

TRAVEL • CULTURE • STYLE • ADVENTURE • ROMANCE

# PASSPORT



## THE SPA ISSUE!

ARUBA • SINGAPORE • TULUM • SANTA FE • VERMONT • SIGHTSEEING IN STYLE & MORE!



Photo: Stefano Cavoretto



# THE WORLD'S MOST ASTONISHING SPAS!

We've all heard the term "positive thinking," but when it comes to spas it's all about blissful thinking, combined, of course, with sensual treatments that are designed to rejuvenate body, mind, and spirit. Whether you book a day at the spa or plan to spend your entire holiday being pummeled and pampered, Passport has left no hot stone unturned, or therapy untried, to bring you our favorite spas from around the globe. When planning your next delightfully indulgent getaway, you're sure to find the treatment of your dreams at one of these exceptional locations. Whether it's a couple's massage, mud bath, or seaweed facial, the astounding array of international spas covered here is sure to provide you with just what you need to relax and revitalize.







Blue Lagoon Iceland

## EUROPE

### BLUE LAGOON ICELAND REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND

The first time I experienced Iceland's **Blue Lagoon Geothermal Spa**, I didn't know what to expect. I had seen pictures and knew it was big, but I didn't realize just how enormous the spa complex is. The Blue Lagoon itself was formed in 1976 during the operation of a nearby geothermal power plant. Its geothermal water has a unique composition of three active ingredients: silica, algae, and minerals. The water is a blend of fresh and seawater, combined at extreme temperatures rising at just about 100-degrees Fahrenheit. People started bathing in the lagoon and noticed the incredible effects it had on their skin. In 2005, the New Blue Lagoon Clinic opened with a variety of retail shops, building on the existing spa with skincare lines. Guests can opt to stay at the glamorous Silica Hotel with sweeping views of the nearby lava fields. The standard entrance fee to the Blue Lagoon (which includes a silica mud mask) is \$55. I wanted to completely pamper myself, so I booked the Luxury Pass, which granted me entrance to the lounge and my own separate area to change and store my belongings prior to entering the spa, as well as a silica mud mask, towel, algae mask, a bathrobe, slippers, wine, and a special Spa Journey product set. Also, having the time to dip into the water from an extravagant indoor pool is a true luxury. A door opens directly from the indoor pool to the lagoon itself so there was really no need to step out into the frigid winter air. I took things to a different level on my second adventure at the Blue Lagoon by adding on their Signature Treatment (120 min/\$255). The treatment begins with a salt glow: my therapist scrubbed and polished my skin with a combination of Blue Lagoon minerals and oils followed by an algae wrap while floating on a mattress. It felt like two therapists rubbed my face and scalp softly as I floated in the gentle pool of perfection. The whole experience was rounded out with a full-body, in-water relaxing massage for just under an hour. [www.bluelagoon.com](http://www.bluelagoon.com)

—Jeffrey James Keyes

### AKASHA HOLISTIC WELLNESS CENTRE AT CONSERVATORIUM HOTEL AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

Amsterdam's luxury hotel boon has given affluent travelers much to love. Almost six top-notch properties have opened in the past two years alone, and they brought an arsenal of decadent guest rooms, elevated dining experiences, and personalized service. The caveat? Many of these hotels opened within centuries-old town homes, so space was limited when it came to building over-the-top, full-service spa facilities. Conservatorium Hotel is the exception. Housed within a historic, 1897 former bank and music school, this architectural masterpiece wasn't subtle when it debuted their massive, 10,800-square-foot **Akasha Holistic Wellness Centre**. The city's largest and most luxurious hotel spa is considered the city's premiere sanctuary, and with good reason. Aligning with the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air), the subterranean retreat didn't hold back their vision to create a relaxing, pampering, visually engaging, and cozy space. Once you walk through the semi-hidden entrance, you're whisked away to an enchanting oasis that blends contemporary design with holistic sensibilities. The relaxation lounge feels space age with soft glows of turquoise, lavender, and sapphire against white walls, not to mention a gorgeous fireplace anchoring the space. Further relaxation can be had in the Watsu pool, whirlpool sauna, hammam, and 60x16-foot swimming pool, the largest in the city. My Thai Massage (by an actual Thai therapist!) left me completely knackered (50 min/\$127), and the Natural Bisse Energizing Facial (60 min/\$150) helped my face glow after the long haul to get here. The spa's fully equipped fitness center (with views of an actual, glass-enclosed tree garden that climbs up to the lobby) has an army of trainers on hand, and nothing tops the spa journey like a shake at their organic bar...that is, if you have the will power to end the amazing experience! [www.conservatoriumhotel.com](http://www.conservatoriumhotel.com)

—Jimmy Im

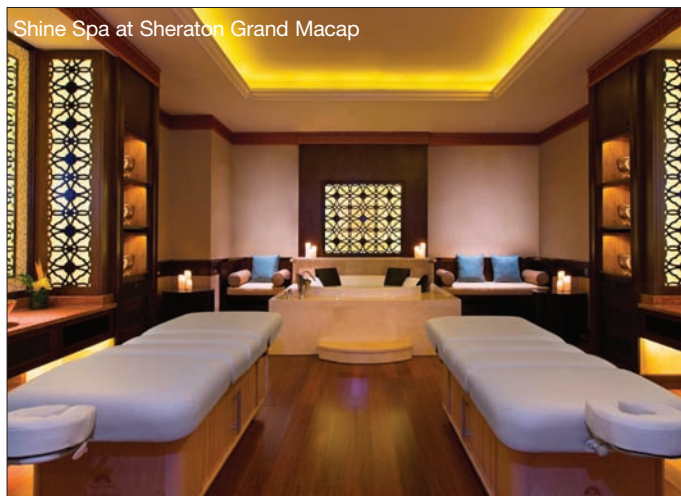
## AIRE DE SEVILLA SEVILLE, SPAIN

Aire de Sevilla is one of the hottest spas in Seville, yet it almost feels like a secret oasis when you enter this gorgeous den of relaxation and restoration. I went with a group of friends on a hot summer day, and it felt as if we were stepping into the city's ancient Moorish baths. Air Group emerged at this location 15 years ago, as part of a desire by a group of friends to bring back the spirit of bathing like the Ancient Greeks and Romans. The space they chose for this first property used to be an old palace built on the foundation of Roman ruins dating back to the first century CE. The basic price for taking in **Aire de Sevilla's** thermal baths is \$31, which includes entrance into a variety of rooms including their hot-, cold-, and warm-water baths, their bath Mil Chorrros, and hammam facilities. My favorite part of their thermal circuit was the meditative salt bath. Time actually seems to stand still when floating in soothing salt waters in this ancient chamber. Massages at Aire de Sevilla are definitely worth it, so add a relaxing 60-minute massage (45 min/\$80). Their Green Hammam Experience (120 min/\$110) is truly a unique opportunity to try something completely different. Start with a 15-minute hammam to open the pores followed by a deep exfoliation with peeling sugar and the essence of lime to remove impurities from the skin. After the exfoliation, therapists worked on my body with green tea oil and then gave me a head massage using citrus to activate the "Marma" points on the scalp. Just when you think it couldn't get any better, the treatment continues for another hour throughout various rooms of water at different temperatures. At the end of the two-hour Green Hammam Experience, you get to sip on a refreshing cucumber-lemon-melon smoothie. Afterward, head up to the roof for sweeping views of this beautiful city. [www.airedesevilla.com](http://www.airedesevilla.com)

