

# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

## The Most Beautiful Spas in Rain Forests Around the World



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Spas the world over extol the healing powers of nature, and trends like forest bathing have quickly developed global followings. So why is it that when you step into many spas, it feels like you're entering a sensory deprivation cocoon of hushed hallways, dark relaxation pods, and sterile locker rooms all set to the same soundtrack?

Like the best hotels (and restaurants, for that matter), world-class spas convey a specific sense of place – *spa terroir*, if you will – and capitalize on holistic habits and healthy techniques traditionally practiced in their part of the world.

Nowhere is that more true than at spas set in the world's vibrant jungles and rain forests. Many harness the medicinal benefits of ingredients found right outside their front door (if there even is a front door) and the ancient traditions of indigenous peoples, all to the salubrious satisfaction of their guests.

Here are some of the most jaw-dropping jungle spas around the world where you can get back to nature — in luxury.



Courtesy of Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve

### [Mandapa, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Bali, Indonesia](#)

Mandapa, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, which opened in Bali in 2015, is one of only three of Ritz-Carlton's ultra-exclusive Reserve properties currently open worldwide. The resort, whose name means "temple in Sanskrit," has just 60 suites and villas running down the slopes the verdant Ayung River valley near Ubud, complete with a lush rice paddy in which guests can picnic and a beautifully maintained century-old temple. Book a River Front Pool Villa so you can enjoy the rush of its torrent (and the delighted exclamation of whitewater rafters passing by) from the privacy of your own walled garden, complete with a frangipani-fringed plunge pool. Also be sure to ask your *patih*, or personal butler, to set up excursions for you like a half-day tour to waterfalls and temples in a vintage Volkswagen 181 convertible, a hike along the hillside tracks of Campuhan, or a lesson on preparing floral temple offerings.

After a complimentary yoga class in the spa's riverside studio, try the Sleep Support Therapy. It begins with a refreshing foot bath with Himalayan pink salt and kefir lime, a guided meditation and the chanting of yogic pranayamas. The Marma body and facial massage is performed according to ancient Ayurvedic practices of manipulating and aligning the body's energy points. Finally, aromatic oil is applied to the nose to induce a sense of calm that will aid with sleep.

The standout spa experience, however, has to be the Traditional Balinese Healing Touch with a locally renowned blind healer named Ketut Mursi. During the 90-minute experience, she vigorously kneads and scrubs body points from the soles to the scalp using her own family's

secret blend of herbal oils. She attunes your energy to the cosmic *prana*, wicks away negativity from your aura and realigns your chakras, then consults with you on how to maintain your aura's new shininess back home.



Courtesy of Mashpi Lodge

## Mashpi Lodge, Ecuador

The 3,000 acres of old-growth cloud forest where the 24-room Mashpi Lodge now sits was once earmarked for logging. But an enterprising former Quito mayor, Roque Sevilla, stepped in and bought the land in 2001, creating a nature preserve. What's more, he even made sure no trees were cut down by the all-local crews he hired to build the lodge. Today, the resort is a model for South American conservation and sustainability, occupying one of the last tracts of Ecuador's biodiverse Chocó ecosystem. The land remains home to some of the continent's healthiest populations of pumas, jaguars, ocelots, sloths and anteaters, 500 species of bird and rare trees and frogs found nowhere else on earth.

Guests can spot capuchin monkeys as they hike to waterfalls, take a cable bike through the forest canopy and visit rare butterflies in the lodge's Life Centre educational facility. At the spa, top treatments include the Ocelot Stone massage with warmed, polished volcanic stones, and the Chocotherapy moisturizing massage, which is performed with a signature blend of lemon, lavender, orange, cinnamon, lemon verbena and ginger oils. The open-air Rain treatment is performed near a waterfall and includes an exfoliating peel with almond oil and passion fruit extracts.



