

Health trip

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Miracles do happen

Not many facials feel like an all-over body experience, but **Gaylia Kristensen's** new treatment at **The Spa at Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park** (a sleek den, one of the best spas in the city) is as mind-hushing as a two-hour massage. No extractions, no pain, no boring moments (even your feet get attention), just a mass of much-needed neck action in all the spots you want it, pressing the pressure out and making you feel as if the blood can finally pulse its way into your face. And then there are your shoulders, and the top of your jaw, and the little corner of your eye that you didn't even realise was tense.

The relief of the resulting oxygen flow is enough to make you feel like laughing and crying at the same time – it's that good.

This is the most holistic facial in London right now. The therapists really know what they are doing, without being heavy-handed, and Kristensen is Australia's premier skincare pioneer (and with all that sunshine, they need her). Her lotions are pure – no parabens, nothing toxic, just the latest know-how in quick-fix anti-wrinkle care. A name to watch out for. 020 7838 9888; www.mandarinoriental.com. *Utopia Advanced Anti-ageing Facial*, £170

Alpina Gstaad, Switzerland

STAR
SPA

Gstaad is the high-octane Alpine village where billionaires brush shoulders with dairy farmers. It's also one of the few ski resorts where it's OK to have all the gear but no idea – and for those who do, it's all about skiing to lunch. Civilised.

Until now, the reigning grande dame has been the Gstaad Palace Hotel – opulent and old-school, loved by the likes of Roger Moore and Elizabeth Taylor. The Grand Hotel Park is also great but more geared to families. So imagine the sparks now that a new, excitingly upbeat rival has hit the scene, one with such gravitas that the old guard are shaking in their ski boots.

The 56-room Alpina is intimate, smart and has the prettiest bedrooms, with open fireplaces and plenty of natural materials (leather, stone and wool). Plus, it has a Six Senses Spa, which, while no longer in the hands of Sonu and Eva Shivasani, still leads the therapeutic pack. Here, the look is Alps-meets-Asia, extremely mellow, with rustic woodpiles set alongside pale-cream walls. Treatments range from the traditional (Swedish, hot-stone and deep-tissue massages) to more left-field, holistic highs

(crystals, Ayurvedic chakra-balancing, and moxibustion, the ancient Chinese practice of placing burnt mugwort on pressure points – your whole body will melt). The facials are incredible, especially QMS Oxygen, which is like a blast of the freshest air to your complexion (if you're not up at the top of a piste, this is the next best thing). Exercise classes (yoga, Qigong or kinesis) start from 7am. For downtime, hang out in the hammams, take a dip in one of the sleek, limestone-lined pools, or lie back in the Himalayan salt room sucking in 84 minerals just by breathing. If you're peckish after ginger tea and dried fruit at the juice bar, the Alpina has three top restaurants. For sushi and sublime black cod, nowhere in the mountains beats MEGU (of the famous Japanese chain), and it's certainly more virtuous than the indulgence of Restaurant Sommet, or the fondue temptation at Swiss Stübli. On top of all this, remember that skiing burns 500 calories an hour and leaves you with more of a glow than any facial can, which, particularly here, is really saying something. **GABRIEL O'RORKE** 00 41 33 888 9888; www.thealpinagstaad.ch. *Doubles from £560. Swiss Air* (www.swiss.com) *flies daily from Heathrow to Geneva*

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