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The Aman Spa at The Connaught review | Hotel spa, London

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QUOTE UNQUOTE

'Do not be afraid of the empty place. It is the source we must return to if we are to be free of the stories and habits that entrap us'

Charles Eisenstein

**Detox Yoga Wellness**

Wildfitness®



The Aman Spa at the Connaught hotel in London Mayfair, a serene space to escape stressy city life

The quick read: The Aman Spa is in (arguably) London's premier hotel in swanky Mayfair. You come to this subterranean beauty when you want to swap stressy city life, noise and buzz for tranquility, spiritual sustenance and top-notch treatments. It's very 'om', with an elegant twist – from the second a staff member glides to your side to offer you a steaming ceramic bowl of lemongrass or ginger tea until you leave the serene, Asian-style treatment room. There's a 60-metre swimming pool with a cascading water wall, a steam room with twinkling lights, crystals and multi-buhzillionaires letting off steam, plus five treatment rooms. You leave a few hours later feeling as though you've had a mini holiday.



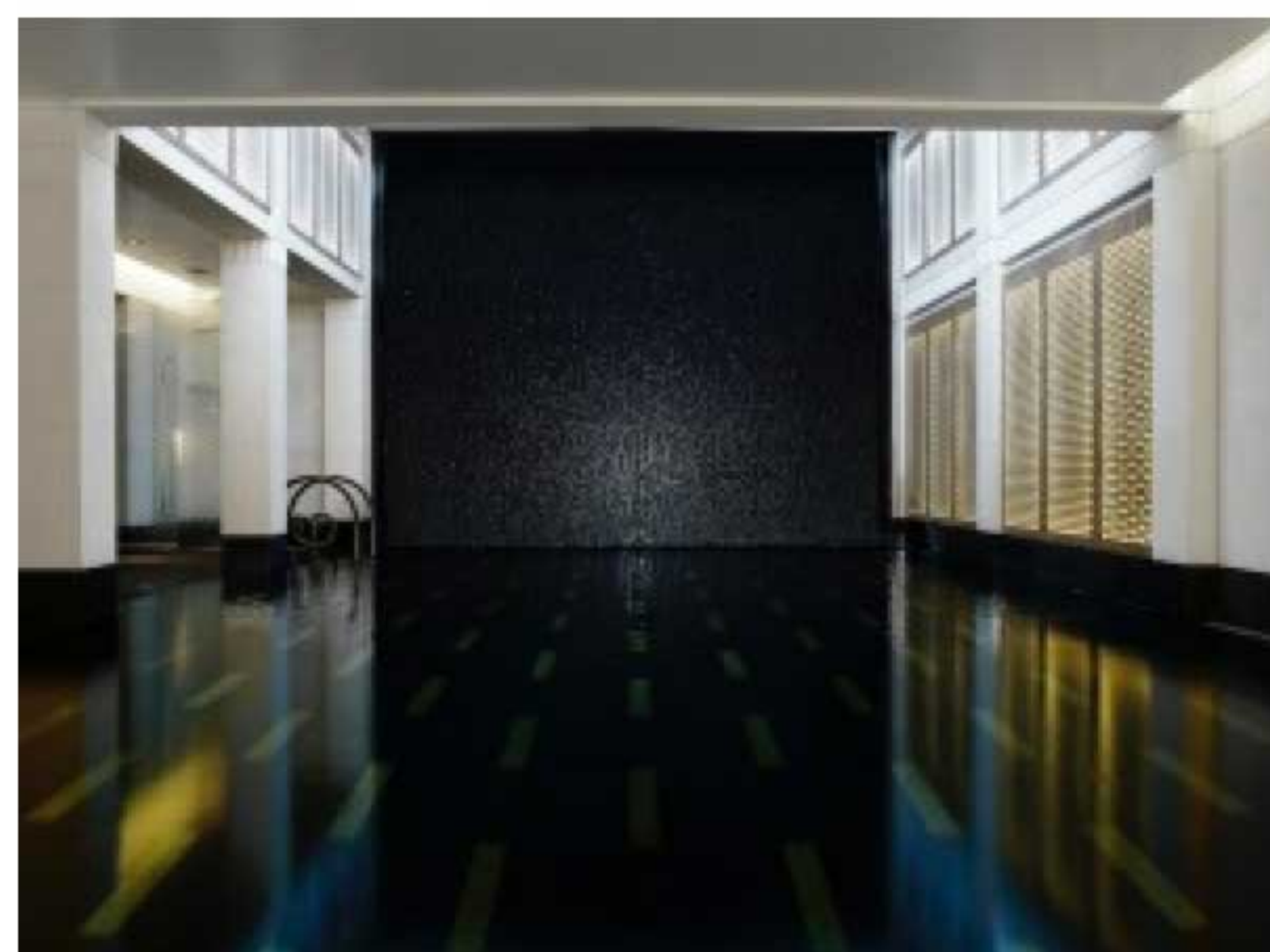
How it was for us: I went because I was feeling autumnal and needed a lift. I was boosted instantly by the staff. Do they all meditate, or are they just naturally calm and smiley? Ylang-ylang-suffused air and ginger tea, donning the slouchiest white robe and the world's comfiest toweling slippers, it was hard to believe I was just five minutes from Oxford Street.



