

SPAS

Peak pampering

The Swiss have always been serious about wellness, but two spas in Gstaad are taking treatments to new heights



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At Gstaad's Ultima Hotel there's a room-service menu for dogs. As I ponder why you'd bring a dog skiing, I notice the La Prairie spa menu.

Its anti-ageing cellular therapies catch my eye, as well as surgical options, from mummy tucks to nose jobs, and nonsurgical treatments, from Botox and cavitation (which reduces cellulite with ultrasound) to plasma that treats hair loss, scars and stretch marks, courtesy of the hotel's medical partner, the Aesthetics Clinic.

The Ultima is a seriously luxe establishment. Set in the Bernese Oberland region of Switzerland, with 11 suites and six apartments, its 8,600 sq ft spa is a sanctuary of black marble with an embarrassment of orchids and a sleek pool. Outside, a Jacuzzi sends plumes of steam into the air. It's so heavenly that after a white-caviar La Prairie massage I fall asleep for two hours.

The very name Gstaad smacks of glamour. Madonna instagrams herself on its glacier. George Clooney pops in. The chalets are opulent and the après-ski prices beyond the pale. Many visitors (60 per cent are Swiss) don't bother skiing. Clearly, they visit the spas.

But then Switzerland has long been associated with wellness. Not only does it have world-class medical clinics, state-of-the-art treatments and personal service, but unbeatable natural scenery, which Dr Xavier Tenorio, the chief executive of the Aesthetics Clinic, describes as "unique assets that cannot be exported". There is no money that can buy beautiful landscape, pure air and water," he says, "and the Swiss invest energy and resources to keep it that way."

Many Alpine spas are aesthetically austere — in neighbouring Austria this is often the case. But Switzerland offers more luxurious forms of medi-spa. The top resorts for combining pampering and science are La Réserve in Geneva, known for its anti-ageing treatments, and Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, with its noninvasive beauty programmes. It was only a matter of time before Gstaad produced medical-quality treatment without compromising on lifestyle.

Down the road, the 57-room Le Grand Bellevue has also invested heavily in its vast spa, which it opened in December. Its owner, Daniel Koetser, tells me the majority of guests don't ski. Koetser reopened Le Grand Bellevue, with the best position on the main drag, in 2013 and he has injected a slug of sassy contemporary luxe. The spa has a salt grotto, an ice fountain and saunas that range from infrared and herbal to Finnish and Laconium. Clinique Rive Gauche

is on hand for aesthetic treatments from mesotherapy, botox and hyaluronic acid injection to CoolSculpting, while serious interventions are done in Geneva, followed with recovery at Le Grand Bellevue.

Escaping to the slopes after my facial, I'm delighted that the locals seem to take seriously Gstaad's motto: "Come up, slow down." Their commitment to spas rather than skiing means beautifully empty pistes.

Le Grand Bellevue costs from £490 for a double, B&B (bellevue-gstaad.ch).

Ultima Gstaad costs from £430 (ultimagstaad.com). For information visit gstaad.ch and myswitzerland.com