

# FRILL SEEKERS

After a tough 12 months, we're sorely in need of a spa — but it's ultra-indulgent extras, not worthy self-denial, that will cure our ills. Here, our global round-up of the new hedonist hotspots

BRUNO POINSARD/TRUNK ARCHIVE/SNAPPER MEDIA

## THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF SPAGOERS IN THIS WORLD.

Ascetics and hedonists. Now, not wanting to generalise (cue dramatic eye-roll from the chief subeditor's desk), but ascetics are partial to marathon meditation, appreciate Spartan medspa environs and find fasting fascinating. Hedonists dump their shopping, revive energy levels with a room-service macchiato, pull on a fluffy robe and pad downstairs for a steam sesh, the pièce de résistance being a treatment as swanky as the surrounds. For our 2018 spa guide, we salute all you hedonists. Let's face it, it's been a tumultuous year, and our limits have been tested enough, thank you very much. We're all in need of a break from reality, so we're serving up spas that come with posh extras. Fragrance butlers, chauffeurs, Michelin-starred chefs and someone called a 'pillow concierge'. You may not leave three kilos lighter, but your complexion and Zen will definitely be restored. Glass of Dom, anyone?

**L**IKE MOST PROPER TOKYO HOTELS, it all begins several storeys high, in this case 32 floors up in the Otemachi Tower, in the city's financial district. An ear-popping journey in the lift speeds you up to the nearest thing to a cathedral in the sky. The lobby (aka the Garden Lounge) ceiling is 30 metres high and simply takes your breath away. All black stone (basalt) topped with *washi* (traditional Japanese paper), it makes you feel as if you have walked into a shoji lantern.

After such a welcome, a mere mortal needs time and space to recover and relax, and that's what the spa is for. On two levels, it comprises a light-filled reception area, complete with a 250-year-old camphor tree trunk masquerading as a desk, eight treatment rooms (one double), a relaxation area and possibly the most glamorous pool on the planet — all 30 metres of it giving views over Tokyo out to the Imperial Palace gardens. Snaffle one of the vast relaxation beds and enjoy the space and the sky.

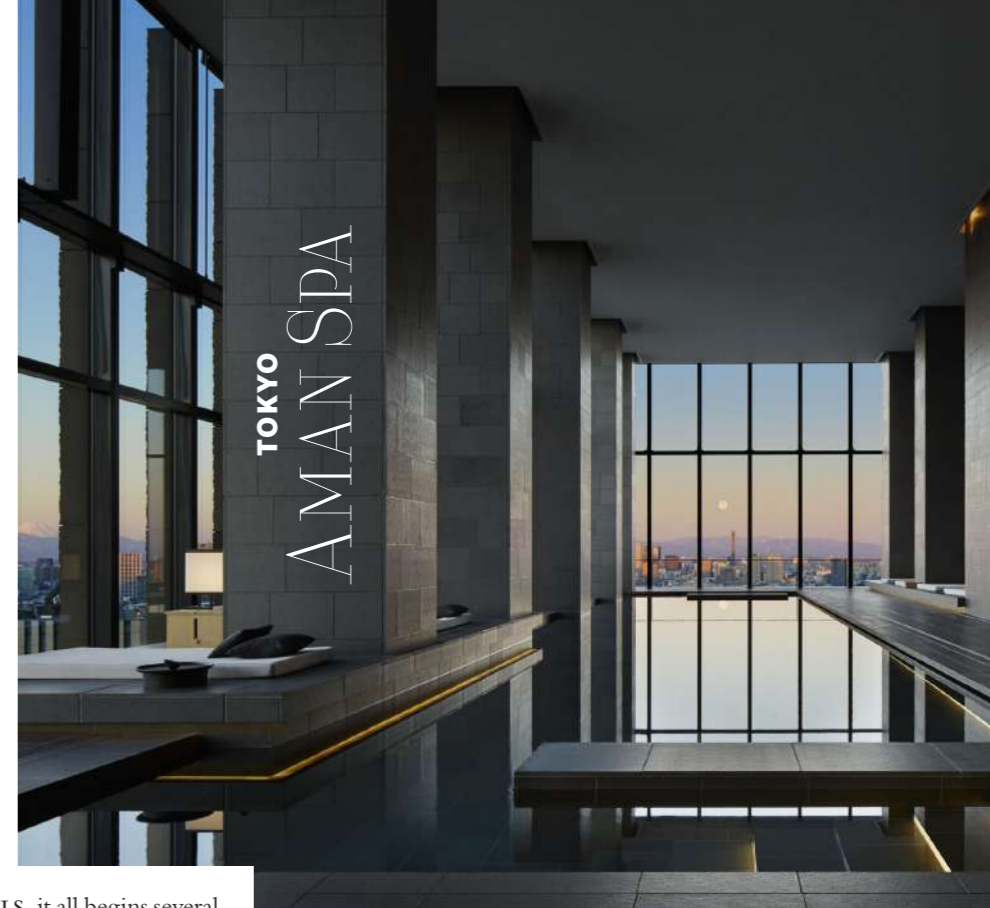
The interiors of the hotel and spa are designed by Singapore-and-Perth-based firm Kerry Hill Architects, which has a long association with Aman, so understands the soul of the brand, and nowhere is this more evident than on these floors. Nothing gets in the way of the experience — no silks, hangings, bells, Buddhas, lamps or any other gee-gaw; this is simplicity as an art form. The corridor off which all the rooms lead would not look out of place in a monastery (a luxury monastery, of course) — clean, chic and free of distractions. Everything is concentrated on the purpose of the place: your body and its pampering. There is a short menu of treatments, massages, facials and rituals based on traditional *kampo* (herbal) therapies. Try the Shirabe, in which shiatsu meets *ampuku*, a Japanese holistic abdominal massage to balance and relax the internal organs.

