



Bali's gentle living softens your mind and opens your heart. But with hours spent squinting into the sun and ploughing through scooter fumes, it doesn't exactly foster your facial glow.

Thankfully, Bali reigns supreme in beauty services with facials for every skin type and budget. The choice boils down to the common baffling question: to go holistic or tap into the high-tech? The standard Western facial has been amped up with medical fine-tuning, which focuses on results far more than relaxation. Meanwhile, more holistic practitioners still take a gentler approach, working from the inside out and prioritising a zen mode.

Here we look at two of Bali's top centers for skin renovation, taking a comparative look at different beauty perspectives in the East vs West of facials as delivered here in Bali.

Western approach: Cocoon Medical Spa Facial

Designed like a Cocoon, albeit an industrial one, walking into this medical spa is like stepping into a chic warehouse with pebbled floors and a 50ft ceilings. The treatment rooms are called 'pods' – self-enclosed structures that line both sides of the warehouse – and only the scent of lemongrass reminds you that this is a day spa. It's a good feeling, in a futuristic, no-nonsense way. You know their treatments aren't for fun and the facial itself is taken seriously, with a full play-by-play breakdown emailed to customers the day before. The aesthetician explains each step of the procedure, down to the minute. Their basic facial includes a deep clean, microdermabrasion, full face LED, and Oxygen Jet Peel and Oxygen Infusion, which is finished by a collagen mask that comes out of a sealed semi-frozen container.

The therapist explains that clients wanting serious skin improvement come in specifically for skin rejuvenation, particularly surfers and beachgoers who suffer from sunspots, open pores or freckling. For this they recommend their laser treatment, micro-needling and plasma injections. They also offers a salt room, and an oxygen bar complete with B-vitamin IV drip. FYI, Bali locals get a discount.

Find out more: cocoonmedicalspa.com



Eastern perspective: The Detox Room Facial Acupuncture

On the other side of the world sits Traditional Chinese Medicine, offered up at The Detox Room specialising in holistic wellness and whole body health in the heart of Canggu. The owner, Thomas Sladek, is an Austrian medical doctor and acupuncturist who learnt Facial Acupuncture from one of the western doctors who pioneered the art for the modern world.

Facial acupuncture has become something of an emerging cult trend, despite the fact that it was practiced long ago by Chinese doctors who attended to the monarchy. The procedure itself is just what it sounds like – many tiny needles are inserted into your face and body at specific points, to trigger the flow of energy back towards the face.

Walking into his office, Thomas explains that facial acupuncture can't really be compared to modern facials. Facials treat the outer layers of the skin, and so the changes are superficial. Whereas Facial Acupuncture is a chem-free botox, treating the root imbalance causing frown lines or wrinkling so that after a couple weeks or months the problems don't come back. He starts by hooking you up to an electrical device that measures the energy being emitted from organs in the body. An identified weakness in the left lung will require a needle going into a nerve point of the ear. Ears are the most sensitive place for energy readings because of the lack of fat or muscles blocking the nerve endings, making it the most painful place for a jab.

Thomas starts inserting needles in the ears, called auriculotherapy, then the face, and then limbs. The more blocked a meridian (energy channel), the more painful the needle is, although never more than a slight pinching feeling. Once all the needles are in you begin to relax. There's no music or eye-masks, it's just you and your nerves settling into this new comfort zone. Twice in the treatment Thomas "winds up" the needles, turning them clockwise for what he calls a "facelift", stretching the underlying tissue and stimulating collagen production. The treatment is finished with facial massage and acupressure, and he leaves you with Chinese skin herbs to be brewed at home.

Find out more: thedetoxroom.com

Save your skin: The verdict

It's hard to compare two treatments so distinctly different. In reality, they are two different philosophies treating two different issues. We recommend dabbling in both techniques – the medical facials for immediate results on skin appearance, and the facial acupuncture for long-lasting glow and structure to the face.