



Clockwise from top left: the itinerary for a super spa Sunday at WOMAD 2022; night time in the spa lounge tent; festival co-founder Peter Gabriel marks the event's 40th anniversary; Saturday headliners The Flaming Lips on stage

A festival of wellbeing

European Spa sets up camp at WOMAD Spa, a unique experience created by wellness consultancy Thirteen33 each year at the world famous music event in Wiltshire

REPORT BY SARAH CAMILLERI

Photography: Finlay Apps

This summer saw the joyous return of festivals and events after two hard years of pandemic restrictions. In the UK, the world-famous WOMAD festival put on a kaleidoscope of music, arts, dance and wellbeing to celebrate its 40th anniversary, attracting 40,000 festival goers to Charlton Park in Wiltshire.

WOMAD has always been a force for good with wellbeing at its very heart. Multiple generations of families and friends gather at one of the most inclusive music events, which has now staged 300 festivals around the world since 1982, featuring over 10,000 artists. The brainchild of musician Peter Gabriel, co-founder Stephen Pritchard and festival director Chris Smith present a rich, immersive world of creative music, art, dance and wellbeing.

One of the most welcome experiences at the event is WOMAD Spa, a haven of tranquility purpose-built by spa consultancy Thirteen33 to offer escape and repose right in the heart of the festival.

Pop-up spa magic

WOMAD Spa is as impressive in size as it is in ambience. Constructed by the festival team each year, its spa tents and secured garden are then handed over to the Thirteen33 team, who transform it into a working spa with all the nurturing and luxury touches you would expect. As the 70-strong spa team arrive, they are briefed and trained with military precision for four days of intensive spa operations.

"WOMAD Spa is our way to sow the seeds of wellness – to really connect with people and deliver a wonderful festival experience," explains

This page from top: Steph Crosby and Caroline Cornish of Thirteen33, some of the WOMAD Spa team, assembled from freelance practitioners who are trained on site

Thirteen33's Steph Crosby, who works in partnership with co-founder Caroline Cornish. "The guest journey is exactly what you would expect to find in any spa. You arrive at reception, take off your shoes, check in and enjoy all the luxurious spa touches we can deliver." Answering a growing demand for comfort and luxury wellness services, WOMAD Spa has become a top draw at the festival. "The WOMAD team took a leap of faith with us to try something innovative. They recognised that their audience has a changing demographic that would be receptive to more wellbeing, but with a luxury edge. We have been given the creative freedom to develop the concept, create a magical space and manage the spa throughout the event," says Crosby.

Showers, serongs and straighteners
WOMAD Spa operates from 7am to midnight every day throughout the festival, welcoming Spa Pass holders who drop in to shower, recuperate and enjoy its menu of treatments. This year, 500 Spa Passes were sold, keeping the venue in constant swing.

"From an operational perspective you have to be totally on it," smiles Crosby. "We have all the same operational issues of a normal spa but with the added challenge of being right in the middle of a field. Our guests can simply disappear! We also have significant work to do to keep the treatment schedule on track, the showers spotlessly clean and manage our team shifts."

Past the reception area, the spacious Spa Lounge tent serves as a central hub for guests to enjoy all day and into the evening, offering plenty of places to sit, sleep and gather for drinks. Strewn with yoga mats, rugs and plants, this central zone also has a wellness bar and a retail boutique.

Outside, the spa has well-managed washing facilities featuring a bank of immaculate showers and WCs, which are a big daily draw: washed down after every use, they are well stocked with shampoo, conditioner and shower gel from award-winning organic skincare brand iis. Guests are given their own WOMAD sarong and a biodegradable Scrummy towel, as well as full access to a beautifully presented salon zone set up under more canvas. Every detail has been thought of here – even down to hair straighteners.

Away from the main spa area and shielded by trees, guests can enjoy a soak in one of three red cedar hot tubs or work up a sweat in the wood-fired barrel sauna run by bathing specialists Bathing Under The Sky. In the tranquil Sala yoga tipi they can attend a whole host of



This page from above: WOMAD spa provides a world of wellbeing under canvas. A festival-goer takes time out for a soothing massage

educational wellbeing workshops and classes that run throughout the day.

Wellbeing for all
WOMAD Spa's treatment tent offers nine rooms and a capsule collection of wellbeing rituals developed with Tea & Tonic founder, wellness expert Sarah Strang.

"Tea & Tonic was the perfect choice for WOMAD – our guests get to enjoy a cup of wellness tea as they relax in the spa, and the choice of oils for treatments means they can curate their journey," says Crosby.

"Sarah has created a very unique and exciting product range for both the guests and the therapists, with the use of medicinal herbs and adaptogens not only in the topical products but also the teas, so we are able to recommend wellness products that bring you back into balance from the inside out."

