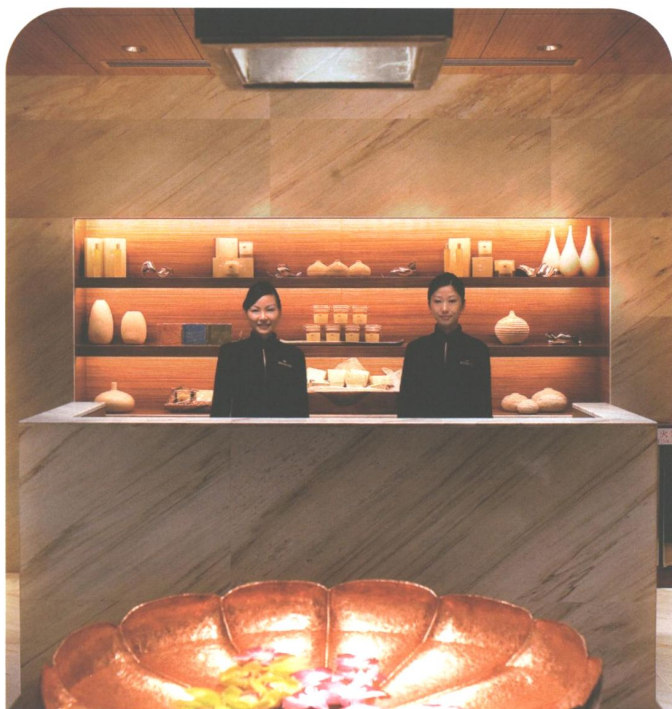


Sit back and relax

For some, a visit to a spa means squeezing two hours into a busy day in-between meetings and rush hours. For others it's time out to enjoy a relaxing retreat that lasts a day or two. The world has many of these havens — some in the world's busiest cities and others on the edges of paradise, far from civilisation. **Daniel Scheffler** visits six of the world's most iconic spas.



The Spa at the Mandarin Oriental, Tokyo

Above the clouds in the city of high rises and chaos, the Mandarin Oriental Spa offers a glimpse into some kind of heaven. Combining ancient and contemporary techniques, 37 floors up in the sky, the spa's main focus is on rejuvenation. One of their most popular treatments is the deep-cleansing ritual that combines the anti-oxidising effects of azuki beans with sea salt, sesame seeds, patchouli, vetiver, ginger and geranium. This is followed by a relaxing oil massage that leaves the body moisturised, nourished and — best of all — balanced.

The spa suites are designed for privacy and are referred to as private havens. And it comes complete with beds, steam showers and fantastic views of Mount Fuji in the distance. Bliss.

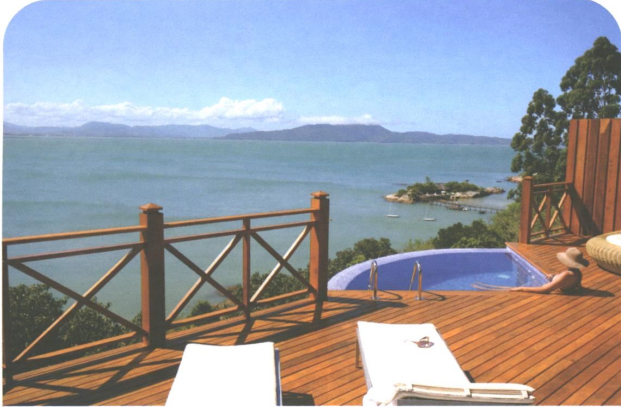
mandarinoriental.com



ESPA Life at Corinthia, London

ESPA Life, located at the beautiful Corinthia Hotel in the world's most popular capital, has infused wellness programmes with alternative medicine and fitness into holistic lifestyle options. Their belief that the spa and medical worlds need to hold hands is what inspired this relatively new approach. For example, the anti-ageing facials and 'Rush Hour Beauty' have been specifically formulated for a quick pop in when time is scarce, and can be combined with a jog or some ski rope. The inner city spa, designed by GA Design, serves as the perfect hideaway from the outside world — cocoons, individual pods and fireplaces offer the opportunity for deep relaxation before getting back to the bustle of the city.

corinthia.com



Ponta dos Ganchos Spa, Brazil

Tucked away in the southern part of Brazil, the Ponta dos Ganchos Spa is a true sanctuary. The secluded stretch of beach, fringed by rainforests and tropical flora, is the setting for this wellness centre. The spa sets up tents on the edge of the ocean, for guests to enjoy views of sunsets, islets and the bay. It is the perfect setting for the spa's signature massage, a treatment using hot cinnamon oil and herbal poultices that provides for complete relaxation.

pontadosganchos.com.br



Singita Lebombo Spa, South Africa

The award-winning lodge and spa takes its love for Africa and all things local very seriously. The Ndzi Lorhe Africa Signature treatment includes a full body exfoliation followed by a soothing body wrap and is finished with an Inkaba balancing full body massage. Monkey oranges, which harden when dried, are used on pressure points to aid the massage. Located within the Kruger Park's most exclusive lodge, Singita, the surrounding bush and contemporary decor by design house Cecile & Boyd's amplifies the luxurious experience. singita.com



Ayasofya Hurrem Sultan Hamam, Istanbul

After a major renovation, the oldest hamam in the city, Ayasofya, has reopened with its tradition perfectly unscathed but with the modern touches expected from a spa. The Ayasofya Hamam in the old city was built in 1556 at the request of the sultan's wife Roxelana and is situated between the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia.

With full body treatments that include steaming, bathing, scrubbing, massaging and a bubble treatment, the hamam honours old traditions and rituals. White marble from 400 years ago, traditional gold beakers and bowls scattered around the hamam, and small skylights letting in the sunlight like tiny stars, all amplify the ancient rites.

ayasofyahamami.com



The Shibui Spa at Greenwich Hotel, New York

This Manhattan hotel and spa, owned by actor Robert De Niro, has the ability to completely shut you out of the world's 24-hour city. Finding serenity and calm as you sink below the streets in Shibui is remarkably easy. The spa's latest offering includes a lymphatic drainage massage that stimulates and increases lymph circulation, as well as clearing blockages within lymph nodes and vessels throughout the whole body. In terms of signature treatments, the spa offers the Drunken Lotus, where sake-soaked cloths and a massage are in order. Designed with low intimate lighting, woody browns and aqua blue-greens, the Shibui Spa feels just like the Japanese haven that it is.

thegreenwichhotel.com