

Spas: Four Regional Spa Treatments To Savor While Traveling

BY SHIRA LEVINE, THURSDAY AUG. 27, 2009

TRAVEL, WELLNESS, SPAS

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It's been too long since I paid someone to touch me. I'm having a dry spell: It's been an entire month since my last spa treatment. Whether or not you indulge in therapeutic bodywork on your home turf is your business. When traveling, however, consider the added benefits of regional and signature specialties: Massages, facials or scrubs incorporating local ingredients, traditions and philosophies. A Lomi-Lomi style massage in Hawaii (where the technique originated) somehow benefits from credibility and enhances the experience. While

it's not a requisite to know your hot stone from your Shiatsu, it does the body good to familiarize yourself with a spa menu the same way you would a three-star Michelin restaurant. Below, four very different spa experiences from four far-flung destinations:

[Cavas Wine Lodge](#), Mendoza, Argentina



A "signature spa treatment" often consists of nothing more than a traditional Swedish massage using a mysteriously-named essential oil, and tacking on an extra \$50. Such is not the case at the [Cavas Wine Lodge](#) in Mendoza, Argentina, the spa literally uses the fruits of their own vinified labor in treatments: The Cavas spa incorporates Bonardo and Malbec grape extracts (some from vines grown on site) into a luxurious four-step session lasting two and half hours. Just like the first sip of a glass of wine, Cavas's wine spa session (available for couples also) seduces upon first dip into an actual vintage tub enhanced with the bonardo extract. Excellent massage and body scrub aside (and *wine glass down*), the Red Wine Soak was the most unique and memorable detail of the treatment. I have yet to find its equal: My skin was soft, with a

nice buzz. You'll also find wine flights to sample during your session. Just don't drink out of the tub. [[Cavas Wine Lodge](#)]

[Ritz-Carlton](#), New Orleans



A getaway to New Orleans can be a bacchanalian workout. Drinking Sazeracs, scarfing jambalaya and jiving to late-night jazz in the French Quarter will leave the body feeling pretty toxic the next day. At the Ritz-Carlton New Orleans spa, experienced massage therapists are well-equipped for healing, even a hangover. The Marie Laveau Voodoo Love Massage was a nearly perfect antidote. Using a "special potion lotion," supposedly created by the most powerful Voodoo queen in the world, the deep tissue massage rejuvenated me with truly magical results. I generally feel languid following a treatment, but a little Voodoo Love left me alert, ready

to hit Frenchman Street for another late night. While the Voodoo *is* lovely, the ultimate in indulgence is a Four-Handed massage. The Ritz-Carlton isn't the only spa offering a four-hand (two massage specialists) treatment, but it definitely ranks as one of the best. Experiencing what the Ritz-Carlton describes as a "symphony of synchronized movements" might just be the secret to complete and total bliss for both women and men. [[Ritz Carlton](#)]

Cemberlitas, Istanbul, Turkey



You really can't talk spa treatments without including the historic hamams of Turkey. Men and women have been sweating out toxins in these steamy bathhouses for thousands of years. Today, most hotels and resorts in Istanbul offer some stylized form of the hamami: From steam rooms or cabanas in a [Kempinski](#) or [W Hotel](#) property to in-room amenities like hammered metal washing bowls, exfoliation gloves and lavender- or rose-infused soap-on-a-ropes. While visiting cosmopolitan Istanbul, I wanted to sample old-school, authentic pampering. Instead of hitting up the [Fours Seasons Bosphorus Luxe version](#), I went for the 400-year-old Cemberlitas, the hamam of choice among locals and tourists alike. I opted for the scrub and a rub costing just under \$60.

The best way for we seemingly modest Americans to fully enjoy this off-the-cuff, in-the-buff treatment is to take a "when in Rome" approach. That means disrobing with the masses (generally of the same sex), and undergoing a *very* thorough body scrubbing by a matronly woman in a massive Maidenform bra if you're a woman, or a swarthy man if you're a guy. Focus on the exotic nature of your treatment and the result is pleasingly relaxing (and excellent for body self-image). A hamam experience may not meet Western concepts of decadence, yet there is something primal and comforting in turning yourself over to a sweaty, zaftig Turk for exfoliation—You have no idea how much dead skin one can have until being brushed and scraped clean by these pros—followed by a refreshing, foamy Swedish massage. Two hours at Cemberlitas was just what I needed to forget my late-night soiree and get the blood flowing freely. [[Cemberlitas](#)] and [[hamam.com](#)]

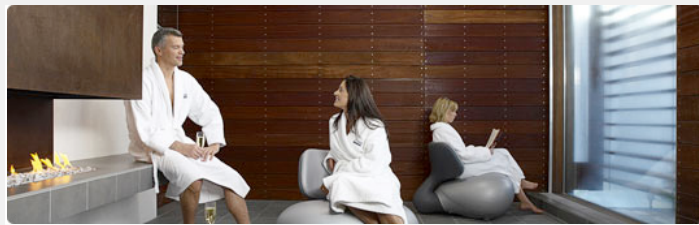
Laguar Spa and Blue Lagoon, Reykjavik, Iceland.



Any place that employs retinal-scan security technology is already pretty epic. That's how you navigate around Iceland's exclusive, Bond-esque Laguar Spa. From the outdoor geothermal hot pots to the indoor amenity rooms and scented steam rooms, the spa is an exercise in oohs and ahhs. I loved the concept of a quiet room with comfy recliners and a wood-burning fireplace and, well, quiet. Curious procedures—a restorative hydramemory facial or the "Chrono-Reverser," which apparently is ideal for cellular regeneration—are crave-worthy reminders that feeling good is good

for you. [[Laugar Spa](#)]

To date, the most otherworldly spa treatment I've experienced was en route to and from the Keflavik airport in Iceland. The destination is the medically healing [Blue Lagoon](#). Experts say the unique ecosystem and natural geothermal waters at the healing-focused Blue Lagoon, makes for measurably awesome results (we're talking baby-tuchus smooth). Massage therapists go native, using indigenous materials, like minerals, silica and algae, to treat clients in the brisk open air. An icy breeze juxtaposed against the warm lagoon waters is indeed invigorating. I loved my in-water massage, reclining on a floating mattress wrapped snugly in blankets was like returning to the womb, minus the trauma. This kind of mollycoddling reaffirms that we can never be spoiled too much.



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August 28, 2009 Love the Blue Lagoon!!



psr
August 29, 2009 You left out \$20 message in China Town!



Nikki
August 30, 2009 Cavas Wine Lodge sounds amazing... thanks for the info!



Sue Rhodes
August 30, 2009 Sounds completely relaxing--thanks for the info!



jojo
August 31, 2009 Shira, I'm so jealous of your life!

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Daddy
August 31, 2009 Shira, a great info piece of work; especially the baths in Istanbul, Turkey. I didn't experience them, but now I think I'd like to try them.



Suzette Mehler
October 01, 2009 I'm ready to book my flight(s), but alas, I can't for the moment (the Euro exchange rate is outrageous). So I'm depending on you, Shira, to live it and report back to me. Plus, your wit and experiences have warranted a second reading.



Nivetha
November 02, 2009 Very good tips... Really it works well



David
November 02, 2009 I Love Such tips