—Jeffrey James Keyes

## DIPIÙ SPA AT GIARDINO ASCONA ASCONA, SWITZERLAND

This is a sensitive part of the world. That's what Ayurvedic specialists say about Ticino, the Swiss state where I settled in at the **dipiù Spa**. Located in the Giardino Ascona luxury hotel, the spacious spa seemed a natural extension of the soothing atmosphere along Lago Maggiore's verdant shore. Treatments at dipiù are quite diverse, extending well beyond the familiar into wellness arenas like Personal Sports Training (60 min/\$150), Ultrasound Cellulite Reduction (90 min/\$305), Permanent Hair Removal (90 min/\$255), and more—including gender- and age-specific treatments. In 2016, the spa added to its holistic array a full-fledged Ayurveda program that introduces the Indian art of healing in this five-star accommodation. Specialists offer treatments such as Sound Massage (50 min/\$150) and Metabolism-Stimulation Massage (60 min/\$180) à la carte; or as more sequential multi-day packages that span pulse diagnosis, nutrition advice, daily yoga and meditation, and excursions to natural energy points in the region. The hotel enhances the theme with an Ayurvedic dining menu based



each guests' physical constitution (called Dosha), but there are enticing traditional services at dipiù too, from hair styling to hand-and-foot treatments to more than a dozen Aveda-cosmetics treatments, and the Only for Men deep-cleansing facial and neck massage (60 min/\$150). After my treatment, I retreated to the sauna followed by a dip in the outdoor pool to wrap up an afternoon of sweet relaxation. [www.giardino-ascona.ch](http://www.giardino-ascona.ch)

—Kelsy Chauvin

## ASIA

### SOKKHAK SPA SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

Cambodia is a country renowned for its warmth and hospitality, human qualities that local Khmer entrepreneur Soann Kann has put at the heart of his business. Despite having no formal education, he worked his way up from humble beginnings in 1997 as a waiter at Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor. By 2012 he'd gained enough knowledge and experience to open his own business. Deriving its name from the Sanskrit word for tranquility, **Sokkhak Spa** is one of Siem Reap's top-rated day spas. This calm and tranquil oasis came highly recommended to me by gay friends, perhaps not surprising, since the owner is also gay. Upon arrival, my boyfriend and I were greeted by Dara, the handsome and charming spa coordinator, and offered iced lemongrass tea. After being introduced to our two male masseurs (around 20% of the therapists are male), we enjoyed a pre-treatment foot wash and scrub with fresh lemon and herbs, with Dara explaining this to be a Khmer tradition, one that symbolizes greeting, respect, and good luck. Continuing upstairs, a spacious treatment room was prepared for our side-by-side massage. Originated in Cambodia, the Khmer Traditional Massage (90 min/\$38) incorporates passive stretching and gentle pressure along energy lines, with the magic hands of our masseurs skilfully working on soothing our tense, knotty muscles. Solo travelers may utilize two masseurs for the signature Four Hands Massage (30 min/\$28). Facial and body treatments are also available using effective natural ingredients such as Cambodian sea salt, mango, pumpkin seeds, and coconut cream. The spa menu is so affordable that you may wish to indulge yourself every day, if so, you might consider staying at **Sokkhak Boutique Resort**. This secluded hotel and spa with 12 guestrooms opened in 2014, close to the famous Angkor UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Sokkhak team also operates a spa within stylish Viroth's Hotel, which is also gay-owned. As well as this spa and resort, Soann owns two of Siem Reap's most fashionable restaurants, suggesting there's no limit to his hospitality. [www.sokkhakspa.com](http://www.sokkhakspa.com)

—Stuart Haggas

### SHINE SPA AT SHERATON GRAND MACAO MACAO, CHINA

Macao is China's Las Vegas, and its location (a 45-minute ferry ride from



Hong Kong) is quite convenient for international travelers. I arrived exhausted after a New York-Taiwan-Macao flight, but true travelers know to skip sleep and adapt to their location's time zone. Luckily there's help at the Sheraton's **Shine Spa**. They're spectacular at figuring out how to conquer your jet-lag problem. The 15-treatment-room spa, amazingly quiet despite the huge hotel's 24/7 action, is the place to get your act together, especially if you're traveling on business and recuperating quickly is key. Spa guests are greeted with an iPad-toting therapist whose job is to dig into your soul and design your custom-made treatment. Provide your zodiac sign, favorite season, color, and what time of day you're most active, and voila the appropriate services are suggested. I'm a summer-loving, red-color adoring Virgo who's most productive during midnight hours. That's why a 9-5 life isn't a good fit for me (the therapist gave me this tip, but I already knew that). My answers determined which essential oils would be used in my treatment, but, their attention to detail didn't stop there. Shine has a feng shui-inspired menu, which balances metal, water, wood, fire and earth. Wood is my element, so the Lava Bamboo Massage (60 min/\$123) was recommended. A herbal bath using chamomile tea, and the spa's Terraké-brand lavender oil (30min/\$64) is super-relaxing (especially if you flew coach class). Naturally, an assortment of teas is offered pre- and post-treatment along with an invitation to stay as long as you wish. My body wanted to veg out, but suddenly my brain had more energy than ever. Mission accomplished. [www.sheratongrandmacao.com](http://www.sheratongrandmacao.com)

—Chanize Thrope

## THE SPA ABOARD THE BELMOND ROAD TO MANDALAY MYANMAR

Cruising up Myanmar's Ayeyarwady River aboard a luxury ship may seem like ample indulgence all by itself. Gliding across smooth waters, looking out at hills dotted with gold and terra-cotta temples, and relaxing on the sun deck or in its outdoor swimming pool, it's as if you can feel your soul purring. A visit to the spa aboard the **Belmond Road to Mandalay** only enhances that sensation, delivering physical relaxation, cleansing, and nourishment. Much like the cabins, the spa rooms are compact, but cleverly designed to create a comfortable, quiet space away from the humidity. As of press time, the LGBT-friendly Belmond team was refreshing its spa menu to launch in late 2016, so check online for the latest pricing and treatment details. The ship also runs daily wellness programs for guests to enjoy, like morning yoga gatherings, and an on-board fitness center with an array of weights and machines, which you can use while peering across the river. Belmond also invites special guests aboard the ship throughout the year to share their expertise; in 2016 that included Nadia Narain, who led special yoga and meditation sessions for guests of all skill levels. She also hosted talks to inspire and explain the benefits of day-to-day mindfulness, with special post-practice "juice boosts" prepared by the ship's chef. [www.belmond.com](http://www.belmond.com)

