

HOUSE
& GARDEN

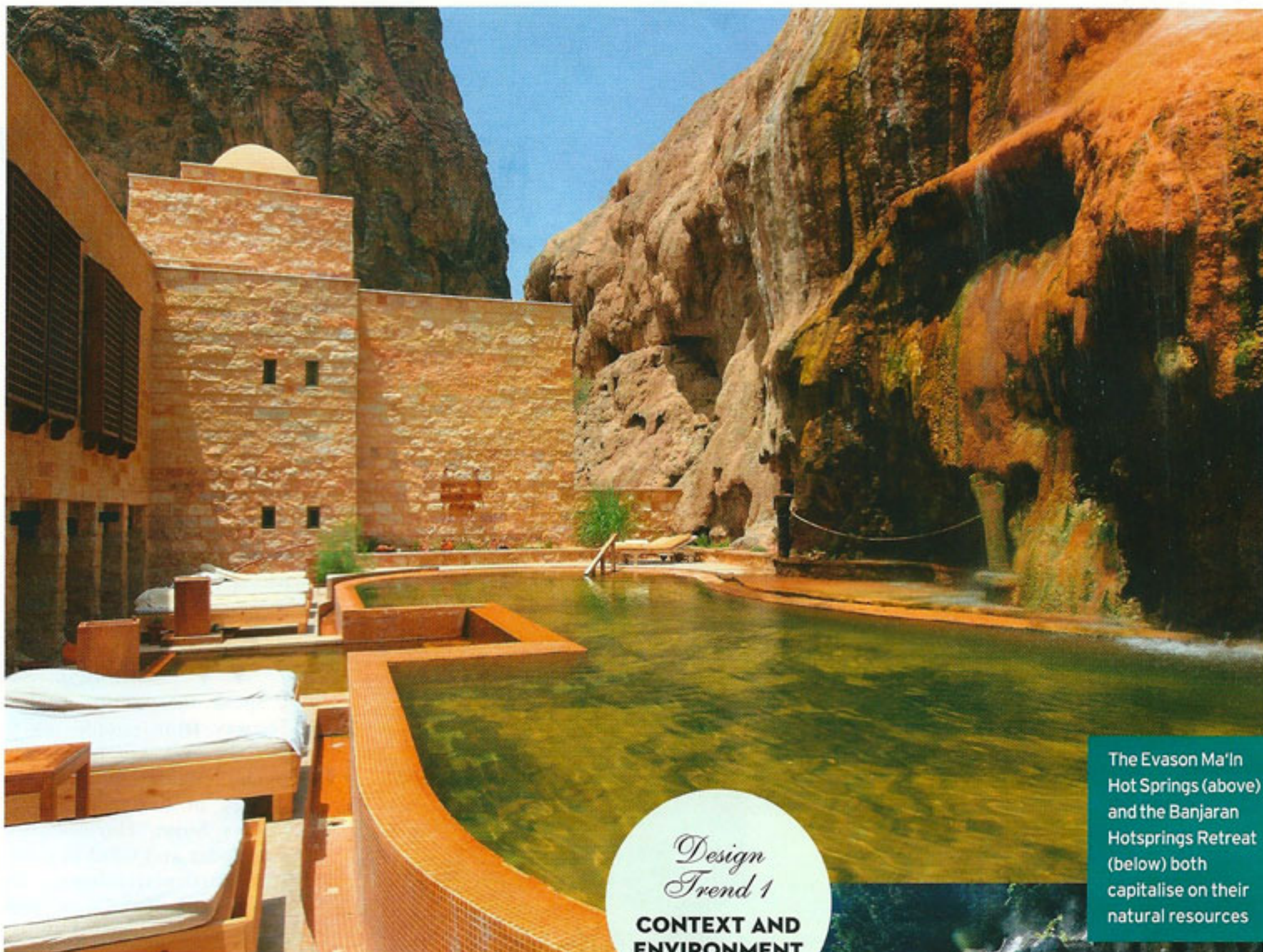
HOTELS by DESIGN

A guide to the most beautifully designed hotels in the world



DESIGN TRENDS

In the world of the modern spa, it's no longer a case of one style suits all. Caroline Phillips identifies six key design trends that are transforming the experience of today's spa-goer

