



Ten of the Best: Luxury Spas

by Harriet Whiting



Looking for bliss? Then prepare to be pampered. From island escapes to jungle hideaways, seaside idylls to desert oases, here are ten of the most luxurious destination spas on earth. In no particular order.



01 The Brando resort – once owned by Marlon himself – is as near to paradise as you can get. A ravishing French Polynesian island ringed by blindingly-white sand and dotted with leaning coconut trees, is cocooned within by a crystal clear lagoon bejewelled with brightly-coloured coral gardens. You'll find utter tranquility in the nature here, with regulars in the turquoise sea including turtles, whales and dolphins. Bike the sandy tracks to the Varua spa, located in the heart of the jungle. Up in the canopy you can take a treatment in the treehouse suite, where a strong Polynesian-style massage will loosen knots to the sound of lapping waves.

Varua Polynesian Spa
The Brando
 French Polynesia



02 This destination spa just keeps getting better and better. Devotees return religiously and it recently won a bevy of awards to add to its bulging cabinet. So what makes Chiva-Som such a superstar spa? Some say it's the delectable food, always low fat but packing a punch with zingy Asian herbs and sauces. Others swear by the army of Chiva-Som therapists who are on hand to offer everything from reiki healing and Pranayama breathing to interval training. While others still cite the discreet and hushed atmosphere, attracting privacy-seeking celebs and burnt-out businessmen. You will leave recharged, energised and several pounds lighter.

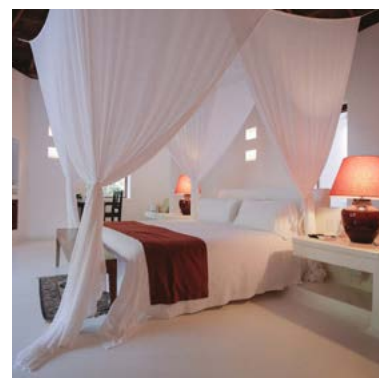
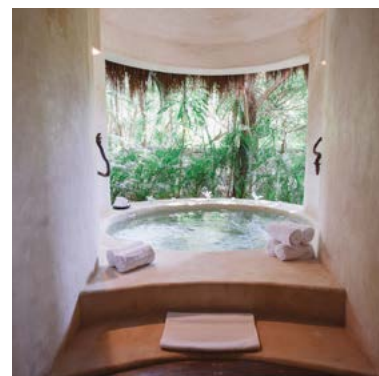
Chiva-Som
Hua Hin / Cha-am
Thailand





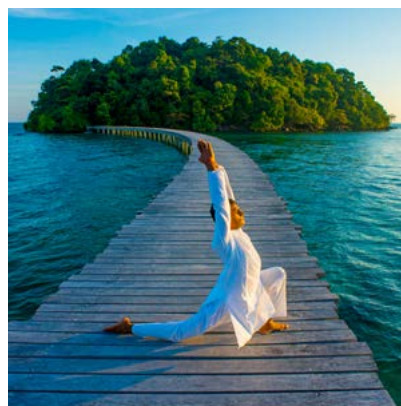
03 The stunning private beach at Esencia is a slice of perfection. Couples lounge in thatched huts and sink their feet in baby-soft sand while palm trees bend obligingly. Esencia's white stucco house, once the residence of an Italian duchess, forms a lofty and grand backdrop. In the jungly garden, tucked in amongst the foliage, is the airy Mayan spa, a circular building topped with dried palm leaves. Here the breeze circulates around the made-for-two Jacuzzis, each looking out onto the tropical spa garden. Massages and facials make use of organic and chemical-free ingredients including rose petals and fresh herbs. There's a fitness room and juice bar too, while yoga bunnies can get up at dawn for classes at the beachside pavilion.

The Spa Esencia
Mexico



04 This is not just one picture perfect tropical island but two, joined together by a boardwalk that hovers over aquamarine water. Both have bags of rustic charm, with driftwood décor, polished wooden floors and sea view bathtubs. This is a get-away-from-it-all experience where you can tap into the verdant nature all around. Snorkel off a deserted beach, meditate in the jungle or tune into your chakras by the sea shore. Wellness retreats are recommended for those seeking big results; highlights include the stillness bath ritual and rainforest facial.

