



Uniting two continents and the historical capital of three great empires (Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman), one thing remains the same: Istanbul is the city of cities. The magic of Istanbul is in its rich and vibrant history and marriage of east and west, ancient and modern, and religious and secular. The Bosphorus Strait divides the city as it flows from the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmaram, and it is from here that visitors get the most memorable views of the city. On the Asian or Anatolian side of the city, history whispers from the Blue Mosque, Grand Bazaar, Topkapı Palace and the Byzantine architectural wonder, the Ayasofya. Linked by several bridges, the European side remains the economic centre of Istanbul as well as the home of historical sites the Çıra an Palace, Galata Tower and Dolmabahçe Palace. With 15 million inhabitants, the sheer energy

of the city is undeniable, and for the traveller, Istanbul offers delectable shopping, cuisine, history, culture and pampering. Passed on from the Romans, the tradition of hammam (Turkish bath) is undeniably alive and well; however, another renaissance of spa has emerged in Istanbul that is as rich and diverse as a Turkish kilim. Mention 'spa' in Istanbul and the word 'hammam' will sing from the lips of locals and visitors alike. Starting in the 15th century, hundreds of hammams were built in Istanbul due to water shortages and Islam's emphasis on cleanliness and purification. To this day, most traditional baths have separate sections and entrances for men and women and remain a lively social institution. Hammam experiences are not created equal, but what is undeniable and common to all is that guests leave several shades lighter than when they arrived.



magical
Istanbul

writer Danielle Rippingale



AYASOFYA HÜRREM SULTAN HAMAMI

Hammams can be found through out the city; however, there are handful of historical hammams and this exquisite hammam is the crème de la crème of Istanbul's Turkish bath experiences. Commissioned by Sultan Suleiman in honour of his wife, the hammam was designed by Ottoman master architect Mimar Sinan. Built in 1556 between the Ayasofya and Sultanahmet (Blue) Mosque, it reopened its doors in 2011 following a 17 million Turkish Lira renovation. Upon entering the inner courtyard, your eyes naturally gaze skyward to the high dome and drift down, taking in the three levels of rich wood, white marble and natural lighting. The impeccable service and skill of the natir is as soothing as the adhan (call to prayer) that echoes through the hammam from the Blue Mosque. The Ab-ı Hayat, or 'Elixir of Life' treatment, is a sure clue as to why this royal treatment has survived for centuries.

The 90-minute treatment starts in the Sultan's Iwan with a traditional kese scrub, followed by a foam ritual and massage on the heated göbek taşı. Enjoy a platter of fruit as the moisturising clay body masque dries, followed by a shampoo and head massage to complete the bathing ritual. Relax in the hammam before you are guided to the top mezzanine for an extraordinary oil massage followed by tea and sherbet (apricot, walnuts and Turkish delight). www.ayasofyahamami.com

VINOTHÉRAPIE SPA, HÔTEL LES OTTOMANS ISTANBUL

Reflecting its location in a restored 19th century Ottoman mansion, at Caudalie Vinothérapie® Spa the treatments are all about decadence and pampering within this spacious and wine-inspired spa. Perched regally on the edge of the Bosphorus, the 2400sqm spa has six treatment rooms and a private spa for couples with a sauna, steam room, Jacuzzi and sensuous day bed for lounging after treatments. Float effortlessly through the extensive relaxation and therapeutic areas of the spa to the Bosphorus sea water pool, meditation room with soft white interiors and salt and eucalyptus inhalation steam room featuring large amethyst crystals to ground

energy and soothe tension. The private Deep Sea Floating pool contains 33 percent salt and 27 unique minerals to sooth aching muscles and treat the skin. In the expert hands of your therapist, the Premier Cru Facial uses essential oils applied with warm herbal balls and rich masque to leave your skin hydrated, radiant and full of vitality.

