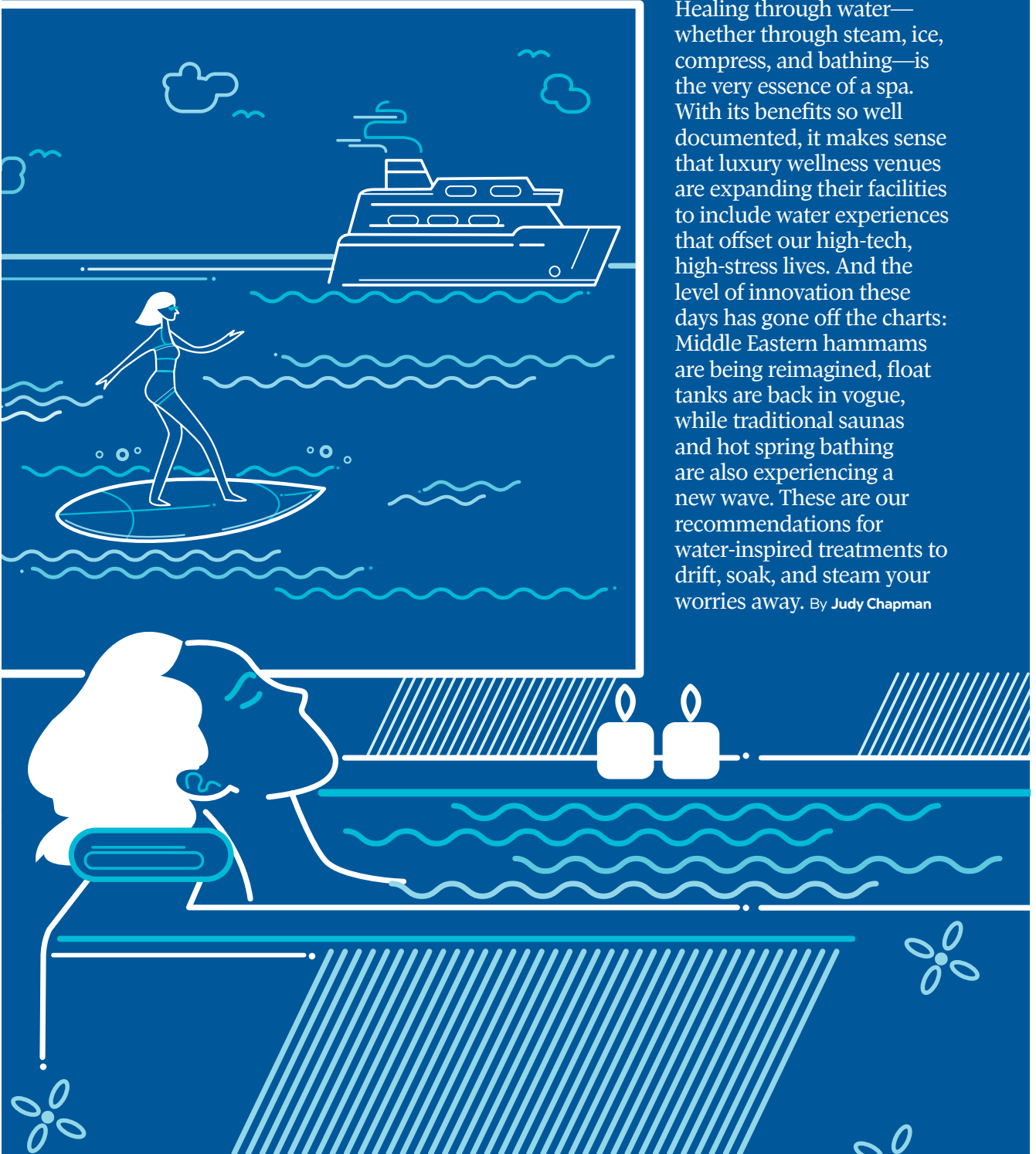


SPECIAL REPORT

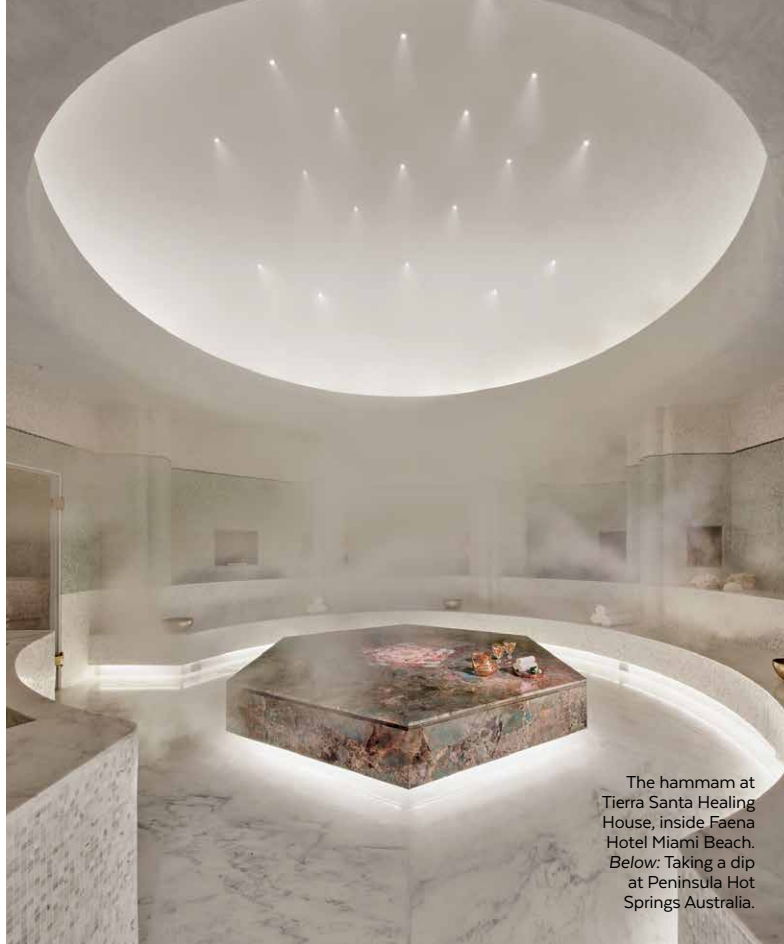
Fountains of Youth

Healing through water—whether through steam, ice, compress, and bathing—is the very essence of a spa. With its benefits so well documented, it makes sense that luxury wellness venues are expanding their facilities to include water experiences that offset our high-tech, high-stress lives. And the level of innovation these days has gone off the charts: Middle Eastern hammams are being reimagined, float tanks are back in vogue, while traditional saunas and hot spring bathing are also experiencing a new wave. These are our recommendations for water-inspired treatments to drift, soak, and steam your worries away. *By Judy Chapman*



Hydrotherapy

Practiced for centuries in Europe as a cure for pain relief, stress, arthritis, and sleep disorders, hydrotherapy is being reinvented for luxury spas. At Bali's **COMO Shambhala Estate** (comohotels.com), you soak in a mineral-rich vitality pool while massage jets pummel different parts of your body to boost circulation. Over on New Zealand's South Island, **Aro-Ha** (aro-ha.com) takes a different approach, with outdoor hot and cold pools that beckon after a day of vigorous hikes and yoga. Meanwhile, upscale urban hotels seem intent on creating the ultimate thermal sanctuary for guests to relax before their treatments. The marble Wet Lounge at the **Remède Spa at St. Regis Singapore** (remedespasingapore.com) is a prime example, where spa-goers can enjoy Mediterranean bathing rituals including a black olive soap scrub, a