—Kelsy Chauvin

## WILLOW STREAM SPA AT RAFFLES MAKATI MANILA PHILIPPINES

Sharing a building with two siblings, a 237-unit Raffles Residences and 280-room Fairmont Makati, the 32-suite Raffles occupies a prime location within Makati's Ayala Center district, which includes the energetic Greenbelt shopping center, Legazpi Sunday Market, and a superb restaurant/café scene. Blending its historic Singapore flagship's luxurious colonial style with contemporary flair and conveniences, the four-year-old Raffles is also distinguished by its gorgeous fourth floor pool and adjacent **Willow Stream Spa**. The ridiculous, soul-sucking snarls of Manila traffic are completely forgotten once checking into this almost 13,000-square-foot facility. Creamy off-white and soft colors, and dashes of Asian-Western art and design set the tone, while pre- or -post treat-



Cool Spa at Sri Panwa Phuket

ment time can be spent in a blue light-bathed Jacuzzi or the inviting, sun-kissed outdoor pool. Perusing the spa menu, a handful of options stood out: the Traditional Hilot Foot and Body Massage (10 min/\$100), the Ultimate Willow Stream Experience (150 min/\$179), and Age Repair Facial (90 min/\$125). However, having come all this way to the Philippines, it seemed sage to experience some local-centric pampering, so **Kultura** (120 min/\$125), incorporating indigenous products and several different Filipino techniques and treatments, emerged victorious. A *banyos* (foot wash) commenced the experience, an herbal solution disinfecting my feet. Next, my entire body received a detoxification through a *kapeng baranko* (body scrub) with strongly scented coffee grains sourced from the Batangas province—and yes, their brew can be quite rich, and purchased in local supermarkets. I loved this! After showering off the dark brown residue, I enjoyed an Albon Hilot, a style of massage from northern Ilocana that is heavy on thumb and forearms with alternating pressure and soothing strokes. Finally, I felt a firm yet pleasant tool applying pressure to points on my feet: a wooden dagdagay stick, with beaded shapes carved into its length for incredible acupressure effect. Could this be the next Filipino crossover product? I hoped and wondered... [www.fairmont.com](http://www.fairmont.com)

—Lawrence Ferber

## AWAY SPA AT W TAIPEI TAIPEI, TAIWAN

W Taipei is, without any doubt, Taiwan's gayest, most glamorous, and best-located property, right in the heart of Xinyi's upscale dining and retail district with the iconic Taipei 101 just minutes away (the awesome, upscale Breeze Xinyi shopping center that opened across the street from W in late 2015 is a must for its dining alone). As one would expect from W, there's a clubby, post-modern element to the entire property, including Taipei's **AWAY Spa**. White walls with bursts of bubbly textures, shiny black, and off-white tiles with golden illustrations, a copper ice fountain, retro-futuristic furniture, beds, and colored glowing lights in the three treatment rooms. It's all very sci-fi Zen. The AWAY Spa here stands apart from its international sibling spas with new exclusive treatments. This year saw the addition of the Pro-Collagen Quartz Lift (50 min/\$150, 75 min/\$194) and the Ultimate Spa Experience (135 min/\$278), both incorporating Elemis products. The latter package includes the Quartz Lift, clinically proven to firm up skin and smooth out wrinkles with just one treatment, plus a deep-tissue massage. I chose the AWAY Signature massage (90 min/\$150). A completely bespoke 90 minutes of oils and techniques depending on your personal preferences. The massage, while penetrating, was also quite relaxing with super-intuitive strokes, to the point I completely dozed off during its second half. [www.wtaipei.com](http://www.wtaipei.com)

—Lawrence Ferber

Spa at the Twelve Apostles, Cape Town



### COOL SPA AT SRI PANWA PHUKET, THAILAND

Far-flung from raucous Patong beach, Cape Panwa is among Phuket Island's most majestic, scenic spots. Perched upon its green tropical cliffside is Sri Panwa, a stunning full-service villa resort boasting over 100 pools, dramatic sunset cocktail spot Baba Nest, a brand new 30-unit wing, The Habita, geared to wedding and events groups, and of course, the world class **Cool Spa**. A small pool with lily pads greets spa visitors, while blue and wood tones dominate the buildings. The treatments menu is so extensive it's almost dizzying, from 30-minute traditional foot reflexology to creative multi-day programs and packages. For example, massage categories encompass signatures (Traditional Thai, Sri Panwa Serenity), pressure point (Sport, Deep Relax), warming (Sabai Hot Stone), and soothing (Balinese, 4-hand Heavenly Bliss). A full-day "Cool Man Space Retreat" (290 min/\$307) includes personal training, scrub, massage, men's facial, pedicure/manicure, and light spa snack, while the most lengthy package is "3 Days Spa" (360 min/\$435), six hours worth of treatments: Swedish, sports, and Indian head massages, a body polish, wrap, and facial spread out over three days. Catching my eye above all else, a handful of Cool Spa's herbal body scrubs represent and incorporate traditional Thai flavors and dishes: Tom Yam, Somtum, Milk Tea, and Mango Sticky Rice. The Thai Herbal Supreme package (150 min/\$195) seemed an ideal sampling with its Tom Yam scrub, floral footbath, herbal body bath, and Thai Herbal Healer massage. I adore Tom Yam, and sure enough the scrub included edible ingredients that smelled absolutely delicious. [www.coolspaphuket.com](http://www.coolspaphuket.com)

—Lawrence Ferber

## AFRICA

### THE SPA AT THE TWELVE APOSTLES CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Serenity comes with the location at this award-winning spa 20 minutes up the

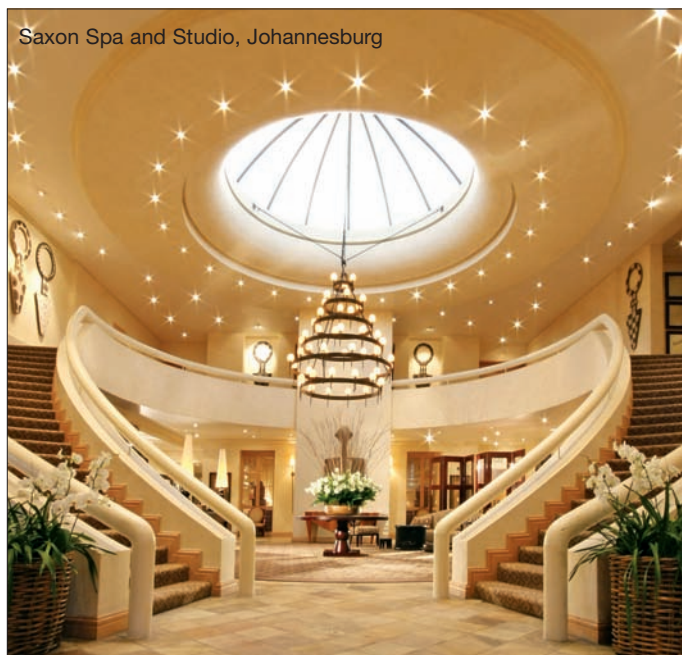
Cape Town coast, at the luxurious Twelve Apostles hotel. Its secret is occupying a grotto within the hotel's private corner of the Table Mountain foothills. From its own alcove, the **Spa at the Twelve Apostles** delivers peace and quiet in a low-lit haven, perched between the mountain and the South Atlantic Ocean beach. Like other Red Carnation properties, the spa here is led by an incredibly warm, accommodating staff that's eager to please. The spa has several signature treatments, offered for singles or couples, which incorporate proprietary B|Africa products blended from native African-plant extracts. The traditional Arabic Rasul (60 min/\$50) applies mineral-rich mud to skin and hair for detoxing and rejuvenation, removed with a gentle steam and indoor "rain shower" inside the spa's cleansing-ritual chamber. If a couple's treatment is preferred, B|Together (90 min/\$100 per person) uses rose quartz to promote compassion and balance through stone application and massage oil. Healthy skin is the focus of many aromatically inspired treatments that include a Coconut Rub and Milk Wrap (60 min/\$80), Lime and Ginger Salt Glow (30 min/\$40), and other fruit and herbal facials. The services are impeccable, but the space itself sets this spa apart. There are two outdoor gazebos with ocean views available for massages, a salon for mani-pedis, a tranquility lounge to relax pre- or post-treatment, and a saltwater flotation pool for a "reduced-gravity experience" to gently recover from jet lag and improve sleep. [www.12apostleshotel.com](http://www.12apostleshotel.com)

