



Relax Spas

*From spa therapist
to spa innovator*



Meet Noli Mini, “The Modern SpaPreneur”

“You don't have to wait for perfection to head towards the life you want to live or to change.”

Noli's advice to entrepreneurs:

- Surround yourself with mentors. “It's important to put yourself out there to learn,” she says. “It's a never-ending journey of learning and progressing and pushing forward. Having a support structure on your sometimes lonely entrepreneurial journey makes all the difference.”
- Nothing is impossible. “But you need to be to have the courage to be open and transparent. Stay true to yourself and ask for help when you need it.”
- Give back. Noli does this through speaking engagements, “inspirational speaking, addressing women audiences, especially young women.” She has also registered a training school to address the lack of staffing in the industry, which she would like to get off the ground.

Business overview

Relax Spas is a luxury, professional spa service in Cape Town, established in 2010 by Noli Mini, a former Camelot Spa therapist with nearly two decades of experience in the industry. Her vision was to transform conventional spa services, while providing hotels with an added-value offering. Having entered the market as a mobile and in-room spa service, Relax Spas has since partnered with Protea Hotels by Marriott. Its services have been integrated into these leading hotels with a Spa Suite at the Protea Hotel by Marriott Cape Town Waterfront Breakwater Lodge and a second branch at Protea Hotel Fire & Ice in Cape Town. A team of professional therapists provide personalised and result-oriented treatments using Relax Spas branded products, and bring the luxury spa experience directly to guests, whether in-room or poolside.

Noli Mini was raised in the Eastern Cape in rural Madubela outside King William's Town. The family later moved to East London, where she completed her schooling at Clarendon High School for Girls. Noli says, as a teenager she aspired to be a beauty journalist. "I read magazines like True Love and Drum and loved the beauty pages. Then in Grade 10 or 11, I got a part-time job at Edgars as a junior beauty consultant, which really inducted me into the world of beauty products." With an entrepreneurial spirit inherited from her father, she also worked multiple jobs – Ster Kinekor and CNA included.

Noli says she always knew what she wanted. "I dreamt of becoming a global entrepreneur, but I also wanted to be someone who inspires others to follow in their footsteps. I believe nothing is impossible, regardless of the challenges. With hard work and determination and the right community around you, you can accomplish anything, but you must open yourself up to be led and guided," she says.

In Matric, she was torn between studying journalism or interior design until a classmate told her about beauty therapy. "I thought if I wanted to be a beauty journalist, then this would give me a good foundation and so I enrolled in a beauty therapy course."

Becoming a spa therapist

Noli's first job was as a spa therapist at the Kat Leisure Hotel Group in East London. "They had spas in various game reserves, including Shamwari. I really enjoyed being in the reserves and I learnt so much. With many international guests passing through, this exposes you to different cultures." But after about two years, Noli started feeling restless and decided to look further afield than East London. This led to an interview opportunity with Camelot Spa at The Table Bay, and her family drove her down.

"I got the job, and they asked me to start the very next week! I was 23 and had never lived away from home, but I was excited. My parents left me in Cape Town with my father telling me I could always change my mind. But I was going to

make this work. I initially stayed with a friend and later found my own apartment. This just goes to show you don't have to wait for perfection to head towards the life you want to live or to change!"

After more than five years at the Camelot Spa, Noli wanted to grow more in her career and left to join the Arabella Spa at The Westin Hotel, which later changed its name to The Heavenly Spa by Westin. Here, she asked to be appointed in a supervisor role. "I explained that I was not asking for additional remuneration, I just wanted to understand all the facets of the spa business and the end-to-end guest experience, while contributing more. I was given the opportunity, and it went really well. Later they entered me into a hotel supervisory development programme, funded by the Swiss International School of Hospitality. It was incredibly valuable in terms of broadening my knowledge of hotel operations," she says.



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Creating a niche in hotel wellness

Two years down the line, Noli identified a gap in the market. “We were getting many clients from surrounding hotels coming to the spa because their own hotels didn’t have an on-site spa. That’s when I got the idea for a mobile business.” Her concept was to combine a top-tier spa experience with the convenience of mobile and in-room spa services. In 2010, she resigned to launch her business, and the first hotel she approached was The Table Bay Hotel, where she had previously worked, followed by The Westin Grand Hotel. Both brought her on board and used her services on their wellness days.

Towards the end of that year, Noli was invited to attend a networking event, where she met the general manager of Protea Hotel Cape Town North Wharf. This was a major turning point. “They decided to partner with me, even though I lacked a formal business plan. They proceeded based on what I said I could deliver.”

