



**Sensasia Urban Spa, Dubai**  
**Dr KC Barker, TheSpaReview.com**

I smell like a delicious fresh biryani and I feel slender. I've just emerged from at Sensasia – the “urban spa” in The Village on Jumeirah Beach Road in Dubai. I've spent the afternoon and early evening in this Asian retreat in the heart of a world city. I've left the Middle East and entered Bali or Thailand as I've closed the spa doors behind me. The ambience is southeast Asian, with trickling water and dark polished wood reflecting tiny candle flames. This is a ladies-only spa, crafted to create an escape to tropical world of pungent spices, bamboo greenery, Buddha statues and temple bells.

Why do I smell like a spicy meal? Well, I've just had the Balinese “spice experience” – soothing massage, followed by a vigorous heating rub of combined spices, then a cooling scrub of grated carrot. The online spa menu enticed me with ...“Out of all the oriental treatments the Balinese Boreh offers the most potent sensation – an all over deep heat experience... The Balinese have used this warming blend of sandalwood, clovers, ginger, cinnamon and ground rice for centuries.” It is all it promises and more. Sadly, it clogs the shower when I try to get clean, without the aide of soap or a scrubber. Worse, despite the shower, I find when I get home that it stains my clothes a bright yellow. But I feel slender. Maybe it is the spiced detoxifying tea that has contributed to emptying me of excess fluid. Maybe it is the delicious ginger tea that begins and ends the treatments. Slender is good.

Following the spice experience, I've also had an Elemis facial. You simply cannot go wrong with Elemis – it is a lovely product, albeit very expensive. But isn't your face worth it? I know so many women who don't spa, and who don't appreciate the importance of a facial for cleansing, toning, hydrating and glorifying the part of us that people see first (or at all). I have been blessed by inheriting good skin from my Mom who still has a great complexion at age 85. But we have to take good care of what we've been given and I consider my regular facials to be a necessity rather than a luxury. I shudder when I think that I was more than 40 years old when

someone told me that I should take as good care of my neck and décolletage as I do of my face. Did you know that? Take a good look in the mirror and see what it tells you.

Sensasia is a lovely opportunity to retreat from the rush and rumble that is Dubai. The treatment rooms are warm and inviting with burnished bamboo, smooth stones and smoky mirrors. Like a temple to body care, the long hallway is dimly lit, edges defined by a row of flickering floor candles. I've been relaxing in the great room – sleek low Asian couches set in dark aubergine walls hung with raw silks of deep ruby and amber. It feels like Bali, but it doesn't sound like Bali. The sound track is that sort of modern combination of pan pipes and piano arpeggios. After five hours in the spa, I'm really on edge from its unrelenting repetition.

Despite that, or in spite of that, Sensasia can be a lovely setting in which to give attention to your body. That's what it does best, with a host of skin and massage treatments. It is not a full-service spa, so it doesn't provide for me what I'm looking for in a total spa experience. On my typical spa day, I want to achieve the sense of physical and mental well-being that comes from a balance of fitness, beauty, serenity and indulgence. My face feels beautiful and my senses have been indulged, but I'm feeling twitchy from laying still so long in one place and my mind is far from serene. I'm going to accept some of the blame for that. I tried to book my spa day on short notice and that's never a good idea. However, the website information that I'd based my decisions on was outdated and the requested interview with the spa owner never materialized, despite my repeated requests.

In the end, I was rather glad to leave the spa. I have a bias against sealed compartments inside air conditioned buildings. I needed to escape from the controlled and artificial environment of the spa to the rush, rumble and real air of Dubai.

**Sensasia at The Village I rated by TheSpaReview as a 4 Crown Spa - the four silver crowns indicating that you can expect Royal Treatment.**

