



Mandarin Spa is located at Boracay Mandarin Hotel, just five minutes away from D-Mall. It's a pretty easy location to find from the perfect spot for photos.

Pampered like Royalty

Boracay Mandarin Spa treats GMA beauties Rhian Ramos and Iza Calzado to an afternoon of glorious pampering

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PHOTOGRAPHY: RENAN RAMIREZ

After you're done with all the partying and the sporting activities, the next best (and most sensible) thing that you can do in Boracay before heading back to Manila is go to a spa.



Some of you might readily disagree with me, but I consider going to the spa as the highlight of any Boracay vacation.

And one of the best spots where you can experience some serious pampering is the Boracay Mandarin Spa.

Located at the charming Boracay Mandarin Hotel, Mandarin Spa is perhaps one of the most accessible, convenient spas in Boracay. It is five minutes away from D'Mall and a good two minutes away from the island's main thoroughfare, the Mandarin Spa is the perfect place where you can regain your strength and re-gather your

thoughts.

So when Christine Po, who manages Boracay Mandarin Hotel, invited us (me, Iza Calzado and Rhian Ramos) to try out some of the spa's luxurious treatments, it didn't take a minute for us to say yes. Who wouldn't want to be treated and pampered like royalty? You'd be insane if you said no to an offer like this.

With a silly grin on our faces, we each headed back to our own hotels and got ready.

ULTIMATE PAMPERING

It's easy to see why Mandarin Spa has become so



popular in Boracay. Because the facade of the spa is hidden behind the plants, the main entrance looks as though it's a little nook. Small wonder guests are easily drawn to this place.



Christine Po carefully goes through each treatment offered by Mandarin Spa, and decides to get a body scrub. A good scrub is what she needs after being exposed to the summer sun for many hours.

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For one, it's located in what I would like to call, "the most photographed hotel" in the island. Many locals and foreigners, whether they're guests of the hotel or just passing by, would be spotted getting their pictures taken in front of the hotel.

With its charming and well-maintained frontage, the 52-room Boracay Mandarin Hotel is easily a headturner.

And so it didn't come as a surprise for us to find out that Mandarin Spa draws in quite a number of guests. During our 10-minute stay at the receiving area of the spa, there were about ▶



The Couples Room is a picture of Zen and tranquility. Aside from the comfy beds, the room has a small koi pond (not in photo) with water elements and bamboo plants. Soft trickling water from the pond helps guests relax more, bringing their pampering experience to a whole new level.

four to five couples who came in and inquired about the treatments.

While waiting for Iza Calzado and Rhian Ramos to arrive, I noticed how relaxing and homey the ambience of the spa was. Unlike most spas in Manila that would rely on piped-in music to achieve a more calming atmosphere, Mandarin Spa has this unmistakable soothing effect on the senses. The staff spoke in hushed tones. They move unobtrusively from room to room.

The wooden accent pieces that are strategically placed in the receiving area gave a very warm touch to the interiors. Doors with capiz windows add a traditional Filipino flair. Inside the presidential suites, one would find koi ponds with water elements that inspire meditation.

It was as though time stood still inside this spa.

The first to arrive was Iza Calzado. With her handler in tow, Gen Magno, Iza greeted each of us with a warm smile. The treatment hadn't started yet, but Iza was already giving us thanks profusely.

"Thanks, I really appreciate it. After what we did the entire day, a massage is a big help. *Nagmadali na*

nga lang kami," she said softly, turning to Gen.

And Iza was not lying. Although she did look beautiful as always, we noticed that her curls were a bit unruly that particular day. It was obvious that she left her hotel in a hurry. But unlike Iza, Gen Magno was looking too spiffy for someone vacationing in Boracay. And to think, it was just 4 pm, too early for a nightout. She even managed to put makeup on. The shimmer on her lips was unmistakable.

"Uy sorry ha. *Hindi na nga kami nakapag-prepare eh. Dabul nagmamadali kami*," Gen interjected.

"Yeah right, Gen, it's obvious you didn't prepare," I said sarcastically.

Gen playfully slapped me on the shoulder. Iza just rolled her eyes.

After reading the menu of services, Iza decided to have the Mandarin Aroma Hot Stone Therapy. This popular therapy uses heated volcanic basalt stones to heal muscles and induce deep relaxation. The ▶



The Presidential Suite offers clients more privacy. If they choose the Sunset Lovers Package, they would get to have their sunset views, treat once and then at the end of the pampering session, they can have drinks at the balcony. Clients can also choose to have the candles drawn, so that they can enjoy a magnificent view of the beach while getting their massage.

