

A woman with her hair in a bun is lying on a massage table in a spa. She is looking directly at the camera. The table is covered with a white towel and is set on a dark stone base. The background features a large window with a wooden frame and a view of greenery outside. The scene is framed by two large wooden doors with glass panes.

# Secrets of the world's BEST SPAS

Step behind the doors and enter the world of the most exclusive spas... The best ones make you rethink the way you eat, sleep, exercise and even use your phone and computer. Until you get the chance to slip into your fluffy gown and slippers, enjoy some spa benefits at home with our insider secrets and tips to try

FEATURE **NADINE BAGGOTT**

*try it*

## Chew each mouthful of food 30 times

MAYR FX, AUSTRIA

### The lowdown

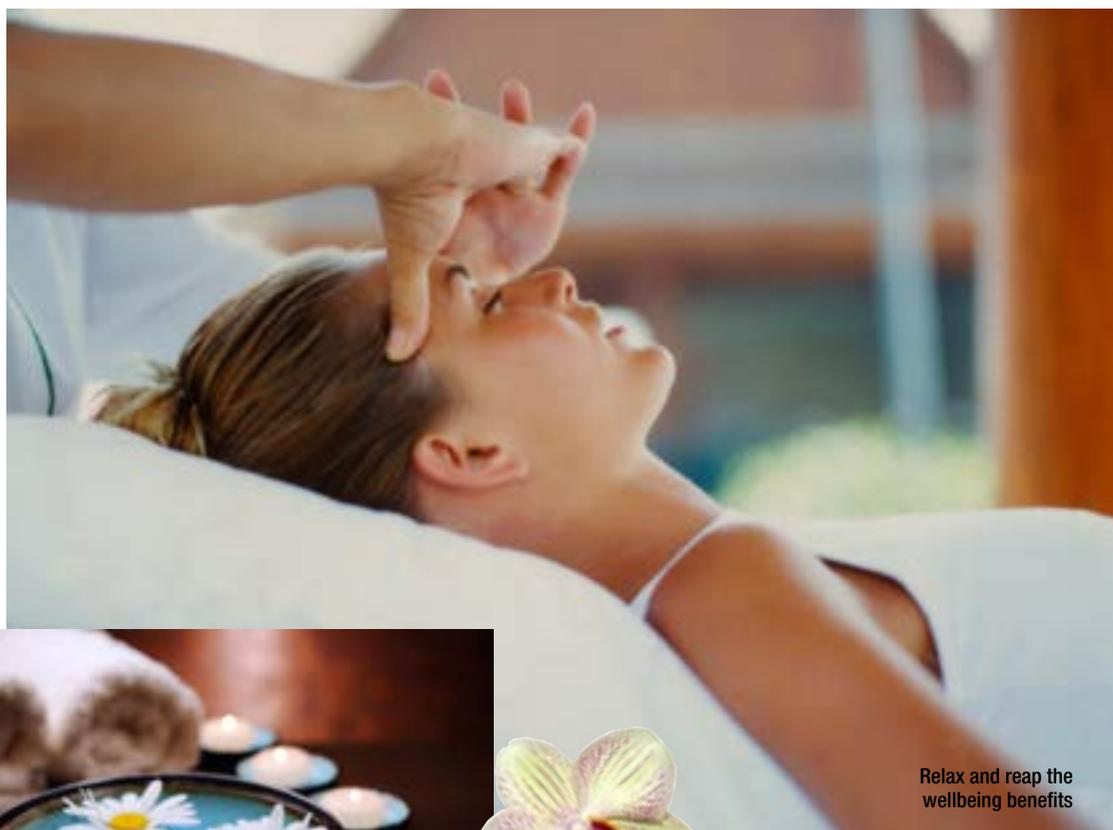
One of Europe's most established detox centres, Mayr FX is nestled in the Austrian hills beside a gorgeous lake. The regime is based on resting and cleansing your intestines and the key premise is to eat in silence, chewing each mouthful of the meagre rations (broth, yogurt, and spelt rolls) 30 times before you swallow, while also drinking magnesium salts to help, ahem, 'flush', out the toxins. Colonics and blood lasering are optional.

### Take-home lessons

'Chew each mouthful of food 30 times and you will automatically eat slowly, eat less at each meal and digest your food more effectively to lose weight,' advises Mayr FX Medical Director, Dr Stephan Domenig, author of *The Alkaline Cure* (£14.99, amazon.co.uk), which aims to help you avoid excess acidity in your body - via what you eat and when - for overall health benefits.