Do make time to enjoy the traditional bathing experience before your treatment; alternatively, your personal bathroom is equipped with an onsen-style square stone bath as well as instructions on how to perform the bathing ritual. And while the hotel has a state-of-the-art gym and a yoga and Pilates studio, each guest room is equipped with Yamuna fitness balls and a video on how to use them.

The hotel's 84 rooms are huge for Tokyo (at 71 square metres, the standard room is the largest entry-level room in the city) and designed as a luxury version of the traditional ryokan (inn), with sliding doors, *washi*-lined glass and day beds — not to mention the iconic Japanese loo with heated seats and blow-dry options.

Add an award-winning restaurant, a lounge for lighter meals, a bar and a library, and you have the ultimate in urban retreats. Costs? Well, if you have to ask, spa treatments start at approximately \$300, with rooms from \$1060. But remember, it pays not to scrimp when it comes to your health. — Jo Foley [aman.com](http://aman.com)

COURTESY OF AMAN SPA



From top: the swimming pool has spectacular views out over Tokyo; the entrance; spend some time on a relaxation bed before your treatment.



THE PENINSULA SPA PARIS

**E**VERY SINGLE STREET IN PARIS seems to be groaning under the weight of a mega luxury hotel right now, and with the Ritz and the Crillon both recently reopened after top-to-toe refurbishments, competition is fierce. But some days it feels as if the city is drowning in goldswan taps and silk damask wallpaper, which makes The Peninsula Paris a standout if light-and-bright is more your thing.

Don't get us wrong, here on Avenue Kléber, in the smart 16th arrondissement, a five-minute amble away from the Arc de Triomphe, it's still all fine marble, rich wood panelling, gold leaf finishes and chandeliers the size of trucks, yet it feels ethereal. A Lasvit chandelier crowns the lobby, the contemporary artworks add a minimalistic edge and the technology in the 200 guest rooms (in-room dining menus on tablets, touch-screen panels in place of light switches) fast-tracks you to the future. A three-quarter-sized L'Oiseau Blanc plane poised as if it's taking off from the hotel's terrace restaurant is a quirky touch.

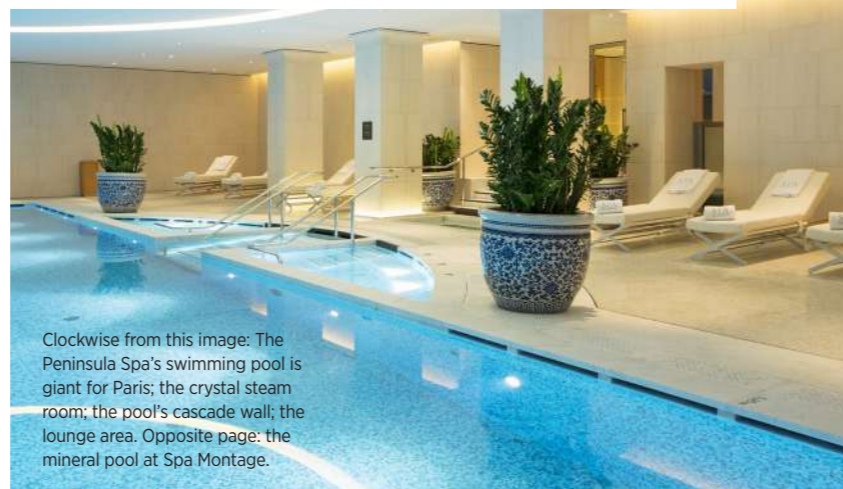
Today, my jet-lagged complexion (think pores the size of potholes) is in desperate need of a little beauty à la française, so I take the lift down to the subterranean hotel spa, which I've

heard is the best in Paris. Here, the vibe is East meets West, so if you're more Euro-inclined, go for super skincare brands such as Biologique Recherche and Espa; for something more Asian-inspired, try Cha Ling. Developed by Guerlain chief executive Laurent Boillot, Cha Ling is a new range using ingredients harvested from Chinese tea plant forests. The beauty director in me knows I need to book the Lian Bu Signature Facial (approximately \$310), a Cha Ling treatment launched only a few months ago that uses traditional Chinese medicine techniques to harmonise my energy flow (damn you, cabin air) and a typical French massage (pinching, basically) to plump and tone my saggy jowls. The effect is Benjamin Button-like, I congratulate myself the next day, as I happily forgo makeup for the long-haul home, for once looking well rested.

