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Travel

Six spas for a new you

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Detox is no longer a dirty word, and these six superb spas specialise in pampering as well as pummelling you back into shape. Rowena Carr-Allinson reports on some of the world's loveliest spas for an indulgent escape. Tried and tested.

The Viceroy, Miami, USA

The Viceroy in Brickell is home to one of Miami's most amazing spas; a 28,000 square foot Philippe Starck-designed extravaganza. Unlike anything you've seen before, this spa is art. The all-white décor, Starck's signature look, is immaculate. The reception desk overlooks the central spa area, a 5,000 square foot water lounge, reflecting pond, hot and cold plunge pools, all with edgy rococo-style furniture in silver, gold and white.

Taking the purple-carpeted stairs down, past the 50s bathing beauties photography wallpaper, I'm led to the stunning changing rooms where Starck's furnishings sit perfectly against huge floor-to-ceiling windows. As for the 10 treatment rooms, white pods, hidden by roman curtains, they are dark and cosy inside. Almost cave-like!

I booked in for 'Raindrop Therapy,' intrigued by the name. Designed to release blockages and align energy, the treatment is an hour and a half of body bliss. Essential oils like peppermint, basil and thyme were sprinkled onto my spine and massaged in to stimulate the central nervous system. The pressure was just perfect, except when it got to my toes, when I couldn't stop giggling. It's all worth it though, and I let the healing power of laughter do its bit too.

Find out more at www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com

Elbow Beach Hotel, Bermuda

On assignment in Bermuda I found myself on a little slice of tropical paradise, just outside the capital Hamilton, at the Elbow Beach Hotel. Once run by Mandarin Oriental, the resort is just the place to kick back in chic Ralph Lauren style surroundings. My 'cottage', just yards away from the perfect flour-soft sandy beach was all soothing nautical-chic décor, classic creams and pale blues.

At the spa, I was mesmerised by the Lemongrass fragrance and the beautiful silk fabrics, dark woods and signature Orchids that made me feel as if I was actually in Thailand. Jeeya, a lovely Indian therapist was on hand for a 'Time Ritual' so, instead of booking a treatment ahead, we had a chat and decided what my body and mind needed right there while I sipped delicious lemon and honey tea. I opted for a back body massage and an express facial for rehydration and relaxation. It was pure bliss, all of it; from the Aromatherapy oils from British brand E'spa, to the incredible view over the resort, the palm trees and the beach below. After Jeeya wove her magic on my face, I left with a spring in my step, and a much plumped, happier face! Result.

Find out more www.elbowbeachbermuda.com

The Spa Terre at the Riviera Resort, Palm Springs, CA

Palm Springs is renowned for its hot springs and multitude of fabulous spas catering for the rich and famous in need of a little R'n'R'. This desert resort has long been the choice for LA's 'it' crowd, thanks to its location a couple of hours drive away. To stay where the Rat Pack used to hang out, head to the Riviera Resort, which has been revamped and now boasts a lovely spa too. The Spa Terre is a beautiful space, dark and calm, a contrast to the rest of the rather bright, bling Riviera Resort, especially its crazy pool bar scene! The spa's heart, inspired by a Turkish Hammam is a vision in blue mosaic with waterfalls, with a cosy cocoon and private booths off the Jacuzzi to sip a cup of green tea and unwind. My recommendation? The Signature Facial with citrus and olive oil for much needed repair and restoration.

Find out more at www.psriviera.com

COMO Shambhala spa, Parrot Cay, Turks & Caicos

The Turks & Caicos are what Caribbean dreams are made of; perfect clear waters, beautiful sunshine and the finest white sand…

Parrot Cay is simply gorgeous. A 35 minute speedboat transfer away from the airport's island, it's all understated beach chic and elegance. The 50 acre resort has it all; beach villas as well as tennis courts, a mile long beach, gym, beautiful eternity pool, two restaurants and the amazing award winning COMO Shambhala spa with excellent eucalyptus and peppermint products. The zen-like pavilions overlook the Caribbean mangroves and there's a palpable Asian influence making the spa utterly soothing. Indulging in a Purify Ritual, with an hour long blissful massage with hot herbal 'bolus" and signature facial, is guaranteed to give you a special happy glow! The spa also has two jacuzzis, a Pilates hut, complimentary yoga classes and sauna. A truly dreamy experience in a jaw-droppingly beautiful part of the world!

Find out more at www.comohotels.com/parrotcay

Chiva Som, Hus Hin, Thailand

Hua Hin, just three hours drive south from Bangkok is set on the Gulf of Siam and has been hot property since Thailand's King built his secondary residence there in 1926. Well known for its beaches, it's also got a reputation as a pampering capital, with its many spa resorts including the uber-detox palace for the rich and famous, Chiva Som. Kate Moss, amongst others is a regular at the world famous Spa, renowned for its alternative health therapies combining both Eastern and Western techniques. A beautiful hideaway amidst the exotic orchids, Jasmine and relaxing water features; the atmosphere is totally serene, and for good cause. The first stop on entering? Phones are banned and gadgets switched off. This is definitely somewhere to go unplugged. After an initial consultation on arrival, the staff create a bespoke wellness menu to match your requirements. For me, it was getting those chakras realigned, boosting energy levels and being treated to a full body massage. Sadly I only stayed for a day, but next time I hope they will keep me a while longer…

Find out more at chivasom.com

Tiara Miramar Beach Hotel & Spa, Theoule Sur Mer, France

Because we can't all fly off to exotic climes for our spa break, here's a gem of a hideaway, a mere hop away on the French Riviera. Check into the Tiara Miramar Beach Hotel and get automatic access to the relaxing haven that is the wellness center. Set over two floors it's all about change of scenery, (though I'm not sure why you'd want to change scenery from the beautiful Cote d'Azur?) and energy rejuvenation as well: the extensive spa menu features everything you can imagine from Lomi Lomi massages to Swedish style or Oriental ceremonials and hot stone massages. Luxurious, soothing and cosy, the spa uses gorgeous, natural minerals Sothys brand spa products. On arrival I felt a little as if I'd stumbled into a gingerbread house, all ambers and coppers and rich mellow tones. My first port of call was the sauna and steam room, before plumping for the high tech 'cellular awakening' treatment with Siberian ginseng roots. Could this be the secret recipe to perk up this tired face? I just wish I'd tried it before…

Find out more at www.miramar-beachspa.tiara-hotels.com

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