

Updated December 4, 2025 · The Journal / Travel Inspiration

Insider's Guide to Destination Spas

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Image courtesy of One&Only Portonovi

Destination spas offer a full-immersion approach to rest that feels intentional from the moment you arrive. Days unfold around expert-led treatments, thermal circuits, movement

classes, and tailored wellness programs shaped by local traditions. In Europe, that might mean mineral-rich baths in Germany or Alpine hydrotherapy in Switzerland. In Asia, you'll see centuries-old healing philosophies woven into Thai massage, Ayurveda in India, or forest-focused rituals in Japan. Across Mexico, Costa Rica, and the United States, modern techniques are paired with natural settings that are quiet but expansive.

Expect thoughtful nutrition programs, restorative therapies, and plenty of space to reset both physically and mentally. It's a style of travel designed for depth, not speed, and each destination brings its own unique character to the experience.

Need to know



Image courtesy of The Retreat Costa Rica

Destination spas are each shaped by their own philosophy and wellbeing approach. Some specialize in mindful movement and yoga, others in advanced medical therapies, nutrition plans, or spiritual renewal. Whether you want structured programs or a simple restorative escape, there are many to choose from that will align with your personal goals.

Key features: Aside from spa treatments like massages, body wraps, and facials, destination spas offer holistic, integrative approaches and programs.

- **Location:** From mountain ridges to oceanfront cliffs, or serene gardens, a calming backdrop encourages rest, reflection, and deeper connection.
- **Wellness programs:** Ranging from detox plans to stress management, or weight loss guidance, tailored programs anchor these experiences to support long-term wellbeing.
- **Fitness:** Daily movement takes the shape of yoga, fully-equipped gyms, and one-on-one training sessions to build strength, flexibility, and overall vitality.
- **Healthy food:** Thoughtful nutrition is woven into the stay to support energy, balance, and whole-body health. Be aware that some may have set menus and limit alcohol.
- **Mindfulness:** Quiet practices are central, with meditation, breathwork, and mindful rituals that bring clarity, emotional ease, and a restorative sense of presence.
- **Sustainability:** Many properties prioritize eco-responsibility by using organic products, energy-efficient systems, and supporting conservation efforts that protect nature.

Best time to visit: Timing depends on the setting and desired experience. Many spas shine in warm, clear weather when outdoor pools, nature trails, and open-air rituals are accessible. In seasonal destinations, some experiences may pause during colder months or stormy months.

Ideal length of stay: Most travelers settle into the rhythm of a destination spa's programs and treatments with a three to seven day visit. Some programs offer pre-determined lengths and fixed dates, so check availability if you're planning a more structured escape.

What to pack and wear: Expect a relaxed, low-key atmosphere where comfort is essential. Most spas provide robes, slippers, towels, and gear like yoga mats. Bring loose, breathable clothing for classes, swimsuits for pools and thermal areas, as well as comfortable sneakers for daily movement. Remember to pack a reusable water bottle and, if hiking is part of your stay, proper shoes or boots. Many places prefer minimal makeup, no fragrance, and may have simple dress guidelines, so be sure to review your resort's recommendations before you leave home.

Travel tips:

- **Pricing:** Some destinations and programs operate under an all-inclusive pricing model, whereas certain high-end treatments or private consultations might incur additional fees. Review the list of inclusions carefully to maximize your stay.
- **Digital detox:** Some enforce no-phone zones or complete unplugged stays; violating this can result in fines or being asked to leave communal spaces.
- **Gratuities:** In some countries, tipping spa staff is expected while in others it's included or even discouraged. Check with your destination spa in advance.
- **Hair:** Steam rooms and hydrotherapy can ruin blowouts or impact certain hair types. Plan to embrace natural hair and plan any salon time at the end of a stay.
- **Advanced bookings:** Specialty treatments, private sessions, and group classes often book out quickly, especially during peak seasons.

