

So near, so spa

You don't have to travel far for a mid-winter pick-me-up. Kate Farr and Rachel Read bliss out with some of Hong Kong's most relaxing treatments

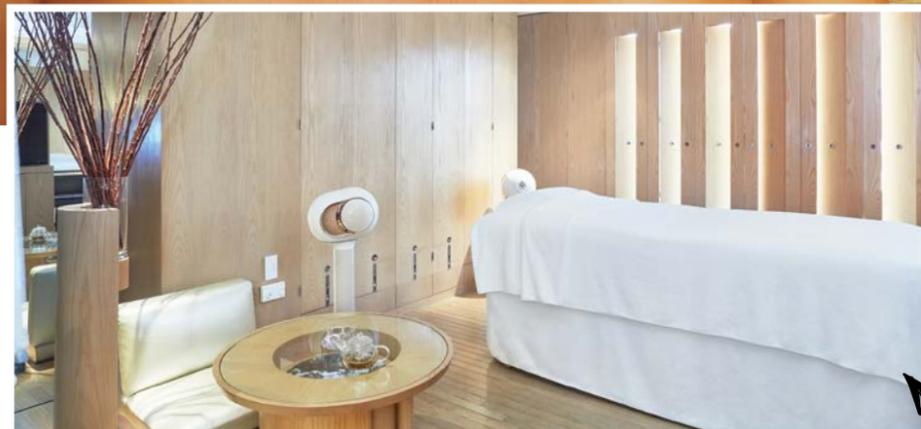


Get with the beat

The Grand Hyatt's serene, Scandi-chic **Plateau Spa** has partnered with high-end French speaker brand Devialet to create a one-of-a-kind treatment that combines massage with a unique soundtrack, recorded all around Hong Kong.

Arriving at the spa, my treatment began with a warming cup of ginger tea and a quick questionnaire to complete. The friendly therapist asked me about any specific areas of concern, and helped me to select a relaxing aromatherapy oil blend for my massage. During our chat, I became aware of a pair of glossy white speakers, softly omitting low background sounds that are unmistakably Hong Kong – the buzz of traffic, the “tick” of a pedestrian crossing and the sound of a metal trolley rattling along the pavement.

As I was led to the heated bed, the city noise gradually subsided into seagull calls and the whisper of a breeze over lapping waves, which was definitely more relaxing! The soundtrack continued to seamlessly evolve as the treatment progressed – into the light patter



of rain on leaves, the gentle chime of monastery gongs, the soft melody of an erhu playing over birdsong... even a gale-force wind.

With a perfect medium-pressure massage carefully choreographed to the recording, I soon drifted into a deeply meditative state. After what seemed like minutes, I was gently brought back to reality by the delicate clinking of china cups on saucers, as my therapist poured me another steaming brew, and left me to slowly come round, feeling lighter and completely relaxed.

As someone whose mind tends to wander during a massage, I found that focusing on the soundtrack really helped me to stay in the

moment and fully appreciate the experience. I also loved the way in which Hong Kong's familiar sounds are isolated and presented – not just as daily background noise, but as the real star of the show. (Kate)

Devialet Voyage des Sens experience is available until the end of March 2018.

Price: \$1,300 (plus 10% service charge)
Duration: 60 minutes

Plateau Spa, 11/F Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, 1 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, 2584 7688 plateau.com

Oil toil

A pretty, unashamedly chintzy space, **Spa BPZ** was founded in 1975 by Nigar Qureshi, who has remained ahead of the curve in innovative therapies ever since.

Over a cup of herbal tea, Qureshi explained that the ancient Ayurvedic Shirodhara treatment focuses a steady stream of oil onto the “third eye” area, just above the eyebrows in the centre of the forehead, and that, in combination with the OxyEssential – when pure essential oils are diffused and inhaled with oxygen – I should experience a deep sense of relaxation.

Leading me to the treatment room, my therapist instructed me to lie back on the massage bed, and helped position my head on a padded cushion suspended at a slight

recline over a small sink. Above my head was what appeared to be a brass lamp, narrowing to a small opening at its base, containing oil. After positioning the OxyEssential nozzle near my face, I was instructed to breathe deeply and enjoy a gentle head, neck and shoulder massage. After around ten minutes, the oil was released, slowly dripping onto my forehead before running over my hair into the sink below. The sensation felt like a gentle massage in itself and, coupled with my therapist's continued focus on my neck and shoulders, soon left me in a light doze.

As the treatment came to an end, the remaining oil was combed through my hair to evenly distribute it – I chose to leave this on until later in the evening for deep conditioning

benefits, but you can also shower off there if you prefer not to rock the wet look in public!

