

SPEAR'S
SPA SELECTION



HOT ON THE HEEL

Tradition meets style — and of course luxury — in Borgo Egnazia at the foot of Italy



WHAT Midway between Bari and Brindisi in Puglia in the stiletto heel of Italy, Borgo Egnazia is not quite one of the seven wonders of the world, but close to it in luxury hospitality resort terms. It's built like a traditional Apulian village, complete with honey-coloured alleyways, church and piazza, the backdrop for French *Vogue* fashion and Italian *Architectural Digest* shoots and *bellissimo* Italians at play. It's surrounded by ancient olive trees and a 250-acre private estate of vineyards and fields bursting with cherry tomatoes.

Vair, the Borgo Eganazia spa, is a modern-day interpretation of ancient Roman baths — including a Tepidarium (warm room), Calidarium (hot room) and Frigidarium (you guessed it) — with private therapy rooms upstairs, toga-clad therapists and a haze of local lavender, mint and lemon scents. It's 20,000 square feet, with thirteen single treatment rooms, three doubles, one spa suite with its own garden (and heated beds) plus steam room, saunas, steam bath and indoor swimming pool. Imagine a film set of church candles, calming creams and taupes and cool ceramic 'towels' hung on the walls as lampshades — then you're halfway to capturing the spa's beauty.

WHO Romans and Milanese floating around in Alberta Ferretti and Pucci, and yummy mummies from London.

WHEN Ideal from the cool of autumn to the mild, crispy spring, when you won't feel compelled to loll in the sun around one of the four 'wow!' pools or beside your own private villa pool. Or in late May, when the poppies are still in bloom.

HAVE Vair offers a new idea of wellness, all based on the popular traditions of Puglia — from ancient natural remedies to therapies inspired by local traditions. Everything is made in Italy and they use local citrus and olive oil and almonds as the foundation of many treatments, plus indigenous ingredients such as prickly pears, rosemary and mint. Even the treatment names are written in the local dialect. Try their signature treatment U Mor, an enveloping massage inspired by rolling sea waves, carried out to the sound of waves and with products containing purified sea water. You can have a pink Apulian sea salt scrub. Or there's

Calming creams and natural light abound at Vair, the spa at Borgo Egnazia with a distinctly traditional influence

Imagine a film set of church candles, calming creams and taupes

a version of Tarant, based on an ancient therapeutic ritual of magical, cathartic dances used to cure women's anxiety and depression. It embraces treatments, readings, teas and psycho-physical activities — the aim now being to help with self-confidence, inner balance and femininity.

DO Visit Alberobello, 'the capital of *trulli*' — with its alleyways and Hobbit houses with conical roofs, like so many sunbleached beehives. Enjoy nearby Ostuni (known as the 'White Town'), with its Byzantine-style cathedral and citadel. Cycle ten minutes from Borgo Egnazia to the ruins of the important ancient city of Egnathia for pots, tombs, crypt and acropolis, some of it still unexcavated and dating back to the Bronze Age.

BEST Staff with smiles the size of the Colosseum. The teens' club and Trullalleri kiddies' club, which has junior-sized bidets, soft play areas and a kingdom-sized playground, as well as English nannies who make Mary Poppins look like a psycho. *f*

borgoegnazia.com
From around £4,250 for a seven-day stay and spa package, based on two sharing a standard room

JUNGLE BOOKING

MesaStila in Java is the calmest of retreats despite the volcanic surroundings

WHAT MesaStila (previously known as Losari Spa Retreat and Coffee Plantation) is an oasis of serenity in central Java. It's a heritage site boasting Colonial, traditional Javanese, Arabesque and contemporary architecture. Imagine a 19th-century Javanese prince's-turned-planter's house, wooden villas with Javanese antiques, relics of an 1860s Colonial railway station and South East Asia's only authentic hammam. It's all set amid eight spectacular volcanoes, coffee plantations and 55 acres of lush, palm-filled gardens, 3,000ft above the plains of Java.

WHO Having recently transformed from resort to fabulous retreat, it's luring affluent Indonesians, European adventure-seekers and expats from Jakarta and Singapore: often stressed-out city folk focusing on their health and recharging their spiritual batteries under the volcanoes.

WHEN Try the dry season from May to September.