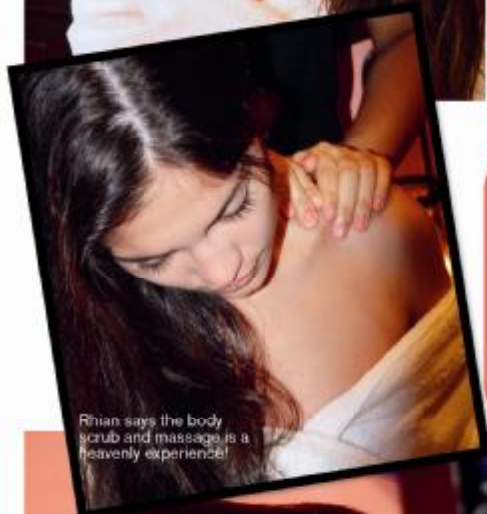
From the way Rhian smiles, the therapist must have found her ticklish area.

The therapist applies firm strokes on Rhian's back to release muscle tensions.



Rhian gets a gentle massage on her scalp and she loves it!

Great to Know
During a massage, be conscious of your breathing. Do not hold your breath when the therapist applies too much pressure on sensitive areas. If you're still uncomfortable with the pressure, do not hesitate to tell your therapist.



Rhian says the body scrub and massage is a heavenly experience!



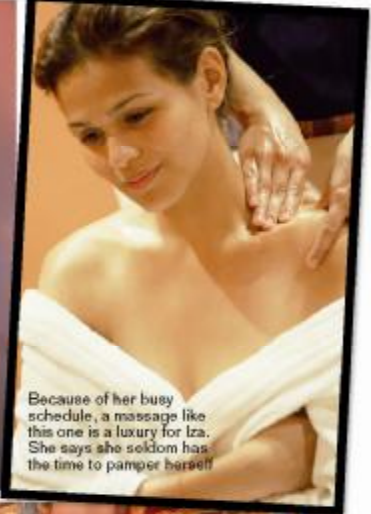
Rhian enjoyed the massage she fell asleep →



Iza feels like a queen



Among the two, Iza is the more conservative and shy one. She says she's not that comfortable being photographed with just a robe on.



Because of her busy schedule, a massage like this one is a luxury for Iza. She says she seldom has the time to pamper herself.



As the therapist applies pressure on Iza's back, particularly on the shoulders, Iza lets out a deep breath, a sign that she truly enjoys her "hilot".



Her smile says it all. Iza liked her massage so much she thought of canceling her next dinner appointment.

stones, which are heated from 50 to 55 degrees, relieve muscle tension and improve circulation. They are placed on the body's meridian lines, particularly the spine, to balance the body's energies.

The therapy lasted for an hour and a half. Iza and Gen emerged from the couples room feeling refreshed. She and Gen would have loved to stay at the spa to relax for a little longer. But because Iza had an important dinner to attend to, Gen had no choice but to go with her.

After a few minutes, Rhian arrived at the spa, looking a bit harried. Her hair was still wet, a sign that she just had a shower. We learned from Michael Uyco, her talent handler, that going there was a bit of a challenge for them, because a lot of people would stop Rhian and ask for a photograph. There was even an old woman who grabbed Rhian by the arm because she was so excited to see the Kapuso star.

As she read the menu of services, Rhian exchanged banter with the photographer. She gamely posed and did what the photographer asked her to do.

"I'd get *na lang* the body scrub. Michael can get the massage," she said with a smile. She would have preferred the Total Body Ritual, which is the longest, if only she had enough time. She told us she had a dinner to attend to so she couldn't stay any longer even if she wanted to.

So without wasting a second, we headed to the second-floor where the couples room was located. All of us had to wait at the door when Rhian changed into her robe. We were only ushered in by the therapists when everything was set.

