

SPA *on the side*

Fancy a dollop of culture, some city living or natural beauty with you spa? Look no further...



THE RESIDENCE, ZANZIBAR

Zanzibar – the name alone evokes an island rich in spice growing, a tropical paradise of dugout boats that fishermen launch knee-deep into the warm waves of the Indian Ocean, returning with a catch of fresh fish to sell at market. All this is here in abundance – what a perfect sidekick to a dusty action-packed safari in East Africa. One minute you are tracking game in the Serengeti, the next a short flight brings you here for some idyllic down time.

Arriving for a pampering break, our driver whisked my girlfriends and me south from the small bustling capital, Stone Town, a Unesco World Heritage Site (be sure to spend an afternoon here, taking in the noisy – and smelly – fish and meat markets and walking with a guide around the old slave market; these excursions bring the island's rich history to life) to the island's newest luxury beach resort, The Residence.

This resort of 66 spacious, detached villas is now a year old which means the planting has matured into a vast garden of flowers

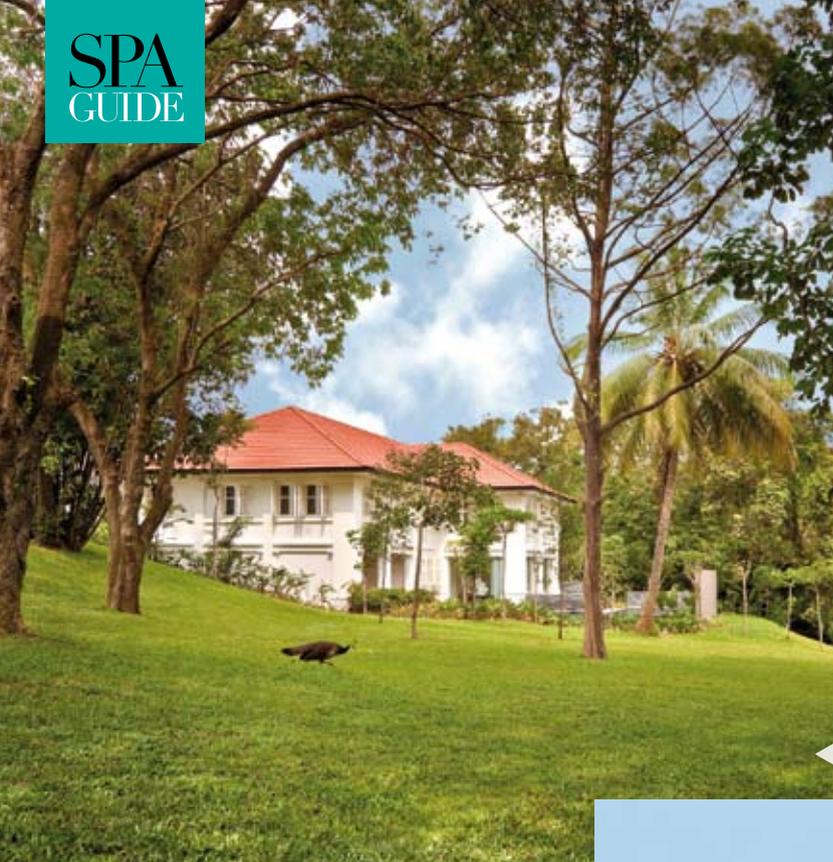
and African grasses. Inside, the look is 'simple colonial' – lots of wood and rattan furniture in a neutral palette of creams and browns, with a huge four-poster bed draped with mosquito nets. Each villa, facing directly onto the beach or with garden views, has its own swimming pool heated by the sun, with outdoor terrace and shower, and I was delighted to find we all had our own bikes to carry us to the two restaurants, spa, boutique and library (or you can call up a buggy, should your evening shoes not be up to the job). A bit of exercise is welcome, too,



as the food is beautifully cooked – sizzling tuna skewers, spicy king prawns, even an elegantly presented Lebanese tasting menu (although drinks are pricey – a bottle of sparkling water is \$10). It is deliciously quiet and peaceful, well away from the beach bars of the north.