Europe

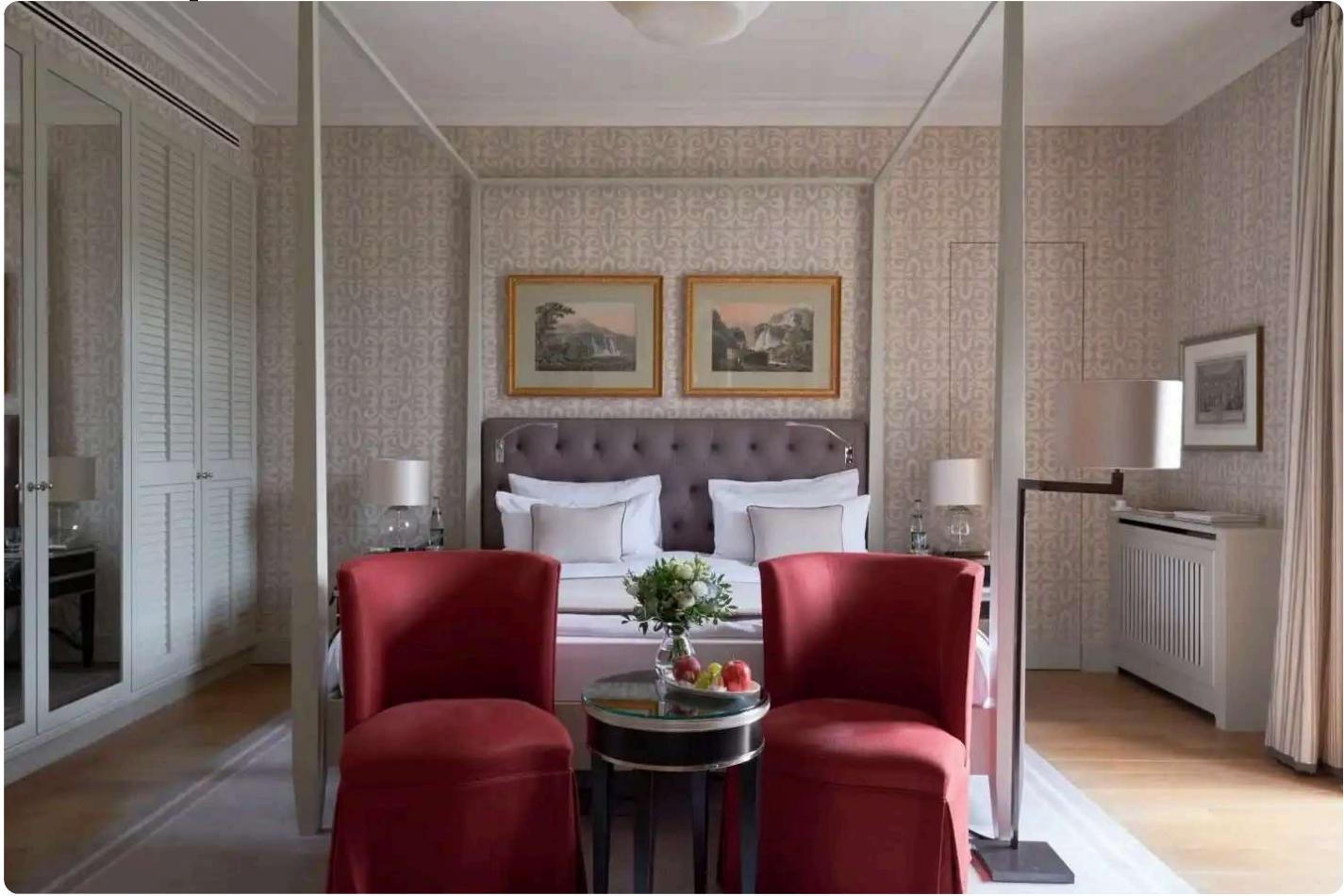


Image courtesy of Brenners Park - Hotel & Spa, Oetker Hotels

Centuries-old spa towns and natural thermal springs make Europe a destination for healing, rest, and renewal. Expect country-specific differences, like textile-free saunas in places like

Germany, Switzerland, and parts of Scandinavia.

In Italy's Dolomites, alpine air and pristine forests are the backdrop for holistic healing. The Adriatic's calm waters inspire thermal treatments and marine therapies. On Spain's Mediterranean coast, sunlight and sea breezes come together in restorative ways. Germany's Bavarian Alps blends spa culture with intellectual retreat, including mineral springs and forest trails that pair with music and literature. Portugal's Douro Valley brings spa rituals infused with regional wine traditions.

Where to stay

Forestis Dolomites (Italy): A serene sanctuary high in the Dolomites, where minimalist design meets alpine majesty. Floor-to-ceiling windows, holistic wellness programs, and locally inspired cuisine reflect a deep connection to nature.

