



8 OF THE Best OUTDOOR SPAS

Find inner peace in the great outdoors, writes
Katie McGonagle

@katie_mcgonagle



De-stressing comes in many forms: while some of us head outside for fresh air and freedom, others book themselves in to the nearest spa for total top-to-toe pampering. So what if you could combine the two?

Stretching out on a massage table with nothing but the sound of the waves lapping, the feel of a gentle breeze on bare skin, or the scent of tropical flowers blooming in the gardens will have clients feeling at peace before the spa treatment even starts.

If that sounds like an ideal antidote to everyday stress, check out our pick of some of the world's best spas inspired by Mother Nature.

1 VINPEARL PHU QUOC, VIETNAM

Vietnam has been making quite a name for itself on the spa stage, with luxury resorts and spa-inclusive packages popping up all over the country, not least on the increasingly popular resort island of Phu Quoc. That's where Rebecca Turner, senior product manager for luxury long-haul at Simply Luxury by Travel 2, recommends for those in search of relaxation.

"My top outdoor spa has got to be the Vincharm Spa at the Vinpearl Phu Quoc Resort & Golf," she says. "The individual treatment rooms are private above-water cabins raised on stilts, connected by a wooden walkway that can be opened up to leave you feeling like you are floating on the water. The

soothing sound of the water gently lapping against the cabins is the perfect accompaniment to the aromatherapy massages. All of the senses are catered for, with the holistic spa treatments leaving you feeling relaxed and replenished."

The hotel also features tennis courts, water sports, a large pool and a 27-hole golf course for those who want to intersperse their spa days with a bit more activity.

Book it: Simply Luxury by Travel 2 offers a week's B&B in a Deluxe Garden View Room, with Emirates flights from Gatwick and private transfers, from £1,199, valid April 16 to June 4. travel2.com

2 CONSTANCE MOOFUSHI, MALDIVES

Of course, when it comes to all things overwater, nowhere can hold a candle to the Maldives, where spas set above that calm, turquoise ocean are practically de rigueur.

At Constance Moofushi in the South Ari Atoll, each open-sided spa cabin has windows built into the floor so guests can open their eyes and be hypnotised by the waters below or keep them shut and let the breeze and the sound of the waves do the work instead.

There are six treatments for couples to choose from, plus body scrubs and facials focusing on natural ingredients. If that's still not enough to get that back-to-nature vibe, there are also outdoor yoga and fitness classes, and a shaded relaxation area on

the wooden jetty, so there's no chance of feeling stressed here.

Book it: If Only offers a seven-night all-inclusive package at Constance Moofushi from £2,999 including Emirates flights, accommodation in a beach villa, seaplane transfers and airport taxes, for departures June 1-20. One to five-day spa packages can be added, starting at €300. ifonly.net

3 SON BRULL, MAJORCA

The sound of waves is soothing enough, but so is the sight of green, rolling hills, which is exactly what awaits at monastery-turned-design hotel Son Brull in Majorca. This rural boutique, a member of Relais & Chateaux, is set in the north Majorcan countryside at the foot of the Tramuntana mountains.

Its spa opened just last month, with a host of treatments making use of the local prickly pear, along with other Mediterranean plants and herbs grown in its gardens. There's even a series of seasonal signature treatments, from 'spring', which uses the prickly pear leaf and flower in a massage, scrub, body mask and facial; to 'summer', which draws on the cactus's fruit and essential oils alongside aloe vera; and 'autumn', which makes the most of the oil and seeds of the prickly pear for reflexology, a hot stone body massage and facial.

That's rounded out with daily yoga, organic home-grown produce in the restaurant, and

multi-day packages which pair spa treatments with cycling and hiking in the nearby mountains. **Book it:** Signature seasonal rituals cost €225 for 135 minutes. Rates at Son Brull start at £215 per night for a Superior Room including breakfast, based on two adults sharing. sonbrull.com/en

4 ROYAL LIVINGSTONE, ZAMBIA

Enjoying a view across wide, sweeping scenery is uplifting enough, but when that view happens to include the mighty Zambezi River and the even more impressive Victoria Falls, the sense of relaxation is of another order of magnitude altogether.

The Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara capitalises on its unrivalled location on the banks of the Zambezi with three riverside spa gazebos, so treatments are accompanied by the sound of birdsong and the splashing of wildlife in the rushing water below. Whether guests are indulging in the Zambezi Massage – using African floral oils and stretching to relieve tension – or a Poolside Foot Massage complete with a cocktail to sip, they can be guaranteed a tranquil experience.

Book it: Nightly rates at the Royal Livingstone Hotel by Anantara start at £595 for a Deluxe Room, including breakfast and unlimited access to Victoria Falls. royal-livingstone.anantara.com



5 VICEROY RIVIERA MAYA, MEXICO

"The Jungle Spa at the Viceroy Riviera Maya Luxury Resort on Mexico's Caribbean coast is a spa like few I can think of," says Deborah Wadhams, product manager at Pure Luxury. "Set in a peaceful outdoor cabin, surrounded by lush jungle, the spa lets you unwind from the stresses of every day, rebalance your spirit and connect with nature."

"If the jungle spa isn't enough, try some yoga in the resort's overwater pavilion. Or if you want something a little more active, I'd recommend a nature walk to spy some of the incredible birds that live in the vicinity."

