



A RURAL RETREAT

In search of serenity, *Ali Gudgeon* retreats to the award-winning Spa Hotel at Ribby Hall Village, nestled in the heart of the Lancashire countryside

The Spa Hotel at Ribby Hall Village offers a luxurious escape from the everyday. As I drove the long, tree-lined avenue leading into the 130-acre estate, I was greeted by a charming sight – a family of ducks waddling calmly across the road. It was an early hint that this place operates at a gentler pace, in harmony with its serene surroundings.

Stepping inside the spa, I'm immediately enveloped in the most heavenly scent – a calming blend that signals instant relaxation. If I could bottle it, I would. The warm welcome from the attentive staff only enhanced the feeling that I was in for something very special.



Wrapped in a plush robe and ready to unwind, I made my way into the heart of the spa to begin the signature Aqua Thermal Journey – a carefully curated experience designed to raise your body temperature gently and gradually, unlocking a host of holistic benefits along the way.

The journey begins softly, in the tranquil Aroma Room, where gentle lighting and a glowing water feature set the mood. From there, it's onto the Aroma Steam Room, perfect

for opening up pores, and then into the first Saunarium, where the temperature steps up a notch. A brisk cold shower follows – invigorating, if not a little bracing.

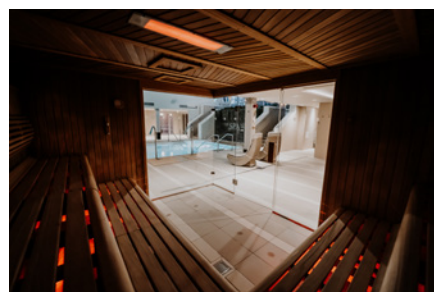
One of the standout moments for me came in the Balinese Steam Inhalation Room. At 49°C and infused with salt vapour, it's one of the hottest rooms in the journey, and arguably the most rejuvenating. The steam works wonders on the lungs and skin, leaving you feeling deeply cleansed and utterly renewed.



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There's an icy overhead bucket shower for the brave — though I opted to bypass this and head instead to the herbal-infused

Saunarium, followed by a soothing spell in the Tepidarium. The gentle warmth here encourages deep relaxation, preparing you for the next phase: a dip in the Hydropool, where gentle jets and warm water lull you into a meditative state.



But the real showstopper awaits outside: the Zen Garden. With the spring sun beaming down, this outdoor oasis is the epitome of spa luxury. Three hot tubs of varying sizes and settings beckon, along with a bar, experience showers, a Himalayan Salt Sauna, and – for those seeking a full contrast therapy experience – newly added individual ice baths (which I admired from afar!). All of this, against the backdrop of sweeping countryside views, makes for a blissful escape where time seems to stand still.

Whether you're after a full spa day or a twilight escape, The Spa Hotel at Ribby Hall Village offers a wide range of packages to suit every preference. With its long-standing 5 Bubble Spa rating from the Good Spa Guide – held proudly since 2011 – it's easy to see why this gem continues to attract those in search of calm, luxury and a touch of rural magic. ■

