



## Beauty at a Price

While lavish facials may not be for every spa or every client, these high-priced menu items prove to be a draw for some.

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**FOR \$360 YOU CAN FLY TO EUROPE, GO ON A Caribbean cruise, or buy a month's worth of groceries for an average family. Or you could have the Opulence Infusion Oxygen Facial with add-on Anti-Wrinkle Infusion at SpaHalekulani at the Halekulani hotel (Honolulu).** Spa director Gloria Williams-Ah Sam, who books up to 10 appointments weekly for the facial, makes no apologies for the price, which soars even higher when you throw in the recommended retail products (\$40 to \$90 each) to maintain the benefits. "We use O2 Intraceuticals for our oxygen facials, and the immediate, visible results validate the cost," she says. "Our guests may be celebrating an anniversary, attending a class reunion, getting married, or having another once-in-a-lifetime experience—and they demand the best."



Of course, not every spa could sell a facial at that sum. But at upscale resorts and high-end day spas, facials with price tags of \$250 and upwards are popping up on menus. Spa directors say that guests of such establishments aren't hunting for a bargain. Rather, they expect top-of-the-line service, treatments, and products to match the exclusive setting, and extravagant facials enhance the spa's image to this coveted clientele.

### How to Wow 'em

It makes sense that high-priced facials are usually based on high-end products, such as Bulgari, Carita, Éminence Organic Skin Care, ESPA, La Prairie, Natura Bissé, and Probios. "We explain to our guests that our products from the Natura Bissé line are used by Hollywood actresses," says Ricardo Adame Carbajal, spa director at **Pueblo Bonito Pacifica, Holistic Retreat** in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. At least five guests a week request the spa's \$300, 80-minute Diamond Facial.

Oftentimes, gems, exotic concoctions, or scientific-sounding ingredients are part of the product mix, thus adding to the treatment's allure, extravagance, and, possibly, effectiveness. For example, the Pueblo Bonito Pacifica facial boasts a "DNA infusion," which uses marine DNA to create an epidermal shield that protects existing DNA from further damage. The Million Dollar Facial (90 minutes) at **Raisa Laser and Skincare** in West Hollywood, CA, includes emu oil derived from feathers of the wingless bird and pure gold dust, making its \$250 price tag seem like a bonafide bargain. And The Pinnacle (\$300, 110 minutes), a signature treatment using products from Académie Scientifique and Body Bliss at **The Spa at the Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North (AZ)**, incorporates caviar oil and champagne—not to nibble and sip, but for the skin. "Of course, the caviar and champagne add to the decadent appeal, and therefore they pique guests' curiosity, but both ingredients actually contribute to its benefits," says spa director Lia Rowland. "Caviar oil supports cell renewal by stimulating blood flow and improving circulation. And



Various Ritz-Carlton spas offer high-end treatments, such as The Prada Replenishing Body Facial.

champagne is used to activate an enzyme exfoliant to help slough off dull skin cells."

**The Ritz-Carlton Spa** in Laguna Niguel, CA, offers Prada treatments and products, exclusive to Ritz-Carlton, with facials priced up to \$375. "Our customers need to be wowed. They want to feel that they are entering an exclusive environment with products and services that they will not be able to find elsewhere," says spa director Doug Piil. "Cost is not an issue in this affluent marketplace, so we market the Ritz-Carlton Spa as an elite environment that provides the finest of personal services. Our partnership with Prada supports this."

The affiliation is so important that Prada Spa Experiences have a special, separate spa menu at **The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Half Moon Bay** in Northern California. The designer-name treatments are highlighted in turndown letters in guest rooms, on the website, and in hotel brochures. "Naturally, with the Prada brand there is a very strong association with quality and integrity. We feel that the line deserves to have its own look and feel, from the shelf space where the products are placed all the way to the menu," says spa director Melinda Milner.

### **Worth Every Penny**

Super-duper facials typically incorporate lots of extras that go way beyond the face. At **Spa du Soleil** at Auberge du Soleil in California's Napa Valley, the 75-minute "Glow with Ultimate Bliss" facial includes an aromatic sage foot soak; neck, décolleté, hand, arm, and scalp massage; a foot exfoliation with a mint salt scrub; and reflexology. "These special pampering touches create a satisfying, luxurious experience well worth the \$285 price," says spa director Susan O'Bryen.

The key to successfully marketing a sky's-the-limit facial, O'Bryen says, is location, location, location—the loftier, the better. In a five-star resort setting, customers expect and are willing to pay for superlative spa treatments. "This facial might not do as well at a three-star property or a hotel positioned primarily for group business," she says. "But, Auberge du Soleil represents ultimate luxury in an intimate and exclusive setting. Our guests visit our hotel for a special birthday, anniversary, or romantic weekend getaway, so they are seeking a world-class spa experience."

But it's not all about indulgence. Facials priced in the stratosphere have to show real results, too—and then they practically sell themselves. "We do one half of the face first and then we let the guest look in a mirror, so they can see the difference between the two sides," says Maureen Schumacher, spa director at **LeSpa** at the Sofitel Los Angeles, where the 80-minute Carita Lift and Firm Facial goes for \$290. "The results are so dramatic that no one even questions the price." Schumacher promotes the treatment as a pre-event facial, and it's included in bridal and Oscar packages.

"Any spa that sells elaborate packages or caters to brides or special-occasion clientele should have an ultra-decadent facial," she says. "If a spa has the kind of clientele that will splurge on a handbag, a dress, or a pair of shoes, it should have an ultra-decadent facial. After the client sees what it does for them, the indulgence will seem like a necessity."

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