—Kelsy Chauvin

### SAXON SPA AND STUDIO JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

The aroma of fresh jacaranda seemed to whirl around me wherever I went at the Saxon Hotel in Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa. The property, situated on the former home of insurance giant Douw Steyn, opened its doors to the public in 2000 with a transformation of the most luxurious suites in Johannesburg. Over the years, the Saxon has been the go-to place for diplomats and legendary figures like Nelson Mandela and Oprah Winfrey. It's on these same grounds where Mandela edited his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*. I imagined rubbing elbows with Winnie Mandela while sipping





Saxon Spa and Studio, Johannesburg

oolong tea in the spa lounge as I put on my fancy robe in the **Saxon Spa and Studio** and marveled at the ornate detail put into every corner of this opulent and friendly spa. The décor includes handprints of some of its most famous guests. Their Signature Sound Therapy Treatment (60 min/\$55) is unique to the Saxon Spa and Studio, taking you on a spiritual journey using sound. Imagine lying down while receiving the gentle and sometimes stark vibrations of gongs, cymbals, Tibetan singing bowls, and bells. I can honestly say I've never experienced anything like it. The treatment itself takes place on a warm waterbed with color therapy to fully enhance and rebalance your energy flow while receiving sound vibrations at every angle. If you want to up the ante a bit, opt for the Signature Journey for Men (240 min/\$170), a four-hour treatment which includes the Sound Therapy treatment before a Deep Tissue Massage and followed by a Spa Pedicure. The whole experience includes a lunch in the Spa Café. In October of 2016 new hydro facilities including heated pools, a floatation pool, and steam room will be unveiled to kick back, relax, and float in the water between spa treatments. [www.saxon.co.za](http://www.saxon.co.za)

—Jeffrey James Keyes

## AUSTRALIA/OCEANIA

### CHUAN SPA AT THE LANGHAM AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

After a full day of exploring Maori culture at the Auckland Museum, I was able to secure a spa appointment at the Langham Auckland, my home base for my initial adventure in New Zealand. **Chuan Spa** builds on the oriental traditions that seek spiritual and physical harmony by balancing the five elements: metal, wood, fire, earth, and water. I started my Chuan experience by tempting and awakening my body with various levels of hot and cold in their Tri-Bathing Ritual, first bathing under the spa's snail water, then taking in the "ice experience" and bringing my icy chest and shoulders into a herbal steam room. All treatments feature a range of essential oils, incense, and candles to enhance your experience. The Chuan Man's World (75 min/\$110) is a decadent treatment commencing with a back exfoliation. As if the repetition of hot to cold-water experiences didn't prepare my body for nirvana enough, the sensation of having a clean exfoliation before a rigorous yet relaxing massage was a total home run. Afterwards, I was pleasantly surprised with a purifying facial cleanse tailored specifically for my sensitive skin. If you're looking for something a little more in the feet and hands realm, dip them into warm



Chuan Spa at The Langham, Auckland

Photo: Chuan Spa

water infused with essential oils in the Chuan Executive Indulgence (60 min/\$110) that additionally exfoliates and softens the soles of the feet while rejuvenating those overworked hands. The treatment concludes with a super-relaxing scalp massage that will bring balance and bliss to the forefront. After my treatment, I went for a dip in the heated rooftop pool. A small group of friends was just leaving the pool as I arrived, and I was lucky to have the water all to myself. First-time visitors to the spa might want to take advantage of a newbie 25% reduction on their Discover Chuan Spa Package (75 min/\$130), which features an invigorating 30-minute Herbal Salt Scrub, 30-minute Back, Neck, & Shoulder Massage, 15-minute facial, complimentary valet parking, the tri-bathing area, and pool/Jacuzzi access. [www.chuanspa.co.nz](http://www.chuanspa.co.nz)

—Jeffrey James Keyes

## SOUTH AMERICA

### ENTRE CIELOS SPA AND HAMMAM AT ENTRE CIELOS MENDOZA, ARGENTINA

Just 600 miles from Buenos Aires is Mendoza, a secluded Malbec grape-producing region that's home to **Entre Cielos**, a low-key hotel with one of the most high-end hammams I've seen outside of Istanbul. Upon arrival at the spa's reception desk, I was presented with a kit consisting of a metal bowl, an exfoliating glove (called a kese), flip-flops, a pestemal, and a cotton body-wrap robe to be used as my bathing suit. Yes, under that, you're naked. However, the way the spa staggers appointments, the truly shy won't have to worry about being seen bare-bottomed—and it's never unisex. There are a lot of options when choosing a hammam experience, and to be honest, I'd have preferred it to be more simplified so you know what you're paying for. However, everyone does start with the Traditional Hamam Circuit (90 min/\$50), where you move from several rooms that vary in temperature and experience. It's all meant to help with detoxifying, stimulating, and relaxing the body. I added the Rhassoul, where one rubs liquid volcanic clay into their body (I was told to put it in my hair, too). After the hamman, my skin was smooth enough for the Grape Seed Exfoliation (155 min/\$120), a wine-based therapy designed to exfoliate dead cells with wine-producing seeds. [www.entrecielos.com](http://www.entrecielos.com)

—Chanize Thrope

## CARIBBEAN

### WATER CLUB SPA AT THE FLORIS HOTEL CURAÇAO

Curaçao is one of the most LGBTQ-friendly islands in the Caribbean, and the Floris Hotel, an adults-only resort in the downtown area of the capital city, Willemstad, tends to attract the "beautiful people." How do they get so glam for the near-nightly pool parties and annual hotel-hosted Pride week? By



booking pretty-making treatments at the petite, but perfectly white-decorated **Water Club Spa**. The menu is limited to basic massages and easy manicures, but with Curaçao's out-there atmosphere, a deep-tissue massage (40 min/\$90) may hit the spot after dancing the night away. Plus, a day pass (starting at \$10) allows access to open rain showers, a 20-person steam room, and large sauna that's been described as a place "big enough for you and a few friends"—an understatement for sure. [www.florissuithotel.com](http://www.florissuithotel.com)

