

BOHEMIAN BLISS: PAMPERED IN PRAGUE

A spa paradise at the cultural heart of Europe, Prague offers a wealth of luxury wellness options. Whether you desire an elaborate hotel spa or an intimate boutique wellness haven, step back from city sightseeing and prepare to be pampered

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Although the massages, including Swedish, deep tissue, aromatherapy and specialist (such as Leg Energiser and Jet Lag), are the most popular treatments here, options range all the way from cellulite-busting exfoliations to pore-refining facials, golden mineral scrubs to moisturising pedicures. Choose Czech with the 75-minute La Bohème, a toning aromatherapy body and scalp massage that works on fatigued, jet-lagged and tense muscles. All spa products at Four Seasons are by paraben-free spa and skincare brand Omorovicza, comprising effective anti-ageing properties. www.fourseasons.com

AUGUSTINE SPA AT THE AUGUSTINE

When it comes to history, The Augustine is in a league of its own. Opened following extensive restoration work six years ago, this property was once a 13th-century monastery and brewery run by the friars of St Augustine. Today, its seven buildings, which run the architectural spectrum from Baroque to Renaissance to Gothic, contain 100 elegantly appointed rooms and suites. And of course, one of the city's great spas.

Located deep down in the ancient basement of the property, the surprisingly contemporary spa has everything you could ask for in a city centre retreat. Five treatment rooms, a Turkish hammam, a Finnish sauna, a steam room, two manicure stations, two experience showers and a relaxation area create a tantalising time-out treat. The facilities also boast a state-of-the-art fitness centre with personal training sessions, yoga and Pilates classes. But the real highlights of a visit to this spa are the treatments.

A wide menu of natural therapies are available here, including massages, facials, body wraps, manicures, pedicures and hair removal, but it's the signature treatment inspired by the site's own history that really stands out. The St Thomas Beer Body Ritual utilises the homemade brew (from a monk's secret recipe) with an intoxicating pure beer scrub, a hammam beer splash and full body massage. Then, to treat you inside as well as out, you're given a glass of beer to 'hydrate' and 'detoxify'. www.augustinehotel.com

THE SPA AT MANDARIN ORIENTAL, PRAGUE

Located in the historic Malá Strana quarter, just a short (but



very steep) stroll from Prague Castle, the Mandarin Oriental is one of the city's most popular luxury hotel options. But it also attracts day visitors thanks to its amazing spa. When you enter the reception – either after a hard morning's workout in the gym or a hard morning's sightseeing in the city – the interior of glimmering glass and polished marble affords it the air of a calm, contemporary paradise. But look closer...the ultra-modern is offset by Renaissance foundations and vaulted ceilings. This is the only spa in the world set inside a former 14th-century chapel.

Your spa experience begins with the swapping of shoes for slippers and the sipping of herbal tea, before your consultation with a personal therapist. Once through to one of the seven private treatment rooms – some of which include their own steam rooms and meditation areas – you can decide on your remedy. Signature treatments include the Czech-inspired Bohemian

Prague is a city of contradictions. It's the capital where medieval stone bridges sit alongside shining glass offices, where grand cathedrals and churches are ignored by the largely atheist population, and where nouveau artists Mucha and Kafka are enjoyed in tandem with classical icons Dvořák and Mozart. It's also a surprise that Prague, at the heart of a landlocked country, is one of Europe's premier spa destinations.

After wandering the streets and enjoying the city's countless attractions – majestic architecture, historic monuments, fascinating museums, upmarket restaurants and eclectic jazz clubs – it's time to relax and unwind in one of its many spa retreats. Whether you're looking to be lathered in home-brewed beer in a 13th-century monastery, to enjoy an Asian-infused herbal compress in a beautiful boutique, or to indulge in a post-treatment swim with a view across the city rooftops, you'll be living your spa dream in Prague.

SPA AT FOUR SEASONS HOTEL PRAGUE

With polished marble floors, curved wooden corners and shimmering ceramic fittings, the clean and crisp interior of the Four Seasons spa suggests sheer serenity. And that's precisely what's on offer. Take the changing rooms; tranquil spaces complete with gently reclining beds, complimentary tea and water, experience showers and single sex saunas. Take the essential oil massages, which can be tailored to your personal preferences; you can be sent into a slumber or kneaded into submission. And take the post-treatment experience; a choice of herbal teas on a comfy bed to slowly bring you back to the real world.

