

SPECIAL REPORT: LIFE-CHANGING TRIPS THAT HELP THE WORLD

Condé Nast Traveler

WIN!
A \$25,000
DREAM
TRIP
Page 36

TRUTH IN TRAVEL

MAY 2008

INTRODUCING

QUICK TRIPS

3 PERFECT DAYS
IN AUSTIN,
PALM SPRINGS,
MINNEAPOLIS,
AND MORE



2008 HOT LIST WORLD'S TOP NEW 136 hotels*

105 Restaurants

76 Spas

28 Nightclubs

*including 36 under \$250

ULTIMATE HAWAII

STEP-BY-STEP
ITINERARY

BRAZIL'S SECRET BEACHES

SYDNEY NOW!

WHERE TO STAY,
EAT, SHOP, PLAY



Hot Spas

2008

compact satellite with energizing fluorescent decor and piped-in chamber music, has a gym, a pool, and sauna and steam rooms, and offers beauty treatments, hairstyling, and massage. Treatments derive from California and East Asia as well as India. Try the detoxifying massage (\$75), in which sesame oil is vigorously applied in deep pulling and kneading movements using the entire palm to stimulate the lymphatic system and release toxins. Every inch an urban spa, it has a dressing area that can seem crowded; the bathrobes are not the fluffiest, but staff are lovely (91-11-2374-3000; massages, \$61-\$86). ☎ ☎ ☎

IRELAND

ESPA at Powerscourt

»County Wicklow

Set in Enniskerry's new Ritz-Carlton hotel (see "Hot List") at the foot of Sugar Loaf Mountain, this 30,000-square-foot spa in slate, wood, and stone has views of the surrounding forest. There are 20 treatment rooms and a generous modern ensemble of saunas, plunge pools, and steam rooms. The two-hour Garden of Inspiration Body Ritual (\$372) starts when your therapist brings you a cup of herbal tea and performs a footbath. A sea salt-and-oil body scrub follows, before warmed ESPA oils are poured on for an intensive massage (353-1-274-8888; massages, \$190). ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎

ITALY

E'Space 1898 »Venice

Sybaritic self-indulgence has always been the cornerstone of Venice, so it's surprising that many of the city's finest hotels lack spas. Until now, that is. The brand-new Hilton Molino Stucky, a swank property inside a nineteenth-century flour mill, has E'Space 1898, a sleek six-treatment-room operation. Here, the emphasis is on top-notch service, not fluff: There is little to soften the stark white aesthetic, not even potted plants. The treatment menu is full of cult spa brands such as Decléor and Carita, plus homegrown services like the Molino Flour Scrub (\$137),

Kriya Spa »Bali
Covered walkways link
24 treatment rooms.

a European riff on an Asian rice rub that uses *grano saraceno*, or Indian corn, to buff away dead skin. Save room for a soul-cleansing (or just detoxifying) session in the luxe steam room (39-041-272-3414; massages, \$137-\$199). ☎ ☎

JAPAN

Armani Spa/Ginza Tower

»Tokyo

"It's not a treatment, it's a ceremony," corrects the receptionist. She's not kidding: Like all treatments, the Facial Focus (\$391) begins with a volcanic ash footbath (the black powder is briskly whipped with warm water to create a foamy, matcha-like brew), after which a gong is solemnly struck. The facial—including a thick mineral mask that peels off in one large piece—is followed by a deep foot massage and a neck and shoulder rubdown. Armani has left his stamp throughout his lair, from the smoky, woody incense (fabulous, and available for purchase) to the vaguely S&M (but unbelievably comfortable) treatment bed, a black leather slab that rises and falls at the touch of a lever. It all feels a bit silly, but it leaves a lasting

»GOOD TO BE GREEN

Eco-friendly efforts seek to lessen environmental impact

Six Senses Spa, Yao Noi, Thailand

Bamboo and recycled paper are used

Taj Spa, Thimphu, Bhutan

Organic sheets and natural fiber slippers are de rigueur

Spa Tranquility, Antigua

An eco-resort absolves guilt at this luxe isle



OLE HENRIKSEN AFRICAN RED TEA FACE MIST
London's Bluebird Spa has facials with Ole Henriksen's vitamin-loaded wonder potions.