In addition, Thirteen33 works to champion exciting new wellbeing brands, and several are available for guests to try at WOMAD Spa. "London Nootropics' adaptogenic coffees were so well received by our spa guests this year," says Crosby. "The concept of adaptogens and mushrooms is now becoming more familiar, with many of our guests loving the idea that their daily coffee will also bring them back into balance. There is a natural synergy between adaptogens and



caffeine, which means you don't get the spike in energy, its more sustained throughout the day." EthicaCBD Sports Gel is also on hand to soothe guests who have been on their feet dancing and wandering around the festival site. "It has accompanied us to all our festival events this year as we have found no other product relieves pain so quickly," says Crosby. "It sold out every time as it's a perfect substitute for taking ibuprofen for inflammation – brilliant for aching feet, tense muscles and cooling the body down."

Championing therapists

Thirteen33's unique approach to building successful spa teams is testament to their understanding of what holistic therapists want.

"Often being a spa therapist can be lonely and isolating with much time spent in single treatment rooms all day, but there's something magic that happens in our communal tipi, particularly when we bring the gong in for a spontaneous sound bath during the treatments," says Crosby.

"Our whole model of bringing together wonderful therapists has now been successful at WOMAD for ten years. We bring together awesome wellness

Above: three red cedar hot tubs are operated by bathing specialist Bathing Under The Sky

practitioners who wish to remain freelance and free-spirited. Interestingly, this level of flexibility is now even more highly valued by a whole new generation – it is how many therapists want to practice, yet still many spas do not recognise this.

"At Thirteen33 we help them to find this freedom as well as opportunities that they might not find on their own, allowing them to be part of a dynamic spa experience. Our therapists really enjoy coming together each year as the WOMAD Spa team to deliver wellbeing as a collective," says Crosby.

One to watch

Thirteen33 is an innovative and dynamic company, creating imaginative and unique concepts that link people, products and guests to authentic wellness.

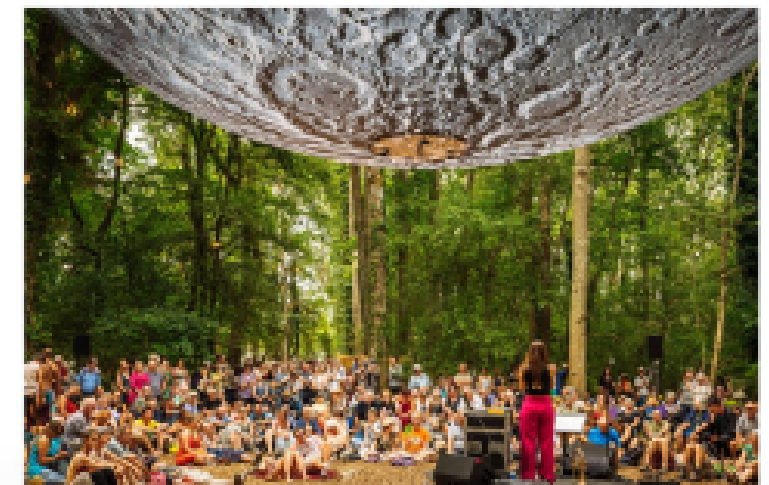
"As well as creating spas for many renowned festivals, we also connect therapists with spas looking for working holiday placements, and we source freelance trainers for brands seeking the right expertise. We also provide consultancy services for outdoor sustainable spa developments

Right from top: WOMAD has always been an inclusive, family-friendly festival; wellness brand Tea & Tonic provide wellbeing rituals for the pop-up spa; attendees gather under Luba Jaram's Museum of the Moon installation

and businesses wanting to create unique wellbeing concepts within nature," says Cornish.

Looking to the future, the company's co-founders are excited about taking WOMAD Spa from strength to further strength in response to growing demand. "We are doing what we love – bringing wellness services to events for people to enjoy. We are keeping therapists fulfilled, providing brands with new exposure routes and always focusing on the end result – the guest experience," says Crosby.

"Overcoming the flow of mini challenges gives us a buzz and the best feeling is seeing guests floating back off into the festival to soak up more fun. We know how important it is to rest and recharge and our guests come back year after year to do exactly that." 🌿🧘🏻‍♀️



SPA STATISTICS

WOMAD Spa

www.womad.co.uk
www.thirteen33.co.uk

Spa zones: Main spa tent with reception, chill-out area and wellness bar; spa treatment tent with nine treatment rooms; Sala yoga; 13 showers and 12 WCs

Spa team: Three managers, 16 therapists and 60 spa hosts

Spa guests: 500

Starry Nights: Three red cedar hot tubs, cold plunge, cold shower and barrel sauna

Spa partners: Bathing Under The Sky, Sorummi, Tea & Tonic, EthicaCBD, London Nootropics

Thirteen33 festival partners:

HowTheLightGetsIn, Wales; The Pop-Up Hotel, Glastonbury, Somerset; Latitude, Norfolk; WOMAD, Wiltshire; Rock Oyster Festival, Cornwall; Soul Circus, Cotswolds

2022 statistics: Thirteen33 has delivered 60 treatment rooms, 250 booking system columns and 2,500 treatments this season