For those who like to earn their relaxation, there's also the opportunity to work up a sweat in the gym, fitted throughout with professional Technofit equipment. Take full advantage of the free juice, Gatorade and water in the fridge – and don't miss the joy of wrapping a cold towel around your overheated neck.

THIS PAGE: The cosy, welcoming changing rooms at the Spa at Four Seasons Hotel Prague; the Augustine Spa at The Augustine Prague. OPPOSITE PAGE: The Augustine Prague was once a 13th-century monastery and brewery. OPENING PAGE: Romantic and vibrant at the same time, Prague is a city of contradictions





THIS PAGE: The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Prague offers a serene escape. OPPOSITE PAGE: The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, Prague is set inside a former 14th-century chapel; Ecosotica Spa at the Alchemist Grand Hotel

treatments – all with an Asian accent – is superb. The lavish Jasmine Anti-Oxidant Massage combines aromatherapy and Swedish strokes, using jasmine and pomegranate massage oil, which minimises signs of ageing and relieves emotional tension, while the Healing Thai Herbal Compress Treatment includes a warm body compress of premium Eastern herbs to dissolve all of the muscle tension from your body and soothe the mind, followed by a chakra-realigning massage. Other ever-popular treatment options include the Path Less Ordinary Herbal Foot Treatment, which boosts circulation, cleansing dead skin and warding off odour-causing microbes; the Inner Peace Massage, a back and head treatment combining Swedish and Shiatsu techniques to relieve ailments such as high blood pressure; and the Skin Nourisher Treatment, a full body scrub and red algae body wrap (encouraging cell renewal, drawing out harmful skin pollutants) followed by a head massage.

Throughout all of its treatments, the spa uses Pañpuri products, which include natural, kind-to-the-skin ingredients and 100 per cent pure essential oils with no added perfumes. Once the treatment's over, end your experience with a soak in the Jacuzzi or a detox in the steam sauna. www.buddhabarhotelprague.com

PURE SPA AT LE PALAIS ART HOTEL PRAGUE

Situated within Prague's artiest hotel – a majestic palatial residence far from the madding crowds – Pure Spa brings a strong bohemian spirit into the wellness space. A monument to Belle Époque architecture, with all the contemporary luxuries expected from a five-star spa, Le Palais' divine wellness space offers soothing well-being massages and relaxation treatments alongside luxe beauty and cosmetic procedures.

Day spa aficionados can make the most of three well-



Meadow, a two-hour nine-flower treatment, including sage-salt scrub, thermal wrap, rose facial and hot stone massage, and the Linden Embrace, a full body scrub and massage using linden leaf poultices. These decadent treatments are complemented by customised massages, scrubs and facials using your choice of Aromatherapy Associates products.

After your treatment, put your feet up in the serene Tea Lounge. Complimentary tea, water, nuts and dried fruit can be enjoyed while thumbing through international newspapers and magazines, putting off the transition back from slippers to shoes for as long as possible. www.mandarinoriental.com

ECOSOTICA SPA AT THE ALCHEMIST GRAND HOTEL AND SPA

Tucked away on a quiet and secluded street, yet merely a short stroll from Charles Bridge, Prague Castle and main square Malostranské Náměstí, the Alchemist Grand Hotel provides a truly luxurious haven in the heart of the tourist territory. The restaurants and bars offer respite from the masses, but the best way to relax and unwind at the Alchemist is to make the most of its spectacular Ecosotica Spa and Health Club.

After entering the lobby of the five-star hotel, follow the spiral Renaissance staircase down, down, down until you emerge into an atmospheric Gothic cellar. This is Ecosotica, a haven of restful rejuvenation that blends modern luxury with ancient architecture. And it is bigger than you'd imagine; this subterranean health club is home to a fully-equipped gym (where a workout on Technogym equipment takes place beneath vaulted ceilings and chandeliers), a large swimming pool, dry and steam saunas, a steam bath and