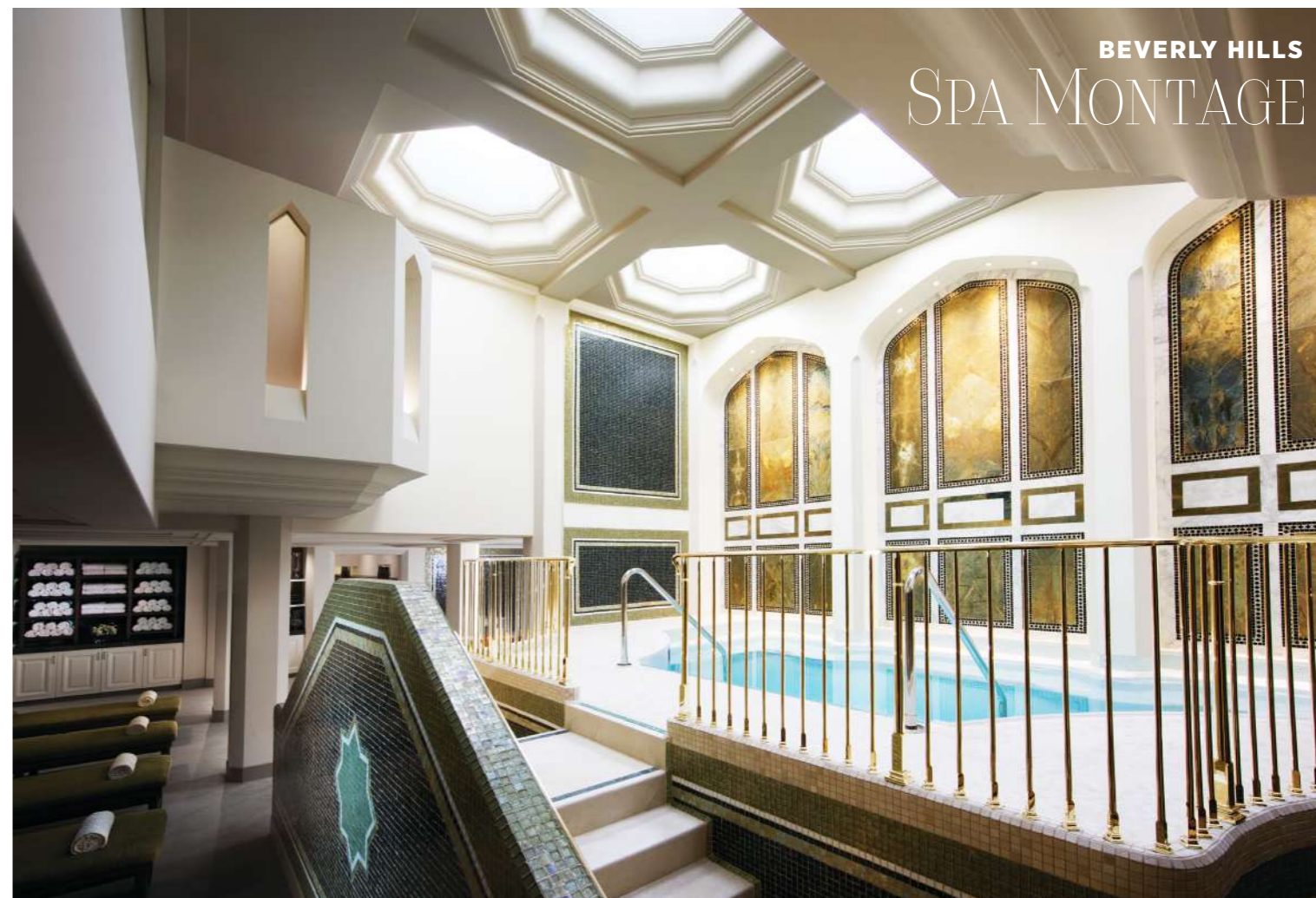
The Peninsula Spa knows God is in the detail. Such as a therapist pouring you a cup of antioxidant-rich Pu'er tea from Yemaya while you're working on your consultation forms; the lunch of delicate microplankton dim sum she pops in front of me before my massage; and my departure gift: a pack of The Peninsula's legendary ginger biscuits whipped up daily by the pastry chef.

At 1800 square metres, this is most certainly the biggest hotel spa in Paris, and although it has eight treatment rooms including two spa suites, a pool, two jacuzzis, saunas, hammams and a rain shower area, the place is pin-drop quiet. Afterwards, absolutely zonked, I wobble back to my room and contemplate snacking on my ginger biscuit stash in a hot bath, but instead summon the will to head to the terrace to indulge in a rooftop rosé, take in that dreamy view and switch my phone's camera to panoramic mode. This is prime zinc-rooftop territory, after all. — *Eugenie Kelly*

[paris.peninsula.com/en/spa-wellness/luxury-spa](http://paris.peninsula.com/en/spa-wellness/luxury-spa)



Clockwise from this image: The Peninsula Spa's swimming pool is giant for Paris; the crystal steam room; the pool's cascade wall; the lounge area. Opposite page: the mineral pool at Spa Montage.



BEVERLY HILLS SPA MONTAGE

**A**TION OF CELEBRITIES, from Justin Bieber to Oprah, love Montage Beverly Hills for a long list of reasons — location, location, location being just three of them. But considering we're slapping in awards season right now, my guess is its famous spa's \$1800 L.Raphael Royal C Treatment vitamin C facial is another drawcard. The newest signature treatment added to what is already a seriously sumptuous menu of services actually visibly brightens your skin, for real. But vanity aside, there's also the instantly popular restaurant Georgie, which has been known to lure the likes of Chrissy Teigen and John Legend for romantic modern American feasts, the absolutely Edenic rooftop pool (by which you can lounge when spa-ing Monday through Thursday) and a hidden-away speakeasy serving the rarest of Macallan whiskies. Like the intimate bar, the almost-10-year-old hotel feels exceedingly private, even though it boasts more than 200 guest rooms — including three palatial Presidential Suites — and classic elegance-meets-Hollywood Golden Age decor throughout. Whether you're Kim Kardashian, royalty, a tourist or, like me, a local coming for a spa day, we're all treated the same — at least that's how the gracious staff make it feel.

Yet despite its grandiose size and glamour, there's no one here right now in this enormous 1850-plus-square-metre spa complex. And that's a good thing. This disposable black bikini is definitely not my finest fashion moment. I slip into the massive 40-degree whirlpool, infused with ridiculous amounts of rejuvenating magnesium, and the iridescent white tiles and opulent marble archways surrounding me gleam under octagonal

skylights above, making me feel as though I have slipped through the time-space continuum and into Morocco. An attendant delivers green juice in a pool-safe champagne flute, which I sip happily as the immaculately positioned — and wonderfully forceful — jets nail my aching back like a warm herbal poultice. Spins through the dry redwood sauna and sinus-clearing eucalyptus steam room (both a balmy 60 degrees) with chilled cucumbers on my lids entice my whole being to release just a bit more.