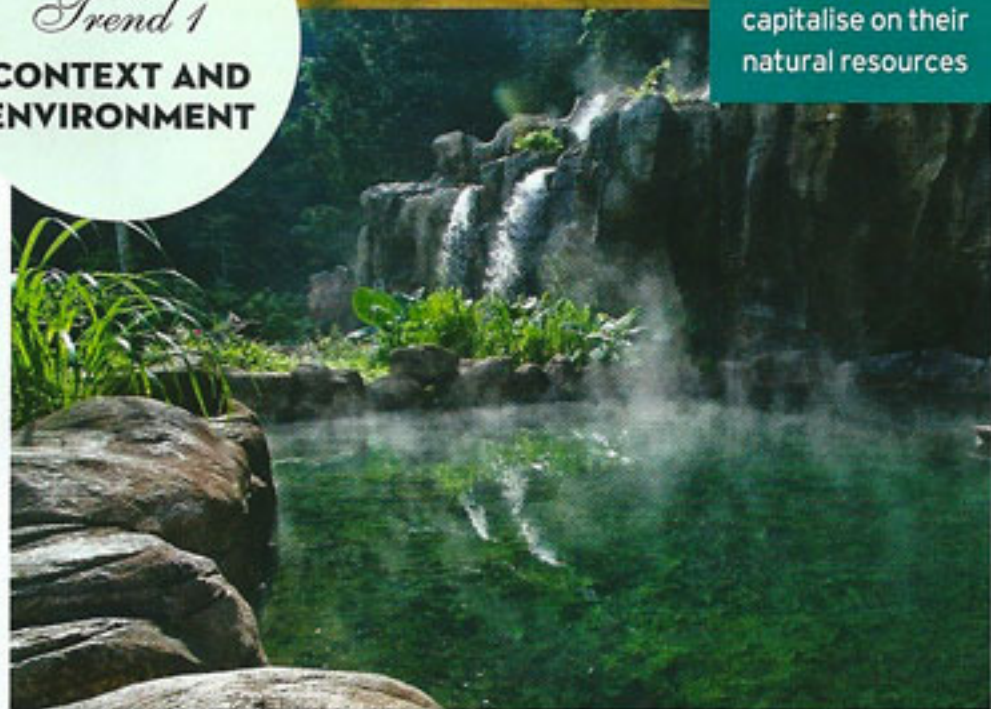


The Evason Ma'In Hot Springs (above) and the Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat (below) both capitalise on their natural resources

*Design
Trend 1*

**CONTEXT AND
ENVIRONMENT**

Long gone are the days of the one-Eastern-style-fits-all approach to spa design. The current zeitgeist is for authenticity of location. 'Spas have to be relevant to their location and have a physical connection,' notes Ingo Schweder, CEO of spa consultants Goco. Nowhere is this more apparent than at [Evason Ma'In Hot Springs](#) in Jordan, where the Six Senses spa incorporates a natural hot-spring waterfall which cascades down a sheer rock face into the main pool; or at two Malaysian enterprises, the [Geo Spa at Four Seasons Langkawi](#) and the award-winning [Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat](#), both of which capitalise on their natural and geological assets. From an architectural standpoint, the lavish Dheva Spa at the [Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi](#) in Chiang Mai, Thailand, is beautifully designed to replicate the ancient palaces of South-East Asia, and sits perfectly within its context. >

