

Healing powers

Greece and Cyprus are overflowing with spa and wellness retreats, writes Laura French

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FACT

Cyplon Holidays is offering agents gifts such as bubbles and truffles on bookings of at least £6,000, as well as incentives such as free stays

Wellness tourism is positively booming – it's worth about \$563 billion worldwide, according to the Global Wellness Institute – and while long-haul spa breaks are all well and good (excuse the pun), for those wanting to stay a little closer to home, Europe has plenty of options.

And where better than Greece, home to some of the world's first spa practices, and nearby Cyprus, where Greek goddess of love Aphrodite is said to

have bathed in the rejuvenating waters? You'll find spa retreats left, right and centre, so read on to find out some of our highlights.

▶ TIME TO RETREAT

There are spas – and then there are full-on spa retreats. For the latter, suggest Out of the Blue Capsis Elite Resort in Crete, where options span a six-day yoga and organic-food retreat to healthy-eating programmes for kids and medical detox

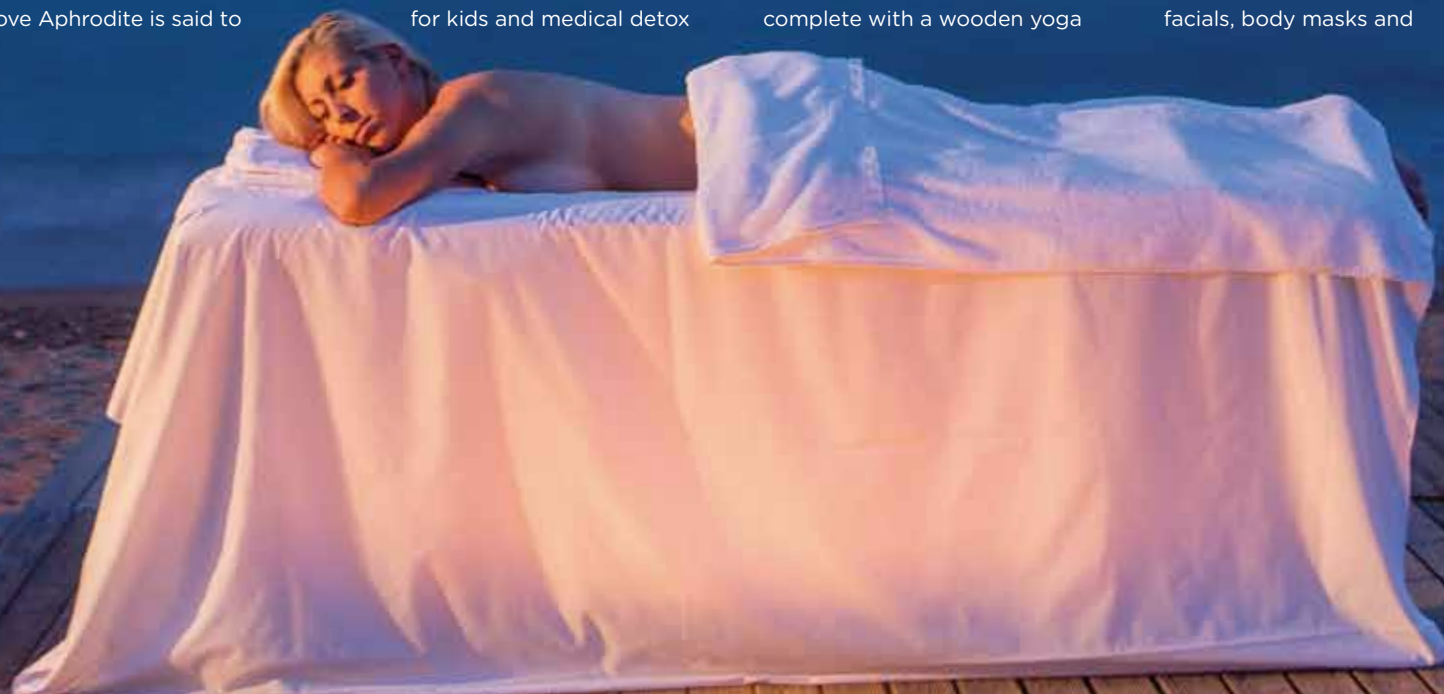


The Greek goddess of love Aphrodite is said to have bathed in the rejuvenating waters of Cyprus

plans for adults. It's all set in 400 hectares of lush gardens, complete with a wooden yoga

deck for those wanting to stretch out in front of a scenic backdrop.

Further east in Crete, you'll find beachfront icon Elounda Mare Hotel, home to a Six Senses Spa that won it the 'best wellness retreat' gong at last year's World Spa Awards. Experiences include a 'sleep well journey', a body rejuvenation detox programme and various other medical treatments alongside classic offerings – Ayurvedic massages, facials, body masks and



PICTURE: CHRISTOS DRAZOS

→ hammam treatments – all devised with the help of science boffins and in-the-know therapists.

On the island of Evia – about two-and-a-half hours from Athens – lies the town of Edipsos, whose healing waters have been drawing in spa-seekers since Roman times. Cream of the crop here is the five-star Thermae Sylla Spa Wellness Hotel, which offers its own medical spa treatments plus weight-loss, detox and anti-stress programmes, using thermal, mineral-rich waters from underground springs in its products and pools to help rejuvenate.