Parker J Tontavutto, my therapist, fetches me for a poolside chat about the customised signature Elements of Wellness treatment

**“Whether you're Kim Kardashian, royalty, a tourist or, like me, a local coming for a spa day, we're all treated the same.”**

he's chosen for me, and explains the ultimate bespoke 90-minute plan (\$350). This booking is one of the best choices to make since it's completely personalised — incorporating a mixture of modalities such as thalassotherapy, dermatome therapy, reflexology and wraps — to address precisely what you need based on a detailed lifestyle profile completed prior. Parker feels my body is craving detoxification, so we head into one of three wet treatment rooms (there are also 13 dry ones) and I'm scrubbed vigorously, top to toe, with a blend of black lava and Himalayan, Turkish mineral and Dead Sea salts, then popped under the Vichy rain shower. Next comes a clay and algae wrap and contrast shower. During the massage it

becomes clear that Parker has all the moves. He intuitively zeroes in on my tensest places (scapulas! hamstrings!), creating a full-body high that nears nirvana. Turns out there's nothing better than warm oil on a freshly exfoliated body. I think I've just found my new local. — *Kathryn Romeyn*

[montagehotels.com/spamontage/beverlyhills](http://montagehotels.com/spamontage/beverlyhills)

THE PENINSULA: VIRGILE SIMON BERTRAND; WILLIAM FURNISS; MONTAGE: SCOTT FRANCES



LONDON  
THE LANESBOROUGH

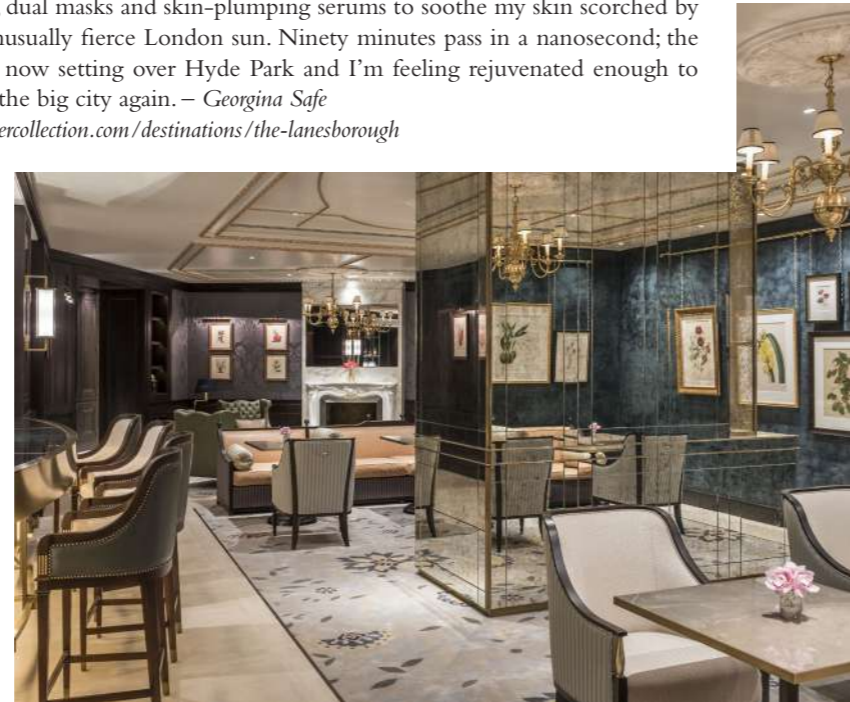
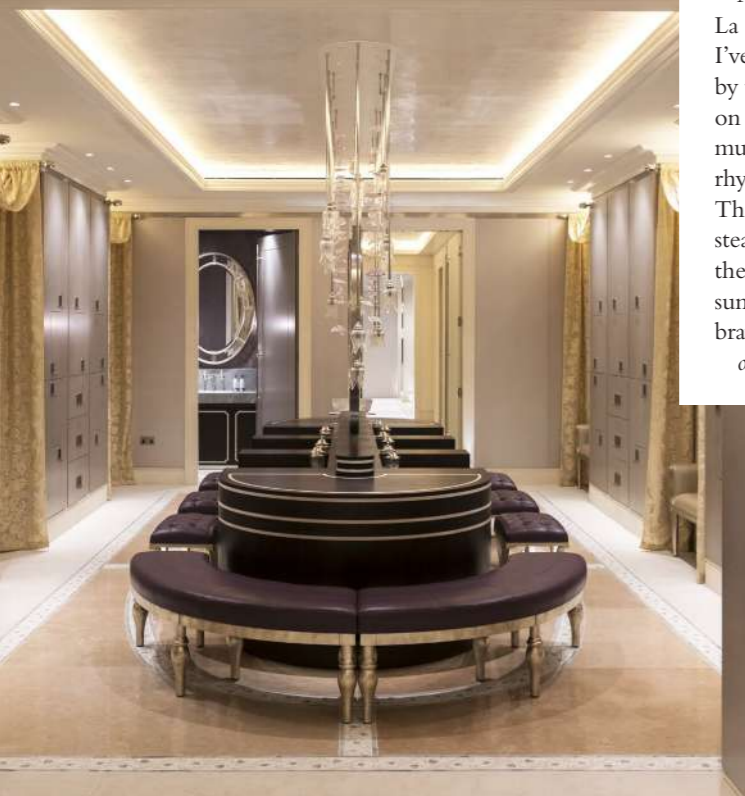
**M**OST FIVE-STAR HOTELS have a day spa, but strolling into The Lanesborough Club & Spa is like walking into a five-star hotel in itself. Alongside the expected changing rooms, treatment cabins and manicure and pedicure suites, there is also a restaurant with a private dining room, an opulent spa lounge, social spaces, a fitness club, a hydrotherapy pool and a lobby bigger than my apartment. Spread over 1672 square metres within The Lanesborough hotel on Hyde Park Corner in Knightsbridge, the spa is larger than some boutique hotels, and like any good hotel it has a dedicated check-in area, in this case with a spa concierge and spa butlers on hand to attend to my every need.