The Les Ottomans' Signature Massage is an effective blend of Swedish, Deep Tissue, Stone and Shiatsu techniques to restore perfect balance and energy to the body. Finish with a warm detoxifying tea of red grape and relax on the heated marble loungers. www.lesottomans.com

SILVER SPA, GEZI HOTEL BOSPHORUS

Considered the heart of modern Istanbul, Taksim Square bustles day and night, and visitors will be happy to learn that soulful pampering is only steps away in the boutique Gezi Bosphorus Hotel. Despite its youth (late 2010), the Silver Spa has garnered devotion and praise within Istanbul and beyond with exceptional international therapists.





The small spa oozes charm from the marble and agate floors to the curving textured silver walls. With attention to design, the Italian glass and wood tiled corridors lead you to the steam bath and sauna, hammam and relaxation room. The sauna features handcrafted wood benches and televisions, while the exquisite Iraqi marble hammam, with open aromatherapy shower and raised Jacuzzi, is a labour of love, taking craftsmen four months to complete.

For a decadent hammam ritual with one of the best spa natir in Istanbul, the Aroma Relief is pure bathing bliss. Imagine all the wonderful things that hammam is famous for but with full body exfoliation with customized scented organic mineral sea salts, body masque, aromatherapy shower and hydrating oils to seal in the benefits. This ritual brings new meaning to Turkish delight. Especially recommended is the 100 percent natural aloe and algae-based Casmara Masks and the De-Stress Muscle Relief Massage using 100 percent organic oils from Germany and expert strokes that are guaranteed to melt tension away.

www.gezibosphorus.com/spa.asp

AMRITA SPA & WELLNESS, SWISSÔTEL BOSPHORUS

The thoughtfully designed and award winning Amrita Spa and Wellness at the Swissôtel is the largest spa in Istanbul, with 14 treatment rooms, couples suite, salt pool, hydrotherapy room, and hammam, to name a few, in its beautiful 4000sqm facility. The Amrita Spa is more than simply spacious; it is a world-class oasis for wellbeing and rejuvenation. The enchanting candle-lit corridor of dark wood and textured paper walls guides you to the fully serviced change room that is virtually a spa unto itself. Begin and end your visit with a salt steam bath, bio and dry sauna, Turkish hammam, ice grotto, watsu pool, tropical showers and relaxation lounge with waterbeds and sound stations to prolong the sensory journey. The

THIS PAGE: Couples' treatment suite at Vinothérapie Spa, Hôtel Les Ottomans Istanbul; The Silver Spa at Gezi Bosphorus Hotel . OPPOSITE PAGE: Spa Hammam at The Silver Spa at Gezi Bosphorus Hotel; Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı. OPENING PAGE: Büyük Mecidiye Camii (Grand Imperial Mosque) situated at the waterside of the Ortaköy pier square, one of the most popular locations on the Bosphorus.

menu offers therapies for couples, expectant mothers, slimming and firming and spa packages lasting from 90 minutes to five days.

A tailor-made experience is offered from both Aromatherapy Associates and Cinq Mondes according to your need to release, renew, revive or detoxify. KoBiDo® Youthfulness Precious Face Care from Japan is an effective facial that incorporates massage to the contours of the face, eyes, lips and neck to improve radiance and firmness of the skin. With meticulously trained therapists and 68 spa therapies inspired from wellness traditions all over the world, you could easily spend a full day or two here.

www.swissotel.com/EN

THE SPA, PARK HYATT MAÇKA PALAS

Within the trendy and fashionable district of Nişantaşı, The Spa is a sleek and intimate space with two treatment rooms, sauna, relaxation lounge, and open-air pool. The small but well-designed spa menu is described by the elements of earth, air and water with the obvious aim of delivering treatments that promote wellbeing and transformation. The beautifully trained therapists use Terrake products from Paris to give facial and body treatments designed according to your needs: hydrate, energize, detoxify, relax and firm, as well as traditional, hot stone and reflexology massage.