▶ HEALING WATERS

It's not the only thermal retreat on the shores of Greece. Over in Halkidiki, Travel 2 recommends the Miraggio Thermal Spa for its geothermal springs, plus treatments using ingredients sourced from the local environs: think herbs, honey and olive oil.

Meanwhile, in Cyprus you'll find a similar focus on thermal waters – especially at the Ayii Anargyri Natural Healing Spa Resort, an adult-only retreat in the village of Millou, close to Paphos. Yoga, meditation,



Treatments are fed by sulphur spring water – said to slow ageing, heal inflammatory joints and work various miracles

aromatherapy and holistic therapies feature on the menu, alongside a range of treatments fed by sulphur spring water – said to slow ageing, heal inflammatory joints, improve sleep and work various other miracles.

There's plenty more on the natural spring front elsewhere on the island, not least in the Troodos Mountains, where you'll find Casale Panayiotis, a retreat in the traditional village of Kalopanayiotis. Made up of converted village homes, it's surrounded by nature trails, wine routes, mountain-bike tracks and colourful orchards, and boasts a dedicated spa serving up an exotic 'champagne and truffles' experience, plus other Mediterranean massages, hydrotherapy treatments and bath rituals.

It's not just the natural spring water spas booming here though – thalassotherapy centres designed to harness the power of seawater are having something of a heyday too, according to Mathilde Robert, managing director for Planet Holidays. "It's the big thing among luxury spa hotels in both countries," she says.

Among its champions is the Anassa in Paphos, whose all-natural products use water pumped straight from the nearby Chrysochou Bay. Carrier recommends the spa here for its extensive facilities, which include a sky-lit indoor pool, 18 treatment rooms, fitness equipment and saltwater exercise pool. And if that's not enough to secure a sale, the Roman villa-style architecture and verdant landscaped gardens might be.

Back in Greece, it's Crete's Aldemar Royal Mare that takes the crown on the thalassotherapy front, according to Jet2holidays, offering one-off treatments including an anti-jetlag facial and a slimming water massage, alongside two, four and six-day programmes targeted at different needs. There's also an oriental hammam, hydro jet-bath and



Olympic Holidays offers a week's half-board at the five-star Elounda Beach Hotel, Crete, from £1,525. The price is based on two sharing a deluxe spa room with a sea view, and includes private taxi transfers and return flights from Gatwick, departing May 8. olympicholidays.com

Olympic Holidays has a week's B&B at Casale Panayiotis, Cyprus, from £799 per person in mid-April, including flights and car hire. planet-holidays.co.uk



The Romanos, Costa Navarino

DESTINATIONS GREECE & CYPRUS SPA & WELLNESS RETREATS

→ affusion shower, with body scrubs, hydration treatments and aqua biking on the agenda for added oomph.

▶ ADDED PIZZAZZ

Elsewhere, you'll find plenty more unusual offerings. Classic Collection Holidays recommends the Anazoe Spa at The Romanos, a Luxury Collection Resort, in Costa Navarino, where treatments are inspired by ancient Greek physician Hippocrates and follow practices inscribed on clay tablets found at the nearby Palace of Nestor. The treatments – which include light therapies, heat treatments in ice grotto rooms and other more offbeat options – are tailored to clients' needs via everything down to the sound, with ancient Greek melodies accompanying olive-oil massages.

Over on Mykonos, Kensho Boutique Hotel & Suites has a spa known as the 'Cave' with rock-boulder walls, a colourful light-up pool and tropical rain bed, plus high-tech sun beds that let users customise the sound, heat and



Aldemar Royal Mare

colour. And in Crete, Daios Cove's new spa features a thermal suite featuring a Finnish sauna, 'Ninvea' reaction showers and a cryotherapy chamber, plus beach cabanas for those looking for a Thai massage by the sea.

If it's more yoga your clients are into, direct them to the island of Skiathos, where the Skiathos Princess resort offers dedicated 'Yogafest' weeks, with freshly picked herbs and reflexology treatments greeting clients at its harmony-giving spa.

But it's the award-winning Hébe Spa at Columbia Beach Resort in Pissouri Bay, Cyprus, that really stands out, according to Kuoni. It offers body scrubs, wraps and other goodies as well as a plunge pool, sauna, Jacuzzi and more. It's also the only spa on the island to boast an Elemis Biotec machine – used for super-charged facials that reboot cellular performance, apparently. Combine that with a splash from Aphrodite's Baths and everlasting youth is all but guaranteed. **TW**

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TOP FOUR NEW OPENINGS

1 **Gennadi Grand Resort** opens in Rhodes in May, with an eco-friendly spa featuring a green roof and offering Greek-inspired treatments, plus activities such as aerial yoga and aqua pilates.



2 **The Annabelle** in Paphos will be unveiling its rooftop Ouranos Wellbeing Spa next month as part of a wider £10m renovation.



3 **Louis Paphos Breeze** will open in the summer with all-inclusive packages and an emphasis on seaside yoga, cycling, jogging and other wellness activities.



4 **Parklane Resort & Spa** – formerly Le Méridien – will make its anticipated debut in Limassol in the spring with three pools and a 3,000sq m thalassotherapy spa.

