—damage. The medical clinic offers more than 150 treatments and exams. They include cellulite reduction therapy, injections and fillers, peels, and photo- and electrocurrent facials.

One of the more futuristic therapies is the Body-Image Evaluation (20 min./\$120). It uses a diagnostic tool that evaluates body fat and

lean tissue percentages, and their distribution. Staring at my composition of muscle and fat was a motivator to get moving. During the afternoon, guests like to convene at the Kur water circuit located in the courtyard. It's a knee-deep, cold-water walking path. We'd each let out a yell, howl or whistle upon entering the icy pool, followed by "ouches" and "ahhs" as our feet made contact with the rocky, uneven bottom. All this in the name of circulation-boosting, immune-enhancing, energy-producing health, but it was worth it.

What began as an intimidating itinerary of physical and mental obstacles turned into an incredible experience. My trip to Kurotel helped me to realign my habits to enjoy a healthier way of living. ●

**Camille Hoheb** is a Rancho Palos Verdes, California-based writer and the founder of Global Spa and Wellness ([globalspaandwellness.com](http://globalspaandwellness.com)).