The 90-minute Ultra Luxe Body massage takes you on a luxurious journey with your choice of aromatic oils that relax, firm or stimulate under the hand of exquisite massage technique. With incredible attention to detail, the chic Maçka Palas has five suites with an in-room spa. Here, guests can experience the luxury of hammam in complete privacy or have the therapist come to their room for the two-hour 'Turkish Delight,' combining hammam with customised spa massage. With promises of tranquility, you can't help but be enchanted by this little gem of a spa.

www.istanbul.park.hyatt.com/hyatt/pure/spas

ESPA, THE ISTANBUL EDITION

It is no coincidence that the 2000sqm and three-floor ESPA is located several floors below the ground, and from the moment



THIS PAGE: Women's main heated chamber (sıcaklık) at Çemberlitaş Hamamı. OPPOSITE PAGE: Gold dust tiled pool at ESPA at The Istanbul Edition; Jasmine Suite at Amrita Spa and Wellness, Swissôtel Bosphorus

you step into the spa, you will feel the soothing effect of the earth. Without a doubt, ESPA in the new luxury boutique hotel, The Istanbul EDITION, is the hippest spa in Istanbul. Incorporating elements from the earth, your senses awaken to rich woods and crystals, lights that dance and play on the soft silk walls, flooring of embossed copper in social areas and energy grounding leather in the 10 treatment rooms.

Couples will love the exclusively designed private spa suite featuring smoky quartz walls, steam shower, suspended day bed and oversized bathtub. The environment is harmonious and warm, making it easy to relax and enjoy the numerous spa amenities, including a gold-dust-tiled pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, steam bath and poolside heated stone recliners. The snow cabin will invigorate your senses and bring out the playfulness of winter after a session in the sauna.

The Turkish Indulgence is a superb 150 minutes of relaxation and replenishment that can also be done as a couple's treatment. The mocha-toned marble of the ESPA hammam is unconventional for hammam, but undoubtedly aids the connection to earth and promotes deep relaxation. After the complete bathing ritual, you are cocooned in a full body masque followed by an exquisite aromatherapy body massage. For a facial like no other, try the Super Active Lift & Firm Facial that is performed by hand selected therapists and incorporates ESPA products and the most advanced facial massage techniques for intensive results. ESPA is also the only spa in Turkey to offer Bastien Gonzalez signature foot and hand treatments.

www.editionhotels.com

PURI SPA, DIVAN ISTANBUL HOTEL

After two years of renovations, the legendary Divan Istanbul Hotel reopened its doors in September 2011 and with it the Puri Spa — a shrine to the body and soul, in central Istanbul. The 2000sqm American-designed spa has a contemporary Asian feel with a minimalism in ornamentation and architectural detail. The five

treatment rooms include a Thai massage room and couple's suite with private hammam that are functional but nourishing with creamy marble and rich wood walls and flooring. The green-tiled steam rooms emulate traditional hammams with lights on the ceiling that fill you with a sense of starry expansion and peace. The relaxation rooms have heated marble recliners under lit with relaxing blue. Wraps, body and facial treatments by Carita are instantly calming and rejuvenating, while the inspired massages bring the best of Asian traditions to Istanbul.

The Lagoon Hydration Facial by Carita will smooth and plump dehydrated skin using exclusively designed impulses to stimulate and aid absorption of the skin-quenching product. For the body, don't miss the Body Perfect Treatment that starts with a sunflower seed and oil exfoliation followed by Carita's exclusive skin stimulation technique to bring perfect refinement and hydration to the body.

www.divan.com.tr

THE SPA, FOUR SEASONS HOTEL

On the European side of the strait, the exquisite Four Season's Hotel faces out to the turbulent but soothing waters of the Bosphorus. The high ceilings and soft lighting of the spacious 2100sqm spa instantly relax and set the tone for the spa journey awaiting you. The change and treatment rooms are peripheral to the beautiful central teal and aqua mosaic pool that bathes in natural light and is framed by white marble columns and loungers. A raised Jacuzzi is situated at the end with small tables on either side for refreshments à la carte. Each separate and spacious change room features a sauna, tranquil relaxation room with herbal teas and lounge beds and one of the spa's three hammams, making it a bather's paradise.

