

'to love beauty is to see the light'

From authentic hammams set in majestic mosques to designer spas and organic healing – Paris is an exciting melting pot whose diverse new range of spas is giving it an outstanding reputation for wellness. While traditionally revered for its water and hammam therapies, more recently the City of Lights has seen a shift towards Oriental and healing-focused spas. Spa spaces are warm and intimate, treatments deep and nurturing, and the therapists are some of the world's best.

writer **Judy Chapman**

# Paris

## GOES SPIRITUAL

A mecca for art, food and culture, Judy Chapman discovers a host of irresistible spas for every budget and spa devotee.

DREAMING PARIS SERIES: STATUE ON THE PONT ALEXANDRE III WITH VIEW TO THE EIFFEL TOWER.  
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**ZEN ALLURE**  
**THÉMAÉ**

Slow down a notch or two at this spa haven located not far from the Louvre. Named after a Japanese tea ceremony, Thémaé was recently acknowledged as one of the best spas in Paris. Step inside this retreat and you'll discover why. Rendered walls, smooth lines, dim-lit corridors and harmonious colours create a calming atmosphere. Design-wise, every corner has been thoughtfully cared for with just enough special pieces to give it a slightly Oriental aura.

**TREATMENTS TO TRY**

Treatments are called 'ceremonies' and there's a strong focus on tea-based rituals. A highlight is the Hammam Ritual where you alternate between steam time, black soap scrubs and mud therapies bestowed upon a heated slab of marble. Other recommendations include the Onsen Ritual given in a traditional wooden Japanese tub and an Oriental Massage. Take home offerings include organic teas and Thémaé skin and body care made from white, green, red and black antioxidant-rich tea. [www.themae.fr](http://www.themae.fr)

**OPULENCE**

**FOUR SEASONS HOTEL GEORGE V**

For a well deserved touch of luxury in between shoe shopping and gallery visits? Venture inside this iconic hotel located near the Champs-Elysées and give your being over to the most good natured and well-trained staff. The Parisian style spa, reminiscent of Marie Antoinette's boudoir, features dimly lit cocoon rooms and steam and water facilities inclusive of a blue sanctuary pool surrounded by *trompe l'oeil* gardens. There's a private chic dining area stocked with strawberries, dried fruit and teas, and if you've booked the Marie Antoinette facial, you'll be served orange blossom tea and chocolate macarons – apparently the Queen's favourite.

THIS PAGE: Swimming pool at Four Seasons Hotel George V Paris. OPPOSITE PAGE: Le Spa d'Anne Fontaine and steam time during the Hammam Ritual at Thémaé Spa.

**TREATMENTS TO TRY**

Well-executed manicures and pedicures plus cocktail make-up sessions and hair treatments set the tone for a romantic evening. Curatives include Osteopathy, Fascial Pulsology and Mother-to-be massage. More recently the Four Seasons has partnered with Australian brand Sodashi to offer 100 percent natural sumptuous treatments. The Marie Antoinette Facial is a luxe experience in which three orange blossom-scented products are applied throughout a 'wow' facial, neck and scalp massage, ending with an (optional) leave-in jasmine hair mask. Make sure you save some time to lunch in La Galerie Lounge upstairs. [www.fourseasons.com](http://www.fourseasons.com)

**PURE CURES**

**LE SPA D'ANNE FONTAINE**

It was only a matter of time before fashion designers moved into the spa arena in Paris. Located on the ground floor of Anne Fontaine's signature store is the city's first organic urban spa based on the designer's philosophy. "I wanted to open a spa that was both organic and urban that conveys my passion for balance, comfort and needs as working woman," she says. Like her natural specialist clothing, interiors are cream, white and charcoal. Lines are ultra smooth with neo-Japanese fittings. Memorable are the water features inclusive of a rock Jacuzzi, waterfall with floors carved from stone and a tropical rainforest shower bed. Fontaine's private label line of candles, sprays, balms and creams are also on offer.

**TREATMENTS TO TRY**

She calls her treatment room 'cabins' and inside these wombs are an expansive choice of natural facials, wraps and massages. Alluring offerings include the Goddess Bath, Amazonian Baptism and The Girl from Ipanema, many of which are based on the designer's childhood memories in Brazil. The Slimming and Energising Massage comprises the rolling and kneading of nine sticks of sacred bamboo sticks resulting in toned and firm skin texture.

[www.annefontaine.com](http://www.annefontaine.com)

**ANCIENT BEAUTY**

**LA MOSQUÉE**

Located in the Latin Quarter, this is possibly Paris' most authentic (and affordable) healing experience. Within the interiors of France's oldest mosque of Islamic worship, is an awe-inspiring traditional hammam. Complete with several high-ceiling mosaic tiled rooms, some with stained glass windows and rose marble pillars. There are separate days for men and women but the courtyard café serving tea with Arabian sweets is open to all.