We were here to relax, eat and drink like kings, and put our city-stressed bodies into the expert hands of the spa therapists. Over at the spa, the six detached treatment villas have their own changing room, floor-to-ceiling windows and high roofs. When I arrived one morning a carpet of pink flowers had opened its petals for me. The outdoor Jacuzzi bubbles away within a larger pool and stays open till 8pm, so I took a solitary evening's dip under the stars. Bliss. The treatment menu has been kept deliberately small and niche, just three types of facials, for example, with Carita products. The speciality of the house is the Oshashiatsu massage, during which you wear a loose linen 'judo set' lying on a mattress whilst a male therapist stretches and manipulates your limbs. A kind of 'yoga massage', my girlfriends and I found it a rather intimate experience – perhaps best for spa aficionados and those who like getting themselves into the shape of a pretzel. Best of all, we loved the full-body massage. My therapist was from Dar es Salaam, just across the water on the mainland, and had been expertly trained – as have all the staff. Her small yet strong hands soothed and revived, taking time to work on every spot – even my ears. From my back, arms, legs and tummy, to my head, face, feet and hands. It was an hour of blissful calm, a treat, a rest, a moment of indulgence. If the Zanzibar of old evokes spices, the new Zanzibar is all about five-star spa. Bring it on. *Laura Ivill*

DETAILS Rainbow Tours offers nine nights at The Residence on a half board basis from £2,420 per person, including flights. 020 7666 1250; rainboutours.co.uk



CAPELLA, SINGAPORE

Don't let anybody advise you to bypass Singapore. This is the mini big city that you can tackle in a couple of nights – a fabulous gateway to the rest of Asia that is clean, easy and buzzy. Come for the shopping, feast at the top of Ku De Ta on the best chilli squid, and when the jetlag means you rise pre-dawn, hit the streets and watch the whole city wake and emerge to a new day. Lay your head down at the Norman Foster designed Capella on Sentosa Island – a five minute cab ride from the action and by far and away the most relaxing retreat in town. There are tranquil gardens where peacocks roam, several cascading swimming pools and the fabulous Auriga spa.

TREATMENT TO TRY The two-hour New Moon treatment which is all about renewal. Your feet will be anointed with oils of juniper, fennel and rosemary, followed by an all over eucalyptus salt body scrub and then wrap. Bliss.

DETAILS Garden Rooms start from S\$900. +65 6591 5000; capellasingapore.com

ES SAADI PALACE SPA, MARRAKECH, MOROCCO

Set close to the bustling heart of Marrakech, the Es Saadi Palace Hotel is the epitome of an urban retreat. Only a five-minute walk from the hectic Djemaa el-Fna square, it is an oasis of calm, creating an atmosphere that can soothe away any souk stress. The spa is built around a 100-year-old eucalyptus tree with a swimming pool encircling the trunk on the ground floor – the perfect way to ease you into a day of pampering. The treatments range from traditional Moroccan Hammam massage using rhassoul mud to state-of-the-art sapphire particle facials from the Dior Institute. A true sanctuary in the middle of this crazy, wonderful city.

TREATMENT TO TRY The Blissful, a four-handed massage that uses balloons filled with warm water and coconut shells, which leaves you with an all-time high on the floatiness scale.

DETAILS Suites from £380, including breakfast and transfers. + 212 (0) 5 24 44 88 11; essaadi.com



FOUR SEASONS, JACKSON HOLE

The thrill of Wyoming is everything you hope it will be, and more. There's a buzz in the massive views but Nature's stillness and calm are just as electric. In winter the skiing is awesome, but don't write it off as a ski destination – it's more popular in the summer months. People flock to nearby Yellowstone National Park to share the epic views with elk, bison and moose, and hit the hiking trails, fish, white water raft or get in the saddle. But Big Sky country feels best from inside the Four Seasons' rustic but luxuriant hotel, within which hides one of the most fabulous spas anywhere. Spend an afternoon here recovering from your epic journey, it's a deeply cocooning recovery zone which showcases the best of all American service. You gotta love it.

TREATMENT TO TRY The Peak Performance, customised to address all those niggly muscle issues. Extremely therapeutic, especially if you've hit the slopes a little too enthusiastically.

DETAILS Doubles from \$389. +1 (800) 914-5110; fourseasons.com/jacksonhole