—Chanize Thrope

## NORTH AMERICA

### ISLAND CURRENTS AT SENORA RESORT SENORA ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA

While Vancouver reigns as far as international name recognition, British Columbia is riddled with plenty of beautiful, destination-worthy islands, from Victoria, its capital, to the eco-oasis that is Sonora Island. Accessible by helicopter, seaplane, or water taxi, Sonora's namesake resort, open from May to mid-October, is an all-inclusive, lushly landscaped resort, part of the exquisite Relais & Château collection, where one can observe populations of bald eagles, seals, sea lions, black bears, and (passing by daily) whales. Sonora's **Island Currents** spa sports an additional distinction: it's a member of the Swiss Valmont product line's elite V35 club, which encompasses 35 of the world's finest hotel and luxury brand spas. Housed within a stone and wood lodge-style structure that overlooks the water and neighboring islands, the spa includes a fitness room and outdoor mineral pools. All Island Currents patrons can commence or conclude their treatment with Water Journey, a self-led therapeutic wet ritual including stops in a sauna, Swiss shower, warm and cool mineral pools, and hot tub. The menu's signature treatments draw inspiration from and imparts the essence of Sonora's Pacific Northwest surroundings and elements. For instance, heated beach stones and salts exfoliate and detoxify the body while cooling jade and Valmont products soothe the face during the Peaceful Warrior (120 min/\$226). A bit knotted up, I opted for the Balsam Deep Tissue Massage (60 min/\$117, 90 min/\$175), incorporating Balsam Fir Gum (highly treasured by Canada's First Nations for its medicinal applications) plus eucalyptus, tea tree, India spearmint, avocado, and argan in the treatment's massage oil. It was a luscious and too-short experience, and the oil proved quite alluring in scent. Certainly enough to purchase some in the spa's store. [www.sonoraresort.com](http://www.sonoraresort.com)

—Lawrence Ferber

### EL GANZO LOS CABOS, MEXICO

It's no secret that Mexico's beach towns heavily rely on tourism. They're chockfull of luxury resorts, excellent restaurants, nightlife options, and plenty of activities and attractions that lure millions of visitors the world over. One vacation element that truly stands out in Los Cabos is the num-

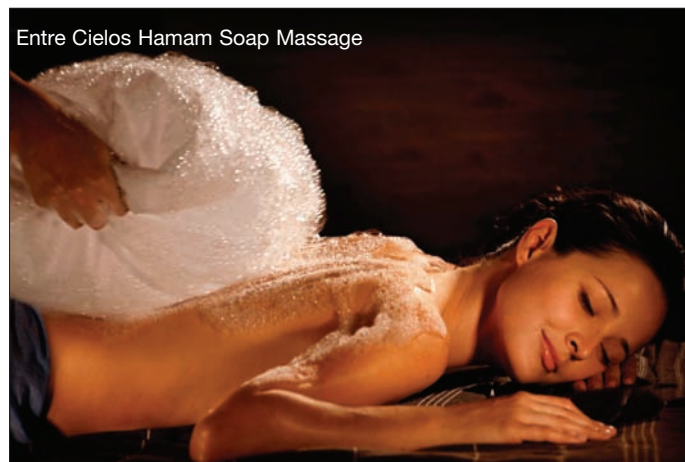


ber of unique, exceptional spas that take wellness to the next level. From traditional Mayan ceremonies to personalized healing journeys, Los Cabos resorts bang out a thoughtful (and unforgettable) spa experience, and **El Ganzo** has just begun leaving its mark. Shuttered after Hurricane Wilma, El Ganzo reopened earlier this year, giving its repeat visitors much to rejoice over (like its trademark infinity rooftop pool with all-glass hot tub and private beach club). The boutique spa here receives equal fanfare. What makes it attractive is that it's not over the top. In fact, it's quite simple, understated, and intimate. On the main level of the boutique hotel, the no-frills spa features five treatment rooms with outdoor areas, and two massive therapy pools in addition to steam, sauna, a relaxation room, and a fitness center looking out into the marina. The outdoor pool is a further sanctuary for those who want to avoid the scene on the rooftop, and spa treatments (which can be had here). Inside the spa, I opted for a unique Mexsun Intuitive Massage (50 min/\$120) where my therapist used a hybrid of techniques (acupressure, deep tissue, etc) to help release energy blockages and, of course, whack out the knots from my flight. The Parafango Dead Sea Mud treatment (80 min/\$180) immersed me in full bliss thanks to the salt scrub for exfoliation and Parafango mud that helped draw out toxins (not to mention a hydrating facial that was applied while I was cocooned in a warm thermal blanket). Afterward, I chilled in the outdoor therapy pools where the good vibes were just as I expected from this soulful space. [www.elganzo.com](http://www.elganzo.com)

—Jimmy Im

### THE RAINFOREST AT BANYAN TREE SPA MAYAKOBA MEXICAN RIVIERA, MEXICO

Nestled into the freshwater lagoons and mangroves of the romantic Riviera Mayan coast is Mayakoba, where an arcadia of indigenous and bird species celebrate life in a delicate ecosystem. Banyan Tree Mayakoba, the star resort in a handful of local accommodations, is a draw for luxury-minded travelers who enjoy the quiet, finer things in life. This extravagant and friendly resort with its fusion of Asian and Mexican hospitality is just a stone's throw from the beaches and ruins of Tulum. As if my private pool, bathtub, and outdoor whirlpool in my Serenity Pool Villa weren't enough to lull me into a Zen-like state, **The Rainforest** with its unique combination of hydrothermal circuit of hot and cold thermal cabins is designed to allow guests the red-carpet treatment on their path to wellness. I didn't know what to expect when I walked down a winding path of stones through their cascading indoor rainstorm. The blend of cool and warm water made me feel as if I was leaving everything behind and discovering a new landscape of tranquility. Once I completed my Rain Walk, I explored an aromatic steam chamber followed by a detoxifying hammam, covered myself in therapeutic mud in the sensory Rasul, and then washed it all off in a



Entre Cielos Hamam Soap Massage

Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North



refreshing Bucket Drench Shower. This was just the start of the completely immersive guilty spa pleasure. There were additional sauna chambers, steam rooms, an ice fountain, and vitality pools with restorative acupuncture jets and waterfalls galore. The Personal Hydro Experience (60 min/\$75) gives you roughly an hour in the Rainforest. For an additional cost you can add a choice of their Banyan Tree Massages. Whether it's Ayurvedic, Balinese, lomi lomi, or a traditional Swedish, they've got you covered. Signature Banyan Tree Spa massages include the Royal Banyan Treatment utilizing East-meets-West techniques and a herbal pouch dipped in warm Sesame Oil. Something especially unique about the Banyan Tree Mayakoba Spa is their use of Melipona Honey gathered from local Mexican bees. The Honey's Oil is a classic recipe for detoxifying and healing the body. [www.banyantreespa.com](http://www.banyantreespa.com)