Song Saa Sanctuary,
Cambodia





05 The otherworldly landscape of Zighy Bay means letting go and relaxing is easy. The hotel is surrounded on three sides by the dramatic peaks, rust-red ridges and never-ending desert of the Hajar Mountains. On the other side, it faces a sublime white-sand beach with sparkling sea. The Six Senses Spa is a showstopper, offering a large range of holistic treatments from acupuncture to Ayurveda, all overseen by your own personal practitioner. You can even experience a Moroccan hammam. Post-treatment, kick back in your suite with private plunge pool, or grab a bean bag dotted among the date palms for the open-air evening movie club.



Six Senses
Zighy Bay
Oman



06 This superb hotel is the place to stay in Thailand's capital, providing a cool sanctuary from the sensory overload of the capital's hectic streets. Inside you will find a calm and classic atmosphere with stylish use of teak, silk and exotic Thai fabrics. The crowing glory of this luxurious hotel is the Oriental Spa, housed in a traditional four-storey building made from gleaming teak. It's a place of extreme zen and peace: a soothing lily pond runs through the centre and therapists pad quietly around ferrying relaxed guests from room to room. Try a Rhassoul Bath, the first of its kind in Thailand, for a rejuvenating uplift to your wellbeing.

The Oriental Spa
Mandarin Oriental
Bangkok



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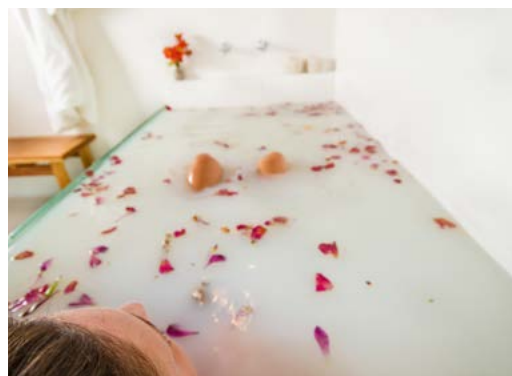
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07 Arriving by helicopter is always a great start to any trip, but as your chopper disappears over the Mantiqueira Mountains, you'll be left with a calm sense of peace at this slick yet homely Brazilian hotel. Huge glass windows frame views of the sub-tropical forest whilst interiors are made of rugged stone, polished steel and varnished wooden floors. In the spa, you will find niche treatments such as the isotonic pool, tropical rain sauna and saltwater flotation tank. Guests are encouraged to make the most of the clean mountain air so horse riding trips, tennis and hiking are part of the wellbeing agenda.

Botanique Spa
Botanique, Brazil



08 Expect results at Como Shambhala, the grande dame of spa hotels. Initial consultations will direct you to the resident doctor, healer and masseur via some of Indonesia's spectacular scenery. The expansive jungle is backed by bright green paddy fields; descend the moss-covered steps by the crashing Agung River and you'll discover freshwater pools and open-sided treatment rooms. The spa is built around nature, with palm trees entwined through the structure. Try a Taksu massage, a Balinese treatment that focuses on long deep strokes. Afterwards, make time for the submerged hydrotherapy loungers in the mineral spa pool.

Wellness Retreat
Como Shambhala
Bali





09 One of the most indulgent and pampering spas in the world, this is located on its very own tropical island; a perfectly formed islet of fine sand offering breezy treatment rooms nestled between coconut trees. Getting here is a quick Dhoni ride from the resort on a neighbouring island. It might just have the finest spa cuisine in the world too, with the likes of lobster salad and carpaccio of beef served up daily. Treat yourself to a spoiling Guerlain facial then laze in a hammock and commit the sensational views to memory – you won't want to forget them.



Cheval Blanc Randheli
Maldives

10 You can't fail to feel the love at this award-winning destination spa. The rural location is tinged with raw beauty: oak forests scattered with granite boulders, hemmed in by orange-tinted mountains. It's a family-run place so you'll find smiley staff offering extra-mile service. There's a sociable, communal vibe for classes and meals but equally you can take me-time in a hammock or bubbly hot tub. A highlight is the emphasis on learning through cookery, tours of nature and evening speakers, so you'll leave La Rancho feeling empowered and inspired.

Rancho La Puerta
California

