

# Our galaxy of the spas

Some of the world's best pampering is not so far from home, writes **Rachael Oakes-Ash**.

**T**here are spas and there are destination spas – all-inclusive resorts dedicated to rejuvenating the body, mind and spirit through a mix of spa treatments, alternative therapies, fitness activities and healthy cuisine. Unlike day spas, where the client “drops in” for a treatment, today’s “sleepover” spas are multi-day and week-long affairs in luxurious surrounds. You’ll find many of the world’s best on our doorstep.

## Ananda Spa

**WHERE** Rishikesh, the Himalayas, India.  
**WHO FOR** Spirit searchers, mountain lovers and yoga devotees.  
**WHY** Set in a palatial manor house and former home of a maharaja, Ananda complements traditional Indian yoga and ayurvedic spa therapy with contemporary Western treatments. Daily yoga and guided meditation are offered alongside Vedanta spiritual teachings but don't expect yogic minimalism: the decor of Ananda is more suited to a five-star hotel than an ashram.  
 The food is guided by your body type, whether “air and space”, “fire and water” or “water and earth”. The ayurvedic doctor will let you know your type upon arrival. You can spend your days relaxing by the pool, take guided treks through the hills to nearby temples or just indulge in the spa.  
**DON'T MISS** The Ganga Aarti ceremony on the banks of the Ganges, with chanting hymns that move the soul.  
**HOW MUCH** A five-night stress-management program starts at \$US2850 (\$3175) and includes personalised yoga and seven spa treatments. Book through preferredhotels.com. See anandaspa.com.



## Como Shambhala Estate

**WHERE** Ubud, Bali.  
**WHO FOR** Those in the spa know.  
**WHY** Christina Ong is the Anna Wintour of boutique hotels and the name behind the Metropolitan in London and Bangkok and Uma Paro in Bhutan. Ong has applied her distinctive style and attention to detail to create a seriously stylish hilltop retreat.  
 Five major residences are available for exclusive use or can be divided into one-bedroom suites with shared poolside facilities. A series of private villas is also near The Source, the retreat's state-of-the-art spa. The villas feature private pools and treatment rooms.  
 Choose from wellness programs of three, five or seven nights or design your own, be it rejuvenation, fitness or stress relief. Did we mention Glow, the seriously good restaurant? We should have.  
**DON'T MISS** The unique “guided challenges”, including mountain ascents at dawn.  
**HOW MUCH** From \$US1290 for a three-night bespoke program including meals, massage, transfers and personal assistant. There's 20 per cent off some programs until March. See cse.como.bz.



## Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary

**WHERE** Koh Samui, Thailand.  
**WHO FOR** Those looking for a holistic approach to health.  
**WHY** Set up by a former yogi, John Stewart, and his healer wife, Karina, Kamalaya attracts the well-heeled celebrity set searching for inner peace. The nine wellness programs include healthy lifestyle, emotional balance, wellness a la carte, longevity and Asian alchemy.  
 The retreat is set around a Buddhist monk's cave, which is open for personal meditation. Lush gardens overlook a boulder-dotted ocean and a white sandy beach. There's also a series of landscaped swimming and plunge pools, a herbal steam cavern, two dining areas and a tea lounge and a wellness spa sanctuary. Tai chi, yoga and Pilates are offered daily.  
**DON'T MISS** The far-infrared sauna that burns 600 calories in 30 minutes.  
**HOW MUCH** A seven-day detox and rejuvenation program starts from 58,100 baht

**Feeling good ... (clockwise from main) tai chi at Kamalaya Wellness Sanctuary; a massage at Como Shambhala Estate; the tranquil surrounds of Ananda Spa.**

(\$1940), including meals, transfers, consultations, herbal remedies, daily activities, five Chi Nei Tsang massages, five infrared sauna treatments and a colonic therapy. Accommodation starts from 6500 baht a night. See kamalaya.com.

## Chiva Som

**WHERE** Hua Hin, Thailand.  
**WHO FOR** European royals, British celebrities, self-made entrepreneurs and anyone with cash and a desire for health.  
**WHY** Founded more than 14 years ago, Chiva Som's private enclave sits on Hua Hin beach. Fifty-eight suites and villas surround a resort pool and the usual gym, meditation salas and the like but the crown is the underground spa offering 150 treatments in 70 rooms, including meditation, yoga, acupuncture and massage.



**WHY** Six Senses already has a name for award-winning eco-friendly resorts favoured by honeymooners. The company's first foray into destination spas is a 60-villa complex overlooking Phang Nga Bay. Each villa features a private pool, meditation sala and steam shower and comes with an ocean view from either cliff top or beachfront.  
 Guests are appointed a spa butler and wellness consultant upon arrival and a “life passage” package is individually designed to each guest's requirements, whether it's tranquil treatments or hard-core adventure activities. The “village” is negotiated by bicycle, getting guests from the gym to the spa, meditation hall, Pilates studio, library and two restaurants.  
**DON'T MISS** The spa cooking class in the underground “cuisine cave”.  
**HOW MUCH** From \$US295 a night for a single, \$US470 for double, including meals, two spa treatments a day, activities and wellness consultation. See sixsenses.com/Six-Senses-Destination-Spa-Phuket.

## The Farm

**WHERE** The Philippines.  
**WHO FOR** Devout detoxers.  
**WHY** The Farm Medical and Wellness Resort sits in the foothills of Mount Malarayat, two hours from Manila. The lush tropical retreat is dedicated to “live” cuisine using dehydrators instead of cooking to keep food in a natural and raw state. Trust us, the menu, which includes pizza and chocolate, is so good you won't notice it's raw.  
 Programs focus on three areas – recovery, rejuvenation and wellness – and the art of detox is supported with a full alternative spa menu and “medical treatments” including blood analysis, colonic hydrotherapy, magnetic-clay foot baths, infusion therapy and kidney cleansing. With such dedication to health it's impossible to leave here not feeling like a new person. All this on 48 hectares dotted with rivers, lagoons and waterfalls.  
**DON'T MISS** A hampol herbal press massage under the stars.  
**HOW MUCH** From 97,819 pesos (\$2345), twin share, for a five-night recovery retreat including consultation, daily activities, six spa treatments, two infusions, three colonic hydrotherapies and airport transfers. See thefarm.com.ph.

Two restaurants serve up spa cuisine that tastes too good to be good for you – but it is, with calories, fibre, fat, protein and wheat content listed on menus. Cameras and mobile phones are not allowed in public areas, the first due to the high profiles of some guests, the second because they're just annoying. Botox is administered discreetly in the medical rooms.  
**DON'T MISS** Buddhist monk Danchai's “floating meditation” pool class.  
**HOW MUCH** Three nights from \$2055 in low season, twin share, including meals, daily massage, health consultation and fitness activities. See traveltheworld.com.au and chivasom.com.

## Six Senses

**WHERE** Naka Yai Island, Phuket, Thailand.  
**WHO FOR** Lovers and style mongers.