—Jeffrey James Keyes

### SPA CASA VELAS AT HOTEL CASA VELAS PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO

The all-inclusive, adults-only Casa Velas Resort is located in one of Puerto Vallarta's more quiet zones, but despite this small haven's intimate size it's large enough to house the bi-level **Spa Casa Velas**, with a sweeping staircase and marble steps. At first, the spa areas seem tiny, but there are plenty of nooks and crannies to perform the 60-plus treatments on the menu, many named after gems from amethyst to onyx. Services begin at the unisex hydrotherapy pool, for a circuit to start detox (yeah, those margaritas catch up on you). After a soak, you're led to the relaxation area where a warm, lavender-and-lemongrass infused compress is placed around your neck and a glass of antioxidant-filled chlorophyll juice and assorted local fruit and nuts are on offer. In fact, Casa Velas uses seeds, fruit, and herbs from their on-site botanical garden. The Herbal Ritual (80 min/\$170) uses a handpicked cinnamon, clove, and spearmint combo designed to stimulate your senses. To get the full pampering experience, choose an outdoor spa cabana and let the sun caress your skin along with your skilled therapist. [www.hotelcasavelas.com](http://www.hotelcasavelas.com).

—Chanize Thrope

### SAN JUAN SPA AT RITZ-CARLTON SAN JUAN PUERTO RICO

Located in beautiful Carolina, Puerto Rico, the **San Juan Spa** is nestled within the ocean-front luxury hotel of the Ritz-Carlton San Juan. At a whopping 12,000 square feet, the San Juan Spa provides the latest skin and body therapies with 11 treatment rooms. The spa menu is designed to help you relax, invigorate, and enrich your body with specific treatments. Of course, they have a full-service beauty salon, a state-of-the-art gym, steam rooms, saunas, and whirlpools. They even have six massage treatments catering just to men including the Power Hour (50 min/\$155) and The Men's Massage (80 min/\$220). However, I was particularly drawn to the Experience treatments that the San Juan Spa has to offer. The Experience treatments are inspired by Puerto Rican ingredients such as locally grown coffee along with tropical coconut and rich sea salts for an experience unique to the spa. I saw the Café con Leche Body Polish (80 min/\$220) and knew right away that it was the treatment for me. As soon as I disrobed and relaxed on the table, the aroma of full-bodied Puerto Rican coffee transfixed me to the scents of my childhood mornings. The most gentle but firm hands scrubbed me with a nutrient-rich coffee scrub, detoxifying from my scalp to my toes. A massage with an application of warm *leche de coco* (coconut milk) soon followed. My senses went into overload, and I thought I was in heaven. That's until the masseuse applied another layer of lemongrass lotion to further hydrate my skin with a full-body massage. It was bliss! I promised to return for the Sea Shell Indulgence (80 min/\$220) and the Stress Melter Ritual (100 min/\$270) to complete all three featured Experience treatments at the Ritz-Carlton San Juan Spa. [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)

—H. Luiz Martinez

### UNITED STATES FOUR SEASONS SCOTTSDALE SPA SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

I have to admit my whole **Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale at Troon North** experience was a bit of a modern-day (gay) Cinderella story. I was munch-



ing on some delicious nuts and fresh local honey the Four Seasons team had left as a welcome gift as I took in a bit of the desert landscape on the patio of my Desert Garden Casita Room. I ducked in for a quick shower before my spa appointment, but when I came back into the bedroom there were about 20 tiny birds jumping around my room. I took a handful of granola and tossed it out onto the patio to lead them outside and laughed my way to the spa for a “spa party” they were throwing for hotel guests and locals. Upon entering the decadent **Four Seasons Scottsdale Spa**, I was handed a glass of Champagne (my kind of spa) and learned about their spa’s integration of local desert botanicals like desert sage, prickly pear, and jojoba. I booked a Healing Hiker’s full-body massage (80 min/\$230) for the next day. After spending the day biking in the desert this full-body treatment was just the ticket. The therapist was strong at times and gentle in just the right ways. He integrated mountain arnica and sage to ease my muscles that were sore from discovering bumps and winding paths through cacti in the foothills of Pinnacle Peak. When my treatment was over, I ventured over to a small Jacuzzi and a waiter intuitively suggested a prickly pear margarita to help me cool off after my spa treatment. Be sure you finish all treatments and water play in time to catch the sunset from their Frank Lloyd Wright inspired Onyx’s Bar and Lounge on the first floor of the resort. [www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com)

—Jeffrey James Keyes

## RANCHO MIRAGE SPA AT THE RITZ-CARLTON RANCHO MIRAGE, CALIFORNIA

Among the exceptional resorts in Palm Springs, The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage effortlessly rises to the top. It has good energy and good vibes (with great food and rooms to boot), and it’s obvious the back-bending staff truly love being there as much as the guests. Not one thing was overlooked when carefully creating the perfect resort experience (manicured lawns, beautiful views, crafty cocktails, adult pool, entertainment), so imagine the heaps of love poured into the **Rancho Mirage Spa**. The bi-level, stand-alone sanctuary is an unrivaled gem in the desert. As soon as you enter, the friendly staff greets you at the front desk before a dedicated spa butler guides you to the separate men’s or women’s wellness journeys on the second floor. Each area is equipped with sensory showers, steam, sauna and an outdoor deck with whirlpool and sun beds, should you want to laze under that trademark desert sun with breathtaking canyon views. The boutique spa menu pays tribute to the surrounding desert, where guests can create their own body scrub or body butter from dozens of oils inspired by indigenous ingredients like prickly pear and jojoba. I could feel my skin getting a much-needed refresh with the my Indigenous Desert Clay Wrap (75 min/\$240), which used the healing properties of desert clay, not to mention a relaxing scalp massage and facial acupressure while under wraps. The Men’s Massage (80 min/\$270) was the best decision I ever made after using the massive gym (with complimentary coconut water). The full-body massage was customized and hit all the sore spots that needed attention. While being beautified, both treatments were heavily detoxifying, a nice afterthought when I chilled by the pool afterward, feeling completely decompressed and rejuvenated. [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)