glow (81-3-6274-7004; 90-minute massages, \$463). ☎

Peninsula Spa by ESPA »Tokyo

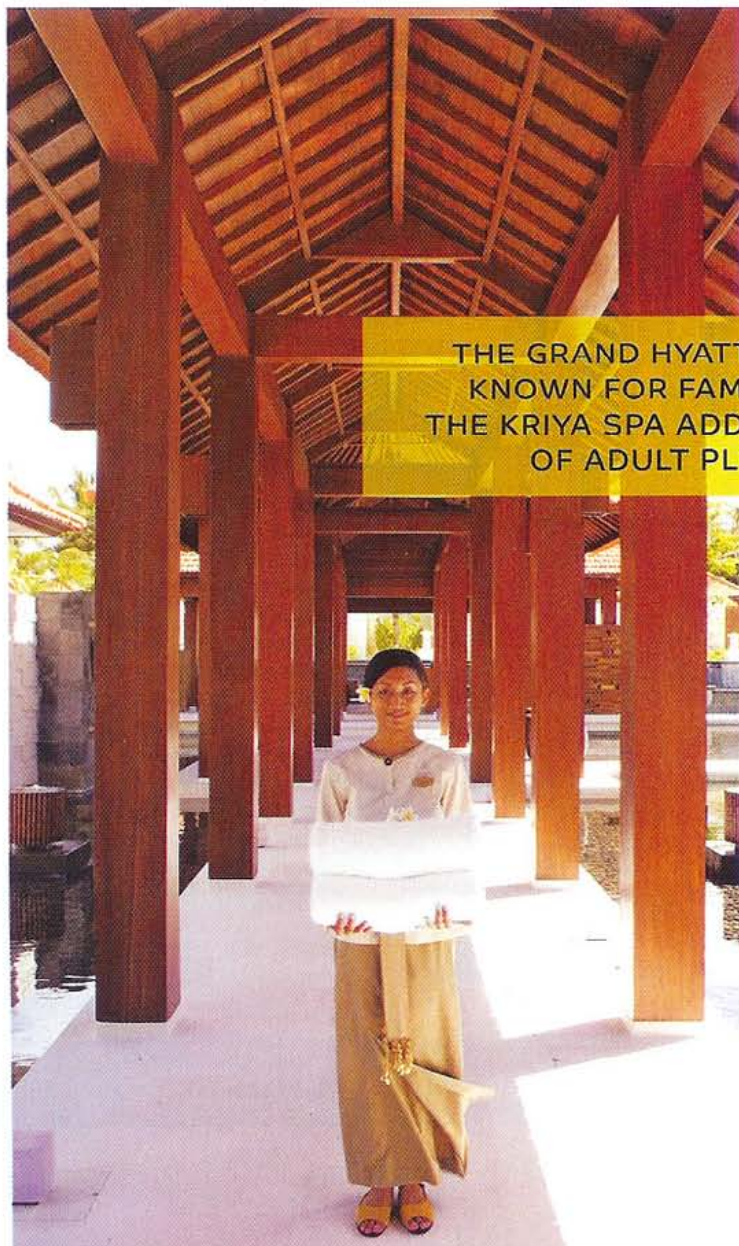
Arrive early at the spa area in the Peninsula Tokyo (see "Hot List"), where some of the best aspects of the treatment occur before you lie down. Of particular note is the steam/sauna room, which includes showers that release bursts of delicious-smelling floral- or eucalyptus-scented mists. The steam room—brilliantly tiled like a mermaid's underwater palace—is picture-perfect and skin-poachingly hot. After reclining in a relaxation room that, with its dim lighting and plush recliners, actually feels relaxing, it's off to the treatment room, where even the sumptuous facials include lengthy face, neck, and shoulder massages (81-3-6270-2888; massages, \$212). ☎ ☎ ☎

