

WASHINGTONIAN

February 2008

washingtonian.com

Great Day Spas

Want a Thai Massage but Not at the Mandarin Price? Here's a Less Expensive Version.

What it is

Two-hour Chaan Royal Journey treatment at Chaan Thai Yoga Therapy, 8300 Arlington Blvd., Suite C3, Fairfax; 703-846-8228; chaanthaitherapy.com.

What it costs

\$150 plus tip.

The experience

The drab Fairfax office park I pulled into made me hesitate. Still, I climbed two flights of stairs to Suite C3 and was pleasantly surprised to open the door to a bright, pretty space with lots of blond wood and a few well-placed Asian accents such as carved wooden bowls with floating flowers.

Chaan specializes in Thai massage, but there are several types, including a treatment incorporating Thai herbs and hot towels. The place also offers foot reflexology, scalp massages, hand massages, and couples massage. I came for a two-hour classic Thai yoga massage.

Nid Tositrakul, the year-old spa's friendly owner, gave me a tour and sat me down with a cup of tea to await my foot bath—free with all services. My masseuse, Kanya Kunchaekan, exfoliated my feet in warm water and massaged them. It was soothing, but the hard wooden bench reminded me of a church pew.

Once my feet were soft and towel-dried, I changed into light cotton Thai pajamas in the massage room and made myself comfortable on the floor mat. Kunchaekan stretched my limbs and applied deep pressure to my entire body—using her palms, thumbs, and even feet. I know only because at one point I opened my eyes to see how she could be in so many places at once.

I like some pressure when it comes to massage, but I asked Kunchaekan to lessen the pressure a couple of times, which she did. The massage is advertised—correctly—as deep-penetrating.

The two hours ended with a more traditional rubdown of my arms, legs, hands, and feet.

Another cup of tea waited with my shoes in the lobby, and I took a few minutes to sip and relax on one of the plush couches.

I left relaxed and rejuvenated—Kunchaekan had worked out every kink.

Was it worth it?

Thai massage is definitely more luxurious at the lavish Mandarin Oriental, but for less than a third of the price, Chaan is a hidden gem—and the treatment is similar.

—SARA LEVINE