—Jimmy Im

## ARCHIMEDES BANYA SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Do you dream of spa days replete with plush robes, herbal aromas, New Age music, and tranquil surroundings? Well wake up baby and smell the sweat, chug a beer, and let that belly loose! In the company of *Passport’s* typical array of pamper palaces, **Archimedes Banya** is not the prettiest boy on the block. If your spa indulgences have had you oleander oiled, salt scrubbed, hot-stone massaged, and crystal-healed to the edge of metrosexuality and the brink of hippiedom, Archimedes Banya offers a gen-

uinely refreshing and invigorating alternative. It’s a spa that offers a sense of escape...from spa clichés. Located in an industrial area of San Francisco rarely explored by tourists, it’s a no-nonsense, old-school, Soviet-style *schvitz*, about as chic as your neighborhood YMCA. One of two large common rooms features a large multi-person Jacuzzi (complete with floating chess and checker sets), a frigid plunge tub, a steam room, a typical dry sauna, and an infernally hot, 16-foot-ceilinged Russian sauna with temperatures close to 200 degrees at the upper level of its three tiers of wooden benches (180 min/\$46). It was here that I underwent Archimedes’ signature treatment, the detoxifying Venik Platzza (Seven min/\$46). My therapist, Max, a towel-clad twenty something Dolph Lundgren lookalike, escorts me upstairs into the Russian sauna and instructs me to lie facedown on my towel. Just the heat radiating from the wood already had me feeling something close to pain when Max began to lash me with a small bundle of leafy birch branches he’d soaked in water before our session began. The impact itself was light, but the wet branches directed and concentrated the atmospheric heat directly onto my skin with the wicked efficiency of a flame-thrower. Can the ligaments at the back of the human knee actually melt? Does the meniscus boil? These were the questions passing through my fevered brain as I called my seven-minute treatment to a halt after four and a half. I descended and exited lightheaded, Max guiding me by the arm into normal climes, now more a nursemaid than a temptation. He urged me into the cold pool, then sat me on a stool and poured jugs of cool water over my head as I trembled and felt my heart rate slow. Five minutes later, I felt a surprising surge of healthy energy, as if my body was celebrating its survival. Much of Archimedes is clothing optional, and all of it is co-ed except for women’s night, the first Tuesday of each month. Attendance normally skews male, but you will be surrounded by all manner of nakedness (hairy bears, svelte young women, wrinkled seniors, and couples on dates), and the Banya is busiest on weeknights when the facilities are open to midnight. Nudity is not permitted in the small indoor pool area, on the roof deck (which has unexpectedly dramatic Bay views), or the second floor café, where you can cool off with a decidedly un-spa-like mug of beer. [www.banyasf.com](http://www.banyasf.com)

—Jim Gladstone

## NOB HILL SPA AT THE SCARLET HUNTINGTON SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

The City by the Bay is one of the most popular travel destinations in the world, welcoming over 18 million visitors a year. People flock to this beautiful city to see, photograph, and Instagram the many beautiful vistas and attractions such as the Golden Gate Bridge, Fisherman’s Wharf, Twin Peaks, and Nob Hill. After seeing the sites, and climbing the steep hills to marvel at the view from the top, you should head to the **Nob Hill Spa** and revitalize your tired body. This sanctuary of bliss in the center of the city is the perfect place to spend a half-day at the spa. Located at The Scarlet Huntington hotel, this refuge of pampering offers a wonderful array of rejuvenating treatments, personalized service, and skyline views. Start your day at the indoor infinity pool, then head for the steam and sauna before beginning your treatments. On a recent visit, I booked the **Enrich Body Treatment** (80 min/\$220) that is designed to rejuvenate dry, out of condition skin. The sensual fragrance of exotic flowers such as tuberose and ylang-ylang combined with vanilla will transport you to nirvana almost instantly. An intensive salt and coffee body exfoliation stimulates the circulation and revives dull, tired looking skin. Hands and feet are given special attention with applications of rich vitamin E oil to cuticles and heels and a freshwater mud mask to soften and condition the skin. Your body is then layered in hydrating and mineralizing marine algae applied with long, gliding strokes using a blend of four highly nourishing plant oils. All this is culminated with a scalp massage designed to dissolve stress. We highly recommend that you reserve a table on the terrace for lunch where you can enjoy a selection of salads, sandwiches, and

Spa Nalai, Park Hyatt New York



vegetarian treats. The prawn and lobster spring roll with daikon, carrot, mint, cilantro, crispy romaine, and sesame dipping sauce is one of our favorites. Pair this with their Sparkling Watermelon Refresher with lime and mint, then spend a hour working on your tan before your head out to enjoy cocktails with friends in The Castro, SoMa, or a new favorite neighborhood you discover earlier in the day. [www.nobhillspa.com](http://www.nobhillspa.com)

—Christopher Perry

## SEA WELLNESS SPA AT HOTEL CASA DEL MAR SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA

At a spot called the **Sea Wellness Spa**, located within the oceanside hotel named Casa del Mar, it's not surprising to find treatments based on the sea. Step inside this Santa Monica retreat to a world of healthy refinement, where wood walls, silk curtains, soft lighting, and original art give you a relaxing feeling before you even start your treatment. It's all designed with a green approach (some of the wood, for instance, is repurposed from an Amish barn) that lets you experience, in the spa's words, "eco-luxury." Using the Pacific (the very word means "calm") as an inspiration, the choices include such indulgences as a "Sea Blossom Sojourn" (120 min/\$325), which starts with a body polish of sea minerals and neroli blossoms, then continues with a massage using warmed Himalayan sea salt stones, and finishes up with an orange blossom facial and marine masque. Want to feel good enough to eat? Body wraps and facials incorporate everything from ginger/coconut/sugar (60 min/\$205, 120 min/\$265) to chamomile (30 min/\$145) to grape stems/white tea (60 min/\$205). A firming facial uses peptides derived from sea products (60 min/\$205), while the gentleman's facial (60 min/\$190) leaves your skin glowing and relaxes you completely with scalp, neck, and shoulder massages. You can choose a traditional massage (30 min/\$130, 60min/\$190, 90 min/\$270) or couple's

massage (60 min/\$210, 90 min/\$290 per person), but if you're really in the mood for a splurge, why not go for the caviar facial treatment (60 min/\$220, 90 min /\$330)? Who knew this favorite food of the jet set contained proteins that nourish your skin? While the five treatment rooms are well designed with comfort and relaxation in mind, you're on the edge of the most beautiful body of water in the world, so why not get your treatments on the oceanview terrace? In this soothing spot that combines cutting-edge advances in treatment with the natural assets of the spa's location, there's no doubt that you'll soon come to learn the true meaning of the word "pacific." [www.hotelcasadelmar.com](http://www.hotelcasadelmar.com)

—Rich Rubin

## HIPPOCRATES HEALTH INSTITUTE WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Set on a lush 50-acre tropical campus, **Hippocrates Health Institute's** signature Life Transformation Program lasts a full three weeks (although 1-2 week stays are possible, and some guests stay longer). Nearly 2,500 years ago, the father of modern medicine, Hippocrates, said: "Let food be thy medicine and medicine by thy food." To that end, the nutritional foundation at the nation's longest-running wellness center is a 100% raw vegan diet. Guests have a large salad buffet at lunch and dinner, with 50% sprouts, plus some whole grains and nuts, fruits, green juices, and teas, and twice-a-day wheatgrass shots. That's it. No salt, sugar, caffeine, gluten, dairy, alcohol, or meat. The first week is a major detox for most people, although during my stay hunger was never an issue. But the food is just the beginning. There's ongoing wellness lectures, fitness classes, indoor and outdoor gyms, walking paths and meditation spaces, swimming pools, a mineral cold plunge, Jacuzzi, steam rooms and saunas, weight training, and yoga. There's a traditional spa offering massage, facials, colonics, and innovative therapies for



pain management, meditation, psychotherapy, and oxygen and vitamin IV therapy (the program price includes many of these services). The overall health results are so dramatic and consistent for guests on the three-week program that you'll start and end your stay getting blood drawn at their medical facility so you can see the results for yourself. So who comes here? Anyone who wants to seriously heal his or her body or focus on preventative health. During my one-week stay I saw diabetes and cancer patients, athletes, yoga teachers, adventure travelers, and at least one recognizable celebrity. All-inclusive pricing depends on your choice of housing, from a dorm-style shared bungalow (18 nights/\$8,310) to a stunning 2,000-square-foot luxury town home (18 nights/\$13,905). [www.hippocratesinstitute.com](http://www.hippocratesinstitute.com)