Courtesy of One&Only

## One&Only Nyungwe House, Rwanda

Luxury hotel chain One&Only has rapidly been expanding into Africa. This exclusive 23-room lodge opened on a working tea plantation in the mountainous southwest of Rwanda in 2017. The area's mahogany groves and orchid forests are home to 13 species of rare primates including Mangabey and L'Hoests's monkeys as well as a thriving chimpanzee population and over 300 species of birds. Guests can spend their days exploring the forest canopy from a walkway suspended nearly 200 feet above the ground, trekking through national parks, mountain biking, kayaking, visiting local communities and even learning traditional spear throwing.

One&Only Nyungwe House's spa menu includes a selection of property-specific holistic therapies using products by South African beauty brand Africology. The Intonga Amasatchi treatment is performed using hands and specially designed yellow-wood sticks to stretch out tense muscles. The Coffee and Mint Body Wrap begins with an exfoliation with walnut and marula shells and then a mud wrap with coffee extract and spearmint to induce lymphatic drainage and promote circulation while eliminating toxins from the body.



Courtesy of Four Seasons



## Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle, Thailand

The mountainous, mysterious border country between Thailand, Laos and Myanmar is the exotic backdrop for Four Seasons' Bill Bensley-designed Tented Camp, which set the standard for glamping when it opened back in 2006. Its two-bedroom Explorer's Lodge and 15 individually themed luxury tents are strung along raised wooden walkways winding through a lush bamboo jungle, and contain hidden delights like freestanding hand-beaten copper bath tubs and knick knacks recalling the 19th-century explorers attracted to the region's riches. Guests can visit nearby hill tribes and tea plantations, cruise down the Ruak River on longboats and spend mornings learning how to be an elephant before taking these gentle giants down to the river for a bath.

After all those activities, the hotel's treetop spa is a relaxing respite with just two open-air treatment *salas* (though you can also request your treatment on the wooden deck of your own tent, too). Using traditional lemongrass oil and ginger, the Ruak Bamboo Massage targets tension areas with smooth bamboo sticks that can work deep into the muscle. If the elephant sessions prove taxing, book the Mahout Recovery Massage, which applies traditional poultices of camphor, lime and lemongrass to work out the knots. Afterward, you'll be ready to get back in the saddle, or on the elephant, again.



Courtesy of Andaz

## Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya, Mexico

Spring breakers flood Cancún's clubs, the glitterati populate Playa del Carmen, and yogis seem to have overrun Tulum. But 40 miles south of Cancún, Mayakoba is 1,600-acre preserve of mangrove forest crisscrossed by limestone canals fronting a mile-long white-sand beach. The four resorts there include the Rosewood Mayakoba, Banyan Tree Mayakoba, Fairmont

Mayakoba, and the 214-room Andaz Mayakoba Resort Riviera Maya, whose Naum Wellness & Spa distills the jungle spirit into Mayan-inspired rituals focusing on clarity, rest, strength and connection.

Treatments begin with a ceremonial lighting of copal incense. The smoke eliminates negativity in the environment. The Ritual Sac Ki includes an invigorating dry exfoliation using henequen fibers from locally grown agave followed by an energizing massage with organic copal oil. The Ritual de Ixi'im y Chia incorporates antioxidant-rich blue corn and chia into a gentle exfoliation before a massage with soothing shea butter enriched with calendula.



Courtesy of Kokomo

### Kokomo Private Island, Fiji

Kokomo Private Island quickly ranked among the Best New Hotels in the World after it opened in April 2017. The resort has just 26 beachside villas and hilltop residences total, each of which has its own private garden and infinity pool. Days here are spent reef surfing, game fishing, kayaking, sailing. And snorkeling and diving the waters of Great Astrolabe Reef, which is one of the South Pacific's best dive spots.

Treatments informed by ancient Fijian healing practices and using all-natural Australian Sodashi products can be enjoyed in the Yaukuve Spa's outdoor *bures* surrounded by tropical gardens (there are also indoor treatment rooms). The Jojoba Radiance Treatment begins with a full-body exfoliation with jojoba beads, bergamot and ylang ylang botanicals before the application of a moisturizing jasmine and damask-rose body treatment leaving the skin softened and refreshed. The Mineral Marine Facial taps the antioxidants in seaweed and spirulina plus the

cleansing and toning powers of French yellow and white clay as it brightens the skin and restores that sun-kissed South Pacific glow.