KENYA

Sanctuary at Ol Lentille Spa

»Kenya

Guests at the Sanctuary at Ol Lentille, a four-villa property high on the northernmost escarpment of the Laikipia Plateau (see "Hot List"), enjoy unlimited facials and massages as part of its designer villa rental package, and you'll need them after all the hiking, quad and mountain biking, and horseback riding up and down kopjes, along twisting sand riverbeds, and on green acacia-dotted hills between tribal homesteads. Two- or four-handed Swedish and aromatherapy massages, reflexology,



THE GRAND HYATT BALI IS BEST KNOWN FOR FAMILY FUN, BUT THE KRIYA SPA ADDS A MULTITUDE OF ADULT PLEASURES

Indian head massage, facials, and manicures and pedicures are taken in an open-air spa villa with a deck inspired by a Masai cattle boma, by the infinity pool, or in your spacious private villa overlooking Ol Lentille, a 6,500-foot-tall granite peak (888-588-4590 in New Mexico; one- to three-bedroom villas from \$3,800, with a three-night minimum). ☎ ☎

MALAYSIA


Spa Village Malacca »Malacca


Inspired by the healing traditions of the Baba-Nyonya (an ethnic community unique to the Malay Peninsula), treatments here either warm or cool the body. Sessions begin with a welcoming hair wash, while guests are entertained by ceiling-mounted TVs broadcasting a popular 1960s

Castello Banfi—Il Borgo, Tuscany

 Set amid 7,100 undulating acres of vineyards and olive groves near Montalcino, Castello Banfi, maker of some of the region's best-known wines, has opened its doors to overnight guests, having converted its former workers' lodgings into sumptuous accommodations that embody Tuscan-style good living. The 14 individually styled rooms, housed in conjoined eighteenth-century stone buildings adjacent to the estate's twelfth-century *castello*, have retained some atmospheric elements of the original structures, from wood-beam ceilings to deep-set windows to terra-cotta floors, and are done in a cheerful, elegant Tuscan palette, including softly patterned silk draperies, plump couches, and absurdly comfortable beds with romantic baldachins. Special touches include a gratis bottle of Brunello, an LCD TV hidden in a false bookcase, and free high-speed Internet—a rarity in these parts. The large, well-lit bathrooms also come with comfort in mind, equipped with heated towel racks, sizable glass-walled showers with rain showerheads, and toiletries made with Sangiovese grapes grown on the estate. The service throughout is warm and efficient, and the hearty breakfast (included in the room rate) exceeds the typical Continental-style offerings, while the two excellent on-site restaurants—the intimate Michelin-starred *Ristorante*, and the more casual *Taverna*—offer well-prepared Tuscan dishes and, naturally, a strong house wine list. A small pool overlooks the bucolic landscape of vineyards. **When to go:** The harvesttime months of September and October, with their fall colors and still-warm days. **Which room to book:** No. 16 comes with a large dressing area and both a soaking tub and a shower. The loft-style No. 17 faces a rose garden, while No. 31 has stone arches (39-0577-877700; castellobanfiilborgo.com; doubles, \$614–\$848).    

Palazzo Barbarigo, Venice






 This former family palazzo from 1569 on the Grand Canal is part of the new generation of intimate guesthouses that are giving travelers an alternative to the usual grande dame hotel. The 18-bed-

room property now houses a cheeky boudoir design with heavy velvet curtains, feathered bedside lamps, massive mirrors, and seductive chaise longues in rooms kept light by huge windows overlooking the canal. The baldachin-style bed comes with two duvets (putting an end to couples' wrestling for the covers). Other attractions are the sizable bathrooms (the rooms themselves are spacious by European standards), a stylish Art Deco bar that doubles as the breakfast area (a meal that is delicious rather than passable), and a great location on vaporetto route No. 1. One caveat: The arrival by water taxi is quite lovely, but the way by foot is marred by a narrow unsigned alley full of "exotic" smells. **When to go:** Book your trip for late November, when most of the tourists finally leave Venice in peace and the mist along the canals is atmospheric. **Which room to book:** The junior suites have the best views of the Grand Canal, but No. 17, on Rio San Polo, is actually quieter (39-041-740172; designhotels.com; doubles, \$275–\$675). 