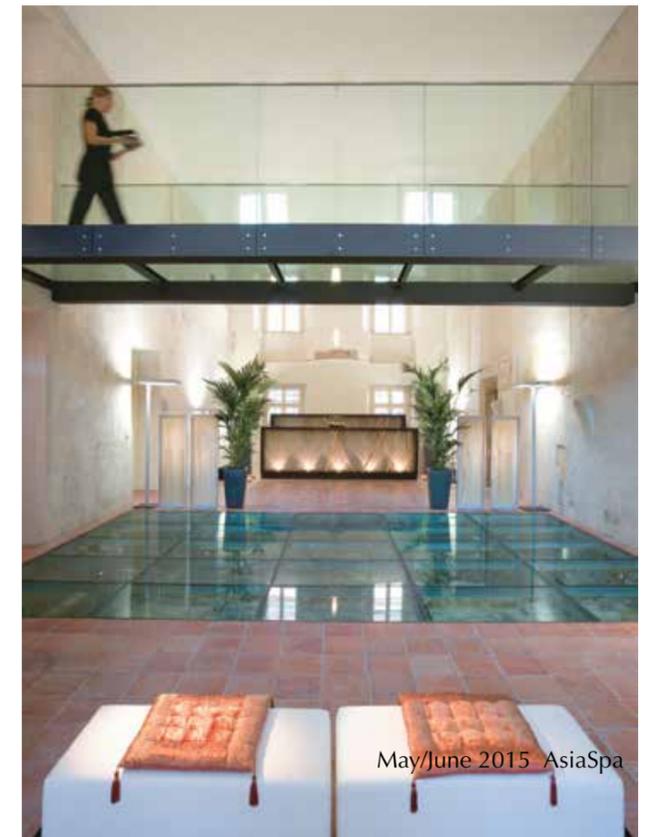
– the pièce de résistance – a divine relaxation room including an original, 18th-century Chinese bed.

There are also five private treatment rooms, where guests can indulge in Indonesian-inspired signature treatments from the team of experienced Balinese masseuses. Sweat your way through a deep muscle massage, unwind with the aromatherapy and bathing rituals or be rejuvenated with a detoxifying wrap and Darphin facial. Massage scholars should try the signature Alchemist Massage, combining techniques of Balinese, Hawaiian and Swedish massage, or the exclusive Duo Massage, a four-handed treatment where two therapists work in tandem to rebalance your body. www.alchymisthotel.com

SPA SUITE AT BUDDHA-BAR HOTEL PRAGUE

This sumptuous boutique hotel near the city's Old Town Square combines the essence of contemporary Asian interior design with French colonial influence; and its small but snug spa suite oozes this decadent ambience too. Outside, guests arrive through the atmospherically lit red-and-black reception and up the glass-fronted lift, before entering the wellness spa suite. Snuggle into the cosy, open-fire lounge corner, where you can slow your pulse with a book from the spa's private library while awaiting your treatment.

