TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

The Birthplace of Luxury Wellness: Western Europe's Most Exceptional Retreats

(Courtesy of FORESTIS)

By Armen Muradyan
Content Specialist

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- Western Europe, cradle of spa culture from Roman baths to Alpine grand hotels, now leads global wellness tourism.
- From Riviera cliffs and Dolomite peaks to Icelandic lava fields and Portuguese rice paddies, these resorts fuse dramatic landscapes, medical-grade programs and regional cuisine into immersive, deeply personalized wellness escapes.
- Guests trade generic spa days for narrative-rich stays: gut-health clinics on Austrian lakes, Arctic floating saunas, family-owned Champagne estates and Nordic sea-bathing rituals rooted in century-old prescriptions.

Few regions have shaped modern resort culture as profoundly as Western Europe. From the thermal baths of the Roman Empire to the grand hotels that emerged along the Mediterranean coast and in the Alps during the 19th century, the idea of traveling for rest, health and leisure has deep roots here. Today, Europe generates more wellness tourism trips than any other region on earth, and wellness travel is expected to grow at 4.7% from 2026 to 2035.

That heritage continues today through a collection of luxury wellness resorts that combine history and ancient traditions with contemporary spa and medical wellness programs. Some occupy centuries-old estates overlooking the Mediterranean or the towering Alps. Others are set among geothermal sources, where mountain air and mineral waters have drawn visitors for generations. Across Spain, Italy, France, Switzerland and beyond, these properties have helped establish many of the standards that define luxury hospitality today around the world.

We sought out hotels where wellness comes with a story (and yes, usually a price tag). At each, the surroundings help bolster the treatments, traditions and sense of place guests encounter during their stay.

Lily of the Valley

La Croix-Valmer, French Riviera, France

(Courtesy of Lily of the Valley)

A few minutes' drive from Saint-Tropez, Lily of the Valley sits within the protected Cap Lardier estate — one of the last stretches of undeveloped coastline on the French Riviera — overlooking the wild, three-mile Plage de Gigaro. But this is not a typical Riviera property. Rather than trading on glamour and social currency, the hotel has built its identity around something rarer on this coast: genuine commitment to physical transformation.

The five-star hotel is organized around its Shape Club, a 21,500-square-foot wellness facility allowing diverse types of activities starting from a semi-Olympic heated outdoor pool, a fully equipped Technogym fitness studio to a Pilates reformer studio, and a cryotherapy room. Additionally, there is a Nordic circuit that cycles through sauna: hammam, cold plunge, and snow shower. Structured programs run four, seven, ten, or fourteen days and focus on weight loss, detox, sport performance, or better aging. Nutrition is guided by the approach of French dietitian Jacques Fricker.

Rooms range from 377-square-foot terraced studios to pool suites and standalone villas, with interiors that combine polished marble, exposed concrete, and natural leather. Three restaurants serve Mediterranean produce sourced from local farms, precisely calibrated to support the wellness programs without sacrificing flavor. The Shape Club has received recognition as Best Luxury Wellness Retreat and France's Best Wellness Retreat.

FORESTIS

Brixen, Dolomites, Italy

(Courtesy of FORESTIS)

Set at 5,906 feet on Mount Plose above the medieval city of Brixen, FORESTIS overlooks one of the most iconic landscapes in the Alps: the Dolomites. The resort sits in South Tyrol, a region shaped by Austrian and Italian influences, where German and Italian are spoken side by side and Alpine traditions intersect with Mediterranean culture.

The architecture draws on the surrounding landscape, using wood, stone and glass to frame views of the UNESCO-listed Dolomites. Accommodations range from streamlined suites to a 2,150-square-foot penthouse with a private rooftop pool, all oriented toward the mountains. Dining follows a regional approach. Ingredients are sourced from nearby forests, meadows and farms, while the resort's restaurant, YERA, has earned two Michelin Keys.

Wellness is based in the local landscape. Treatments draw inspiration from the area's long-standing relationship with mountain botanicals, incorporating species such as mountain pine, spruce, larch and stone pine. The spa also features indoor and outdoor pools supplied with spring water directly from Mount Plose. Seasonal activities extend beyond the wellness program, with ski-in, ski-out access during winter and direct connections to hiking and mountain biking trails in the warmer months.

Quinta da Comporta Wellness Boutique Resort

Carvalhal, Comporta, Portugal

An hour south of Lisbon, the Comporta coast remains one of the last stretches of the Portuguese Atlantic that resists the look and feel of a resort destination — low whitewashed buildings, pine and cork oak, rice paddies running to the horizon. Quinta da Comporta opened in 2019 on a working rice estate in Carvalhal, designed by architect Miguel Câncio Martins as a direct response to that landscape. The resort's original threshing floor was preserved as its central courtyard, with the spa barn on one side and the restaurant on the other.