—Paul Horne

## QUA SPA AT CAESAR'S PALACE LAS VEGAS LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Chalk up standing nude in the middle of a snowfall as one of those 'only in Vegas' experiences, but it's part of the unforgettable ritual at **Qua Spa**, a full-service spa and Roman-style bathhouse at Caesar's Palace. Perhaps the most luxurious spa in all Sin City, Qua entices with its expansive clothing-optional bathing areas for both sexes where the eye candy on a busy afternoon is jaw-dropping. The bathhouse features three pools (the Tepidarium, the Caladium and the Frigidarium) of varying temperatures, a steam room, public rain showers, an upscale lounge and, yes, the appropriately named Arctic Ice Room where visitors can chill in the buff while snowflakes decorate their body. Meanwhile, the list of upscale treatment options are long and sumptuous and include a breathtaking array of services for both singles and couples such as the tantric Kama Sutra with Shirodhara, deep-tissue surrender, traditional Hawaiian lomi lomi (a healing-based massage), facials, waxing services and more. Try the signature Fiji ritual (\$235), a deep pore-cleansing exfoliation using a coconut creme scrub, followed by a soothing wrap and scalp treatment with coconut oil. Next, the body is painted with coconut body butter for hydration, nourishing and repairing damage to deep skin layers. If ever you wanted to escape the cacophony of the slot machines in Las Vegas, Qua Spa is the place to do it. [www.caesars.com/caesars-palace/things-to-do/qua](http://www.caesars.com/caesars-palace/things-to-do/qua)

—Jason Heidemann

## SAHRA SPA AT THE COSMOPOLITAN OF LAS VEGAS LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

In Vegas, it's easy to drink like a fish, pig out like royalty, party like it's 1999, and bake under that hot desert sun. I'm quick to admit my inhibitions run loose and my morals are (temporarily) on the back burner. Among the several brain cells I kill over a weekend (with no regrets), there's one that's still wired to good judgment, which leads me directly to the 43,000-square-foot **Sahra Spa** at The Cosmopolitan. While it's an unexpected sanctuary, it's still as Vegas as you can get: imaginatively detailed Moroccan-themed design, towering walls, cascading water, exceptional service, and that trademark bling The Cosmopolitan is known for. There's separate men and women's water journeys, Sahra suites, lively Violet Hour salon, and Epicuren and Kérastase grooming products are free to use in the changing areas. The core of Sahra Spa is its hammam room, a modern take on the centuries-old ritual that promotes healing. Centered with a heated motherstone slab, the somewhat sensual room also includes two whirlpools, steam rooms, and stone loungers, which can all be used privately with a treatment. Get the standard scrub down with the Hammam Soap Ritual (50 min/\$185) that includes a body buff using traditional Turkish Kese Mitt, a steam, and body-lotion application. I also recommend a Sahra Signature Massage (80 min/\$255), which I've received on several occasions. It's interesting to note that most masseuses have been here since the spa opened in 2010,

and most rubdowns I've received have been nothing short of knackered. It's a truly indulgent way to take a break from your Vegas vices. [www.cosmopolitanlasvegas.com](http://www.cosmopolitanlasvegas.com)

—Jimmy Im

## GREAT JONES SPA NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

**Great Jones Spa**, with its alluring three-and-a-half story waterfall display, opened to a competitive landscape of popular Manhattan day spas in 2004. For \$55 guests can enjoy the atrium and water lounge, jumping from sauna to steam to hot tub to cold plunge pool (in no particular order). I booked a massage and luckily remembered to bring a comfortable pair of swim trunks to hang out in at the wet lounge. The Chakra-Light Steam was my favorite part of the spa, because it was empty when I walked in and at first glance it seemed like a normal sauna with an assortment of twinkling lights on the ceiling. The longer I sat in the steam room the more the lights changed. I later learned the color harmonics, as they call them, are used to regulate the hormonal metabolic process and impact the mood. After I had enough of the steam and colors, I ventured into the River Rock Sauna, an impressive four to five tons of river rock that fluctuates between 150 and 194 degrees Fahrenheit. When it was time to cool off a quick dip in the cold plunge was just the ticket. I could only take the intensity of the frigid water for a moment before leaping back up into the peaceful atrium and taking a moment to pause for a lavender tea. I literally could have spent all day bouncing between the variations on cold and hot in the spacious basement of the Great Jones Spa, but by the time I finished my tea it was time for my Swedish massage (60 min/\$145, 90 min/\$205). Fernando greeted me for what I would ultimately consider the best massage of my life. I've never had a treatment that was so delicate and intricate. Fernando's magic hands found each and every muscle up my legs, across my back, and even the tiniest sections along my cervical spine. Without asking for direction or chatting about the weather or who I am and what line of work I'm in, he intuitively discovered every centimeter of tension in my body and firmly worked to eliminate it. By the time he had finished, I felt as if I had floated in a pool in Miami, rested on the sandy beach in the Turks and Caicos, and floated on a cloud all without leaving Manhattan. After I said farewell to Fernando, I contemplated marching right back upstairs to book another appointment for the same treatment the next day. Too decadent? Maybe I'll wait and go back next week. [www.gjspa.com](http://www.gjspa.com)

—Jeffrey James Keyes

## SPA NALAI AT PARK HYATT NEW YORK NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Upon entering the 40th-floor **Spa Nalai** at the two-year-old Park Hyatt New York, you'll be greeted by an impressive New York view. On my visit, clouds ominously traipsed Central Park, and as rain covered the floor-to-ceiling windows, I enjoyed chocolate cookies and tea before heading to the massive indoor pool. In my private en-suite, I quickly showered the chlorine off my skin, put on my robe, and lay down for my Fire & Ice Facial (60 min/\$350). My esthetician is a perfect mix of Zen and New York realness. Quickly describing what I can expect from this strong treatment and any problems she's experienced. "Hope you don't have any cuts, or you didn't just shave," she says while brushing iS Clinical products on my face. The skincare line is known for its "clinical" strength products that some people may find to be intense, but luckily I already use them at home. Using a glycolic treatment that includes sugar-cane extract to smooth and polish the skin, the facial uses a warming mask that feels like an in-flight hot towel. Any discomfort is assuaged with a cooling mask that tightens pores, rejuvenates, and makes the whole treatment feel like you've just walked ten blocks in a New York City winter. Feeling ready-to-go cool, I change, stock up on some iS Clinical, and, of course, grab some cookies. [www.parkhyatt.com](http://www.parkhyatt.com)

—Joseph Pedro