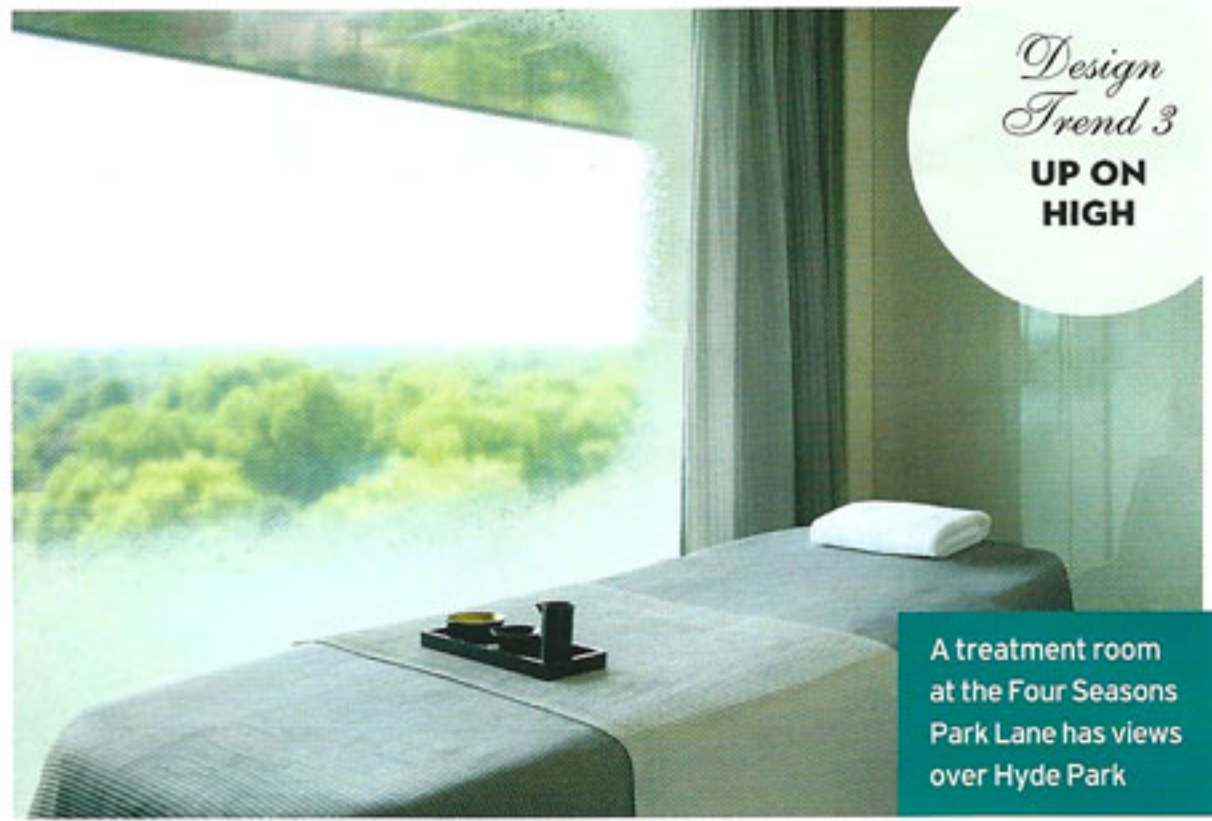
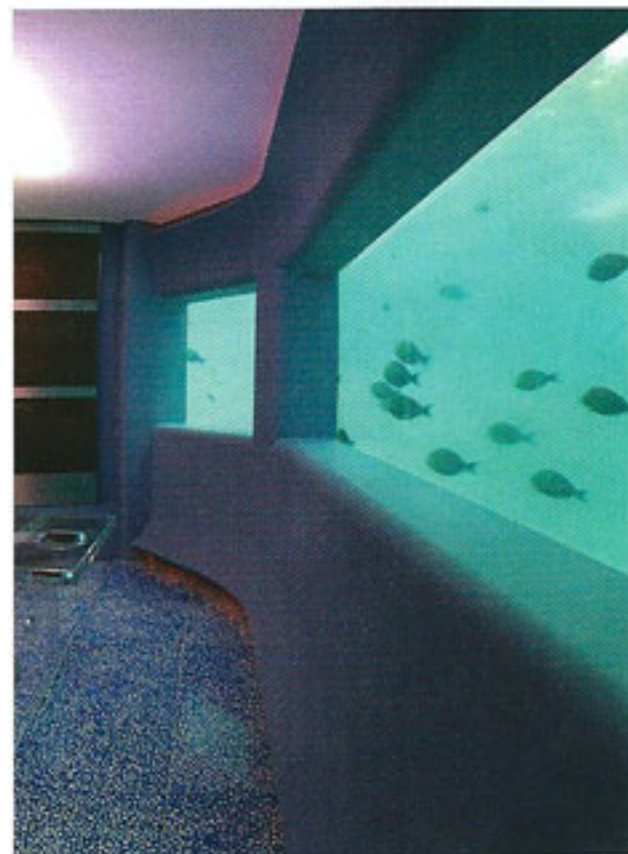


The pods at Six Senses Laamu (this picture) are made from twigs. Huvaafen Fushi (below) has an underwater treatment room