The 73 rooms, suites, townhouses, and pool villas are finished in honey wood, sisal, and wicker, with whitewashed walls that track the surrounding palette. Oryza Spa houses six treatment rooms, a hammam, sauna, and heated indoor-outdoor pool, with treatments built around Oryza Lab, the resort's own rice-based skincare line. A Yoga Shala overlooks the paddies; a 131-foot solar-heated infinity pool faces them. Structured multi-night programs — Detox, Mind Balance, Pure Glow — run alongside a rotating seasonal retreat calendar.

Lanserhof Sylt

List on Sylt, Germany

(Courtesy of Lanserhof Sylt)

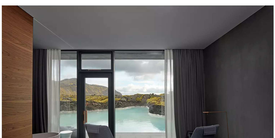
Sylt's northernmost point is where Germany meets the North Sea amid strong winds, salt air, and dunes that shift each winter. Lanserhof Sylt occupies an elevated position in List with views across the harbour and the Wadden Sea's tidal flats. The building is designed to match the terrain: organic curved volumes, natural materials, a dune-toned palette, and a 76,424-square-foot thatched roof — the largest in Europe — whose overhangs draw directly from the island's traditional Frisian vernacular.

Across 215,000 square feet, the property has 55 rooms and suites and a 54,000-square-foot medical and treatment center. A five-story steel-and-oak circular staircase anchors the atrium. Basement facilities include a climbing wall, saunas, steam baths, and saltwater pools indoors and out.

Medical programming runs from four-day retreats to two-week residential cures, all structured around the Lanserhof Concept's framework of Mayr gut medicine, advanced diagnostics, and longevity and sleep protocols. Dining follows the personalized Energy Cuisine concept. Accommodation ranges from 312-square-foot single rooms with loggias to the 797-square-foot sea-view Elysium Loft Suite.

The Retreat at Blue Lagoon

Grindavik, Iceland



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(Courtesy of Blue Lagoon Retreat)

What began as a byproduct of geothermal energy production has become one of Iceland's most recognizable destinations. Built within the lava fields of the Reykjanes Peninsula, the Blue Lagoon draws visitors from around the world to its mineral-rich geothermal waters. Opened in 2018, The Retreat offers the property's most exclusive experience, with 60 suites integrated directly into the surrounding volcanic landscape and private access to areas of the lagoon unavailable to day visitors.

Accommodations range from junior suites overlooking moss-covered lava fields to expansive multi-room residences with private lagoon access, spa facilities and dedicated service. Throughout the property, floor-to-ceiling windows emphasize the contrast between black volcanic rock, pale-blue geothermal water and the peninsula's stark terrain.

Guests have access to a subterranean spa carved into the lava, where a circuit of steam rooms, saunas, relaxation spaces and cold-water experiences draws on Iceland's famous bathing culture. Signature treatments incorporate silica, algae and minerals sourced directly from the geothermal waters.

Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa

Champillon, Champagne, France

(Courtesy of Royal Champagne)

Coaches traveling the royal road between Paris and Reims used to stop at the hilltop post house in Champillon to rest horses and change drivers. That 19th-century staging point now operates as one of France's most decorated five-star hotels — ranked third best in the country by Condé Nast Traveler — perched above vineyard rows that the UNESCO designates as a world heritage landscape. The setting does something to you before you even check in: the Marne Valley drops away below, the vines run to the horizon in every direction, and the village of Champillon itself holds fewer than 500 residents. Quiet is the point.

The hotel blends its original stone coaching inn with a modernist addition — 47 rooms and suites, each individually designed and oriented toward the valley. Two restaurants anchor the culinary side: Le Royal, a Michelin-starred room led by Chef Christophe Raoux, a Meilleur Ouvrier de France, and Le Bellevue, a more casual bistro with terrace dining above the vines. A glass-enclosed champagne cellar holding over 600 bottles runs below.

The spa is the region's first full destination facility of its kind — nine treatment rooms, indoor and outdoor pools, hammam, sauna, jacuzzis, and a yoga studio, with a treatment roster that includes myBlend facial protocols, Kobido face lifting practiced by one of only 50 certified masters worldwide, and weekend Shiatsu sessions with a therapist who has worked the technique for over 35 years. The whole operation is family-owned, an increasingly rare model for a hotel of this caliber.

Palazzo Fiuggi

Fiuggi, Lazio, Italy

Fiuggi's mineral springs have been credited with restoring the health of Michelangelo and Pope Boniface VIII. Palazzo Fiuggi, a restored 1913 Art Nouveau villa an hour south of Rome, treats that legacy as a foundation rather than a selling point. Each stay begins with a full medical workup — blood panels, metabolic analysis, diagnostics — before a team of 15 physicians maps a bespoke program across longevity, detox, or optimal weight. The 64,600-square-foot medical spa runs 39 treatment rooms, thalassotherapy pools drawing on local spring water, Himalayan salt rooms, and an MRI suite. Heinz Beck, a three-star Michelin chef, leads the kitchen. The 102 rooms and suites offer marble interiors and views over eight hectares of private parkland — a setting that makes the regimen feel less like a clinic and more like a Lazio estate.