Courtesy of Rosewood

## Rosewood Luang Prabang, Laos

Also designed by starchitect Bill Bensley, Rosewood's second Southeast Asian resort opened earlier this year in a patch of rainforest with a natural waterfall. The Rosewood Luang Prabang has just 23 riverside accommodations inspired by traditional Lao and French colonial architecture, including six hilltop luxury tents with wraparound decks perfect for lounging with a sweet basil mojito in hand. The hotel staff can arrange cultural activities like a tour of Luang Prabang's picturesque temples, sunset cruises on the Mekong and visits to local villages specializing in handicrafts like weaving and pottery. But be sure to leave time in your schedule to visit the resort's Sense, A Rosewood Spa, whose three treatment tents are set in the jungle overlooking the river.

Though you could indulge in a decadent caviar facial with 16-point acupressure stimulation, the spa has partnered with a local healer named Mr. Xong to create "Hmong Experiences" drawing upon ancient Laotian healing rituals. The Hmong Cleanse includes chanting to remove negative energy and a massage with heated poultices made from a secret blend of healing herbs Mr. Xong forages from the forest before a final session of chants to confer harmony, peace and good luck.



Courtesy of Sugar Beach, a Viceroy Resort

## Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, St. Lucia

Everything you need to know about Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, is in the name. Located on an 18th-century sugar plantation along a white-sand beach, a vacation here is nothing short of sweet. Guestrooms feature views of the Val des Pitons and the Caribbean, and plantation-style décor like mosquito-netted four-poster beds, white wooden shutters and enormous verandas for enjoying the sea breezes. The resort has two new four-bedroom residences dubbed The Beachfront Collection, each with private beach access and its own enormous pool deck.

The resort's St. Lucia Spa at Sugar Beach has seven tree-house treatment rooms along a stream on the lower slopes of the UNESCO-listed Petit Piton, and specializes in chemical-free all-natural rituals with a focus on St. Lucia-grown ingredients including bananas, coconuts, aloe vera and cocoa butter (but they also partner with Natura Bisse and Valmont). Try the Papaya and Pineapple Body Polish for an exfoliating scrub of natural sugar crystals with papaya and pineapple extracts that remove dead skin cells and soothe sunburns. There are also fancifully named monthly spa specials, like the recent Vanilla Latte. It included a body scrub with raw St. Lucian coffee and a massage with kukui-nut and vanilla essential oils.





Courtesy of UXUA

## UXUA Casa Hotel & Spa, Brazil

Though bohemians discovered Trancoso back in the '70's, this sleepy Brazilian beach town has become a haven for the jet set thanks to celebrity interest from the likes of Anderson Cooper, who built his vacation home here, and Leonardo Di Caprio, among others. If you can't build your own villa here, several of UXUA Casa Hotel & Spa's 11 colorful *casas* date back to the village's founding 500 years ago and were restored by designer Wilbert Has with the help of local artisans.

Meditate on that at the Almescar Spa, whose treatments harness the healing power of Bahia's rainforests and beaches, with hand-grown products like palm oil, cocoa, Brazil nuts, pink peppercorns, shea butter and virgin coconut oil. The Relaxing Almescar Oil Massage includes a massage with oil extracted from almescar trees in the surrounding rainforest, and which Pataxó Indians used in their traditional medicine for its anti-inflammatory effects. The After-Sun Skin Repair includes a massage with 100% extra-virgin coconut oil produced in Trancoso that nourishes fatigued skin and stimulates the immune system.



Courtesy of Six Senses

## Six Senses Ninh Van Bay, Vietnam

Located on the tip of a jungle-covered peninsula, the Six Senses Ninh Van Bay is the ultimate in Southeast Asian seaside seclusion. The resort's 59 villas are spread out on hilly slopes, perched over the water on dramatic rock formations, or right on the sandy beach, and each has its own private pool. Guests spend their days island-hopping around the bay, on romantic sunset cruises, visiting local hot springs, and learning Vietnamese recipes during cooking classes in the hotel's organic garden.

