

**SYNC OR SWIM**  
From right: The new outdoor spa pool at Gstaad Palace in the Alps; the indoor spa pool at the Dolder Grand in Zurich.

## Swiss Movement

>>> Switzerland's spa culture sheds its famous lab-coat image  
By Laurie Kable

I grimace when the therapist slaps my back with bundles of bamboo sticks as I lie on a futon on the floor. "There will be some pain," I was warned of the impending shiatsu massage, which combines acupuncture with assisted stretching. "What I mean is," said my punisher, "you will feel it, but tell me if you are uncomfortable." The specially outfitted shiatsu room is not in some Tokyo tower or at an exotic Thai resort, but in the **Dolder Grand** (rooms from \$510; massage from \$179; [thedoldergrand.com](http://thedoldergrand.com)), a recently revamped grande dame hotel perched on a hilltop overlooking Zurich. So if the thought of Swiss spas still conjures images of lab-coated, clipboard-toting clinicians, it's time to update your perceptions.

Switzerland's premier hotels have been busy reimagining their wellness programs with an eye to the East. At the Dolder Grand, American visionary Sylvia Sepielli conceived an enormous spa that blends Asian and European flavors with a global jet-setter vibe. Swim and steam in the Aqua Zone, or nestle into a Japanese-inspired, egg-shaped tub filled with heated black pebbles.

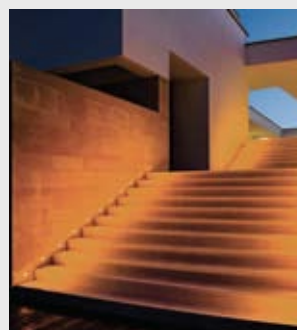
Pure Japanese Koishimaru silk is the common thread that runs through all the treatments at the **Sensai Select Spa** by Kanebo International, the skincare company's first retreat, which opened this year at Interlaken's landmark **Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel** (rooms from \$650; massage from \$292; [victoria-jungfrau.ch](http://victoria-jungfrau.ch)). The three-hour signature treatment starts with a restorative soak in a silk-infused bath followed by body and facial treatments

**Now hear this!** ... CONTINUED prefer to get massages in my room—whether I'm at the Sunset Tower in Hollywood ([sunsettowerhotel.com](http://sunsettowerhotel.com)) or the Principe de Savoia in Milan ▶

▶ that adhere to a six-step program based on “chrono-esthetics,” which synchronizes the therapies to coincide with mental and physical fluctuations during the session.

At the **Grand Resort Bad Ragaz** (rooms from \$322; massage from \$137; [resortragaz.ch](http://resortragaz.ch)), soak in the thermal waters of the Helenabad pool, or get your energies flowing with an authentic Thai massage. Multiculturalism also rules at **Beau Rivage Palace** (rooms from \$425; massage from \$156; [brp.ch](http://brp.ch)) in Lausanne and at the new **LeCrans Hotel** (rooms from \$408; massage from \$138; [lecrans.com](http://lecrans.com)), a chic boutique resort high on a hill over Crans Montana with panoramic views from Mont Blanc to the Matterhorn.

Even the quintessential **Gstaad Palace** (rooms from \$389; massage from \$133; [palace.ch](http://palace.ch)) may look like a fairy-tale castle, but the hotel’s spa is anything but Old World. During the two-hour Hammam Experience, you and a companion pass through seven rooms and stages that progress from a footbath to a soapy foam body massage to a cleansing steam bath to a soak in a private floating pool. The journey is capped with a hydrating oil massage that may have you dreaming of Marrakech.



