

Champneys Tring occupies a former Rothschild family estate.

# Welcome to SPA HEAVEN

As Britain's original health spa, Champneys Tring knows a thing or two about health, wellness and relaxation, all of which – and more – were on offer when Jo Ebsworth paid a visit. She reveals why it's still one of the UK's best, most-loved, health spas.

I always like to take a friend or loved one away with me on an overnight spa break, mainly in the hope that they will feel just as revived and rejuvenated as I will by the end of our stay. But it doesn't always work out that way. You should never assume, for example, that your plus one will enjoy spending time with you sitting in the sauna, pootling along in the pool, or being pampered, because everyone's idea of relaxation is different.

While I love nothing more than a stint in an outdoor jacuzzi followed by a full-body massage, both pursuits are my mother's idea of hell (she hates the heat, as well as being touched by strangers). And I can't say my partner is a fan of them either. My point, therefore, is this: if you're taking someone away with you on a spa trip – and you want to enjoy your experience fully – you need a destination that caters to all tastes, with every kind of activity on offer. And it's for this reason that Champneys Tring is hard to beat.

## RELAXATION AWAITS

Less than an hour away from London by train, Champneys Tring is known as Britain's original health spa, and, as such, has been helping generations to relax, reset and recharge for almost 100 years. The once Rothschild family-owned estate is set in 170 acres of idyllic Hertfordshire

countryside – but don't let the traditional façade fool you. Having undergone significant renovation and refurbishment in recent years, the grounds, exterior and interior feel familiar yet exceedingly fresher and modernised since my last visit more than a decade ago, managing to remain faithful to their heritage while moving with the times.

The reception area is a divinely scented oasis of calm when I arrive with my friend and, after a quick, welcoming check-in, we head to our tastefully decorated room complete with a huge bed (that can be divided into two), separate dressing area, and en-suite bathroom featuring an enormous tub. My friend wants to relax after the journey but I'm keen to kickstart my stay (our separation begins swiftly), so after a quick change into my cossie, fluffy white bathrobe and flip flops, I head off to explore the extensive facilities armed with a map – trust me, you'll need it!

## TIME TO REVIVE

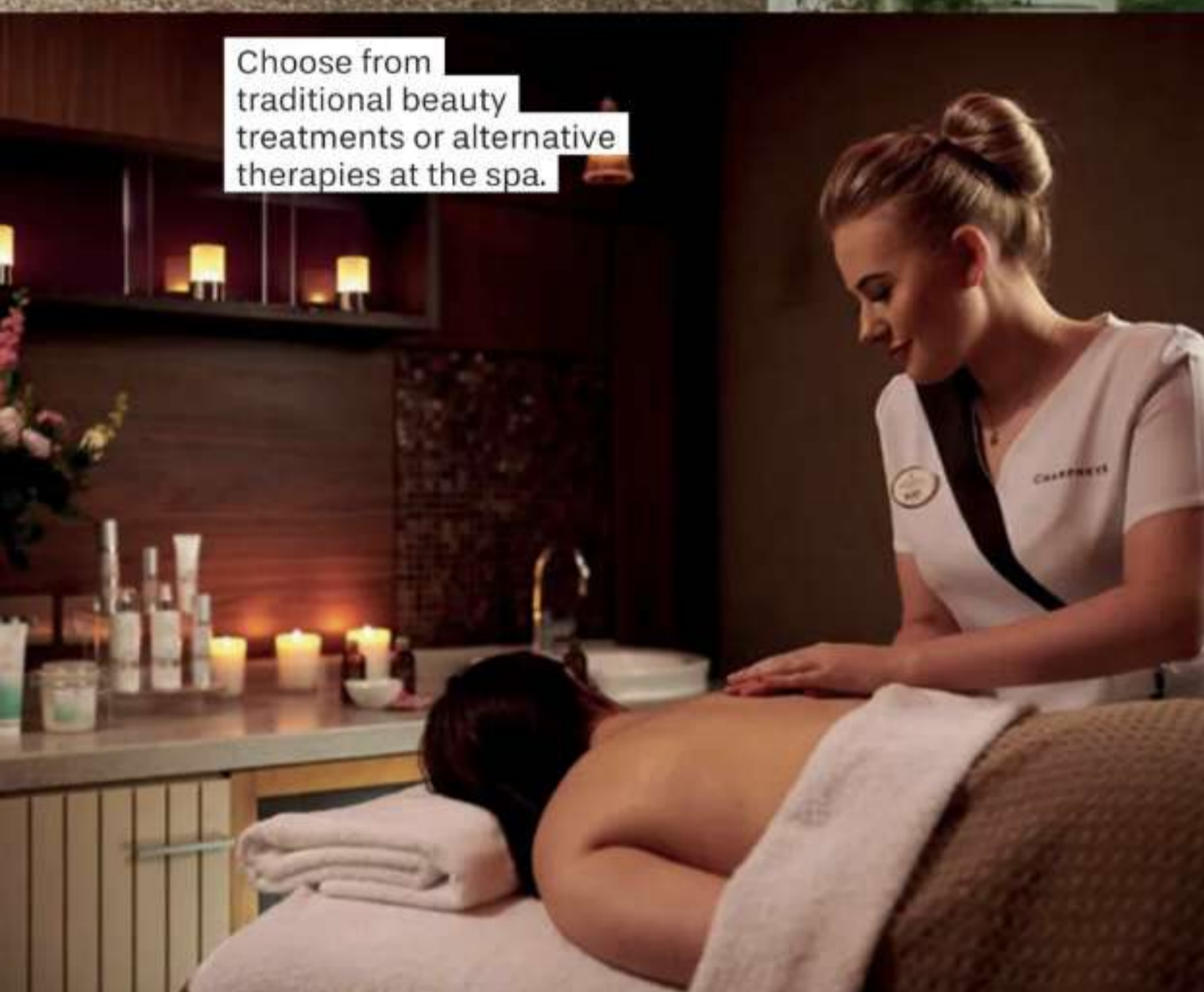
Strolling through the many corridors that lead to an array of cosy relaxation areas, treatment rooms, manicure and pedicure salons, fitness suites, and retail and refreshment spaces, it's easy to see why Champneys Tring recently won Best Spa for Wellness at the Good Spa Guide Awards 2023. My first stop takes me to the hydropool where



