

What can a spa treatment offer? Luxury hotels and wellness retreats across India offer not just skincare and hair treatments but a shot at overall well-being.

■ BY SOHINI DEY



Image courtesy The Spa, Palladium Hotel



Image courtesy The Leela Palace Chennai

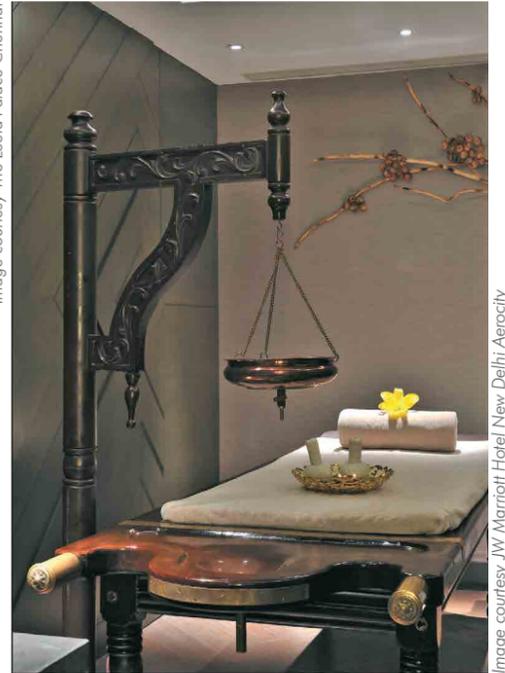


Image courtesy JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity

Feast for the Senses

A spa treatment is an ultimate indulgence—but it's also incredibly beneficial. While infusing your skin and hair with new life thanks to a sleuth of superior brands and organic ingredients, spa treatments also work in-depth to heal the body of specific disorders. Whether you're afflicted by stress, tired muscles or dry skin, there's a suitable spa treatment for everyone. Little wonder, then, that spa treatments are an ultimate experience in luxury and a must-have fixture on the services of luxury hotels and wellness vacations.

SKIN-DEEP LUXURY

Every luxury hotel worth its salt also houses a quality spa in its premises, which becomes an intrinsic part of the services. A holiday is the perfect time for a spa therapy—the leisurely pace allows for elaborate treatments to soak into your skin, body and hair so that you can emerge from your vacation refreshed. While a skilled therapist, a serene ambience, and quality products and ingredients are common features, each spa brand has signature services that it is known for.

Previous page: The Spa at the Palladium Hotel.

Above: Indulging in the Rose Princess Facial at The Leela Palace Chennai.

Right: The nature-inspired interiors of the Quan Spa, JW Marriott Hotel New Delhi Aerocity.

AS WELLNESS VACATIONS BECOME POPULAR, A PLETHORA OF PROPERTIES ACROSS INDIA OFFER A MIX OF AYURVEDIC TREATMENTS, BEAUTY REGIMENS AND INTENSIVE YOGA PRACTICES IN THEIR PACKAGES.

JW Marriott's award-winning Quan spas—which are found at its properties in Mumbai, Pune, Goa, and more recently at the JW Marriott New Delhi Aerocity—are known for their extensive menu of services. The crowning jewel is the Ultimate Aromatherapy Experience, a treatment combining pressure to stimulate the nervous system, Swedish and neuromuscular techniques, and lymphatic drainage that is so relaxing that you're left with a buttery feeling for hours. If the treatment catches your fancy, your therapist can give you an aromatherapy facial. You can also wrap up with a Bespoke Skin Polish that will leave your skin smooth and scrubbed clean of dead skin.

Spas at The Leela Hotels have been designed by the renowned British spa and beauty brand Espa. At The Leela Palace Chennai, the spa's USP is its thermal suites, featuring vitality pools with lounge beds and body jets, steam rooms, saunas, and rain showers for an extensive hydrotherapy experience. Highly recommended (among several others) are the Balinese massage, with warm aromatherapy oils and hot volcanic stones for relaxation, and the Rose Princess Facial, which uses cooling rose quartz crystals to improve micro circulation and leave the skin smooth and beautiful.

The Taj Group's acclaimed Jiva Spas draw from traditions of Indian royalty and time-honoured

spiritual healing to devise treatments such as the Alepa (body anointing); scrubs and wraps using spices, plantain leaves, coconuts and herbs; and a Pehlwan Malish (wrestler's massage). The Spa at the Palladium Hotel in Mumbai has incorporated ancient Indian healing techniques in treatments like the Aroma Nodal Tissue Massage that aids lymphatic drainage and muscular detoxification. Its proximity to offices and the plush High Street Phoenix mall makes the spa's range of 30-minute express treatments ideal for shoppers and busy professionals.