Six Senses has a strong focus on wellness, and the resort invites distinguished alternative medicine practitioners from all over the world to work in residence on a rotating basis. The resort offers integrated health regimens that include physical screenings and personalized fitness, diet and spa programs for a guest's stay. For those who simply want to relax, though, the regular spa menu combines Ayurvedic and Vietnamese therapies, all to be enjoyed in beautiful thatched *salas* along a stream in the forested hills above the resort. Among the treatments to try is a soothing four-handed Abhyanga Ayurvedic Massage that boosts the immune system, refreshes the skin and alleviates fatigue. The Green Coffee Body Treatment includes a body exfoliation, an invigorating green coffee wrap that firms and rehydrates the skin and a detoxifying massage. An added bonus: the green coffee fights cellulite.



Courtesy of Inkaterra

## Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica, Peru

Inkaterra Reserva Amazónica is a luxurious Peruvian eco-retreat on the mighty Madre de Dios River with just 35 rustic-chic wooden cabanas. The property possesses one of South America's

longest treetop bridges, spanning over a quarter mile 98 feet above the ground, from which guests can spot diverse wildlife including three-toed sloths, brown capuchin monkeys, butterflies and over 500 species of birds. Back on the ground, they can hike the lodge's extensive jungle trails and take twilight cruises to look for capybaras, caimans and even endangered giant river otters.

An evening appointment in the ENA Spa's single riverfront cabana is the perfect end to a day out in the rainforest, especially with an Amazon Purification Treatment. It begins with a lymphatic drainage massage and a body masque derived from the medicinal cat's claw herb, which has anti-inflammatory and cleansing properties, then finishes with a cooling Amazonian body mist enriched with cotton, sunflower and olive oils.



Courtesy of Fairmont

## Fairmont Orchid, Hawaii

You don't have to leave the U.S. to visit one of the world's premier jungle spas, the Fairmont Orchid's aptly named Spa Without Walls on the Island of Hawaii. Eight of its outdoor *hales*, or huts, are sprinkled along a waterfall flowing over massive lava boulders (there are also six oceanfront *hales* and three indoor treatment rooms). The Awa Earth & Fire treatment includes a nourishing coconut-oil body masque, a body polish with Hawaiian botanicals and a warm lava-stone massage, while the Sun Soother relieves sunburned skin with a combination of lavender mist, aloe and tea-tree gel plus a final application of hydrating lotion to get you ready for another day on the beach.

While not enjoying the services of the Spa Without Walls, resort guests can participate in activities like cultural hikes, lei-making classes, outrigger canoeing, stand-up paddle boarding, or just relaxing around the massive 10,000-square-foot oceanfront pool.



Courtesy of Hacienda AltaGracia/Auberge Resorts Collection

## Hacienda AltaGracia, Costa Rica

Coffee plantations, cloud forests and convivial communities are all rolled into a single destination at Auberge Resorts' Hacienda AltaGracia in Costa Rica. Suites start at a spacious 1,173 square feet, including expansive panoramic terraces, while the larger casitas have fireplaces to keep you warm on those chilly mountain nights. Complimentary activities include guided forest hikes, mountain biking and meditation sessions in an outdoor *rancho*, though once you see the curved infinity-edge pool, you might not want to go anywhere else. Travelers can also take ultralight flights and horseback rides around the properties, visit wildlife refuges and tour coffee plantations.

The resort's 20,000-square-foot spa is the largest in Central America and comprises not only six indoor treatment rooms and two Aqua Suites, but also four outdoor treatment *ranchos*. The locally inspired treatments include the Auberge Spa Mixology Bar, during which guests can choose from organic aromatic ingredients including almonds, cacao, sea salt and locally grown coconut or coffee for a tailor-made body exfoliation finished with a 60-minute massage using all-natural oils. The Mochachino Manicure-Pedicure with a coffee and chocolate exfoliation, cuticle repair, a soothing soak and a polish will liven up your nails, too.

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