The decor is serene and the therapy rooms very Zen

I lolled in the Crystal Steam room breathing in warmth, essential oils and peeping out at the pretty, low-lit pool area. Then I did laps in the naturally ionized (but too small for me) pool. There aren't state-of-the-art rain showers or all-singing-and-dancing therapists' couches or even a sauna, but the spa is reassuring and the therapy rooms are very Zen.

My treatment, Inspired by the Americas, came from the Amangiri via a local medicine man from the Navajo desert. It's said to purify and cleanse old energies, providing a new beginning – which may be more effective when done by an indigenous tribesman, although it's delightfully unexpected in a Mayfair basement. It uses ancient Navajo techniques, from a foot bath with quartz crystals and Navajo herbs to sage and cedar wood smudging to cleanse my ancestral aura. 'Sage takes your energy up to the ceiling and new energy comes from the earth. Imagine bad energy and emotions going up with the smoke. Some people don't believe, but if you trust, you will feel very nice,' said Pilar, wafting burning sage around my body. I loved the foot massage. The red clay body rub was cleansing (and cold), and the river rock stone massage grounding (and warm). I fell asleep to a great back massage. The marathon (150 minute) session relieved my muscular tension, but I felt completely wiped afterwards – possibly grounded physically and energetically. 'Purifying,' said Pilar, 'is tiring.' After yet another shower (this time with Bamford geranium gel), I left with a spring in my step. And slept oh so well that night.



Start with a few laps in the naturally ionized pool

There are five super calming therapy rooms – one double and four single – each with dressing area, private steam room and individual music system. Plus wooden floors, taupe walls and simple, white painted wicker furniture. Throughout the spa there's lots of off-white and black marble and beautiful lighting effects, like recessed ceiling lights peeping through lattice screens of carved wooden Asian-style flowers. It's delightfully quiet and other worldly, and the staff are super solicitous.

More on the spa: There's a discreet 'shop' in the reception area with must-buys such as Aman's own brand products – Clay Cleanser, dosha oils and the like, plus ginormous 'red carpet' candles by Jenny Pakham. The waiting area is small, more of a reception space than a post-treatment relaxation area – although there are loungers around the pool. You wouldn't opt to chill in this spa all day but it's perfect to pop in to swim, steam and have your treatment. There



