

THE SPA GUIDE

WATERWORLD

After all 'spa' is short for salus per aqua – health through water



MASSERIA SAN DOMENICO Puglia, Italy

Once used by the Knights of Malta as a watchtower during the Ottoman wars, this 15th-century farmhouse in Puglia is now a white-washed picture of peace, an impeccably chic hideaway with a fabulous thalassotherapy spa. Thalasso means 'sea' in Greek and this serene retreat has come up trumps in harnessing the healing power of marine water. Everything is tackled here: dropping the pounds, shifting cellulite, skin conditions, or simply recharging your batteries. There's a dizzying array of treatments to get stuck into such as hydro massages with seawater jets to boost circulation, detoxifying seaweed wraps, sea salt scrubs with essential oils and the revitalising algotherapy, where your entire body is covered in pulverised seaweed. Don't miss the aquabiking (spinning in water) – hardcore but great for toning. Food focuses on a low-calorie Mediterranean diet. But there's no deprivation here – just fresh, local ingredients with generous smatterings of the hotel's own olive oil (the sea bass mille-feuille is a must). Afterwards, flop in one of the ornate first-floor suites – vast with views of the sparkling Adriatic. **BOOK IT:** Doubles from €330 B&B, with three-day thalasso programmes starting from €360pp. masseriasandomenico.com



OLD COURSE HOTEL St Andrews, Scotland

You might only have had reason to visit Old Course Hotel near Edinburgh for the golf; now you can add lavish – not to mention vast – new spa as a seductive draw, so couples can feel equally spoilt (the hotel spent £8m bringing the space up to scratch). Water is at the heart of its healing ethos (it is located by the sea, after all), with a hydrotherapy pool, cold plunge pool, buttock-clenching ice fountain and a 20m swimming pool as just some of the watery attractions. Thirteen treatment rooms offer

mineral-rich seaweed or spiced peat wraps, anti-oxidant facials and hot stone massages, as well as a host of specific 'bathing' rituals. Lying in bliss looking out of the floor-to-ceiling windows at that epic coastline, this is the perfect spa for those who appreciate the therapeutic elements of nature – from a comfortable distance, although a bracing walk in all that wildness will also do you the world of good. Just book in for their signature Tranquility pro-sleep massage and a roof-top hot tub session afterwards. **BOOK IT:** Doubles from £150 B&B. oldcoursehotel.co.uk



HOSHINOYA TOKYO Tokyo, Japan

Tokyo's only luxury ryokan (Japanese inn) cocoons you in calm from the moment you step through its 300-year-old cypress doors. You slip off your shoes (to be stored in intricate chestnut and bamboo boxes) and pad about in hushed reverence, feeling the feng shui. Tatami mat floors, washi paper walls and delicate shoji screens create the typical ryokan ambience, complemented by subtle five-star services. The hot USP is the open-air onsen (hot spring bath) on the 17th floor: it draws mineral-rich, ancient

seawater from 1,500 metres below street level. If you visit at night, you will bathe naked (as is the custom) in the 40°C water beneath an inky sky, the seductively lit high granite walls reducing the city's cacophony to a low rumble. With your core revitalised by the onsen, a shiki treatment therapist will massage your body with fragrant oils and two warm balls made from rice cake and ground, steamed Japanese herbs. **BOOK IT:** Original Travel offers a 14-night trip to Japan, including three nights at Tokyo Hoshinoya, from £4,600pp, including flights. originaltravel.co.uk



DAS CENTRAL Sölden, Austria

From the warm 'Grüss Gott' on arrival to award-winning restaurants (one featured in a Bond movie) and the three-storey Water World Venezia, Das Central is a glistening oasis of wellness in the Austrian Alps. The Venetian-inspired Water World comes complete with an indoor pool, a plethora of saunas, steam baths and water beds, and its very own gondola. At the Spa & Wellness Residence, 16 treatment rooms play host to holistic massages, scrubs and classic beauty treatments. The resort is also ripe for adventure seekers – in addition to 429 hectares

of pistes, there's a Technogym and fitness programmes. Rooms are fresh, bright and airy, fusing clean lines with Tyrolean touches, views of the Ötztal mountains are standard in most, with wellbeing suites featuring in-room saunas. Culinary delights are prepared by Gottfried Prantl – the award-winning chef who rustles up delicious local delicacies such as river trout and potatoes grown in hay. There's also an impressive fine wine cellar, with 30,000 bottles, should you like a little of what you fancy. **BOOK IT:** Three-night spa package half board, from €885pp. central-soelden.com

PACKING ESSENTIALS



CAMILLA
Short dress, £542.
harrods.com



LAZUL
Swimsuit, £240.
selfridges.com



ERIC BOMPARD
Short-sleeved cashmere sweater, £150. eric-bompard.com



HEIDI KLEIN
Maya Bay espadrilles £150.
heidiklein.com



PLAGE BY PAPER LONDON
Shell bikini, £140.
papertlondon.com

THE SPA GUIDE

NICE 'N' EASY

A short-haul flight means you can be on the massage table before you can say, 'full body, please'