And because she did deliver, this led to her inaugural Spa Suite at the Protea Hotel by Marriott Cape Town Waterfront Breakwater Lodge and a second branch at the Protea Hotel Fire & Ice in Cape Town in 2018. Relax Spas’ reputation as a high-quality service became synonymous with the Protea Hotels by Marriott experience. Shortly after starting to work with Protea Hotel by Marriott Cape Town, Noli was introduced to the leadership team, and this kickstarted her journey of being mentored by the leaders within Marriott.

Noli stresses that this is a partnership in every sense of the word. Relax Spas is not an outsourced entity but part of the fabric of the hotels, and together, they work towards the same goal of elevating the guest experience. Through the exclusivity of one hotel group, she is both fully supported and accountable and she can measure the value she adds. The Spa Suites are also open to the public, drawing more foot traffic and creating more exposure for the hotels.

While focusing on honing her business, Noli also wanted to create opportunities for young people who would not usually have the chance to enter the hotel spa industry. “In mid-2010, I put myself



forward as youth segment chair at FEDHASA. I led that segment for six years, and we also changed the name to the young professionals segment to open it up to everyone in the hospitality industry.”

Levelling up

Noli was at a monthly mentorship session when her mentor told her about the SATSA Tourism Business Incubator Programme and asked if she would like to get involved. “I knew I’d love to be part of it because it’s like a micro-MBA for your company – helping you look holistically at your business, see where the weak spots are and how to work on them.”

Relax Spas is currently enrolled in the programme until February 2024 and sponsored by Protea Hotels by Marriott. Among the key objectives is business strategy development and a focus on growth through expanding partnerships with other hotel groups and diversifying into a franchise model. Additionally, Noli is receiving business and financial management mentoring.

Comments Akash Singh, CEO of Sigma International and incubator implementer: “Noli Mini’s story embodies the transformative power of hard work, determination, and the strength found in being open to guidance.”

For Noli, the value so far has not only been for

Relax Spas, but also for her as a businessperson. “Akash would say, ‘Know your value. If you see that something’s not working for you, then don’t dwell on it. Just let it go and move forward’. This has really helped me to be ok with saying no to things if they don’t align with my business.” She adds that the programme gives incubatees a community of entrepreneurs and leaders to talk to if they are dealing with a challenge, while their businesses also gain exposure at a national level.

One of the highlights for Noli has been attending the Indaba, which was made possible through the programme. “I enjoyed being at an international event and interacting with key decision-makers. It helped broaden my mind to see what’s out of there in terms of opportunities and diversifying one’s offering within the tourism value chain.”

Challenges and proudest moments

Noli says her greatest challenges have been access to markets and being taken seriously as a businesswoman. “There needs to be more transformation in the industry in terms of creating an inclusive environment for entrepreneurs – entrepreneurs of colour and also women. You need to work extra hard to be seen as a serious business, and it shouldn’t be that way. I want to change that narrative. It’s not easy but it’s doable.”

And her proudest moments? “Employing my first staff member and being responsible for their salary. That made me proud. I knew back then I wanted to create opportunities for people in a space where they would not necessarily see themselves employed, while at the same time helping them improve their livelihoods. And there was no turning back after that.”

Naturally, the partnership with Protea Hotels by Marriott also ranks high. In 2019, she was invited to be part of an internal Marriott International project to work with the team from Head Office as spa support, inspecting their spas and putting together recommendations. In the same year, she travelled to Dubai in partnership with

Marriott International and visited six Marriott-managed spas to learn about spa operations. “This was to ensure that I grow and scale my business within the group, so that our services are aligned. I was also working with the Head Office team from the Marriott Cape Regional Office and Johannesburg Regional Office together with the hotel general managers,” she explains.

From the beginning, Relax Spas has been about more than just a business. Noli’s intention was always to make a mark in the spa industry and create a lasting impact while inspiring others along the way. Innovative thinking and determination have set her up for success and enabled her to craft a niche. Ultimately, the Relax Spas journey is a testament to Noli staying true to herself and her vision.

Noli Mini Spa Products

Noli’s signature wellness spa products are certified organic and incorporate natural ingredients that promote relaxation, rejuvenation and balance. The range, simply called Noli Mini Spa Products, includes aromatherapy massage oils and cuticle oils.

The products are available to the public for home pampering and well-being, hospitality establishments for use in their spas, and to corporates for gifting purposes. Noli seeks to develop partnerships with the goal of having retail cabinets showcasing her spa products in hotel lobbies, corporate reception areas and social spaces.

For products & partnership opportunities, please call **+27 60 3800 362**

For spa bookings, please call:
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For more information, visit: www.relaxspas.co.za