## Euro Flash! Four Amazing New Spas

### Aman Spa at The Connaught

>>> LONDON, ENGLAND Only Aman could transform an old Mayfair basement into a serene Asian oasis complete with a dove-gray porcelain stone swimming pool and waterfall. The Aman Spa at The Connaught—the famed Asian resort company’s first spa outside its own portfolio—is just one dramatic aspect of the landmark London hotel’s \$100 million-plus renovation. In an exotic contrast to the hotel’s English interiors, the spa employs a contemporary Asian design of carved woods, trellises and atmospheric lighting. The menu draws upon rituals from Thailand, China, India and even the Americas. The China regimen starts with a green tea footbath followed by a body scrub with essential oils. In keeping with The Connaught’s bespoke approach to service, guests book blocks of time and consult with a therapist who helps select the best treatments for what ails you. *Rooms from \$695; massage from \$165; [the-connaught.co.uk](http://the-connaught.co.uk)*



### Verdura Golf & Spa Resort

>>> SICILY, ITALY Rocco Forte’s sprawling new resort in Sicily claims one of the largest spas in Europe. The Verdura Spa draws heavily on its local surroundings to distinguish itself from anything else on the island. “Our programs are mainly based on natural Sicilian raw materials, fresh plant extracts, and cold-pressed plant oils,” explains spa director Ana Coelho, who notes that facials and body wraps utilize abundant blood oranges, lemons, volcanic mud and Sicilian seawater. Thalassotherapy (seawater therapy) is a primary emphasis with four sizable pools heated to between 77 and 98.6 degrees with varying salt densities and minerals to tone and revitalize the skin as you soak. Resort guests can book a simple treatment after a round of golf or stay longer for a personally tailored

program targeting goals of anti-aging, detox, rejuvenation and diet. *Rooms from \$565; massage from \$140; [roccofortecollection.com](http://roccofortecollection.com)*

### Dior Institut at Plaza Athénée

>>> PARIS, FRANCE The Plaza blends well-being with high fashion at the Dior Institut. The two Paris legends are actually historically linked as Christian Dior debuted his first collection in 1947 at his headquarters on the Avenue Montaigne near the landmark hotel. Naturally, the Dior Institut spa wows with stylistic drama, merging the spirit of Louis XVI with the fashion icon’s soothing palette of gray, white and mauve. A wall of runway show clips recounts the Dior legend as you enter a

vaulted gallery. **EUROPA EUROPA** Above, clockwise from top left: Dior Institut at Plaza Athénée in Paris; the outdoor relaxation lounge at Verdura in Sicily; an exterior stairway at Verdura. Left: The pool at Aman Spa at The Connaught in London.

therapy, micro dermabrasion and anti-aging. The menu culminates with the L’Or de Vie, a regenerating treatment that taps the antioxidant properties of ingredients derived from the grapevines of the famed Château d’Yquem vineyard. *Rooms from \$965; massage from \$232; [plaza-athenee-paris.com](http://plaza-athenee-paris.com)*

### La Réserve Ramatuelle

>>> RAMATUELLE, FRANCE Once you’ve had your fill of St. Tropez nightlife, retreat to nearby La Réserve to restore and rejuvenate your party-plagued mind and body. The spa offers a range of anti-aging therapies culminating with a six-day program based on initial assessments with a doctor, an osteopath and a specialist in slimming and sculpting. Following the consultations, you are prescribed a regimen of up to four spa treatments each day, an exercise program, spa cuisine and stress-reducing practices—all designed to turn back your clock. *Rooms from \$815; massage from \$200; [lareserve-ramatuelle.com](http://lareserve-ramatuelle.com)—L.K.*

Only Aman could transform an old Mayfair basement into a serene Asian oasis with a swimming pool and waterfall.

▶ ([hotelprincipedesavoia.com](http://hotelprincipedesavoia.com)). I always carry Vie Luxe candles, my iPod with a mix for Reiki treatments, lavender body oil from Tammy Fender and a silk eye mask made from an **CONTINUED...** May 2010 | **Angeleno** | 85



*Extreme Makeovers*

Balance mental wellness with athleticism at these fab retreats. *By Shane Martin*



*Ask the Ayurvedic Guru*

The holistic medicine of Ayurveda has been practiced for more than 5,000 years and teaches us that health and well-being are based on an optimal balance of natural energies, or doshas: Vata (air/ether), Pitta (fire/water) and Kapha (water/earth). These dynamic forces determine a person's physical and psychological nature. Keep your doshas balanced, the thinking goes, and you'll be happy and healthy in return. Dr. Gopal Grovindasamy is an Ayurveda specialist at Thailand's **Anantara Si Kao Resort**.