Wadhams recommends couples try the Xaman Ek treatment, which translates as South Star Abundance Ritual, drawing on Mayan rituals as well as the natural world with a 50-minute massage to the sounds of the waterfall nearby, followed by a herbal bath in a tub made from the wood of the zapote tree, which is endemic to the area.



If the jungle spa at the Viceroy Riviera Maya isn't enough, try some yoga in the resort's overwater pavilion

Book it: Pure Luxury offers a week at the five-star Viceroy Riviera Maya, staying in a Luxury Villa on a bed-and-breakfast basis, from £2,459 for travel between May 7 and June 12, including BA flights from Gatwick. goldmedal.co.uk



CASTELLO DI VELONA, ITALY

Heritage hotels and spa holidays don't always go hand in hand, and even if they do, it's often a small treatment room or two set deep

ABOVE LEFT: The Royal Livingstone, Zambia

ABOVE RIGHT: Viceroy Riviera Maya, Mexico

BELOW: Castello di Velona, Italy

in the hotel interior, saving the best views for rooms or restaurants. But Castello di Velona, an Italian castle set an hour south of Siena with origins in the 11th century, is the exception that proves the rule.

Not only is it a historical national monument, but it's surrounded by the Unesco World Heritage Site of Val d'Orcia, whose picturesque landscapes inspired many a Renaissance painter.

They can be enjoyed in all their 360-degree glory from thermal infinity pools, which overlook these serene landscapes and vineyards growing grapes for local red Brunello di Montalcino. Lie back on one of the in-pool hydro massage beds, or raise a glass under the shade of one of its king-sized gazebos. And if that's not sufficient, there's even a Brunello Ritual on offer in the spa, using the wine in a face and body peel and deep massage.

Book it: Nightly rates start at €346 for a Castle Junior Suite in low season. The 80-minute Brunello Ritual costs €250. castellodivelona.it/en





LEFT:
Sarojin
Khao Lak,
Thailand

RIGHT:
Nihi Sumba
Island,
Indonesia



7 SAROJIN KHAO LAK, THAILAND

The vibe at this Thai resort is all about embracing nature. It's surrounded by five national parks, the diving havens of the Similan Islands, and the dramatic beauty of Phang Nga Bay, not to mention the tropical gardens of the hotel itself – so it should be no surprise that the spa is just as firmly rooted in its environment as the rest of the property.

The Pathways spa boasts four open-air treatment pavilions – two doubles and two singles – with rain showers and couples' baths, along with an open-air relaxation area so spa-goers can make their good vibes last even longer. If that's still not enough, recommend one of the packages combining several treatments in one. Nature's Midday Haven, for example, gives couples 240 minutes of complete calm, courtesy of a traditional Thai massage, aromatic bath, coconut and rice body scrub, moisturising massage and a facial using natural ingredients.

Book it: A night in a Garden Residence costs around £153 including breakfast and taxes, or upgrade to a spa suite for an extra £75 a night to include one hour of Pathways Spa treatments per night per room. Prices include the Sarojin's summer offer of 50% off stays between April 16 and October 31,



Nihi Sumba Island's new spa safari leaves all other wellness experiences in its wake

applicable when booked at least 30 days before arrival.

sarojin.com



NIHI SUMBA ISLAND, INDONESIA

A stay at this remote hideaway – the Indonesian island of Sumba is twice the size of Bali but with just a fraction of its population – would be relaxing enough on its own, but its new spa safari leaves all other wellness experiences in its wake. It doesn't come cheap, so target it at honeymooners or couples keen to splash out.

The day starts just after sunrise with a 90-minute trek (or an open-air safari drive, for those who don't want to expend as much energy) to the secluded Nihi Oka valley on the island's west coast, where they can join a one-hour yoga session, before moving up to a treehouse platform for a private bush-cooked breakfast – all healthy foods, of course.

Then comes a day spent in their own private bale with

personal spa therapists on hand to offer massages, body wraps, scrubs or reflexology using everything from avocado to cacao beans, all with uninterrupted views of the sea or the verdant paddy fields. After that, there's a night at the ultra-luxury Villa Rahasia and a romantic dinner on the island,

with the option of upgrading to include a vow renewal or blessing by a priest, should they desire.

Book it: Rates at Villa Rahasia start at £1,590 a night based on two sharing on a full-board basis, including all spa treatments. Sumba is a one-hour flight from Bali, with daily links via Denpasar.

nihi.com

✓ Best of the rest



Spa on sea: Why go overwater when you can be on the water, with new luxury option The Floating Resort by ScubaSpa in the Maldives? Kuoni contracting manager Linda Pedler says: "It really is a floating resort, and the spa is like being in a luxury hotel but on a yacht. It is outstanding."



Thalassotherapy: Sit back and relax in the salt-rich seawater pools of Las Villas Bahia del Duque in Tenerife. The Costa Adeje resort comes highly recommended by Jetzholidays thanks to its outdoor pools, cabanas and sun deck, paired with a hammam, steam room and sauna.



Caribbean calm: The Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa has open-sided massage huts set on one of the best beaches in Aruba – and on this sun-kissed island, that's saying something – complemented by Balinese decor and specialist yoga holidays.