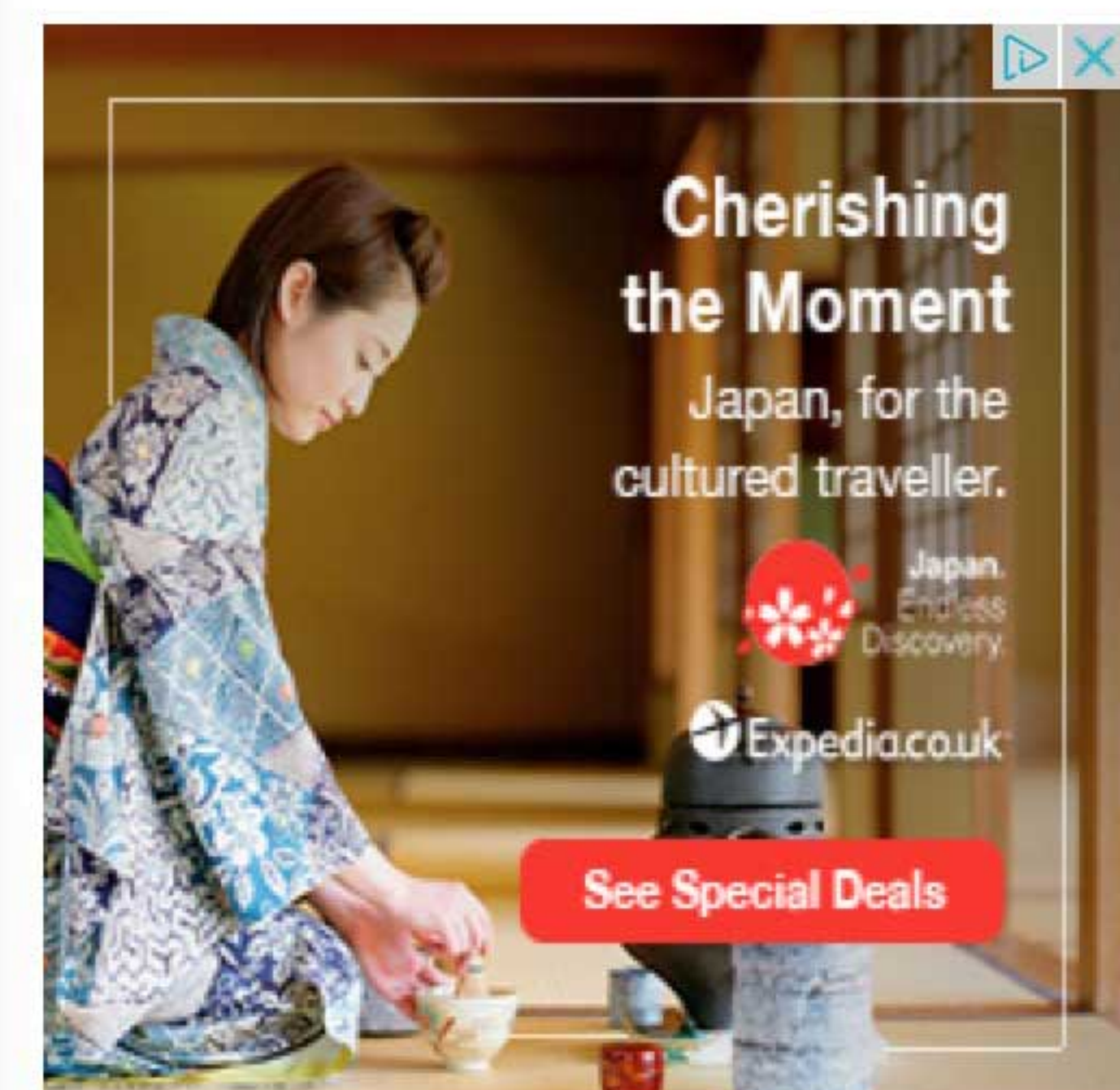
Detox Yoga Wellness

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What's on offer: Holistic massages, body treatments and healing therapies inspired by the renewing traditions of ancient cultures such as China (acupressure to restore your Qi), Thailand (Thai massage and heat compresses), India (think deeply meditative Ayurveda) and the Americas (see above). Plus they offer complementary therapies from reflexology, acupuncture to osteopathy – John Loftus is the king of this – and naturopathic nutrition; beauty services such as signature facials, hand and foot care, and hair removal; and a range of essentials for the traveller – jet lag revivers and the like. Treatments start at £70 for a 30 minute Aman 'to go' massage, and a two and a half hour signature Americas treatment is £280.