That night, I slept better than I have done in a long time, and woke early the next morning feeling refreshed – even skipping my morning coffee, proving that this ancient-meets-modern combination was just the re-set I needed. (Kate)

Shirodhara and OxyEssential
Price: Shirodhara **\$890**; OxyEssential **\$480**
Duration: Shirodhara 60 minutes;
OxyEssential 20 minutes

Spa Beaute Par Zai, 12/F Sea Bird House, 22-28 Wyndham Street, Central, 2524 1272 spabpz.com

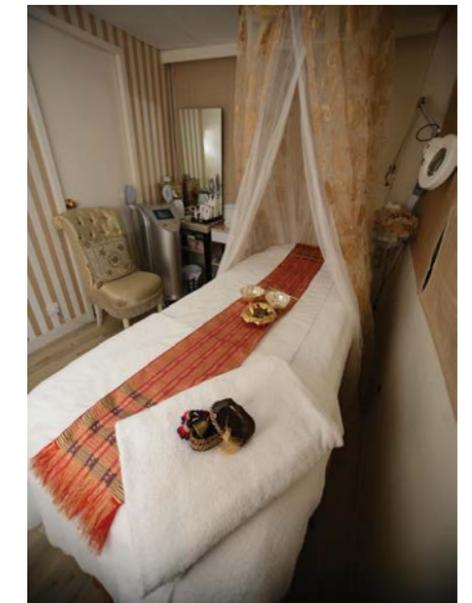


Beetle mania

Lush Spa – the creation of the renowned British eco beauty brand – offers a delightful change of scenery from anonymously-sleek spa spaces; filled with rustic wood furniture and vintage knick-knacks, it feels more like a charming English country cottage.

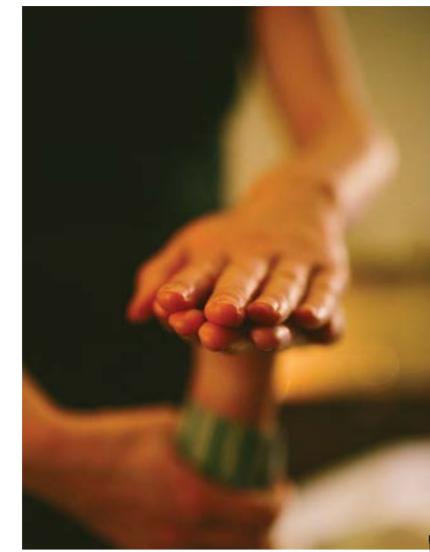
After a thorough consultation where my therapist explained what lay ahead, I was led into my spacious treatment room to change into a pair of cosy, brushed cotton pyjamas (which had even been warmed by a hot water bottle in advance). You keep these on throughout the Hard Days Night treatment, which features a blend of full-body massage and passive stretching, all set to a dreamy mix of reworked Beatles tunes.

If you have no idea what passive stretching is – don't worry, nor did I. It's



essentially yoga with someone doing all the hard work for you; my therapist managed to uncover muscles I didn't even know existed by gently pulling, stretching and twisting my limbs. At one point, a silk ribbon was wrapped around my arms and legs pulley-style, helping to stretch those muscles even further – an unexpectedly serene experience that felt like floating weightlessly into the sky.

This was interspersed with a medium-pressure massage that smoothly kneaded away all my aches and pains, with every stroke and stretch expertly choreographed to match the totally groovy Beatles soundtrack. Created by Lush especially for the treatment, a seamless mix of folksy versions of Ticket to Ride, Strawberry Fields Forever and Here Comes the Sun drifted by, helping to lull my body further into a state of total relaxation.



After 75 minutes of bliss, the sound of a cockerel crowing signalled my return to reality, although the thoroughly British touch of a cup of tea and plate of Jammie Dodger biscuits waiting outside my room helped prolong the loveliness just that little bit longer. On leaving, I honestly felt looser and more limber than I had in years – this really is the perfect treatment to fine-tune your body from top-to-toe, with a dose of quirky Lush magic sprinkled over the entire experience. (Rachel)

Hard Days Night Treatment
Price: **\$1,550**

Duration: 75 minutes, plus 15-minute consultation

Lush Spa, Soho Square, 21 Lyndhurst Terrace, Central, 3915 0638
hk.lush.com

Tibetan fine-tuning

If you're looking for a treatment that nourishes your mind every bit as much as your body, a Vital Energy Crystal Healing session at the **Four Seasons' Spa** might be just what you need for a spiritual awakening.

Arriving in my light-filled, minimalist-chic treatment suite, I noticed a range of crystals placed around the room. Whilst giving me a relaxing foot bath, my therapist Shyju explained that these would help activate my energy flow, and would later be placed on my body during the treatment to enhance this further.

This is just one aspect of a triple whammy of holistic elements – crystals, sound therapy and hands-on healing – designed to deliver total physical and mental relaxation. After lying on my heated bed, the next element came into play, with Shyju striking a series of Tibetan singing bowls around my head.



This ancient practice is believed to have profound healing properties; think of these as tuning forks for the soul, with deep gong-like vibrations that help clear your energy flow and settle your mind.