### Want to visit?

From €1,200  
(mayrandmore.com).



Relax and reap the wellbeing benefits



*feel it*

## Make your bedroom a calm zone

CHAMPNEYS UK

### The lowdown

Britain's best loved spa offers a variety of special breaks, including a two-day sleep retreat for insomniacs and restless sleepers. Discover how to break the broken sleep cycle with Professor Jason Ellis. Learn what foods and drinks encourage sleep and how to break the '3am wide awake, can't sleep' cycle for good.

### Take-home lessons

'Stress is stealing our sleep,' says Professor Ellis, 'Yet so many of us take our work into the bedroom. Leave your

laptop, phone and iPad downstairs. Make your bedroom a calm zone. Do not sleep with your gadgets charging by your bed.'

Take time to prepare for sleep, too. Read a book, take a bath, dim the lights, have a warm, caffeine-free drink and relax before even attempting to drop off.

### Want to visit?

From £399 at the Tring spa  
(champneys.com).

*love it*

## Focus on fab food

SHA WELLNESS, SPAIN

### The lowdown

This spa combines macrobiotic organic food in controlled portions with Europe's best therapists and medical advice. You can be treated for insomnia, weight-loss and more.

### Take-home lessons

This diuretic Sha Wellness Detox Juice lowers blood pressure and promotes weight loss. Blend 10 cored green apples and 1 celery stalk in a juicer with the juice of 1 lemon and 3cm (1¼in) ginger until all the juice has been extracted. Add the juice of another lemon, plus ginger to taste. Serve immediately.

### Want to visit?

From €300  
(shawellnessclinic.com).

★ Try making the Mayr FX Alkaline Soup at [goodhousekeeping.co.uk/mayralkalinesoup](http://goodhousekeeping.co.uk/mayralkalinesoup)

# do it **Breathe away anxiety**

## CANYON RANCH, USA

### The lowdown

These spas aim to work as much on your psychological health as your physical wellbeing. This means that there is a team of cognitive behavioural and neuro-linguistic programming therapists, biofeedback experts and what are called heart-mind connection therapists who can train you to control your reaction to stress to prevent panic and anxiety.

### Take-home lessons

Stress and anxiety are on the rise and the causes can be virtually impossible to escape, but you can learn to minimise the negative effects on your body by controlling your breathing. Focussing your thoughts on slow, deep breathing has been proved to reduce

your heart rate and anxiety, though it can be hard not to allow your mind to wander.

Try this simple Pranayama yoga technique for starters: lie or sit in a quiet room. Place one hand over your abdomen and one on your chest, so that you can feel your breath. Focus on inhaling and exhaling through your nose. You should feel your breath begin to slow and become deeper and calmer.

### Want to go?

From £913 ([canyonranch.com](http://canyonranch.com)).



try it

## The only pill to pop

GLENEAGLES ESPA  
LIFE, SCOTLAND

### The Lowdown

As well as golf, Gleneagles offers a range of rehabilitation spa breaks including Fertility and Conception, Meno-Ease and Relaxation and De-stress, with a team of holistic therapists including massage therapists, acupuncturists, osteopaths and naturopaths.

### Take-home lessons

Multivitamin tablets are not one-size-fits-all and it's worth visiting a dietician if you're concerned about likely deficiencies. The one vitamin we all seem to need, though, is vitamin D, especially in Winter when we really don't get enough sunshine in the UK. Look for a brand that contains at least 400-800 international units, as recommended by GH's Dr Sarah Jarvis.

**Want to visit?** From £98 (gleneagles.com).



Discover the healing power of water

## For less stress, add magnesium

BAD RAGAZ, SWITZERLAND

### The lowdown

There's a long history of 'taking the waters' in Europe and at Bad Ragaz your spa stay is based around the healing power of the local mineral-rich thermal spa waters. As part of a weight-loss programme, you drink two litres of the stuff a day, as well as bathe in it and get pummelled and hosed down with it.