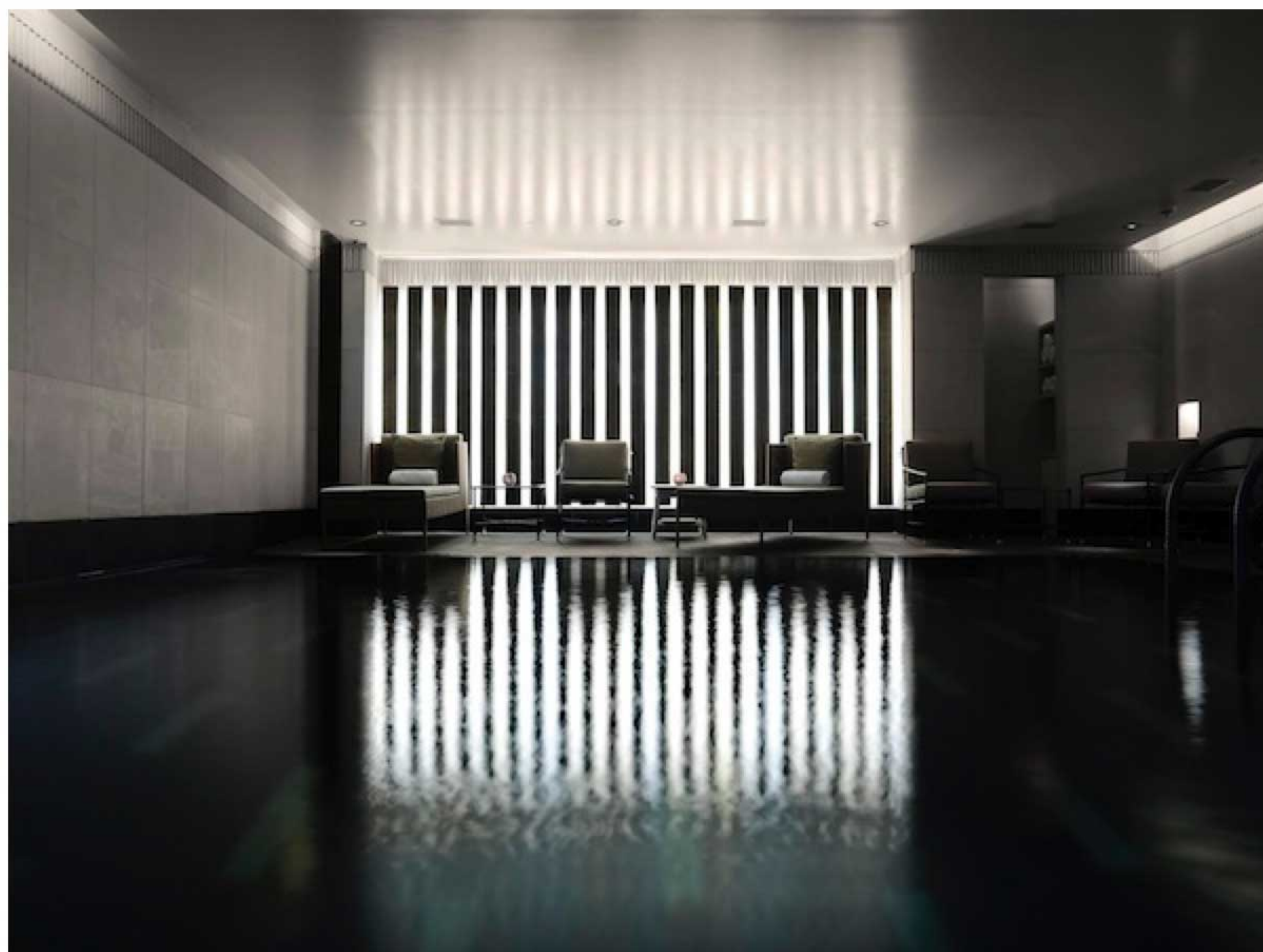
👑 **What's queenly:** The Connaught hotel really feels as if it's run by one big, friendly family – and this vibe extends downstairs to the uplifting and professional spa staff. The treatment rooms transport you to somewhere serene, far, far away from London. John Loftus, their cranial osteopath, deserves an A*. You can nip upstairs afterwards for a tip-top lunch at **Hélène Darroze**, one of the best deals in town.

What's lowly: If the therapist lowers the music, the rumble of the London underground can be heard faintly. For those who want to do their power stretches, the fitness room is nothing special and open only to hotel residents. The spa is in the basement, so there's no natural light – but it's wonderful for evenings. It's compact and such loveliness deserves more space, including more generous sized changing rooms and a sauna.

www.the-connaught.co.uk/aman-spa/

Reviewed by **Caroline Phillips**

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Aman Spa is delightfully quiet and other worldly, and the staff are super helpful