**So, what determines my Ayurvedic constitution?**

Whether you are Vata-, Pitta- or Kapha-dominant depends on the doshas of your parents. Race, sex, religion... all play a role in determining the constitution you will be born with. But your current balance is always shifting.

**How is a Kapha person different from, say, Vata?**

Each dosha character is prone to different types of ailments. Kapha-dominant types

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tend to have strong immune systems but can commonly suffer from respiratory problems. Vata dominance manifests in neurological ways. And when Pitta is dominant, digestive issues always arise.

**Have you diagnosed yourself?**

I'm Kapha. We're generally considered intelligent and exhibit a good capacity for analysis and judgment.

**What's the deal with Shirodhara, that treatment where hot oil is poured over the forehead, or third eye?**

Shirodhara is an ideal treatment for sleep disorders and neurological issues. It is one of the best rejuvenating, relaxing and rebalancing treatments in Ayurveda. Unfortunately, too many spas miss the point and use it strictly for pampering. It's meant to be more than just a scalp massage. —*Laurie Kable*

<i>The Resort</i>	<i>The Program</i>	<i>The Details</i>	<i>The Takeaway</i>
<b>Sanctuary on Camelback</b> SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA <i>sanctuaryoncamelback.com</i>	Triathlon training with Olympian Misty Hyman	Day 1: Swim; sports massage. Day 2: Bike ride; Thai massage. Day 3: A desert run; reflexology.	Gain a firmed-up core and nimble limbs while exploring the massive boulders of the Sonoran Desert.
<b>Anantara Bophut</b> KOH SAMUI, THAILAND <i>anantara.com</i>	Thai boxing retreat led by professional Muay Thai trainer Chueng Pinijart	Learn the practice and philosophies of Muay Thai boxing and the art of meditation and restorative breathing.	Use your body as a deadly weapon while frolicking through the Thai jungle and beach.
<b>Four Seasons Hualalai</b> KONA, HAWAII <i>fourseasons.com/hualalai</i>	Extreme water sports and Hawaiian meditation	Outrigging; stand-up paddle boarding; spear fishing; loma loma massage; meditation afloat in a candlelit pond	Invigorate your aptitude for adventure while taming the open surf of the Big Island.
<b>DuVine Adventures</b> IRELAND <i>duvine.com</i>	Yoga bike tour of Ireland	Start each day with yoga, then bike through the Irish countryside and rugged coastal roads.	Achieve yoga nirvana and an adrenaline rush while also enjoying Irish whiskey at the source!

*Om Delivery*

*By Brad A. Johnson*

I was awakened by a dream. It was my first attempt at meditation, and instead of finding enlightenment or inner peace, I fell asleep in my chair.

I was at **The Chopra Center** in Carlsbad, California, a mind and body wellness retreat that intertwines holistic philosophies with the rationale of modern science. I figured if I was going to tackle this ancient stress-relieving technique and quiet my hyperactive mind, I might as well learn from the best: the retreat's founder, Deepak Chopra.

Science has unambiguously proven that meditation decreases stress, lowers blood pressure and strengthens the immune system. Some studies even suggest meditation can heighten intelligence and creativity. Count me in. I signed up for a five-day workshop promising not only to teach me primordial sound meditation but to help me spontaneously fulfill all of my desires.

The Chopra Center operates inside the lush confines of **La Costa Resort**, where my suite—with



songbirds on the terrace—overlooked the golf course's 17th hole. Each morning began with sunrise meditation followed by yoga. Afternoons were filled with more meditations and conversations with Deepak himself about quantum physics and the meaning of life. I found time daily for an Ayurvedic massage—and by day three, I started letting go of the chatter that was cluttering my email-and-breaking-news-filled mind. By day five, I was the most relaxed I've ever been.

So, obviously, meditation works. But check back with me in a couple of years on that spontaneous-fulfillment-of-my-desires thing. I haven't quite mastered that just yet. *Rooms at La Costa from \$339; lacosta.com; three-day meditation workshops from \$375; chopra.com. ▲*

▶ than the **Khalsa Medical Clinic** (*khalsamedical.com*) in Beverly Hills. Dr. Soram Singh Khalsa is the combination of a modern saint and genius." —*Harry Morton, restaurateur* May 2010 | **Angeleno** | 91