Design Trend 2
QUIRKY USPS

‘Given the proliferation of spas, ever more interesting and quirky USPs are needed,’ says Anna Bjurstam, owner of spa consultancy Raison d’Etre (and recently appointed vice president of spa and wellness at Six Senses). Huvaafen Fushi in the Maldives pulled off the ultimate quirky trick several years back with its glass-windowed, underwater treatment room. But USPs can simply be a matter of location – the spa at the Four Seasons Milan, for example, is to open in a fifteenth-century convent; or architectural credentials – Coworth Park took the eco-luxury route with a spa partially submerged in the hillside to minimise above-ground impact; or unusual design statements, such as the nest-like treatment pods at Six Senses Laamu in the Maldives, made from thousands of entwined twigs.



Design Trend 3
UP ON HIGH

A treatment room at the Four Seasons Park Lane has views over Hyde Park

Traditionally, in city hotels where spas have been tacked on as something of an afterthought, the obvious location has been the basement. But, with exciting newbuilds and refurbishments, spas are finding their way from the bottom to the top. Deep, dark, urban spaces have given way to bright and breezy spas drenched in natural light and affording phenomenal views. China and the Far East are past masters at the trick: the Chi Spa at Shangri-La’s China World Summit Wing occupies the seventy-seventh floor of Beijing’s tallest building (the pool is on the seventy-eighth); the Espa spa at the Ritz-Carlton Shanghai in Pudong is 53 floors up. At the Four Seasons Park Lane, a tenth floor was added to create London’s signature penthouse spa with some of the finest views in town.

Design Trend 4
DESIGN FINISHES



The Espa at the Corinthia Hotel employs glamorous design finishes

While ‘natural’ and ‘organic’ feature regularly in spa-speak, there is also a trend away from simple materials. ‘We are constantly challenging the technology of design finishes,’ says Susan Harmsworth, founder and CEO of Espa, in particular reference to her work at the Corinthia Hotel in London, which has glass partitions that look like ice, lacquer panels, a black mosaic steam room and a steel-lined pool. The watchword is ‘tactile’, as at the Espa spa at the Istanbul Edition, which has beaten leather, bronze floors, and walls of crystal and horsehair. Italian designer Antonio Citterio claims ‘not to follow trends’, yet his spa at the Bulgari Hotel in London speaks of luxurious design finishes – sandblasted stone, green onyx and gold-leaf mosaics. ▷

Design Trend 5
HEAT AND WATER EXPERIENCES



Full-height windows in the spa at Jumeirah Port Soller offer mountain views

It goes without saying that heat and water experiences are de rigueur in spas nowadays. Thalassotherapy pools, Watsu pools, hydro pools and vitality pools are all becoming standard stuff, as are ice fountains, snow cabins, rasuls and ‘experience showers’. The humble sauna may seem a tad passé. Not a bit of it. One of the biggest trends in spa design is the sauna with a window. The *Four Seasons Park Lane* has done it, as has *Lime Wood* in the New Forest, where clients, in the aptly named Forest Sauna in the Herb House spa, can relax in front of a soothing view of the trees. ‘Saunas, as dry environments, provide a fantastic opportunity to create full-height windows for guests to enjoy fabulous views,’ says Russell King of spa designers Melt. At the Talise Spa at the new *Jumeirah Port Soller* in Majorca, the rooftop sauna has stunning views of the port and the Tramuntana Mountains beyond.

The Tibetan Spa Suite at Banyan Tree Ringha is furnished with lacquerwork and Tibetan handicrafts



Design Trend 6
INTERIOR DECORATION

Local context is not necessarily an exterior trend. Interior spa decoration is increasingly realised to reflect a sense of place. Notably – though by no means new – the spa at *Banyan Tree Ringha* in China pioneered an impressive respect for local culture with intricately carved interiors furnished with Tibetan handicrafts and typical lacquerwork. ‘We always localise design and bring in special features from the region,’ says Deepakshi Mathur, development director at Six Senses; hence the impressive *Alpina Gstaad*, where the treatments rooms of the Six Senses spa are lined with wooden boards salvaged from derelict farmhouses of the Bernese Oberland. Similarly, at the *Raison d’Etre* spa at *Borgo Egnazia* in Puglia, a low-key, peasant look comprises street-market fabrics, *Arte Povera* and decoratively styled fishermen’s ropes □

For hotel details, see ‘Web facts’