- **Fora's withIN by SLH** partner perks include a hotel credit up to \$100, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

One&Only Portonovi (Montenegro): Sleek Adriatic escape combining coastal glamour with world-class wellness. The Chenot Espace spa blends Swiss medical expertise with holistic treatments, including diagnostics, detox programs, and bespoke nutrition plans.

- **Fora Reserve perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

SHA Wellness Clinic (Spain): Cutting-edge medical science meets Eastern philosophy. Set on Spain's Mediterranean coast, SHA specializes in integrative programs like medical evaluations, tailored diets, and wellness therapies to renew body and mind in a tranquil, minimalist setting.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 wellness credit, daily breakfast, welcome amenity, complimentary parking, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Schloss Elmau Luxury Spa Retreat & Cultural Hideaway (Germany): World-class alpine retreat offering both grandeur and seclusion. Hidden in a Bavarian valley, this ultra-luxury estate pairs Michelin-starred dining and spas with a cultural calendar of events.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Six Senses Douro Valley (Portugal): A restored 19th-century manor blending modern design with regional character. The holistic spa focuses on local botanicals, while wine tastings, river cruises, and farm-to-table dining celebrate the Douro's natural abundance.

- **Fora's IHG Destined** partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Hôtel Les Sources de Caudalie (France): A vineyard-side retreat in the heart of Bordeaux's wine country. Blending elegant French design with a serene, nature-infused atmosphere, the spa emphasizes vinotherapy treatments using local grape extracts.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 food and beverage credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Retreat at Blue Lagoon (Iceland): Serene hideaway offers a tranquil blend of contemporary Nordic design and volcanic beauty. Private geothermal lagoon access, mineral-rich spa rituals, and Michelin-starred dining make wellness feel elemental.

Brenners Park - Hotel & Spa, Oetker Hotels (Germany): A grand Belle Époque estate in Baden Baden. Known for refined elegance and personalized service, the property combines classical interiors with modern wellness programs.

- **Fora's Oetker Pearl Partner** perks include up to \$200 food and beverage or spa credit, daily breakfast, and priority access to courtesy car.

Clinique La Prairie (Switzerland): A pioneering medical wellness institution on the shores of Lake Geneva. Rooted in nearly a century of longevity research, it offers comprehensive programs from cellular therapy to precision diagnostics and revitalization treatments.

- **Fora Perks** include a 300 CHF spa credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Asia



Image courtesy of BanyanTree Club & Spa Seoul

Asia is home to centuries-old practices and wellness traditions. Many spas emphasize structured wellness journeys with early morning starts and foot-bath rituals before treatments.

In Japan, mountain hot springs and ryokans create a calm, meditative environment perfect for thermal therapy and reflection. Bali's jungle retreats blend tropical scenery with holistic rituals, restorative yoga, and natural harmony. India provides a spiritual backdrop for Ayurveda, meditation, and wellness programs that balance mind, body, and spirit. In South Korea, urban sophistication meets forested retreats, with both high-rise luxury spa resorts and mountain escapes.

Where to stay

Gora Kadan (Japan): This former imperial retreat turned ryokan-style sanctuary blends Japanese tradition with refined modernity. Guests unwind in private open-air onsen baths,

savor kaiseki dining, and immerse in serene mountain views that define understated luxury.

COMO Shambhala Estate (Indonesia): Hidden in Bali's jungle, this retreat combines serene riverside villas with a deep focus on rejuvenation. Expect personalized wellness programs, nutrient-rich cuisine, and expert-led yoga and spa treatments.

- **Fora Reserve perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

BanyanTree Club & Spa Seoul (South Korea): An urban oasis on the slopes of Namsan Mountain, offering sweeping city views and serene design. Spacious rooms with soaking tubs, world-class spa facilities, and a members-club ambiance make it a restorative escape in the city.

- **Fora's Accor Preferred** partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Ananda in the Himalayas (India): At the foothills of the Himalayas, Ayurveda, yoga, and meditation meet contemporary comfort. Immersive wellness programs, organic cuisine, and mountain serenity define this restorative retreat for mind and body.

- **Fora Perks** include a complimentary 50-minute massage for two, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Buahan, A Banyan Tree Escape (Bali): Secluded adults-only hideaway inviting connection with nature through its “no walls, no doors” philosophy. Private open-air villas, mindful dining, and an immersive approach to sustainability create an atmosphere of stillness and renewal.