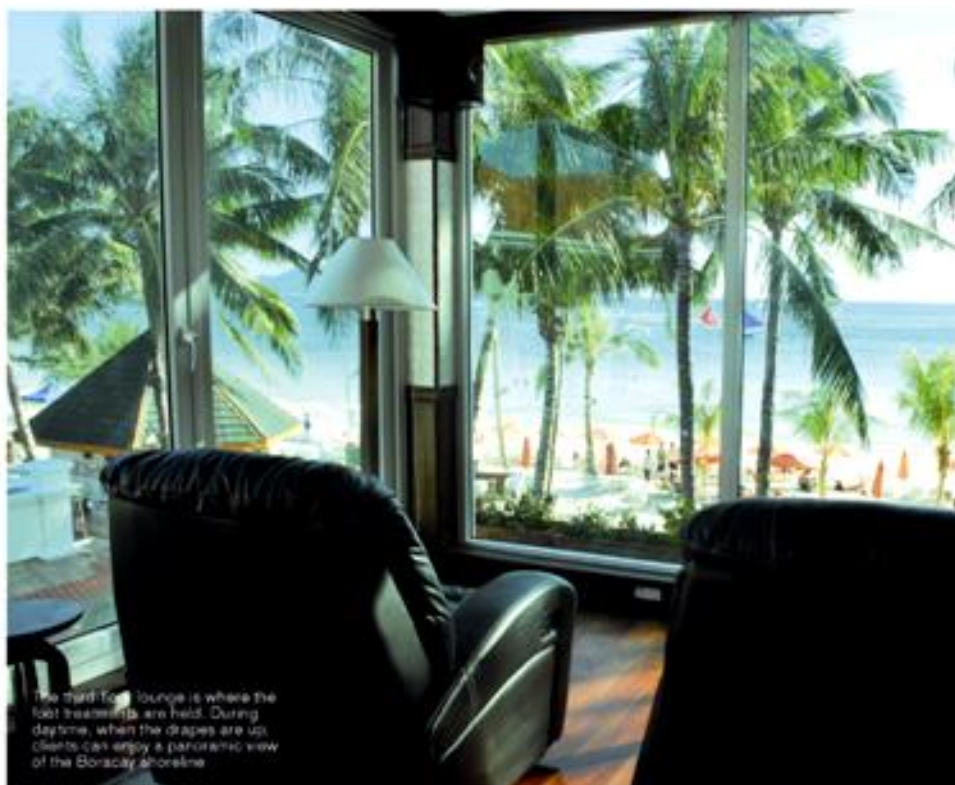
As one therapist carefully knead her neck to prepare her for her body scrub, Rhian worked her charm on us. Because she was wearing only a bath robe, Rhian could sense that the photographer was getting a bit uncomfortable, if not awkward. So she was the first one to break the ice.

"*Kailangan ko pa bang shawl?*," she asked, adjusting her robe and exposing her bare shoulders. Her robe was so dangerously close to falling off. The photographer couldn't answer.

"No Rhian, *Oh na yan*," I said. Michael, who was getting a back massage beside Rhian, agreed with me. If she adjusted the robe any lower, she would be exposing parts of her body that she might regret later on.

But we knew right and then that she was just kidding. Rhian, after all, is what most people would call "cowboy" a term that refers to people who get along with everybody else and can go with the flow of things, all for the sake of good fun and spontaneity.

After taking several photos of Rhian lying down, getting knead on the back, drifting in and out of



The third-floor lounge is where the foot treatments are held. During daytime, when the drapes are up, clients can enjoy a panoramic view of the Boracay shoreline.

sleep, we decided to leave them so that they could enjoy their treatments.

Rhian got the Mango Butter Body scrub, which was meant to moisturize, soften and regenerate the young cells of the skin. This scrub leaves a protective layer that acts a shield, protecting the skin from the harmful UV rays of the sun.

MORE PAMPERING

Mandarin Spa's most luxurious package, perhaps, is the Total Body Ritual Experience, which would last for three hours. It consists of a body scrub, body wrap, the traditional Filipino "Hilot" massage, and Mandarin Spa's unique facial care treatments.

This rich treatment starts off with a body scrub and body wrap inside the spa's Presidential Suites. The spa takes pride in that the therapists would only use natural and organic treatments, all created to relax the mind and treat the skin.

The Traditional Filipino Hilot massage, which is the most popular treatment at the spa, is meant to restore balance in your entire body and promote better circulation. The long, deep strokes are designed to ease common aches.

Facial care treatments at the spa's third-floor lounge cap off the three-hour relaxation.



This lounge can accommodate more than 10 clients at a time. Although the owners would have wanted to put in more Lay Boy seats, they realized that doing so might make the spa feel less private.

These treatments nourish the skin and help it regain its youthful glow. Guests can choose from Mandarin Tropical Fruit Facial, Milk Cucumber and Mango Butter.

Couples, on the other hand, can avail of the Mandarin Sunset Lovers Package, a four-hour long relaxation session that includes Hilot, facial care and body glow treatments. This

indulgent package culminates in a sumptuous dinner specially prepared by the chef from Don Vito Ristorante Italiano at the spa's private balcony overlooking the beach. There's really nothing quite like it in Boracay.

Life in the island, indeed, doesn't get any better than that.

For inquiries, call 567-167 or visit www.boracaymandarin.com