



S P A

# COME ON IN, THE WATER'S LOVELY

Feeling a teensy toxic, post festivities? At these natural mineral water spas you're cleansed inside and out, says *Adriaane Pielou*



▲ NORTHERN PORTUGAL

## Vidago Palace, *Vidago*

Four natural springs emerge from the granite that lies under the woods and park-like grounds surrounding this architectural marvel, providing one of the world's rare sources of naturally carbonated water (Ruisui, in Taiwan, is another). Exceptional alkalinity is what makes this water so effective at improving digestion and cleansing the liver and kidneys. The 70-room Vidago Palace, deep in the countryside, an hour from

Porto was built in 1910 for Portugal's Carlos I as a showcase for Portuguese spa culture. Now beautifully restored, it provides an extravagantly glamorous setting in which to drink and loll in the water. The first hole of the 18-hole golf course,

laid out in 1936, lies yards from the entrance, making the hotel a useful destination for couples where one half doesn't want to spend their entire weekend on a massage bed or wandering through the gardens. Although the restaurant feels a bit sterile, the food, local wines, and exquisitely furnished room more than compensate.

**BOOK IT:** Elegant Resorts offers three nights B&B, including flights and transfers, from £935pp. [elegantresorts.co.uk](http://elegantresorts.co.uk)



▲ LAKE GENEVA, FRANCE

## Hôtel Royal Evian, *Neuvecelle*

Sometimes it's hard to believe all those billions of bottles of Evian really and truly come from natural sources. Then you get to Evian, where eight million bottles a day get filled. When you see the miles of protected empty open land, 3,000 ft above Lake Geneva, through which rainwater and snow spend about 15 years seeping through rock, absorbing various minerals, before emerging at springs, the process becomes credible. If not admirable - all that single-use plastic. The town of Evian became the first spa resort in France in the late-18th century, after the discovery of the effectiveness of the water on kidney stones, in particular. Today, with its funicular, Byzantine casino, grand villas and museums, the lakeside town retains an old-world grandeur. Above the town, overlooking Lake Geneva, so does the Hotel Royal Evian. Opened in 1909, it's kept a similarly old-school vibe, with its serene, light-filled spa and springwater pools, spectacular Michelin-starred food and large, uncluttered rooms. Almost best of all are the surrounding gardens and the fragrant, quite magical pinewood-built La Grange au Lac concert hall in the woods opposite. Super civilised, and deliciously restful for a restorative weekend.

**BOOK IT:** Doubles from £255.

[evianresort.com](http://evianresort.com)





▲ JAMAICA

### Jamaica Inn, *Ocho Rios*

Bizarrely, despite having some of the best natural fresh water and thermal springs on the planet, Jamaica has yet to make the most of its good fortune. Visitors have been sighing over this neglect for centuries, ever since Sir Hans Sloane, founder of the British Museum, wrote a book about his travels in 1707. Even now, visitors tend to come across the pools and hot springs by luck, if at all. The few guesthouses near the sources of the most potent sources are hardly tempting, but the glamorous old 55-room Jamaica Inn – still redolent of the 1950s, when Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller honeymooned there, Churchill visited often and Noël Coward and Ian Fleming propped up the bar – couldn't be more inviting. The pool is filled with seawater but the spa and hotel source theirs from springs in the Blue Mountains. From here, you can explore the Blue Lagoon, where you can feel the cool mineral water meeting the warm Caribbean sea, and Milk River Bath, which is so radioactive that despite relieving pain from rheumatism, arthritis and sciatica, immersion has to be kept to 20 minutes max.

**BOOK IT:** Carrier offers seven nights, including transfers and flights, from £2,860. [carrier.co.uk](http://carrier.co.uk)



▲ SLOVENIA

### Grand Hotel Sava Superior, *Rogaška Slatina*

Scattered with thermal spring areas and sanatorium-type hotels where citizens are still – as in Communist days – sent by the government for free preventative or rehab spa stays, much of middle and eastern Europe remains a source of inexpensive spa stays. In the hills of rural Slovenia, the Grand Hotel Sava's pools are piped with the exceptionally magnesium-rich waters that have made Rogaška Slatina a place of pilgrimage for centuries for people with chronically aching joints and degenerative bone problems such as osteoporosis. While the 232-room hotel doesn't exactly



have an intimate vibe, the entire place is immaculate, with a cheerfully down-to-earth atmosphere and practical approach, vigorously administered massages, good treatments for anyone in need of physical rehab (sports injuries, say), and lovely hiking in the surrounding hills.

**BOOK IT:** Doubles from £130. [rogaska.si](http://rogaska.si) ■