Next was an incredible full-body oil massage, focusing on my nerves, muscles, lymphatic system and pressure points. Absolutely no part of my body was left neglected (even my ears got their own mini massage), with Shyju methodically working away at each muscle and joint with just the right level of pressure. As my body loosened and my tensions unfurled, I could practically feel my stresses melting away beneath his hands.

The treatment ended with Shyju steadily placing his hands over various parts of my body, for a few minutes in each place. These prolonged moments of silence were almost

like aided meditation; Shyju explained that this was to open my chakras, using his "vital hand energy" to activate my energy flow. He mentioned that my mind was racing and particularly difficult to settle... must have been all those deadlines.

It's hard to explain how much calmer and more settled I felt after my treatment, with a deep sense of relaxation that encompassed both my body and mind – exactly the kind of total recharge I had needed for the new year ahead. (Rachel)

Vital Energy Crystal Healing

Price: **\$2,700** on Monday-Thursday, **\$3,180** on Friday-Sunday (plus 10% service charge)

Duration: 120 minutes

Spa, 6/F, Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong, 8 Finance Street, Central, 3196 8888
fourseasons.com/hongkong/spa



WHAT'S NEW?

MiraSpa

Romantic or platonic, it's time to gather up your spa-rtner for a day of pampering à deux. MiraSpa's Couples Package includes a bespoke 60-minute massage and 30-minute facial for both of you, 30 minutes' use of the private steam shower and sunken whirlpool bath, a delicious three-course lunch with two glasses of wine at WHISK restaurant – and even a special mini spa gift to take home too. Available weekdays until the end of February 2018, **\$3,680** per couple on weekdays (except Public Holidays), **\$3,980** per couple on Valentine's Day (plus 10% service charge), **MiraSpa, B3, The Mira Hong Kong, 118 – 130 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui, 2315 5500, themirahotel.com/facility/spa-zone**

Glow Spa

Packing a powerful punch of anti-ageing ingredients, Glow's new 90-minute Timeless Prodigy facial delivers remarkable results. After a welcome ritual incorporating Thai and Shiatsu massage, a lymphatic facial massage and a purifying champagne jelly elixir, your face is treated to a potent concentrate of damask rose stem cells and natural growth factors, followed by a 3D collagen mesh mask, and the application of a rich white truffle extract cream – the perfect antidote to dry winter weather.

\$1,990, Glow Spa, 9/F Parker House, 72 Queen's Road Central, 2525 5198
glowspa.hk

The Oriental Spa

Did someone say spa day? The Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong's Oriental Spa has just launched a fantastic new Sense



of Balance treatment, which combines a powerful trio of TCM-inspired elements – a 30-minute ginseng body scrub, 60-minute Chinese meridian acupuncture-point massage, and 30-minute cupping session (the traditional Asian therapy where circular glass jars are suctioned to various parts of your body) – all designed to enhance and invigorate your body's qi energy flow. Remember to arrive an hour early to maximise your pampering time at the spa's luxurious heat and water facilities too.

\$2,300 Monday-Thursday, **\$2,600** Friday-Sunday and Public Holidays (plus 10% service charge), **The Oriental Spa, Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong, 15 Queen's Road Central, 2132 0011, mandarinoriental.com/hong-kong/the-landmark/luxury-hotel**

Flawless

Can't decide whether to indulge in a facial or a body treatment? Get the best of both worlds with Flawless' February packages, which showcase a range of Medik8 and Aromatherapy Associates' best hydrating, revitalising and rejuvenating products. The

Day Cleanse includes a 45-minute Superfacial and 45-minute Rose Body Hydrator (comprising a body scrub, wrap and Ayurveda scalp massage), whilst the Purify & Revitalise package features a 60-minute Purify Facial and 30-minute Body Scrub.

Expat Parent readers can also bag an extra 30% off any face or body treatment between Monday-Wednesday; simply bring a friend who's never visited Flawless before and show staff this article for both of you to receive the discount.

Available 1-28 February 2018, the Day Cleanse costs **\$1,320**, Purify & Revitalise **\$1,680, Flawless, 4/F, Sea Bird House, 22-28 Wyndham Street, Central, 2869 5868, flawless.hk.com**

Expat Parent reader exclusive

If your New Year's resolutions include keeping a tighter hold on the purse strings, look no further than Sparadise for a fantastic discount deal, exclusive to Expat Parent readers. Just \$1,800 buys you a 60-minute facial, 30-minute eye treatment, 45-minute body scrub, 60-minute body massage, and Shellac spa manicure and pedicure. Split the deal with a friend or better yet, keep it to yourself. We promise we won't tell. Available until 5 March 2018. To redeem, quote 'Expat Parent' at time of booking, **\$1,800 for six treatments, Sparadise, 3/F, 60 Wellington Street, Central, 2997 2208, sparadise.com.hk**