**TREATMENTS TO TRY**

Strip down and move your gorgeous body through five marble rooms for cold dips, scrubs and steams. Be adventurous and book a *Gommage* Exfoliation, where vibrant Moroccan women vigorously scrub your body with black soap until your skin feels as soft as silk. The massages, bestowed in a lantern-lit public chamber, feel incredible. At certain times of the day the women may break out into spontaneous glorious chants. Afterwards, recline on daybeds and sip mint tea served in Moroccan glasses. There's a minimal entrance fee and why not book the scrub, massage package and stay all day. [www.la-mosquee.com](http://www.la-mosquee.com)

**FRENCH TRADITIONAL**

**LES BAINES DU MARAIS**

Situated in the fashionable Marais area (known for its sweet boutiques, cafes and bars), this sensual spa has been an institution for well-groomed French for well over a decade. Its centrepiece, a hammam with relaxation rooms fitted out with day beds as well as a candle-lit tearoom. Upstairs a healthful café provides further nourishment.



**TREATMENTS TO TRY**

Self worship with traditional scrubs made from black soap and olive oil and cleansers fragrant of orange nectar and hibiscus. Access to the intoxicating wet area will leave you feeling invigorated for days. Everyone loves the three-hour session of hammam, sauna, gommage scrub, massage and pedicure but they also serve excellent *decléor* facials, massages and beauty treatments with various mix and match packages. The lantern-lit Moroccan lounge is the place to curl up, sip mint tea and disappear for a while. Even better, take home bath and beauty spa products made from olive, argan oil, bitter orange and honey. [www.lesbainsdumarais.fr](http://www.lesbainsdumarais.fr)







## FIVE STAR GLAM

### L'ESPACE PAYOT

Heated floors, yummy robes and slippers, a gymnasium and juice bar, make it the desired destination for spa and fitness devotees. More contemporary than most other spas in Paris, the large modern space, grey stone walls and muted colours create a cool yet calming ambience. Before your treatment, head to the signature pool area where customised veggie juices and teas are blended on-site.

#### TREATMENTS TO TRY

The 42-Movement Sculpting Facial created by founder Dr. Nadia Payot is a must. During this treatment, manual techniques are applied to the entire face, neck, décolleté, back and arms. Other interesting treatments include balneotherapy, pedicures and facials given with diamond powder, as well as the hammam and sauna facilities. One of the spa's best features is its sparkling 14-metre ultra violet indoor pool that allows one to bathe safely without chlorine. Underwater music and massage jets designed to target your neck muscles, back and feet make this a therapeutic water experience. [www.espacepayot.com](http://www.espacepayot.com)

THIS PAGE: Hammam and massage at L'Espace Payot. OPPOSITE PAGE: The bath at Valmont Spa, photographed by Allen Meaulle.



## HIGH-TECH BEAUTY

### SPA VALMONT @ LE MEURICE

Where better for the Swiss spa brand, Valmont, to open a decadent spa than at the legendary Hotel Le Meurice, Paris's first palace built in 1835. More recently the hotel has undergone decoration by the renowned Philippe Starck. The hotel itself is situated not far from the Louvre and flagship stores for brands including Chanel, Hermès and Cartier. While inside, health-focused guests can stay well via a gymnasium and terrace café serving healthful salads, vegetable juices and detox macarons.

#### TREATMENTS TO TRY

Exotic African and Asian wraps and Indian body scrubs are complimented by a range of soothing back, leg and scalp massage therapies. But it's the glacier inspired collagen boosting therapies that make this menu a standout. Try spring water, vitamin C and rose-balm infused facials. Indeed, what distinguishes Valmont is its technological-based approach to skincare – think cellular renewal and optimal hydration. For men, a Glaciers Vitality Treatment promises to leave the skin fresh and moist. [www.meuricehotel.com](http://www.meuricehotel.com)

## MODERN BEAUTY

### NUXE SPA

For those already familiar with French beauty brand Nuxe (a combination of the words natural and luxury), it won't be a surprise to discover there are not one but several Nuxe based spas in Paris. At the Hotel Square on the west side of the city, for instance, guests can escape into a world of ivory and gold amid curved shaped modern interiors when they take Nuxe's renowned beauty rituals. Founded back in 1957 by a pharmacist who had a passion for aromatherapy and phytotherapy, the legendary brand is now under the guidance of Aliza Jabes and is found all over the globe.

#### TREATMENTS TO TRY

Secret fruit and flower recipes and beauty rituals loaded with exquisite aromatherapy neck, back and facial massages all work together for optimum results. Try the 'Kashmir Zebra Massage' at Hotel Square whereby therapists bestow Indian massage techniques to soothe and nurture while over at 32 Montorgueil, experience east and west treatments amid 17th century medieval surrounds of oak, beams and stone. [www.nuxe.com](http://www.nuxe.com)





THIS PAGE: Aromatic Japanese floral bath and back massage at Cinq Mondes. OPPOSITE PAGE: The VIP Suite at Anne Semonin.

