



Pamper yourself at Europe's top spas

Where spa-goers spend big bucks for youth-regenerating treatments

By Lauren Sherman

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The ancient Romans valued bathhouses for their healing properties but also used them as a place to conduct daily business. Today's European spas, however, are all about providing a fountain of youth—which is big business.

Whether it's \$500 Botox injections on their lunch break or a 90-minute, \$90 alpha-hydroxy facial on a Saturday afternoon, spa-goers are willing to pay up for the promise of smoother skin, finer lines and a lithe appearance.

"Anti-aging treatments—medical or not—are a fast-growing segment of European spa treatments," says Ada Polla Tray, co-creator of the cosmetics line Alchimie Forever. Tray's parents opened one of the first medi-spas in Switzerland.

They were on to something. European spa revenues reached \$18.4 billion from 47.9 million visits in 2007, according to SpaFinder, a worldwide online listing of spas.

Spots like Terme di Saturnia Spa and Golf Resort in Saturnia, Italy, where preserving youth is at the center of this spa's philosophy, have benefited from this boom. Each guest is given a biological age evaluation in which a team of experts looks at everything from health history, general spirits and stress levels to memory, skin, body composition and flexibility.

After the extensive once-over, a set of treatments tailored to the individual's physical needs are performed. These can include something as simple as microdermabrasion (a procedure that exfoliates the skin with a diamond-based scrub), which costs anywhere from \$75 to \$200 depending on the extent of the treatment, to Restylane injections on the forehead to remove crow's feet, which rings in at \$300 or more.

For those looking to smooth cellulite, reduce the appearance of spider veins or give their legs an overall firmer look, Juliet Kinsman, editor-in-chief of Mr. and Mrs. Smith travel guides, recommends Capri Palace's Beauty Farm, in Capri, Italy, for its Leg School—a set of treatments focused entirely on leg beauty and health.

"This spa is not only super-chic but fantastically clinical in its results," says Kinsman. "This is the place to tackle cellulite, and celebrities flock to this exclusive Italian retreat to prepare for high-profile, red-carpet moments."

Therapies include medicated mud to help firm, smooth and decongest skin, as well as Kneipp vascular treatment, which involves immersing legs in water that contains vegetable, mineral and marine extracts to help improve circulation. And, if nothing else, Kinsman says the spa's atmosphere is especially pleasing. From the stone floors and travertine baths to the gorgeous views overlooking the Bay of Naples, the property epitomizes elegance. Four-day spa packages—not including accommodation—start at \$320.

Do you partake in youth-restoration spa treatments? Do they work? Share your experiences in the Reader Comments section below.

If you're not exactly sure what types of treatments you want to undergo, Tray suggests a trip to Cinq Mondes Spa at Beau Rivage Palace in Lausanne, Switzerland. Cinq Mondes' spa menu is extensive, but focuses more on the

high end as opposed to a something-for-everyone approach. Anti-aging treatments are emphasized, but all have an Asian spin.

Guests' choices range from a Japanese flower bath to Chinese Taoist ritual to Ayurvedic massage. The Youthfulness Ko Bi Do ritual focuses on the eyes, forehead and lips, using the ancestral Japanese ritual Ko Bi Do—which combines acupressure and massage—to help "lift" the face, while the regenerating body wrap promises to smooth skin with plant oils.

Just how effective these treatments are depends on who you ask, or even how frequently they're performed. Nevertheless, the relaxation and pampering each spa provides is, to many, worth the price alone.

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