- **Fora's Accor Preferred** partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Kamalaya Koh Samui (Thailand): A soulful wellness retreat that has Thai healing traditions with jungle surroundings. Tailored programs focus on emotional balance, stress relief, and vitality, supported by nourishing cuisine and open-air spaces designed for reflection.

- **Fora Perks** include a personalized 45-minute wellness and goal setting consultation, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Chiva-Som Hua Hin (Thailand): A benchmark in holistic wellness set along a quiet beach. Integrating advanced health diagnostics with ancient Asian therapies, this intimate retreat offers personalized programs, nutrient-focused dining, and serene spa rituals.

- **Fora Reserve perks** include one health & wellness treatment per person, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Farm at San Benito (Philippines): A holistic wellness retreat set amid tropical gardens, blending contemporary design with nature-inspired tranquility. Detox programs, integrative therapies, and mindful living are complemented by plant-based cuisine and spa experiences.

The Americas and Caribbean

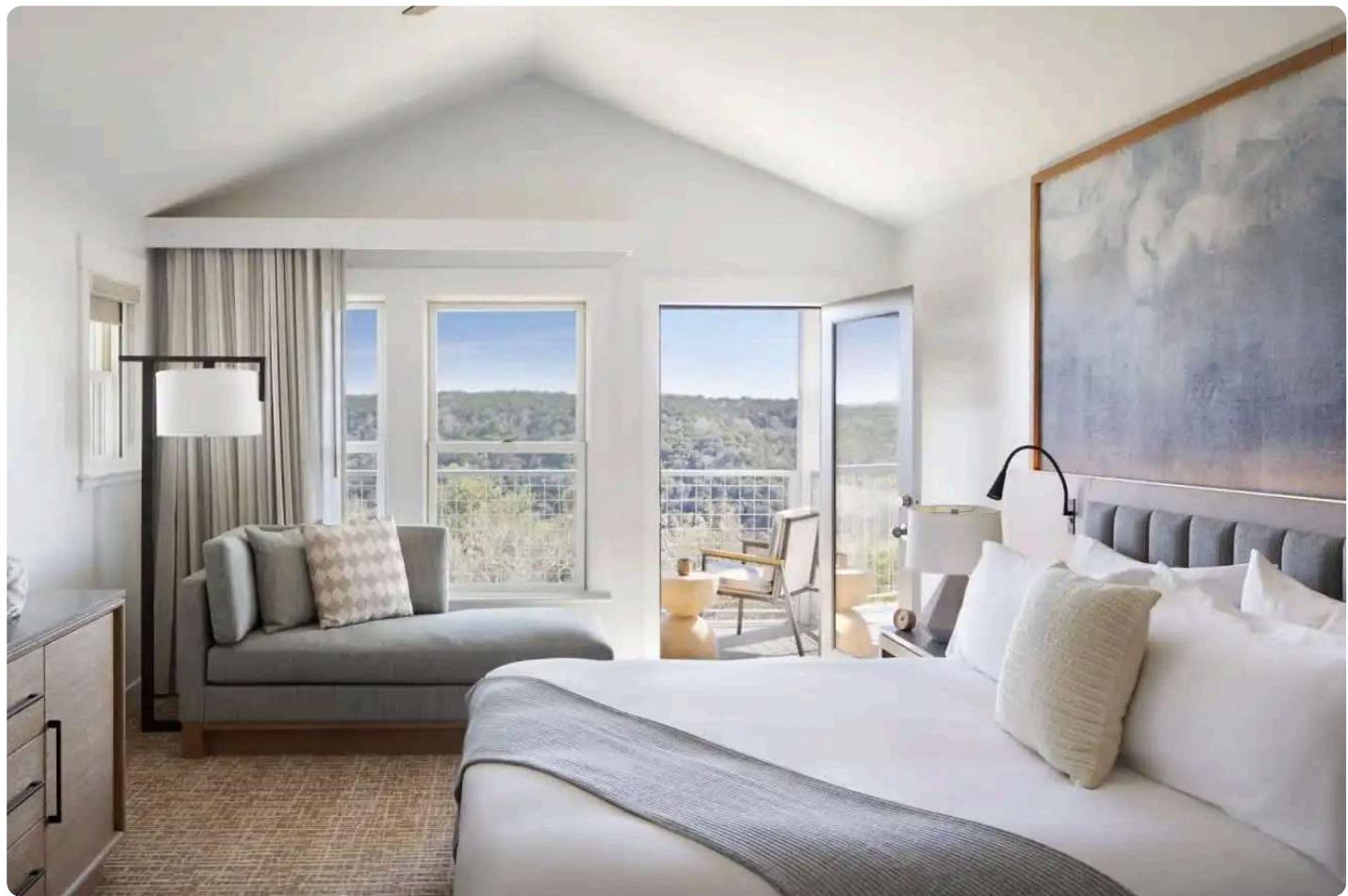


Image courtesy of Miraval Austin Resort & Spa

Mexico and Central America integrate local traditions like Temazcal ceremonies and cacao rituals into programs, while United States spas often focus more on fitness, packed daily schedules, nutrition consultations, and behavioral workshops.

In Costa Rica, wellness blends sun and jungle with modern, holistic therapies. Arizona's dramatic red rock canyons and high desert enclaves offer a mix of hiking, mindfulness, and immersive wellness experiences. California's sanctuaries pair ocean views, mountain retreats, and ranch-style wellness programs with fitness and detox offerings. Hawai'i offers a distinctly tropical approach, integrating native healing practices and oceanfront yoga with fully immersive retreats.

Where to stay

Miraval (Arizona, Massachusetts, and Texas): Immersive wellness sanctuaries designed for balance and mindfulness. Each location offers nature-inspired settings alongside expert-led workshops, spa rituals, and culinary experiences centered on conscious living.

- **Fora's Hyatt Privé** partner perks include a hotel credit, welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Mii Amo (Arizona): A spiritual retreat in Sedona's red rock canyons. Personalized wellness journeys, intuitive therapies, and grounding rituals create a deeply restorative stay in a space that feels both intimate and transcendent.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Ranch Malibu (California): Resort with six- to eight-night programs in the Santa Monica Mountains focused on reset and renewal with hiking trails, a heated outdoor pool, and infrared sauna. For shorter stays, check out The Ranch Hudson Valley.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$250 spa credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Canyon Ranch (Massachusetts and Arizona): Iconic destination spas combining integrated health practices with refined comfort. Personalized wellness programs include medical

