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THE RETREAT

Espa Life at Corinthia Hotel, London

A surprise positive of the impending Olympics is that London is fast becoming the smartest place for swanky spas, as hotels up their bid to win guests. The latest to open its doors is the *Espa Life* at the Whitehall Place-based Corinthia Hotel, just a short walk from Trafalgar Square. A more holistic offering than most of *Espa*'s spas, it targets guests' physical and emotional needs with a three-point plan: personal training, complementary therapies and spa treatments such as acupuncture and physiotherapy. It has an expert-led approach, with Alexander McQueen's former personal trainer Stephen Price heading up the high-tech gym and renowned naturopath Max Tomlinson in charge of alternative therapies. The idea is that guests will be cross-referred so that they get all the care they need.

Arranged over four levels, the facilities are extensive. After passing through the reception and lounge (where light, nutritionally balanced meals are served beneath a gold leaf-covered glass ceiling), you descend to the womb-like treatment rooms. On the lower floor are the thermal circuit and wet spa facilities. The centrepiece is an amphitheatre sauna, whose clever design means that heat remains constant whichever level you sit at, while an ice fountain, hydrotherapy pool and steam rooms offer plenty of diversity. There are also facials for every complexion and novel signature massages from across the globe, such as the 'Bamboo Joint-Release Experience', which uses bamboo sticks to stretch muscles and increase joint mobility. To fully access the variety of expertise on hand, book an initial consultation with one of the 'gatekeepers' from the complementary health team, whose job it is to refer you on to the best therapists and treatments for your needs. Without this, it would be easy to miss out. *Sports massage, £100 for 50 minutes. Corinthia Hotel, Whitehall Place, London SW1 (020 7321 3050; espalifeatcorinthia.com)*

Do it now! Give your skin the ultimate DIY cosmeceutical fix with Munich-based dermatologist Dr Duve's new anti-ageing skincare range. It's the most effective substitute we've found for skin-smoothing, blemish-blitzing salon laser and peel treatments, and it really does start to turn back the clock within weeks (from £60; michaeljohn.co.uk).



SMOKE SIGNALS

Light up this colourful bundle of sage to 'smudge' the atmosphere of your home with its smoky trails. The theory is that doing so purges the room of negative vibes, chases away household smells and infuses the air with a mellow, herbaceous aroma. *£10, Roques O'Neil (020 8969 1221).*



SEWN UP

The 1970s flat-pack clothes-making company Clothkits is back in business with cushions, aprons and soft toys to stitch at home, and vintage dress-making workshops at its HQ in Cirencester.

Cushion, £25, Clothkits (clothkits.co.uk)