JAPAN




Peninsula Tokyo, Tokyo

 The Peninsula Tokyo made news even before it opened: Not only would it be the city's first freestanding hotel built from the ground up in more than a decade, but it would also forgo the de rigueur hotel-in-the-sky design (made famous by the Park Hyatt) for a more conventional approach with a ground-level lobby. Curiously, these features (along with some of the more outlandish ones, such as the nail-drying machine installed in all of the 314 rooms) are among the least memorable elements: The building itself is an uninspired tower, and the lobby, despite its dramatic two-story ceiling, feels small. The earthy palette is far more successful in the generous rooms, whose interplay of textures—a rough-edged wooden-slab pocket door between bedroom and bathroom; a ceiling inset with a lovely woven cedar mat; a slatted wooden headboard above the comfortable bed; dramatic floor-to-ceiling windows—suggests an elegant masculinity. The service throughout is swift and discreet. Best of all is the Peninsula's location, near the heart of the Ginza (and directly above a subway stop where four lines converge). For those little motivated for even that five-minute stroll, there are five on-site eateries, including the excellent *Tsuruya*, an outpost of the famous Kyoto-based *kaiseki* restau-

rant. **When to go:** Early spring for cherry blossom season, or late fall for the changing leaves. **Which room to book:** Any room overlooking Hibiya Park, a Western-style oasis (81-3-6270-2288; tokyo.peninsula.com; doubles, \$558–\$744).     


KENYA

Sanctuary at Ol Lentille, Laikipia












 The Masai community has joined forces with conservation tourism organizations and private investors to convert 6,500 acres of arid cattle range into a wildlife sanctuary and resort. The property's four luxury villas, designed with tribal, Lamu coast, colonial, or retro sixties decor, straddle a boulder-strewn ridge and come equipped with fireplaces, outdoor decks, and spectacular views from sun loungers, beds, even bathtubs. The conservancy's acacia-forested hills and wide, sand riverbeds shelter dik-diks, klipspringers, rare wild dogs, and spotted and striped hyenas; the planned addition this year of a water hole should increase sightings of larger game, such as elephants, kudu, and Grevy's zebras. Meanwhile, the land rejuvenates from overgrazing, as do guests who go exploring on mountain bikes, on horseback, or by scaling Ol Lentille, a 6,486-foot granite peak. (Your villa's enviably fit Masai guide also escorts you on four-by-four night drives and cultural trips to Masai markets and homesteads and on camping expeditions with local Yaku honey gatherers.) A library stocked with a GPS telescope and a well-edited list of Africa-themed DVDs tempts some guests to simply stay put. And why not? The villa fee includes butler service, a private cook, and unlimited massages. **When to go:** January and February for warm, sunny weather. **Which room to book:** Couples will prefer the Eyrie, with stupendous daytime views from an outdoor sunken tub and a round bedroom with floor-to-ceiling glass windows and faux-fur covers. The Sultan's House, a romance of sprawling Lamu-style carved wood furniture, arabesque lanterns, floor cushions, and a four-poster bed, has the most atmosphere at night (888-588-4590 from the U.S.; ol-lentille.com; doubles, \$3,800 for three nights, including meals and most activities).     

MALAYSIA

Majestic Malacca, Malacca

 A fabled port of call for Malay, Chinese, Arab, Indian, Portuguese, Dutch, and British traders, Malacca retains its

KEY TO SYMBOLS

 = Bar/lounge  = Beach  = Free Wi-Fi  = Gym  = Pool  = Spa  = Hot Spa 2008  = 24-hour room service  = Hot  = Hotter  = Hottest