consults and outdoor adventures supported by experts dedicated to long-term vitality and balance.

- **Fora Reserve perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Sensei Lanai, A Four Seasons Resort (Hawaii): Refined wellness retreat set in the serene highlands of Lāna‘i, combining science-led health programs with Hawaiian tranquility. Guests enjoy guided fitness, personalized nutrition, and thermal therapy experiences.

- When you book Four Seasons with Fora, you'll enjoy exclusive Four Seasons Preferred Partner benefits.

BodyHoliday St. Lucia (St. Lucia): A Caribbean classic designed around the promise of complete renewal. Daily wellness activities, tailored fitness programs, and a renowned spa meet beachfront relaxation, creating an energizing yet restorative escape.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, sunset cruise, one 50 minute treatment, one 30 minute tennis or golf session, one 30 minute Wellness Clinic consultation, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Carillon Miami Wellness Resort (Florida): A modern wellness destination where coastal calm meets cutting-edge technology. Integrative therapies, advanced diagnostics, and thermal hydrotherapy anchor a personalized approach, complemented by spacious suites.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 spa credit, daily breakfast credit, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

The Retreat Costa Rica (Costa Rica): A hillside wellness hideaway focused on healing foods, mindful movement, and integrative treatments. This intimate property offers a serene environment for deep restoration surrounded by volcanic peaks and rainforest scenery.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, welcome amenity, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Tabacón Thermal Resort & Spa (Costa Rica): A rainforest haven at the base of Arenal Volcano centered around natural thermal springs. Tropical gardens, mineral-rich pools, and open-air spa pavilions create a sensory-rich environment.

- **Fora Perks** include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade, and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Cruises



Image courtesy of Celebrity Cruises

Nearly every major cruise line features full-service spas equipped with saunas, steam rooms, hydrotherapy pools, and fitness centers with daily classes. Beauty salons, relaxation lounges, and specialized treatment rooms create a sanctuary for travelers to unwind. All cruisers can book treatments à la carte or purchase thermal suite passes, and a growing number of cruise lines now feature spa-inspired stateroom categories.