Moroccan Rhassoul clay mud wrap, and Dead Sea salt baths. Remède's award-winning Vichy shower describes a massage on an infrared heated marble bed, enhanced with sprinkles of rose and orange blossom-scented water. In Europe, the Italian fashion capital is home to **Shiseido Spa Milan** (shiseidospamilan.com), the first such spa by the Japanese personal care brand in the country. Occupying 1,000 square meters on the sixth and seventh floors of the recently revamped Excelsior Hotel Gallia, the venue beckons with plenty of natural light, and guests can make use of both hydromassage and a waterfall wall to relax the shoulders and neck after a swim in the indoor pool.



The hammam at Tierra Santa Healing House, inside Faena Hotel Miami Beach. Below: Taking a dip at Peninsula Hot Springs Australia.



SURF'S UP

There's nothing like natural salt water to replenish and revive, and you can make the most of that with some time on the waves. Indonesia is a great place to start: **Nihi Sumba Island** (nihihotels.com) offers surfer's stretch yoga, stand-up paddleboarding, and an indulgent day-long "spa safari," while you can have your fill of yoga, organic smoothie bowls, and even night surfing at **Hotel Komune Bali** (komuneresorts.com). A brand to watch in India and Sri Lanka is **Soul & Surf** (soulandsurf.com), which compliments morning surf lessons with sunset yoga, meditation, and Ayurvedic treatments. This June, **Four Seasons Resort Seychelles** (fourseasons.com) launched its customizable surf and yoga retreats; optional add-ons include an upper body-focused surfer's massage.