The space feels like an English stately home, with its art and antiques, silk wallpaper, marble, wood panelling, leather upholstery and flickering fireplaces (albeit with fake flames). I'm escorted to the opulent changing rooms and after I've re-emerged in a robe and slippers, my spa butler suggests a snack in the restaurant. Who am I to say no? The atmosphere there is akin to that of a Michelin-star establishment, and, in a way, this is one: the menu has been developed by Michelin-starred chefs Eric Fréchon and Florian Favario, with nutritional input from James Duigan, who operates the Bodyism gym on site. Will it be marinated yellowfin tuna or pineapple tomato gazpacho with a tartare of green zebra tomato? No, after a hot and bothered day of rushing about London during a heatwave, it really must be a refreshing glass of champagne.

As extensive as the restaurant menu is, it's the spa menu that is truly sublime. La Prairie, Ila and Anastasia Achilleos are among the treatments on offer, and I've opted for the signature Anastasia Achilleos Method, honed over 20 years by the London skin whisperer. My therapist gently positions me lying face up on a warm water-filled mat, and I experience a sense of floating and a deep muscle release as she kneads and strokes me to tap into the craniosacral rhythms of the body using Achilleos's experience in reiki and energy lines. The facial features a powerful lymphatic-drainage massage coupled with steam, dual masks and skin-plumping serums to soothe my skin scorched by the unusually fierce London sun. Ninety minutes pass in a nanosecond; the sun is now setting over Hyde Park and I'm feeling rejuvenated enough to brave the big city again. — *Georgina Safe*

[oetkercollection.com/destinations/the-lanesborough](http://oetkercollection.com/destinations/the-lanesborough)

From top: a treatment room; the lavish manicure station; the changing area; the restaurant and bar.



“Entering the lobby of the historic hotel... you do feel as if you’ve time-travelled back to 20th-century Paris.”

**N**EW YORK is every fashionista's idea of a luxury paradise, with its heart-stopping department stores, trendy bars and restaurants, swanky hotels and buzzy day spas. For those who like their spa to be the very definition of uptown chic with a touch of Parisian glamour thrown in, there's no going past the newly opened Guerlain Spa at The Plaza. The iconic hotel, setting of many a Hollywood movie scene and where Carrie confronts Big after his engagement party, was built to resemble a French chateau in a skyscraper, at the stylish intersection where Fifth Avenue meets the Upper East Side and Central Park. So the arrival of Parisian luxury beauty and spa brand Guerlain is a rather perfect fit.

Entering the lobby of the historic hotel, with its marble floors, gilt accents and gigantic chandeliers, you do feel as if you've time-travelled back to 20th-century Paris. I take the tiny, ornate lift to the Guerlain Spa on the fourth floor, where I am greeted by more old-world elegance.

After changing into my robe and slippers, I am ushered into the lounge, where I sip champagne, nibble macarons and leaf through Assouline books on Parisian fashion and art while I await my therapist. (You can also indulge in this ritual post treatment, and the services extend to a shoe shine, garment steaming and makeup touch-ups.)

I'm booked in for Skin Light, a 90-minute facial that promises to reveal the skin's natural light. And while it sounds a little on the high-tech medspa side, the reality is utter relaxation and pampering as my facialist fixates on my every whim, from the music to the temperature of my room to the pressure of her massage (perfect, by the way).

Skin Light kicks off with a deep cleanse using Guerlain's prestige cleanser and toner, before my skin is analysed under a white light. Apart from some dehydration and congestion (part and parcel of living in the Big Apple), the situation isn't a completely lost cause, so microdermabrasion it is — gentle manual exfoliation with natural rice powder, then a machine to go more in-depth — followed by a blissful sculpting-style massage with a little crystal ball that helps to reignite my facial muscles. The wrinkle-fighting Guerlain Orchidée Impériale Radiance Mask is applied and left on for 20 minutes while I'm treated to a luxe hand massage and paraffin treatment. And the Guerlain love fest continues with Orchidée Impériale cream massaged around my eyes, neck and décolletage. The whole shebang is heaven on a stick. My skin's brighter and clearer than what I walked in with, and I got to play out *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* inside a gorgeous old building from a decadent bygone era. — *Natasha Silva-Jelly*

[theplazany.com/spa-salon-and-wellness/guerlain-spa-new-york](http://theplazany.com/spa-salon-and-wellness/guerlain-spa-new-york)

BRUNO POINSARD/TRUNK ARCHIVE/SNAPPER MEDIA; THE LANESBOROUGH: JAMES MERRILL; GUERLAIN SPA: KRIS TAMBURELLO



NEW YORK  
GUERLAIN  
SPA

Guerlain Spa's lounge has a French parlour feel.