## PERSONALISED RITUALS

### ANNE SEMONIN

A pioneer in customised beauty prescriptions, whereby skincare is made specifically for each guest's skin, there are now Anne Semonin spas all over the globe. 'Opening late last year, *Jour de Spa* is her second Parisian spa address. A refuge from the outer world, soak in aromatherapy bathing rituals and spirulina remedies or rebalance via osteopathy, lifestyle coaching and workshops. Retail-wise, beautifully presented prescriptions range from seaweed body powders and nourishing body milks to pre and post-operative skin and body care.

#### TREATMENTS TO TRY

What's significant is her approach in blending products onsite to ensure optimum results. That's why she has used her new product, Black Sand and Body Scrub, in the creation of the 'Black Sandy Body Scrub Ritual.' A blend of marine extracts, jojoba, calendula, sweet almond oils and sand collected from French Polynesia, this exotic concoction is sure to leave your skin renewed and radiant.

[www.jourdespa.com](http://www.jourdespa.com)

## GLOBAL SPA

### CINQ MONDES

Embark on another sensory journey at Cinq Mondes founded by Jean-Louis Poiroux who spent a decade travelling the globe in search of fascinating beauty and bathing therapies. Little wonder his concept blends the best of European, Japanese and Middle Eastern experiences with cutting edge cosmetology. Back in 2000 he opened his flagship spa in a historic building in the famous *Square de l'Opera Louis Juvet*. Interiors feature Japanese Zen treatment booths and wooden bathtubs decorated in orchids and rose petals. Today there are 12 Cinq Mondes Spas from Monte Carlo to Marrakech and the Seychelles.

#### TREATMENTS TO TRY

Everything from Taoist, Oriental, Javanese and Balinese to Indian Ayurvedic and Brazilian inspired rituals. But for something closer to home, hammam scrubs from Morocco are delivered with sesame, argan and olive oils. Take home retail products are made without any mineral oils, animal products or artificial colourings.

[www.cinqmondes.com](http://www.cinqmondes.com)

## paris black book

Paris's first detox hotel has opened. Located in the fashionable Marais district, the Hotel Gabriel Paris Marais ([www.gabrielhotelparis.com](http://www.gabrielhotelparis.com)) is dedicated to guests' wellbeing from the inside out. Mostly white and soft coloured interiors feel clean and Zen. Detox devotees can clean out the cobwebs at a cellular level via internal ecology, healthful cuisine and antioxidant tonics. What's unique is in-room sleep systems. A variety of light and sound programmes filter throughout the night that affects one's melatonin levels resulting in a soothing sleep. All this plus in-room detoxification therapies. Depart rejuvenated.

Not to be left out, French beauty houses like *Guerlain*, *Clarins*, *Carita*, *Spa Nuxe*, *Thalgo* and *Darphi* offer memorable services inside their stand-alone spas. Try French perfumer *Annick Goutal's* salon spa that offers beauty parlor glamour – imagine the scent of fresh roses with shelves lined with glamorous bottles of handmade aromatics. Alternatively, the *Dior Institut* at the *Plaza Athenée* offers five treatment rooms and a relaxation lounge for spa goddesses. As well, a host of Asian inspired spas include the *Ban Thai Spa* offering traditional Eastern and Thai therapies.

## outside of paris

The French have long believed in the benefits of bathing and drinking thermal waters to the extent that their government subsidises folk to spend time at curative spas around the country. While the tradition of healing through water still continues, there's an increasing choice of modern interpretations of healthful water spas.

'*La Ferme Thermale D'Eugenie*', for instance, located in Southwest France towards the border of Spain is a departure from the clinical medical spas found in regional France. Set inside a beautifully restored farmhouse, the communal relaxation lounge features a crackling fireplace, lush robes, books and a tea bar. Opt for their signature water experience that consists of five 15-minute treatments centred around the healthful waters. Simply progress from creamy mud baths to Vichy showers and an underwater massage experience. Depart invigorated. [www.michelguerard.com](http://www.michelguerard.com)

A four-hour train ride from Paris towards Geneva takes you to The Buddha Spa, part of the chic Buddha Bar group. Situated in the legendary Evian mineral water region, the eclectic spa celebrates all continents with particular inspiration drawn from the Himalayan region. "We wanted to make a new twist to the town, yet there is still a harmony here and the call of the water, mountains and fresh air make it all very spiritual," says creator, Helen Coulon. "People depart feeling touched by the Buddha." [www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com)

Most spa (and wine) lovers dream of visiting the infamous '*Caudalie Vinotherapie*' located in a vineyard in Bordeaux, the renowned wine region. Spend the night in a chateau and by day spa via a host of treatments made from the rich mineral waters and local wines. Imagine bathing in a red wine bath or being wrapped up in crushed cabernet scrubs – both of which are said to help combat free-radical damage.

[www.sources-caudalie.com](http://www.sources-caudalie.com)