Next-Level Bathing

Hot spring experiences and contemporary bath houses have become increasingly popular in recent years. In Japan, Hoshino Resorts offers a contemporary take on hot-spring *ryokan* with its upscale Kai brand. Located 90 minutes' by train from Tokyo in the Hakone hot spring region, **Kai Hakone** (kai-ryokan.jp) features minimalist, semi-open baths looking out onto woodlands whose colors change with the seasons. **Amanemu** (aman.com) in Ise-Shima National Park is another testament to Japan's bathing culture: set around a mineral-rich thermal spring, the resort houses a 2,000-square-meter spa with two large onsen pools, a pair of private onsen pavilions, and a watsu pool. And for those who prefer total privacy, each suite at Amanemu features a salt-infused spring water bath.

In a similar vein, resorts in Bhutan are capitalizing on the Himalayan kingdom's long-standing wellness traditions. **COMO Uma Paro** (comohotels.com) offers guests a hot stone bath heated solely by fire-roasted river rocks, which crack and steam as they sink to the bottom of a wooden tub, releasing minerals into the water. For an additional layer of authenticity, **Amankora Gangtey** (aman.com) organizes an unforgettable soak inside a rustic stone shed belonging to a local farmer, with views of the Gangtey Valley and its famous 15th-century



An onsen pool at Amanemu. Right: Amatar Wellness Resort's Thai-inspired hammam.



monastery right from the comfort of your tub.

And with community and connection increasingly linked to longevity, communal bathing is also gaining new ground. At **Peninsula Hot Springs** (peninsulahotspots.com) outside Melbourne, families and friends congregate in magnesium-rich outdoor pools of varying temperature. Visitors who go this southern summer can even watch live music as they soak, thanks to the addition of an amphitheater overlooked by seven new hillside pools.

Showstopping Saunas and Steams

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Sweating is known to detoxify the body and new studies show that regular sauna time can lower our risk of dementia and boost cardiovascular health. Better yet, the latest wave of saunas in Europe has seriously upped the fun factor and levels of creativity. Scandinavia is leading the charge on this front, as evinced by **Löyly** (loylyhelsinki.fi)—Helsinki's recently opened public waterfront sauna complex—and megaspa **The Well** (thewell.no) outside Oslo, a three-level wonderland with 15 themed saunas ranging from a jungle to a cinema. Those who prefer staying put in the Norwegian capital should head to SALT, a temporary 5,000-square-meter cultural project on the seafront promenade. Running through October next year, it comprises



TANK TIME

Popular in the '70s for expanding consciousness, float tanks are also going through a rebirth, especially in cities where the need for sensory and digital downtime is more crucial than ever. In Melbourne, designer "sensory deprivation" pods are opening up all across town with the promise to calm the mind and reduce blood pressure as you bask in the feeling of weightlessness. A recommended option in the neighborhood of Prahran is **Beyond Rest** (beyondrest.com.au), where athletes go to release muscle tension in a cocoon of warm salty water. **Gravity Floatation Center** (gravityfloat.com.au) on Northcote's High Street is another upscale venue to decompress, as is **Resthouse Float Centre** (resthouse.com.au) in the suburb of Hampton East.

a series of striking wooden structures inspired by traditional Norwegian *fishkehjeller* (fish racks) used by nomadic Arctic communities. SALT's **Árdna** (salt.no) amphitheater is perhaps the largest—and certainly one of the coolest—public saunas in the world, where up to 120 people gather for group sweating on tiered benches looking out through a glass wall toward the iceberg-shaped Oslo Opera House, all while experiencing theater, readings, talks, and art exhibits. Visitors can even sip on a cocktail at the bar while grooving to Norwegian electronica. Árdna is open for sauna sessions on Saturday evenings, with admission including the use of two cold tubs outside the structure and a converted century-old barrel once used to store 6,000 liters of sherry.

Over in Scotland, the **Hot Box Sauna** (taymouthmarina.com) has been billed as the country's first lochside sauna, with large French doors framing views of Loch Tay, not to mention an evening DJ area and bar.

Southeast Asia also has a diverse selection of noteworthy saunas and steam venues. The sauna at **ESPA at Resorts World Singapore** comes with an unforgettable view, while the centerpiece of **Karma Spa at Karma Kandara** (karmagroup.com) in Bali is the cliff-hanging Infrared Detox Sauna that offers jaw-dropping vistas over the Indian Ocean.



Looking out at the Southern Alps from a sauna at Aro-Ha New Zealand. Below: Unwinding at Resorts World Singapore's ESPA spa.