## THE SPA, BYRON AT BYRON

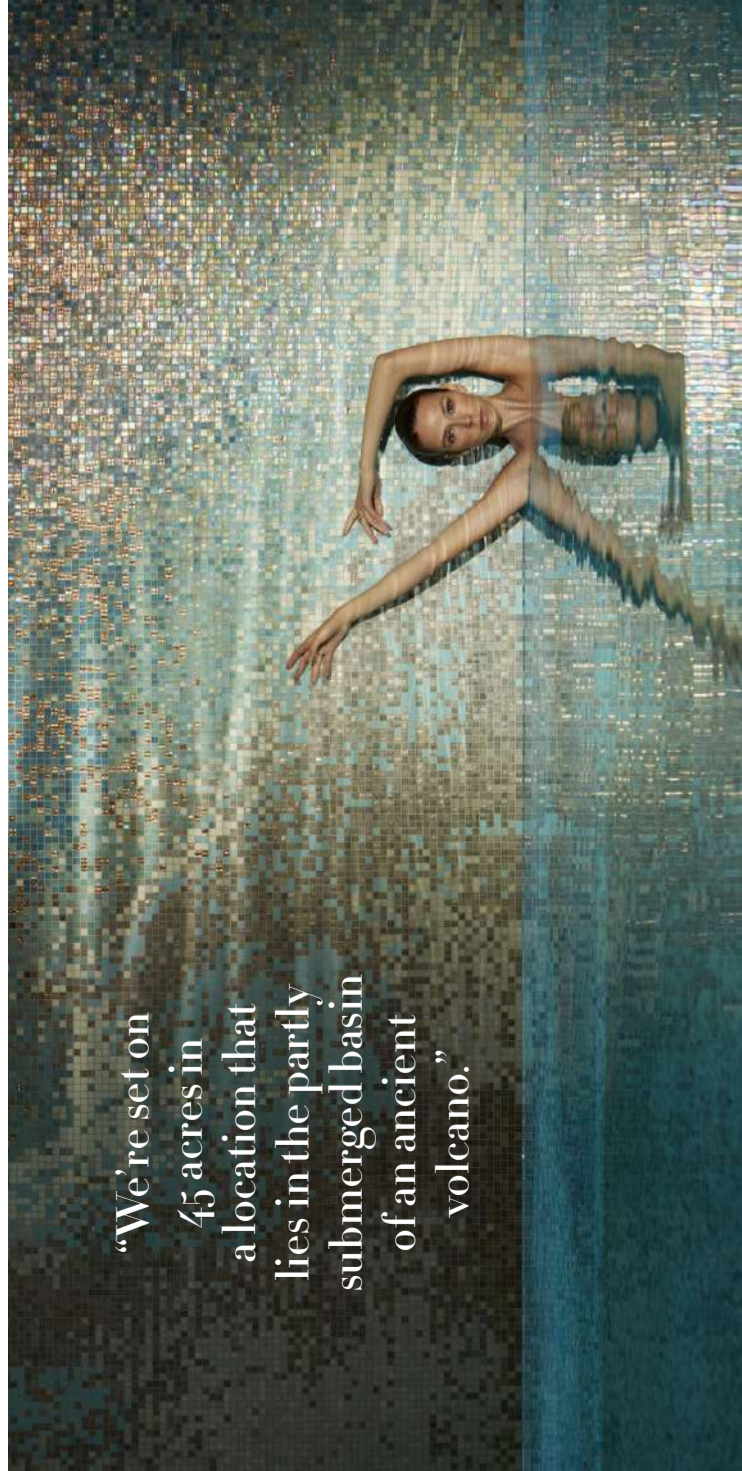
**BYRON BAY**

**H**OW'S THIS for an amazing stress-busting tip: *shirrin yoku*, otherwise known as forest bathing. Apparently, frazzled Tokyo executives swear by it. It sounds a tad out-there, but if you've ever walked through a forest and experienced that blissed-out endorphin rush when you suddenly feel lighter and more energetic, that's it. It's that weird Zen connection many of us get from being immersed in nature — and you're not imagining it. Scientists have studied it. Trees release compounds called phytoncides that are thought to boost your immunity, and it's also been proven the high levels of negative ions in the air pep up your mindset.

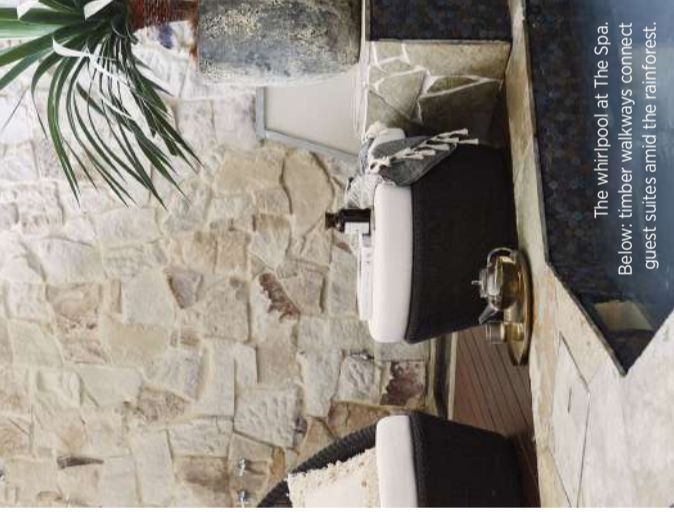
Which brings us to The Byron at Byron Resort & Spa and its latest pre-treatment ritual, which is undoubtedly one of the kookiest I've ever experienced. The lead-up to a conventional spa visit usually rolls like this: obligatory complex questionnaire, which everyone flies through haphazardly, ticking the 'no' boxes at breakneck speed; a herbal tea, left untouched; and perhaps a steam-room stint if you're lucky. But today's precursor to a facial and body scrub turns out to be hugely useful: a slow stroll along two kilometres of rainforest boardwalks out to Suffolk Park's tidal lake that feeds into Tallow Beach. Sitting 500 metres from the surf, the 91 timber suites are camouflaged in the tropical forest so it feels as if you've been plunged into nature. "This area has magical healing powers," my therapist tells me as we tread the boardwalks. "We're set on 45 acres in a location that lies in the partly submerged basin of an ancient volcano. That created the obsidian that many believe gives Byron this unique energising force. It makes sense when you think of how many healers, yogis and people suffering burnout are drawn to this part of the world."

Half an hour later, after a 10-minute guided meditation session en route, we're back to the spa and into today's treatments: a Jindilli Lime Blossom Sugar Scrub, \$95, that leaves my skin baby-soft (Jindilli is a local brand based on the macadamia oil the makers harvest on their farms), followed by a Mukti Mini Facial, \$95. (Mukti is via Maleny in Queensland and is a gorgeous organic brand with serious credentials.) The products are great, but it's the exceptional standard of the therapists that puts The Byron streets ahead of its competitors. Frankly, my facialist's hands work miracles,

"We're set on 45 acres in a location that lies in the partly submerged basin of an ancient volcano."