Guests staying in spa cabins enjoy perks like unlimited access to the thermal suite, priority spa reservations, and in-room amenities such as robes, slippers, and upgraded bath products. Some also include complimentary fitness classes, discounted treatments, or access to exclusive wellness spaces. Guests in Regent Seven Seas' opulent Regent Suite can enjoy a full sauna, heated relaxation loungers, and complimentary, unlimited in-suite spa treatments in their own in-room treatment area. Cruise lines like Celebrity Cruises' AquaClass add even more luxury with a dedicated restaurant, Blu, serving clean, Mediterranean-inspired cuisine.

Notable cruise lines

Celebrity Cruises: A contemporary premium line known for stylish design, elevated dining, and focus on wellness. Guests can book AquaClass staterooms for exclusive access to the SEA Thermal Suite and Blu restaurant, complimenting itineraries to iconic destinations.

- **Fora Perks** include up to \$200 onboard credit per stateroom on select sailings.

Regent Seven Seas: An ultra-luxury, all-inclusive line renowned for spacious suites, fine dining, and personalized service. Its world-class spa and wellness program at sea features rejuvenating treatments, holistic fitness, and serene thermal spaces.

- Virtuoso Voyages Hosted Benefits available on select sailings.

Norwegian Cruise Line: A vibrant, resort-style line offering diverse entertainment and a casual, "freestyle" cruising approach. The Mandara Spa features expansive thermal suites, salt therapy rooms, and ocean-view treatment spaces.

- **Fora Perks** include up to \$300 shipboard credit per stateroom on select sailings.

Explora Journeys: Next-generation luxury brand whose Ocean Wellness Spa has earned global recognition and awards for its holistic approach. Spacious suites, curated nutrition programs, and a slow-travel ethos create a restorative and elevated journey for the modern traveler.

- **Fora Perks** include a EUR 300 Journey Experience Credit per stateroom on select voyages. Virtuoso Voyages Hosted Benefits also available on select sailings.

What to do



Image courtesy of COMO Shambhala Estate

Spa destinations bring together restorative treatments, mindful movement, and nature-driven experiences in calm, beautifully designed settings. Days move at an easy rhythm, with plenty of opportunities to reset your body, clear your mind, and reconnect with your surroundings.

- **Nature walks:** Wander scenic trails through forests, mountains, or gardens and take in the landscape at a gentle, unhurried pace.
- **Mindfulness:** Join daily sessions in yoga, meditation, tai chi, or specialized workshops that center breath, balance, and inner focus.
- **Fitness:** Access state-of-the-art gyms for strength training, cardio, and personalized instruction designed to complement your wellness goals.
- **Spa treatments:** Indulge in massages, body rituals, wraps, and facials that draw from regional ingredients and holistic techniques.
- **Therapeutic experiences:** Explore salt rooms, hydrotherapy circuits, and reflexology sessions that support relaxation and overall wellbeing.

- **Thermal areas:** Rotate between steam rooms, saunas, and hot soaking pools for soothing heat therapies and quiet restoration.
- **Swimming pools:** Drift in serene indoor or outdoor pools, some set against mountain backdrops or immersed in tropical surroundings.
- **Lounges:** Settle into peaceful relaxation spaces ideal for reading, journaling, or simply enjoying the silence.

If not a destination spa...



Imagen cortesía de Image courtesy of

Not every wellness journey takes the shape of a destination spa. Many travelers find renewal through food, movement, or creative experiences that feel meaningful and deeply personal. These alternatives offer their own restorative rhythms to inspire, challenge, or simply bring you back to yourself.

Food and wine travel: Savor global flavors through wine tastings in Napa Valley, street food trails in Bangkok, or elegant Michelin-star dining in Paris.

Nature and eco-tourism: Reconnect with the outdoors while glamping in the Serengeti, exploring Iceland's dramatic fjords, or birdwatching in Costa Rica.

Active travel: Embrace movement with yoga retreats in Bali, cycling adventures in the Dolomites, or participating in destination marathons around the world.

Creative retreats: Explore your artistic side through photography workshops in Provence, writing programs in Ireland, or hands-on art classes in Mexico.

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Reach out for travel inspiration, hotel bookings or customized itineraries.

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Please provide some details about your trip.

You can expect a response from Gregory within 1-2 business days. You'll also be subscribed to our traveler newsletter (you can unsubscribe at any time).

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