Can Ferrereta Santanyí

Mallorca, Spain

(ART SANCHEZ / Courtesy of Can Ferrereta Santanyí)

Santanyí is the kind of Mallorcan town that has made few concessions to tourism — a quiet historic quarter of sandstone buildings the color of burnt sienna, a weekly market, and a 13th-century church. Can Ferrereta sits at its center, a 17th-century manor house converted by the Soldevila-Ferrer family into a 32-room five-star hotel while leaving the architecture of the original structure intact. Stone arches, exposed beams, and the proportions of an old Mallorcan residence remain; what's been added is an art collection that includes works by Joan Miró, a library stocked with Assouline editions and a private vinyl collection, and a central garden where a dark-hued pool sits among cypresses, bougainvillea, and olive trees.

The Sa Calma spa is built around a 33-foot heated indoor pool with hydromassage, sauna, hammam, and treatment rooms where therapists work with local ingredients like salts from the Es Trenc salt flats, almond and olive oils, rosemary, lavender, and citrus. Outdoor yoga and meditation sessions happen in the garden. The 24-hour Technogym adjoins the spa. Restaurant Ocre — named for the ochre facades the Saharan wind gives the town's stone — serves Mallorcan-inflected Mediterranean cooking in the courtyard; La Fresca handles lighter poolside meals.

Kurhotel Skodsborg

Skodsborg, Denmark

What Dr. Carl Ottosen prescribed in 1898 — cold sea bathing, heat therapy, a plant-forward diet, and structured rest — is now marketed across the wellness industry as cutting-edge. At Kurhotel Skodsborg, those same principles have simply never left. The property, a converted sanatorium on Denmark's North Zealand coast, 9.3 miles north of Copenhagen, pairs its 125-year lineage with a Henning Larsen–designed spa that includes a 69-foot pool, salt grotto, steam rooms, outdoor jacuzzi, and 16 discrete warming and cooling experiences. The signature SaunaGus — an aromatherapy sauna ritual led by a trained Gusmester — closes with a cold plunge from the hotel's private jetty into The Sound. Brasserie Carl anchors dining with New Nordic cooking.

Lanserhof Lans

Lans, Tyrol, Austria

(Alexander Haiden / Courtesy of Lanserhof Lans)

The Lanserhof story began here in 1984 in a small Tyrolean village above Innsbruck, where the group's approach to medical wellness was first developed and has been refined ever since. Guests who know Lanserhof Sylt will find a different atmosphere here: less architecturally theatrical, more alpine and unhurried. Snow-covered meadows, dense fir forest, and the Nordkette peaks form the backdrop of the scene.

Following a $28 million renovation in 2017, the property spans 67 rooms and suites — from floor-to-ceiling-windowed singles to the 1000-square-foot Panorama Suite with private sauna — set across three buildings connected by garden paths. Medical programming is anchored by the physician-directed Lanserhof Classic (minimum seven nights), with specialized tracks for hormonal balance, mental health, Long Covid, and longevity. Dining follows the Energy Cuisine concept: individually calibrated menus built from seasonal, locally sourced ingredients.

Arctic Bath

Harads, Swedish Lapland, Sweden

(Courtesy of Arctic Bath)

Arctic Bath is a floating hotel on the Lule River in Harads, Swedish Lapland, opened in 2020 and designed by architects Bertil Harström and Johan Kaupp. The circular main building — modeled on log-jam formations in the river — sits at the center of the property year-round, freezing into the ice each winter and floating free each summer, with an open-air plunge pool at its core. Twelve cabins accommodate guests: six floating on the water, six set on shore among birch forest, all finished with natural wood, Scandinavian furniture, and underfloor heating.

The spa incorporates four saunas, hot baths, and a private treatment room using Kerstin Florian skincare, with a guided spa ritual included in every stay. A Michelin Key restaurant seats 22 and changes its set menu on a three-night rotation. The activity roster is built around the region and its Sámi heritage — reindeer herding visits, moose calling, Northern Lights sleds, and dog sledding among them.

MAYRLIFE Altaussee

Altaussee, Styria, Austria

The Mayr Method — developed by Austrian physician Dr. F.X. Mayr in the early 20th century around the principle that health begins in the gut — has been practiced at clinics across the Alps for over a century. MAYRLIFE brings that framework to its most refined form yet: a medical health resort set directly on Lake Altaussee in Styria, where each stay opens with individualized diagnostics before doctors map a therapy plan to the guest's specific health profile. Programs in detox, optimal weight, longevity, and immune function are built around modern interpretations of the Mayr cure — intestinal regeneration, therapeutic nutrition, and the systematic removal of what the body doesn't need.

The spa draws on local salt water for its indoor pool, and aesthetic treatments developed with Dr. Barbara Sturm complement the medical offering. Rooms and suites, some with floor-to-ceiling lake views, include Park Residences with private steam and sauna suites. The surrounding Salzkammergut landscape — hiking trails, a 9-hole golf course, ski slopes 2.5 miles out — functions as part of the program.