Take a bike ride round the extensive grounds.



Afternoon tea is served with a view of the Hertfordshire countryside.



Choose from traditional beauty treatments or alternative therapies at the spa.



The outdoor jacuzzi is a tranquil spot for relaxation.

I relax on a soothing bed of bubbles before moving to the whirlpool, and then the indoor jacuzzi – quite possibly the best I’ve ever encountered – followed by time spent alternating between the steam room and icy plunge pool.

Next, I head outside to warm up in the outdoor jacuzzi and admire the stunning grounds while watching bathrobe-clad couples play lawn games in the winter sun and enjoy coffee and cake from the revamped Spa Café. Feeling peckish, I move inside to enjoy a tasty nibble and am delighted to discover everything from sweet treats to healthy snacks on offer, including gluten-free options.

It’s at this point that my fitness fanatic friend appears wearing gym gear and trainers in search of a smoothie after

spending time in the new Peloton studio. She excitedly tells me about all the fitness facilities on offer – including a yoga studio, spinning studio, “urban gym”, and cardio centre, along with personal training services and a full timetable of 20 classes a day – before she dashes away to join an energetic HIIT class.

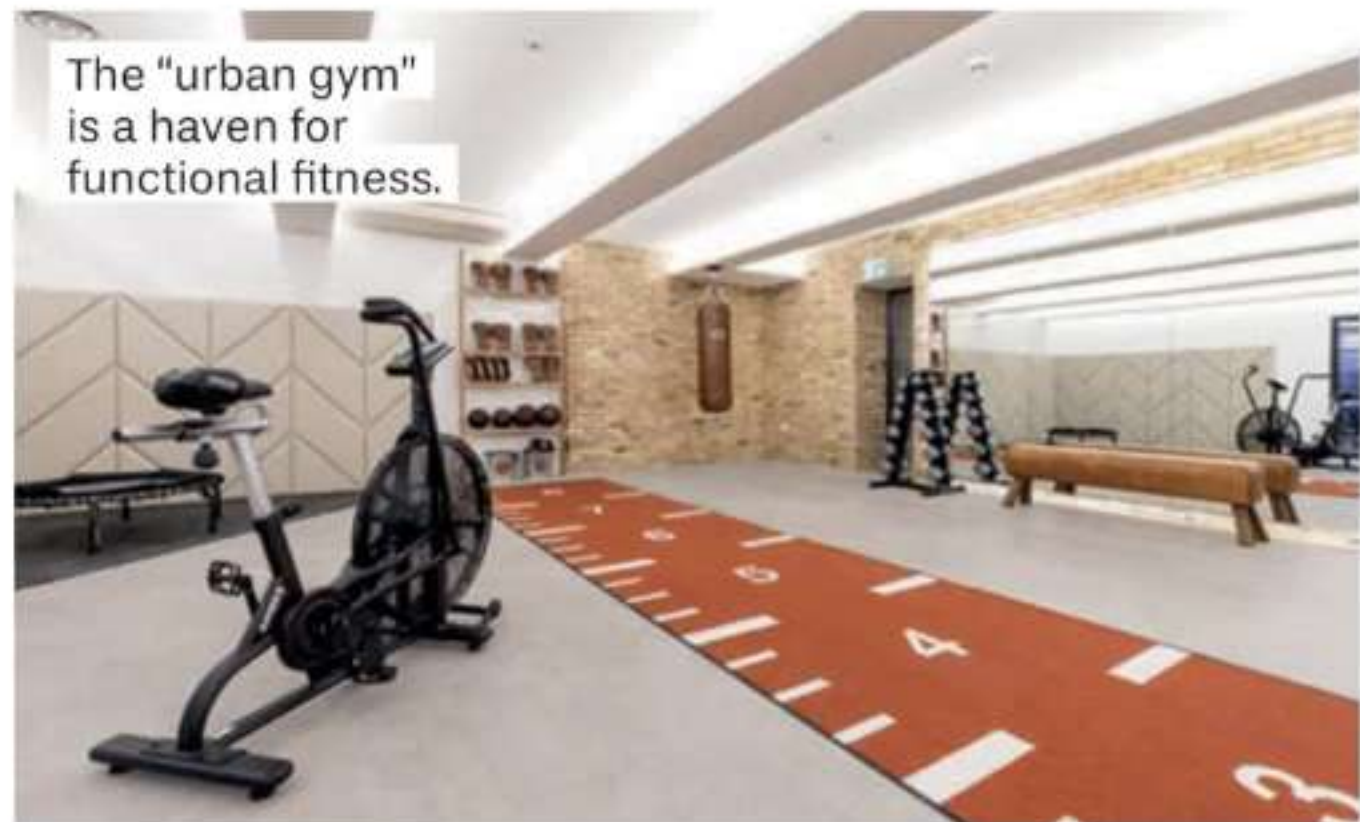
Happy that she’s happy, I feel inspired to do a little bit of exercise myself, albeit gentler, in the 25m indoor swimming pool before moving on to have my 50-minute Champneys Radiance Renewal Facial, which leaves my skin feeling deeply nourished and visibly plumper. On a side note, choosing which treatment to have was much harder than I expected, owing to the vast menu. Everything



Renew mind and body in the hydro pool.