HÔTEL DE CRILLON, Paris, France

As Paris's most exclusive address, bar none, it is only fitting that the recently re-opened Hôtel de Crillon should, under its new Rosewood management, offer a sensational spa behind its magnificent 18th-century, neo-classical façade. Find it at the end of the long, narrow, art-filled hall, past the gilded heritage ceiling of Les Ambassadeurs Bar, where you should stop for a Paris Mule cocktail, before continuing on down to a long swimming pool, its floor glittering with 17,600 gold scales, and walls covered by a mural from noted ceramicist Peter Lane. Beyond are the treatment rooms; pearly white-on-white with marble floors and tranquil tones, with separate showers and dressing rooms complete with jewellery boxes. Choice of products include French brand EviDenS de Beauté, acclaimed for its anti-aging properties, creator of bespoke facial 360° Global Anti-Age Ritual, and the renowned Maison Cautlières, which draws on the 250 years of knowledge acquired through its cultivation of plants. But not to be missed is a massage with the brilliant Fernando and the sweet almond balm created by Kos Paris for the spa. Afterwards float upwards on cloud nine to dine on oysters and champagne at the Brasserie d'Aumont and imagine for a moment that you are Marie-Antoinette. **BOOK IT:** Doubles from €1,110 B&B. rosewoodhotels.com



HOTEL LES OTTOMANS Istanbul, Turkey

Istanbul gives good value for flight time: within just a few hours you can be zipping down the Bosphorus by speedboat, bisecting Europe and Asia, and marvelling at the city's countless spoils. Hotel Les Ottomans may be a touch gaudy at first glance, but it soon reveals its distinctly Turkish delights: spacious suites, charming service and a great al fresco restaurant and bar on the waterfront heaving with Istanbul's glitterati. Thinking of heading to a hammam but petrified of the public offerings? Then

the Caudalie Vinotherapie Spa will do nicely. The signature Rose Remedy will see that (almost) every inch of you is washed, exfoliated, masked and watered liberally in a grand marble wet room. You'll be draped in huge pillows of soap foam with rose extract – the perfume of choice for discerning women of the Ottoman era – and massaged into blissful relaxation. Once reinvigorated by handfuls of ice cubes rubbed on your silken skin, you'll be glowing with the best of them. **BOOK IT:** Small Luxury Hotels of the World offers rooms from £366 B&B. slh.com



LA BUTTE AUX BOIS, Near Maastricht, Belgium

Set on the edge of Belgium's only national park, surrounded by forest, this is an elegant architectural juxtaposition of old and new, a historic house offset by a modern spa with 20 eco-chic rooms. An award-winning gourmet hotspot, you can choose from the Michelin-starred restaurant (where signature dishes include hamachi and North Sea crab and Dombes duck) to a spa menu featuring the likes of yellowfin tuna with shrimps in tempura, which can be enjoyed fresh from a dip in your towelling robe. In addition to all the first-rate facilities

you'd expect – pool, steam, gym etc – there are eight treatment rooms with the latest quartz sand and waterbed treatment tables. However, it's the dermatological offering that really sets this spa apart. Led by Dr Yolande Bullens-Goossens, Belgium's leading authority on anti-ageing, the qualified team of therapists offers procedures including peels, fillers and botox. A perfect trip for anyone wanting to return home with a glow and – naturellement – the exclusive La Forêt by Dr Bullens cosmetics are on sale at the hotel too. **BOOK IT:** Doubles from €225 B&B. labutteauxbois.be



VALSANA Arosa, Switzerland

Sandwiched between the frozen lake and bordering the forest in the iconic ski resort, this 40-room hotel is powered by an ice battery. The first hotel in Switzerland to use this cutting-edge technology, energy is captured by geothermal probes and from waste energy from the hotel and its neighbouring supermarket, all of which heat and power the building and its large spa. Spend the day walking or skiing, and return for a relaxing swim or sauna with views into the forest. Treatments are classic and use Clarins products; think facials and sports massages, perfect for

limbs aching from the slopes. The spa features a pool, steam bath and 24-hour gym, plus yoga studio with twice-daily classes. The menu in Valsana's Twist restaurant caters for every taste – with vegan, gluten- and lactose-free options and organic, locally sourced produce. The surrounding nature and modern technology of the hotel have been fantastically captured by interior designer Carlo Rampazzi – his mix of industrial chic, roughly hewn Aztec rugs and botanical prints goes hand in hand with the whole ethos of this pioneering hotel. **BOOK IT:** Doubles from approx. £284 B&B. valsana.ch

PACKING ESSENTIALS



BORGO DE NOR
Josephine dress, £630.
matchesfashion.com



ISABEL MARANT
Filipo sage wool blend coat, £835.
harveynichols.com



MADELEINE THOMPSON
Curlew cashmere top, £295.
madeleineinthompson.com



RI2K
Metallic tote, £99.99.
ri2k.london



THE ROW
Flats, £675.
boutique1.com