### Take-home lessons

Yes, we should all drink more water, but the advantage of the Ragazer water is that it is naturally rich in minerals. It can be hard to bathe every day in mineral water but you can add mineral salts to a bath once a week to mimic the spa experience at home. Research shows that two thirds of us are deficient in magnesium, which has been proved to help ease stress, headaches, muscle tension and to help regulate bowel movements to ease constipation. Try adding Better You Magnesium Flakes, £9.99 (betteryou.com), to your bath at night to help ease muscle tension and aid sleep.

**Want to visit?** From £275 (resortragaz.ch).



believe it

## Body brushing works!

CAPRI PALACE LEG SCHOOL, ITALY

### The lowdown

An entire spa devoted to getting your legs into shape and working on the dreaded cellulite? Bring it on. Yes there are mud masks, wraps, seaweed gels and even a

toning plunge pool, but nearly all of the treatments start with a lymphatic boosting scrub and body brush. And, you know what? Done every day for five minutes, it really delivers.

### Take-home lessons

Invest in a quality pure bristle Elemis Skin Brush, £21 (timetospa.co.uk), that you can hold in the palm of your hand. Starting at your feet, brush your skin with long, overlapping strokes upwards, from your calves up your thighs, and then your bottom and stomach. Then work up from your hands to your armpits, always aiming towards the heart. Five minutes a day transforms dry and spongy skin, boosts circulation and gives you a glow.

**Want to go?** From £135 (capripalace.com).



## love it

### Enjoy exercise and you'll stick with it

RAGDALE HALL, UK

#### The lowdown

As English as afternoon tea, Ragdale Hall is an unpretentious spa that's perfect for mother-and-daughter getaways. The 12-step Thermal spa is stunning, and the philosophy here is that fitness should be fun – who's going to stick to an exercise regime they loathe? That's why they offer Strictly Come Dancercise breaks, where you can try out lots of different dance classes (like Ballroom, Tango and Latin) over a two-night stay. 'Remember, you don't have to be a dancer to join us, it's all about trying something new and putting the fun back into fitness. Plus, it's a guaranteed mood boost,' says Chris Chambers, Ragdale Hall's Fitness Manager.

#### Take-home lessons

Dancing firms and tones your muscles, increases your strength and flexibility and – most important of all – is great fun. The key message is that you need to enjoy exercise to stick with it for life. Start today with a Fitsteps dance fitness fusion class, available nationwide at over 700 locations. Classes from £4. Visit [fitsteps.co.uk](http://fitsteps.co.uk).

**Want to go?** From £314 ([ragdalehall.co.uk](http://ragdalehall.co.uk)).



Swimming, running dancing... love what you do to make it a habit



## feel it

### Stretch out daily

CLINIQUE LA PRAIRIE, SWITZERLAND

#### The lowdown

A medical clinic offering serious anti-ageing programmes including cosmetic surgery. The wellness programme includes daily stretches.

#### Take-home lessons

Start your day, every day, with a stretch. Stand tall, then raise arms above your head and slowly roll your head and neck down, lowering your arms as you go. Let your upper body drop as far down as is comfortable, keeping legs straight. Breathe slowly and on every out breath try to lower your hands further down your legs to the floor. Don't bounce or force yourself. Stay in the stretch for a minute and let the blood flow to your head. Now slowly unfurl, one vertebra at a time, until you are upright.

**Want to visit?** From £854 ([laprairie.ch](http://laprairie.ch)).

## see it

### Heal yourself with a digi detox

CHIVA SOM, THAILAND

#### The lowdown

An A-list holistic spa (Kate Moss is a regular), famous for its stop smoking acupuncture and world-class therapists, Chiva Som is über Zen. Food is calorie, fat and sugar controlled. Some spas turn a blind eye to iPhones and computers, but not Chiva Som. The therapists believe that Wi-Fi and the 'blue' light from gadgets interferes with healing.

#### Take-home lessons

Have at least one technology-free day a week. Turn off the TV, put your phone on silent, step away from the computer, go outside, speak to friends and family and exhale. If the thought makes you panic, warn friends and family that Sunday is your digital detox day, and make the family join in. You'll feel calmer and happier on Monday.

**Want to go?** From £913 ([chivasom.com](http://chivasom.com)). □

PHOTOGRAPHY (POSED BY MODELS): ROBERT ERDMAN/AUGUST GETTY; AMANDA FRIEDMAN/TRUNK ARCHIVE; ROSS HONEYSETT; GALLERY STOCK; DANIEL WARD/GALLERY STOCK; HOLGER ECKSTEIN/FOLIO.ID.COM