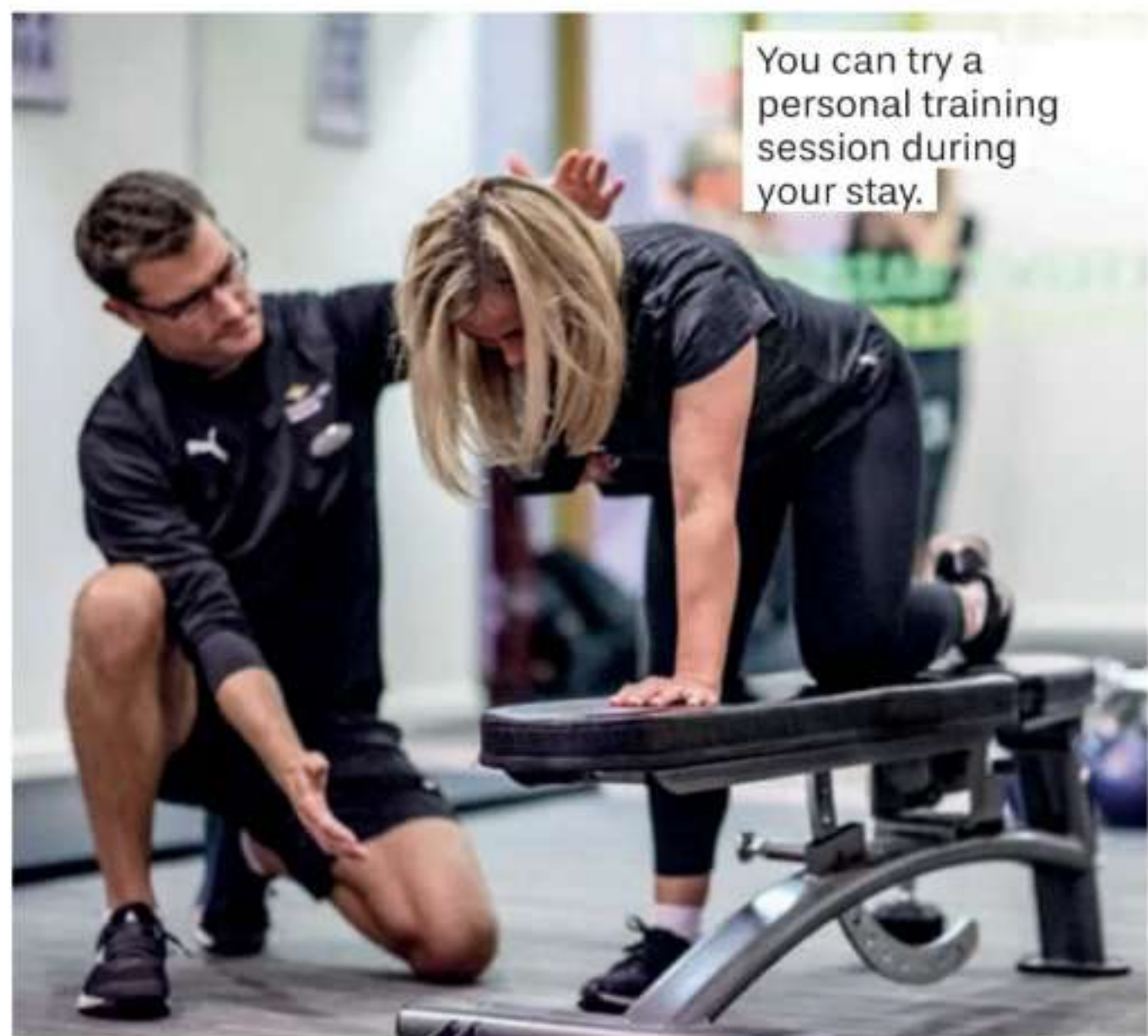
Food is not just healthy, it's delicious and beautifully served.



The "urban gym" is a haven for functional fitness.



The dining room offers a relaxed and elegant setting.



You can try a personal training session during your stay.

from traditional spa and beauty treatments to alternative therapies such as reiki, crystal healing, acupuncture, and cupping are on offer, alongside state-of-the-art services including cryotherapy and non-surgical face and body laser treatments in the new 3D Aesthetics Medispa clinic.

Feeling deeply relaxed after my facial, I pull the curtains around a relaxation bed not far from the treatment area and promptly nod off for 30 minutes, before retiring to my room to get ready for dinner at 7pm. My friend is feeling fantastic after her athletic endeavours, and I feel equally fab after my more leisurely itinerary.