BRUNO POINSARD/TRUNK ARCHIVE/SNAPPER MEDIA



The whirlpool at The Spa. Below: timber walkways connect guest suites amid the rainforest.



massaging my skin so expertly that my cheekbones emerge and now look as if I've just had *very* expensive plastic surgery. Effective though not aggressive, so I skip out with a dewy, healthy glow and head straight to the pool for a celebratory drink. See, I've just been informed that former Balzac and Banc chef Matt Kemp has signed on as The Byron's executive chef, and that quirky design duo Luchetti Krelle (whose blockbusters include Longrain Tokyo and Sydney's Saké, Momofuku Seiobo and Banksii, in Barangaroo) are revamping the dining areas, meaning a return visit needs to be booked pronto. And toasted, of course. — EK

[thebyronatbyron.com.au](http://thebyronatbyron.com.au)

**A**TELLTALE SIGN you're besotted with the location of your spa jaunt: you start googling houses for sale in the area minutes after you've checked in. I plonk down my towel next to my poolside sun lounger, take in the view over Port Stephens — in the foreground, a marina filled with superyachts; in the distance, Corrie Island — then log on to [realestate.com.au](http://realestate.com.au) and start plotting how to turn this scene into a daily reality.

The Anchorage at Port Stephens has just undergone a super-stylish refurb and I'm hooked. This neck of the woods — 26 beaches in total, give or take a cove — is two and a half hours' drive from Sydney and breathtakingly beautiful, with pockets resembling Hawaii. (Trek up to Tomaree Head lookout and you'll see what we mean.) That said, it's a tourist hotspot, the accommodation a hotchpotch of caravan parks, low-rise holiday apartments and quintessential Aussie beach shacks.

"Hamptons" is a term we all throw around with abandon to describe the popular decorating style associated with the resort towns of Long Island, New York, but there's a reason everyone loves that restrained palette of pale grey, navy, cream and white. It makes stressed-out city slickers feel calm and serene. The



From top: The Anchorage's pool overlooks the marina; the spa; the Body Polish, Wrap & Jet Capsule.

COURTESY OF THE ANCHORAGE HOTEL & SPA

## SPA LUCCA AT THE ANCHORAGE

**PORT STEPHENS**

Anchorage's interiors are Amagansett on steroids, helped no doubt by the fact the accommodation fronts an unspoilt bay and natural dunes, while balconies and chic black-and-white striped umbrellas lend a summery look.

Money has been poured into this place (it was previously a Peppers-branded property pre-refurb), and it shows. Particularly in Spa Lucca, which is set over two floors and boasts four treatment rooms, two of which are couples' suites, and a Vichy shower room.

Robed up, I hit the steam room and heated whirlpool to prep for what I'm road-testing: a Body Polish, Wrap & Spa Jet Capsule Experience (\$235). I'm not a fan of Vichy showers, so feel a tad *melb* about the whole thing until I actually see the 'pod' I'm about to climb inside. This is water therapy on a whole other level. Think various Vichy shower and water massage techniques, vibration massage, steam, infra-red and ceramic dry heat plus LED colour therapy — which, spa manager Danielle Bondini explains, adds an emotional element to the treatment. "LED also has healing benefits for skin," she explains. "The red light deeply penetrates to boost collagen production, while the purple and blue lights work on the surface and are more calming."

The 75-minute treatment starts with a body exfoliation using Sodashi Jojoba Bead Body Polish, followed by a firming French pink-clay body mask that hope-fully reduces a few new stretch marks I've acquired. To enhance the effect of the active ingredients, the steam and infra-heat component kicks in, which, when combined with the shower jets — and the constantly changing coloured lights — is when the magic happens. The light energy takes on a therapeutic aspect when it's in a specific wavelength so your skin cells convert that energy into ATP. In non-scientific speak, this is like filling up the petrol tank of your collagen-making cells.

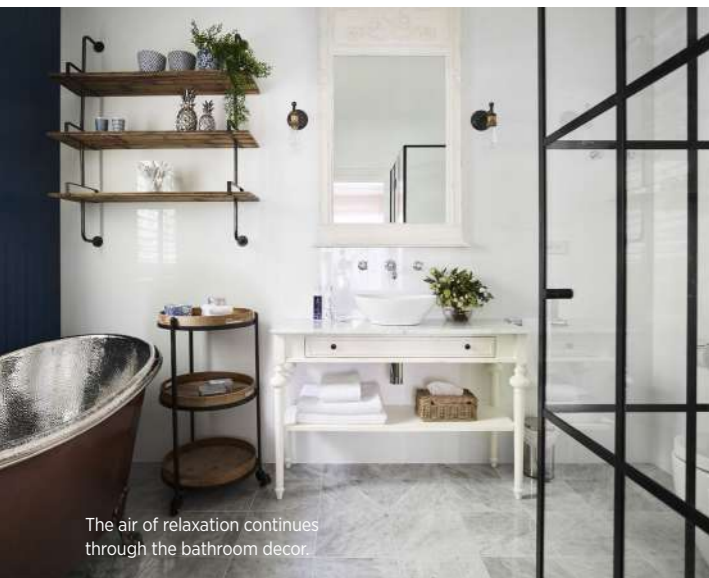
I'm warned things will get hot, but because my face is sectioned off in another area of the pod and has a beautiful cooling breeze focused on it, I'm OK. The only component of the treatment I truly struggle with is the tail end: the bit where you have to sit up and dry off. You know that vacant look newborns get? Guilty. I grab my robe, shuffle back to my room and muster just enough energy to scour the real estate sites for a refresh. Priorities, people. — EK

[anchorageportstephens.com.au/spa](http://anchorageportstephens.com.au/spa)



BELLS  
DAY SPA,  
BELLS AT  
KILLCARE

NEW SOUTH  
WALES  
CENTRAL  
COAST



The air of relaxation continues through the bathroom decor.