The Spa at The Reverie Saigon (thereveriesaigon.com) is a standout for different reasons: at 1,200 square meters, it's easily the largest and most luxurious spa in Ho Chi Minh City. The two-floor expanse contains amenities like a dedicated hair and beauty salon, two open-air Jacuzzis, an almost Olympic-sized swimming pool, and gold-accented steam rooms in Carrara marble that are as decadent as the rest of the property.

Hammams Reimagined

No longer reserved for the Middle East, the traditional hammam has undergone a makeover in Asia and the Americas. Last year, **Amatara Wellness Resort Phuket** (amataraphuket.com) launched the world's first Thai-inspired hammam, a 250-square-meter space clad in vibrant mosaics and marble for an opulent Asia-meets-Morocco vibe. Here, guests lie on a heated stone slab while therapists apply Thai herbal scrubs and muds to cleanse the skin. At Bali's **Mulia Spa** (themulia.com), the Wellness Suite consists of hammam tables, a contemporary steam room, and saunas with personalized music, scent, and color therapy. The signature offering is the two-and-a-half hour Mulia Mermaid that includes a float in the hydrotonic pool, an aromatic steam session, and sea salt exfoliation. China is also getting in on the action; look out for the opening of the Hammam Suite



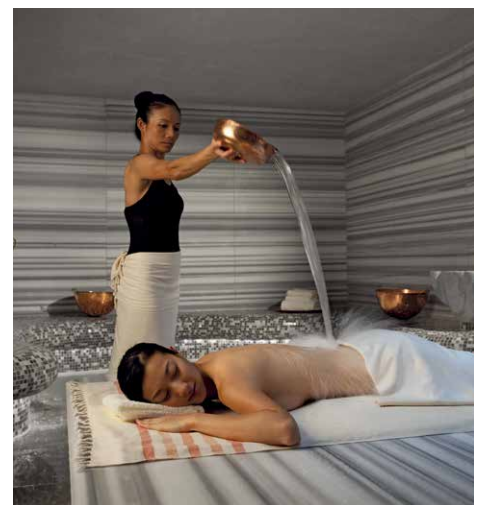
SHIP SHAPE

Spiritual cruises where your captain might also be your yoga teacher are on the rise. **Seven Seas Explorer** (rssc.com) was one of the pioneers in this movement and offers luxury wellness journeys through Indonesia, Myanmar, and Micronesia. **Belmond** (belmond.com) has also launched three- to seven-day Mindfulness Mandalay cruises on Myanmar's Irrawaddy River with on-board juice bars, spa treatments, and fitness sessions. Last year, **Seabourn** (seabourn.com) announced its collaboration with the renowned integrative doctor Dr. Andrew Weil. The first-ever of its kind at sea, the program will offer guests a holistic spa and wellness experience. A certified yoga and meditation practitioner will also be on hand to lead various complimentary classes and gatherings throughout the voyage.

at the **Mandarin Oriental Wangfujing Beijing** (mandarinoriental.com). Farther afield, the architectural showstopper of the moment is the **Tierra Santa Healing House** (faena.com), an 84-square-meter hammam cut from Amazonite stone at the Faena Hotel Miami Beach. Inside its Wet Spa, guests embark on an invigorating journey through hot and cold rooms, which range from the communal hammam and tepidarium to a two-seater ice parlor.

Sacred Showers

As the element of purification and renewal, water has deeply spiritual connotations. In Bali, two retreats outside Ubud bring travelers a meaningful spa experience with a local touch. The Water Blessing Ritual at **Fivelements** (fivelements.org) includes meditation, chanting, and a blessing by a Balinese priest, while guests at the recently opened **Oneworld Ayurveda** (oneworldayurveda.com) take the waters at historic Tirta Empul Temple as part of an initiation into a Panchakarma detox. Also in Indonesia, guests at **Nihi Sumba Island** (nihihotels.com) can opt for a jungle trek to the secret Blue Matayangu Waterfall whose cascading waters provide a soothing soundtrack to a guided meditation. And for a cleansing experience with an element of fun, **The Ritz Carlton, Koh Samui** (ritzcarlton.com) is slated to open in February with a "spa village" that offers a Songkran Shower, in which water is thrown on guests before treatments. Over in India, spa goers at the Rajasthani palace-hotel of **Raas Devigarh** (raasdevigarh.com) can rebalance their Svadhisthana water chakra with the Dance of Healing Waters: a two-hour session comprising a warm coconut oil pouring, a warm salt scrub, a restorative massage, and more.



COURTESY OF ARO-HA NEW ZEALAND; COURTESY OF ESPAAT RESORTS WORLD SINGAPORE