ESSENTIAL RETREATS

Even as luxury hotels offer spa treatments for guests on vacations as well as day visitors, a plethora of properties are emerging across India whose primary emphasis is wellness. As wellness vacations become popular, these retreats offer a mix of Ayurvedic treatments, beauty regimens and intensive yoga practices in their packages. Among the most well-known is Ananda in the Himalayas. Ayurveda is at its core, as the birthplace of Ayurveda was in the Himalayan foothills, and so, the kind of Ayurveda therapies offered at Ananda are authentic and traditional. Through extensive research, specific solutions to several chronic lifestyle issues—ranging from weight management, diabetes and cholesterol



Image courtesy Ananda in the Himalayas



Image courtesy Shreyas Yoga Retreat



Image courtesy The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa/Spa L'OCCITANE

ONE SHOULD TRY THE FIVE-NIGHT AYURVEDA SKINCARE REGIMEN, WHICH INCLUDES MILK BATHS, OIL MASSAGES, AND THE SIGNATURE EXFOLIATING GHARSHANAM EXPERIENCE.

to insomnia and other disorders—have been found. This is the USP of Ananda; the reason why people come here for rejuvenation and cures from across the world.

A number of boutique resorts are also concentrated on Ayurvedic principles and yoga. Bengaluru's Shreyas Yoga Retreat is a high-quality, intimate set-up that personalises the experience of each guest. Yoga is an integral aspect; all the therapists practise yoga, and with the arrival of guests, individual needs are understood and bespoke itineraries created, showing guests how to integrate yoga into their daily lives. Personalised treatments and yoga are also the highlight of the atmospheric Niraamaya Retreats. The properties are sanctuaries for rejuvenation, as the effects of Ayurvedic

treatments and yoga are heightened in the idyllic weather conditions and pristine air. It is here that one should try the five-night Ayurveda skincare regimen, which includes milk baths, oil massages, and the signature exfoliating Gharshanam experience.

BEAUTY EXTENSIONS

While a number of spas use organic ingredients in their therapies, others are associated with beauty brands that are also available in stores and for spa goers to use at home. The brilliance of such collaborations is that while one can reap the double benefits of quality products and service during the spa experience, many of the products are also available for purchase to extend the efficiency and longevity of the treatments at home.



Image courtesy Kama Ayurveda

L'Occitane, a brand inspired by the beauty traditions and ingredients of the French Provence, is also known for its Mediterranean-themed spas. Currently found in over a dozen countries worldwide, the first L'Occitane spas were launched in India in 2010, incorporating Indian elements in interior spaces like the Ayurveda room or in the actual treatments by using local ingredients. Their signature treatments such as the Aromachologie Massage, which combines Swedish effleurage strokes with Chinese acupressure and Balinese techniques; the Verdon signature facial for men; and the anti-ageing Immortelle facials are available in hotels such as The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa and JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa, as well as day spas like Mumbai's Spa La Vie, which also houses the brand's only hammam in India.



Image courtesy JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa

DID YOU KNOW?

The word 'spa' is believed to originate from the Latin phrase 'salus per aquae', meaning 'health through water'. It is also possible that the word refers to the Belgian town of Spa, known since Roman times for its baths.

Clockwise from above:

At Ananda in the Himalayas, as part of the Shirodhara experience, lukewarm herbal oil is poured in an even stream on to the forehead to pacify and revitalise the mind and body. In addition to its intense rejuvenating and anti-ageing effects, this improves memory, addresses neurological disorders, and normalises sleep patterns and blood pressure.

A yoga session underway at the Shreyas Yoga Retreat.

The beautiful environs of Spa Niraamaya.



Image courtesy Niraamaya Retreats

Clockwise from above:

Kumkumadi Miraculous Beauty Fluid—the recommended bestseller at Kama Ayurveda.

Spa la Vie by L'OCCITANE at Mumbai.

Foot ritual at The Khyber Himalayan Resort & Spa by L'OCCITANE, Gulmarg.

Cedar Spa by L'OCCITANE, JW Marriott Mussoorie Walnut Grove Resort & Spa.

Kama Ayurveda is among the growing number of Indian beauty brands that cater to high-end spas around the country—including spas of the Trident and Oberoi Group hotels. The brand supplies a range of specialised spa products, mainly massage oils. Their recommended bestseller is the Kumkumadi Miraculous Beauty Fluid that is used in luxurious facial massages. Available for professional and personal use, one can easily incorporate the products in a regular beauty regimen. The spa also sells a luxury home spa box at stores, consisting of body ubtan, Jawalini oil, heal soap, candle and essential oil. Similarly, an Ayurvedic facial kit comprising mridul, lavanya and rose water makes for a luxe home-made face mask. Other Indian brands

that are making their presence felt as luxurious spa brands as well include those like Iraya and Forest Essentials.

Wellness vacations and a focus on inner well-being is increasingly becoming the mantra of modern living. Today, spa treatments draw from a variety of healing traditions and beauty regimes to create therapies that offer recovery from an incredible range of afflictions. The icing on the cake? A great spa treatment always leaves you feeling great.