**H**ERE'S THE THING ABOUT BELLS. Dog-tired Sydney stressheads have been booking this boutique hotel since 2008, mostly on the reputation of its amazing restaurant. Yes, it's a slice of peace and quiet in a pristine setting, 90 minutes' drive north of Sydney, high on the Bouddi Peninsula, surrounded by national park and immaculate beaches. And, yes, the 25 cottages on site are chocolate-box charming, their classic coastal decor and English-style manicured gardens like something out of a Nancy Meyers movie. But it's been the prospect of leisurely lunches and languorous dinners that have meant Bells books up fast. Not it's spa.

And that's a shame. Maybe because the spa was a later addition, in 2009, it hasn't received the attention it deserves, the restaurant acting like the showy older sister who snares all the attention. Admittedly, the spa is small in size, but what it lacks in square footage it makes up for in expert facialists and a roster of healing masseuses that are a force to be reckoned with.

I've signed up for their signature Kodo massage, \$140 (for 60 minutes), which seems apt as there's a strong Indigenous history related to this Central Coast peninsula. There's no pretence here, and my therapist is super down-to-earth, which I love. She leads me into one of the four treatment rooms, gets me to lie on the oversized massage table and explains that Kodo means melody, so I'm to expect a rhythmic body massage inspired by traditional

Aboriginal techniques that work to bring the body back into balance. I'm smothered in native aromatic oils, then she uses spiralling movements to subtly steamroll knots away, before switching to pressure-point therapy, all to a chilled-out Aboriginal-inspired soundtrack. Also on the treatment menu: desert salt exfoliations, mud body masks, Sapphire Sea Wraps using potent marine extracts and hot rock treatments with stones sourced from the outback continue the Indigenous vibe.

For those serious about skin, you can sign up for all manner of anti-ageing facials, as Bells stocks Aspect, the cosmeceutical line that's great for tackling pigmentation and fine lines. If Australian botanicals are more your thing, it also does a Li'tya facial incorporating macadamia, lilly pillly and lemon myrtle — all miracle workers when it comes to rectifying dehydration, congestion and sensitivities.

Next time, as now I'm off to the restaurant to cap off my extremely lazy day with a fortifying glass of red, some smoked Bangalow pork belly and maybe a little gorgonzola ... and then I'll waddle back to my room and hit the hay. The food has been fabulous, sure, but the spa treatments are the real reason I'll sleep so well tonight. — EK

[bellsatkillcare.com.au/day-spa-retreat.html](http://bellsatkillcare.com.au/day-spa-retreat.html)

BRUNO POINSARD/TRUNK ARCHIVE/SNAPPER MEDIA; COURTESY OF BELLS AT KILLCARE



The spectacular reception area. Below: the female vitality pool.

PERTH  
CROWN SPA AT CROWN TOWERS

**T**OWERING CHOCOLATE FOUNTAINS aren't something beauty writers are often confronted with when undertaking spa-stay reviews, but today we're talking Crown Towers, Perth, where bling is beautiful, big is better and even the breakfast buffet is on a whole other level.

The \$645 million Crown Towers may sit alongside its sister hotels Metropole and Promenade, but it dominates the site fronting the Swan River, and the moment you enter its glass facade and look up at the seven-metre-high ceiling, you know you're in for pure spectacle. Four bespoke chandeliers steal the show, each five metres wide, with 150 lamps and weighing three tonnes, but travertine walls (think a quarry's worth), vertical gardens (indoor frangipani tree, anyone?), pools and columns break up the 150-metre-long corridor. Starchitect Michael Fiebrich finessed the 500 guest rooms, which are decorated in neutral tones and spread over 23 storeys. The focus is on the floor-to-ceiling windows that give you a front-row seat to Perth's city skyline — even from the deep stone bathtub.

Admittedly, we're a tad biased, but the spa, designed by Blainey North and inspired by Roman bathhouses, is Crown Towers' most impressive drawcard (some might argue it's the adjoining casino). Decoratively speaking, there's a lot going on here, but the sheer scale of the thing — 13 treatment rooms, steam rooms seemingly the size of football fields and countless vitality pools — is what strikes you first. Then it's the details, every one of which sends the message: get ready to flex that black Amex.

In reception, you're greeted by the image of an agate by Italian artist Alex Turco, then you move through to corridors hung with commissioned water-themed works by Australian photographers. Wet areas tiled in gold and platinum up the opulence factor, ditto the custom furniture.

As you'd expect, they're serious about their facials here, and the services match the interiors. I'm road-testing the 90-minute La Prairie Platinum

Rare Facial (\$470), which requires two therapists: someone to cleanse, polish and nourish the skin; the other to perform shiatsu, effleurage and massage my hands and feet. In between are heated-towel wraps, foot baths, moisturising masks and La P's famous eye-contour massage. OTT? Maybe. But if you're prepping to hang with the high rollers, complexion perfection is a must.

Because one spa session is never enough at Crown Towers, the next day I'm back for a 90-minute La Prairie Caviar Luxury Body Treatment (\$300), during which I'm exfoliated from top to toe, showered, massaged and Souffléed.

Moisturised to within an inch of my life, I wobble back to the spa lounge, floppy as a baby giraffe, and reflect on what's been a pretty intense relaxation experience. (And I haven't even ventured outside to the gigantic terraced pools and private cabanas yet.) Here in Perth, the long summer days sizzle. The wine lists are epic. And a night out in the casino means a 4am bedtime is highly probable. Crown's spa may be quarantined away from all that craziness, but this is pampering with a capital 'P'. A bedazzled one at that. — EK

[crownperth.com.au](http://crownperth.com.au)



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