The mix of aromatherapy massages, body treatments and beauty



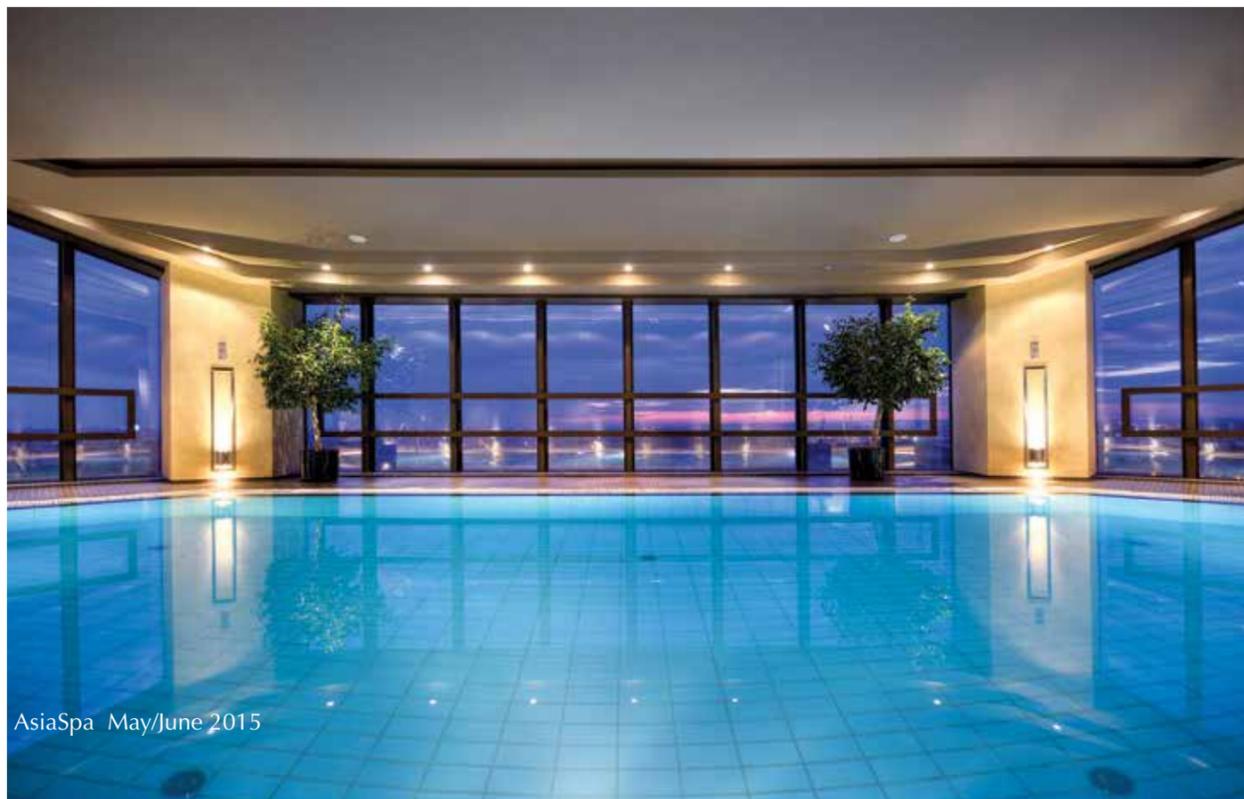
appointed massage rooms (which include a romantic couples' massage and facial treatment room), a hammam bed used for full body peelings and masks, and a specialist free-floating soft pack system for energising body packs. This stress-reducing treatment table allows you to float on a pressure-free cushion of water while you enjoy your treatment.

There are more than 20 specialist treatments available altogether, each utilising the natural cosmetic elixirs of Ligne St Barth, made in Saint-Barthélemy in the French Caribbean. Luxuriate in a gentle, pampering facial, décolleté and hand massage treatment, stimulate all of your senses with a sensual and moisturising coffee skin peel, or relax your aching muscles with a cleansing full-body massage using almond oil with citrus fruit, coconut and exotic spices. If you are in the spa with your better half, choose the couples' stone infinity massage, which is composed of massage, energising work and the soothing effect of hot balast stones; relaxing and stimulating all at once. If you feel re-energised after your treatment, why not complete your stay with a visit to the extensively appointed fitness area; otherwise saunter over to the whirlpool, sauna, steam bath and aroma showers. www.lepalaishotel.eu

APOLLO DAY SPA AT CORINTHIA HOTEL PRAGUE

It may be sitting a couple of miles from the city centre, but the Apollo Day Spa is without a doubt the best-located wellness option in the Czech capital. That's because it straddles the 25th and 26th floors of the Corinthia Hotel Prague, offering spectacular panoramic views across the city. It's the ideal escape from tourist-laden attractions like the Old Town Square and Charles Bridge; a quiet cocoon in a frantic capital.

Fitness fanatics will want to start their downtime with a heart-



pumping workout in the fully-equipped modern gym – fine-tune your workout with the hotel's personal trainer Alicia, who may even take you outside for a hilltop jogging session – while water babies will head straight for the beautiful indoor pool. Enjoy the remarkable city view while you swim laps, then dry off in one of the steam baths, the sauna or the solarium. Then it's time to banish all those stresses and strains of everyday life with a spa treatment.

Succumb to the warming touch and sweet scent of a honey massage, be refreshed and reinvigorated with a wrinkle-reducing Sparkling Eyes facial, or feel like you're floating on air after the ultra-luxe spa pedicure (with foot bath, Tibetan massage, regenerating mask and Therasoft wrap). That's just a taste of the luxury therapies and beauty treatments available. For the ultimate in decadence, finish with a trip below to The Grill restaurant, where you can cleanse yourself with a healthy grilled tuna steak or salmon fillet, or get down and dirty with a cheddar-covered sirloin burger.

www.corinthia.com

THIS PAGE: The Spa Suite at Buddha-Bar Hotel Prague exudes a decadent ambience; the Buddha-Bar Hotel Prague blends the essence of contemporary Asian design with French colonial influence. OPPOSITE PAGE: The beautiful indoor pool at Corinthia Hotel Prague