

## Cafe De Spa: Fish-inspired spa delivers relief for tired feet

The 'doctor fish' (*garra rufa*) used at Cafe de Spa's fish spa are said to be able to bring relief to sufferers of a number of skin disorders, including psoriasis, neuro-dermatitis, and eczema.

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Personally, when it comes to my feet, I'm particularly ticklish and I have to admit that I don't really like them to be touched. On this particular occasion, however, I had already accepted the responsibility of reviewing an unusual yet increasingly popular form of treatment at the Lat Phrao branch of Cafe De Spa.

But the tickles I was set to encounter weren't generated by human hands, as I prepared my feet to welcome lots and lots of tiny little 'doctor fish', a species also known as *garra rufa*. The feeling was truly amazing, although also rather bizarre.

Say farewell to dead skin

Since its launch in the kingdom in December of this year, the branch of Cafe De Spa at Lat Phrao 71 has proven to be extremely popular and three more branches have since opened at Sukhumvit 23, Suan Lum Night Bazaar and the Mengjai Intersection.

Jiramet Yantaporn, one of the owners of the business, was responsible for the idea, having first experienced it in Japan during a visit there. After conducting a good deal of research, Cafe De Spa discovered that the doctor fish would be the best fish for providing the nibbling.

Sometimes referred to as 'nibble fish', the *garra rufa* are a form of freshwater fish that can be found in a number of different habitats, including lakes, ponds, rivers, or streams. The species used at Cafe De Spa is native to the Middle East, particularly within the Tigris-Euphrates basin, as well as being found further north in rivers in Iran, Iraq, southern Turkey, Syria and even Pakistan.

While its primary source of food is plants and detritus, it's the fish's ability to happily nibble away at bathers' dead skin that has brought the species a good deal of fame worldwide.

The fish is said to be able to bring relief to sufferers of a number of skin disorders, including psoriasis, neuro-dermatitis and eczema. In light of these discoveries, the fish are now a far more common sight at spas and health centers across the globe, while Cafe De Spa has really established itself as the leading brand for this kind of treatment in the kingdom.

Completely refreshed

I have to admit I was pretty nervous as I dipped my feet into the pond to experience the treatment for the first time.

In just a few moments, the fish swam around my feet, apparently keen to sample some skin. These fish consume dead skin with such a ferocity that it has been reported that they can even break blisters, while leaving areas of healthy skin completely untouched.

The fish's mouth is naturally designed to be a good sucking instrument. Facing downwards ('ventrally oriented'), the fish likes to 'graze' on algae.

After about 30 minutes of having my feet nibbled, my feet looked and felt remarkably clean. In all honesty, I felt great and very relaxed, while the fish did a great job of making my feet feel a whole lot smoother.

Continuous rotation

A single fish costs about 150 baht, and Cafe De Spa makes sure there are up to 1,200 of the small creatures in a single pond.

The water system is continuously rotated, while the interior décor is like a top-end outlet, the property featuring nice cushions, incense, soft drinks, as well as warm atmospheric lighting.

On this occasion, I'm certainly happy that I opted to check out this treatment. In fact, the experience was so enjoyable, I will almost certainly visit again in the not too distant future.

Located about 200 meters on the right-hand side of Lat Phrao 71, a 30-minute fish spa session at Cafe De Spa costs just 300 baht (US\$8.82). The operator suggests taking no more than one single session per day.

For further information, or to make a reservation, contact Tel: +66 (0)81 375 6060, or +66 (0)85 809 8896.

Transport connections:

Train:

The nearest MRT subway station is at Lat Phrao. On disembarking, take a taxi along Lat Phrao road to Lat Phrao 71 . This will cost you between 60-100 baht, depending on the traffic conditions.