## FEELING NOURISHED

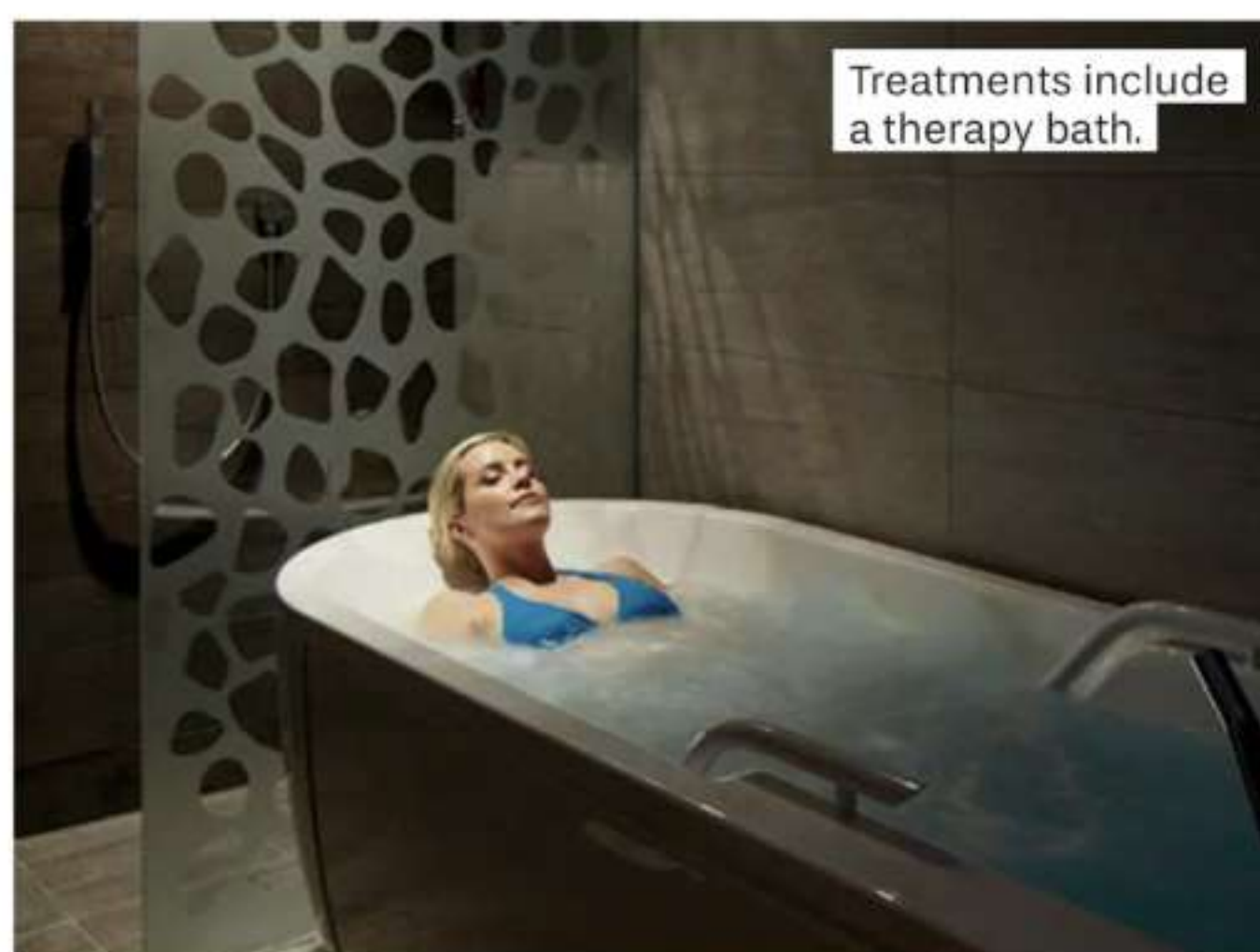
Dinner in the Spa Restaurant is a wonderful three-course affair, and while everything on the menu is healthy, it's also hearty, delicious, and beautifully presented. Over a bottle of wine, we discuss our plans for the next morning, which range from hiring bikes to cycle around the grounds, stretching our legs by exploring one of the three walking trails, or trying out the newly built and very on-trend padel court. However, we soon discover that this racquet sport, played on a tennis court surrounded by squash court walls,

is played in pairs, which puts paid to those plans.

Waking bright eyed and bushy tailed the next morning, I head to the hydropool once again while my friend takes a dip in the pool, meeting afterwards in our bathrobes for a yummy breakfast before getting changed into our exercise clothes for a countryside walk. We choose the 3.3 mile Cardiac Hill trail, which takes in some lovely woodland scenery over the next 60 minutes, although shorter and gentler walks are available, including the two-mile Estate Walk, which takes around 45 minutes.

We return to check out feeling revived, and I know it won't be long before I return with my partner, or my mother, in tow. Both, I am certain, will enjoy the variety of activities and services on offer at Champneys Tring while I indulge in some pampering, safe in the knowledge that they aren't dying of boredom – of which there is no risk because I'll be recruiting at least one of them to play padel with me on my next visit!

● *An overnight stay at Champneys Tring starts from £255 per person based on two people sharing. Prices include dinner and breakfast, plus access to the spa and fitness facilities.*



Treatments include a therapy bath.



Top-of-the-range facilities await at the health spa.



Turn to page 78 for healthy recipes from the new Champneys cookbook!

The rear of the property looks over extensive grounds, which you can happily explore.