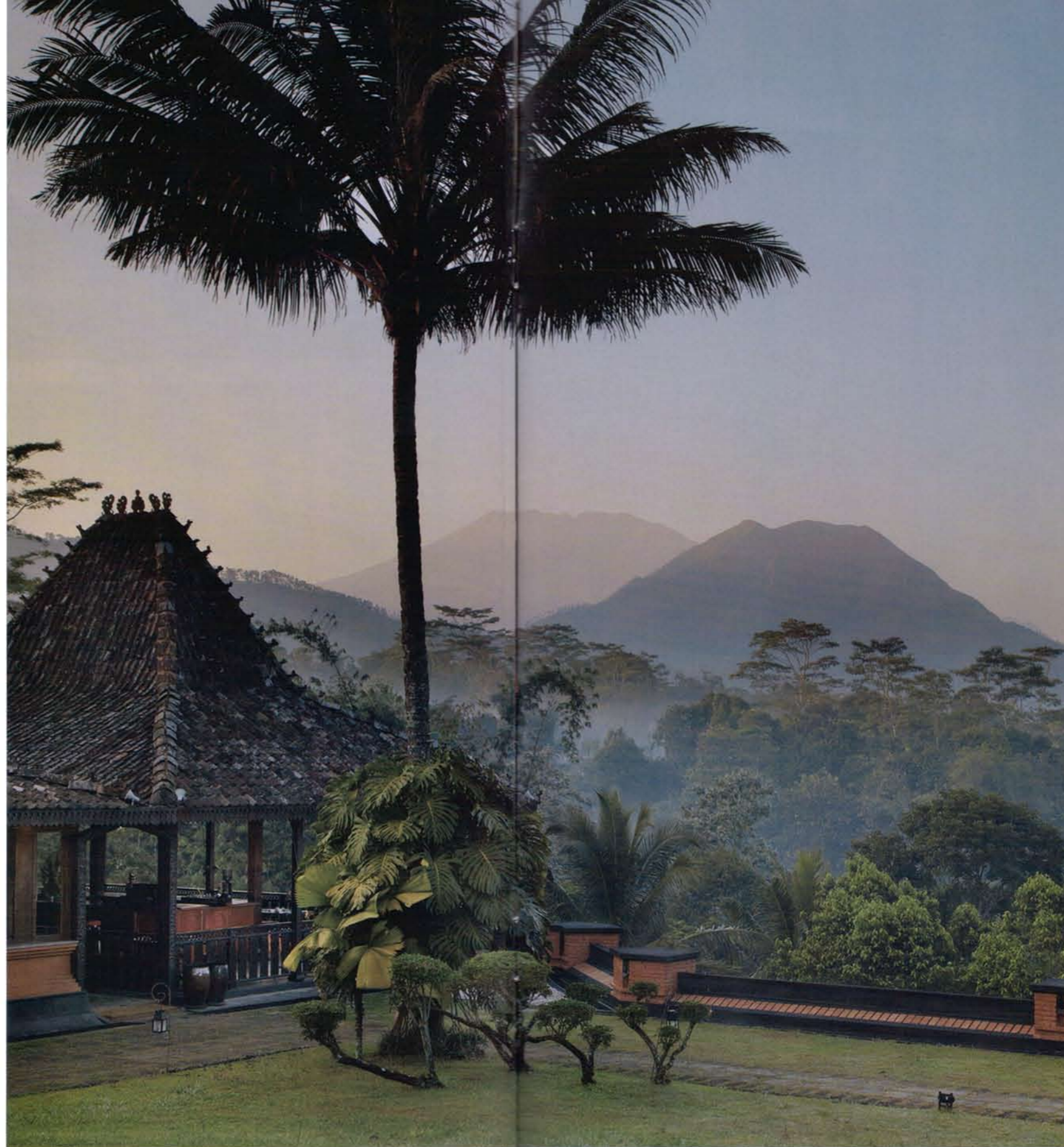
HAVE The wellness options and programmes for healthy living include learning to sleep better. Or you can try bootcamp — albeit with a private villa with Indonesian day beds on the veranda, gourmet Javanese fusion food, and daily traditional massages. The jungle gym and Pencak Silat (Indonesian martial arts) are popular, and there are plantation tours. Have a stimulating Java coffee scrub (blended with coconut milk and cinnamon) and Javanese Lulur (a massage traditionally given to brides).

DO Check out the stupas at Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple and an 8th-century wonder. Then enjoy the local ancient Hindu shrines and temples and a colourful Javanese dance display.

BEST You may never need Harley Street again once you've met a Jamu practitioner, whose healing practices employ medicinal plants, herbs and spices.

losaricoffeplantation.com

Three nights from £540 pp, based on twin-sharing. Includes three meals a day, daily spa and wellness activities.



HEIGHTS OF LUXURY

Enjoy clifftop comfort at the Edge in Bali

They like to say they offer clients life on the edge here — but only because the property is located on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Indian Ocean. You can book the whole estate, spread over 1.5 hectares, or stay in one of four exclusive private villas, each with a dedicated Jeeves.

Think infinity pools that virtually tip over the cliff, views over the lush Gamal forest, and outdoor showers. You may want to stay here for ever and only have in-villa spa and bath experiences. But the spa is something else: it clings to the rock face and has an innovative liquid floor, so going there feels like paddling in the ocean. Try the Divine Fire Ritual, which uses sound and vibration to release energy blockages. It starts in the wet area with a scented water ritual, includes coconut scrubs and a lotus bloom steam wrap, and ends with a massage.

The Edge offers quintessentially Balinese spa experiences. The only blues you'll experience here are turquoise waters and azure skies — it's perfect for the newly hitched. And if you're not hopelessly spoiled when you check in, you will be when you leave. *f*

the-edgebali.com

The Edge Spa Package at \$2,950 nett for two, including three nights in a one-bed villa