Corridors lit with lanterns give a seductive play of light and set the mood for the 150-minute Rejuvenate Spa Therapy from Sodashi — a collection of some of the best treatments on the menu, starting with the fragrant and revitalising vanilla body exfoliation, followed by the body and hair masque of exotic clay and herbal tonics and ending with the warm facial mask. The comprehensive menu of



Spa destination





facials and natural enhancements are from Barcelona's Natura Bissé and Australian natural spa line Sodashi. The new facial from Sodashi, Samadara was five years in development and is transcendental with scents of rose, and rose quartz crystal massage and thermal masque. www.fourseasons.com/bosporus/spa

ÇEMBERLITAŞ HAMAMI

Within minutes of the Grand Bazaar in the Sultanahmet district stands the historical Çemberlitaş Hamamı and another example of the masterwork of Mimar Sinan. Spoil your body with your choice of luxurious bathing rituals hammams are known for. Wearing a traditional cotton peştamal wrap, you are guided to the main heated chamber (sıcaklık) to relax on the heated marble navel stone. The heat from the marble offers your body relaxation, detoxification and improved circulation. Above you, a dome pierced by small star-like windows naturally illuminates the room and gathers condensation that falls with a reverberating echo.

Being bathed in streams of water, scrubbed, lathered and massaged are all part of the extraordinary hammam experience, lasting 15 minutes, but to reap full benefit, it is normal to stay for another hour or as long as you like to rest, perspire and wash. When the heat becomes to much, retreat to the kurna basins to douse yourself in water, or enter one of the four private and cooler halvets located in the corner of the sıcaklık. The soğukluk is the intermediate room designed to dry off and relax before returning to the courtyard. The rooms are simple and offer little for privacy; however, the experience is authentic, and with almost 500 years of history, it is impossible to overlook.


www.cemberlitashamami.com

THE RITZ-CARLTON SPA, THE RITZ-CARLTON

Located on the European side of the Bosphorus and within a stone's throw of Taksim Square, the Ottoman-inspired Ritz-Carlton Spa has nine treatment rooms, indoor pool and separate change rooms with sauna, steamroom, hammam, jacuzzi, and relaxation area. For those seeking a private hammam experience, the Ultimate Turkish Hammam is a delectable 45 minutes of bathing bliss. In classic Turkish fashion, the strong, full-figured natir greets you wearing only

a peştamal (cloth wrap), giving you the first clue that this experience involves copious amounts of water.

In the private, heated marble sanctuary, the ritual begins at edge of a large central marble platform where bowls of warm water are skillfully poured over you from a beautiful silver bowl. The sound of running water fills your senses as your body relaxes from the heat and welcomes a full body exfoliation with a coarse glove (kese), followed by a mountain of cleansing olive oil soap bubbles. Through the bubbles you are massaged from head to toe, sat up to have your hair washed, head massaged and finally doused with refreshingly cool water. With skin tingling and clean, the experience is completed with an herbal tea in the warm intermediate room. Also recommended is The Perfect Face Renovateur, an effective and hydrating facial that comes from Carita Paris.

www.ritzcarlton.com/Istanbul 

THIS PAGE: Mud masque in hammam at Puri Spa at Divan Istanbul Hotel; The copper tap is used for hamam at The Spa at Four Season; Couples suite at The Spa at The Ritz Carlton Hotel. OPPOSITE PAGE: Ayasofya Mosque (Hagia Sofia) in Sultanahmet district; Interior dome of the Yeni Camii an Ottoman imperial mosque located in the Eminönü district; Interior of Ayasofya Hürrem Sultan Hamamı built in 1556; Turkish coffee in the Grand Bazaar; Entrance to the Spice Bazaar (or Egyptian) in Eminönü; Traditional wood nalin worn in hammam; Separated by the Bosphorus Strait, the historical Galata Tower on the European Side stands prominently

