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Lefay Resort
& Spa, Italy

SPAS WITH SOUL

Say no to the plastic slippers.

By Suzanne Duckett

Eco and spa should go hand in hand (did you know that, according to one theory, 'spa' is an acronym for 'sanus per aquam' – health through water? Thought not). Yet most spas barely dip their toes in the choppy waters of sustainability. There are some fabulous ones out there, though – like the 400-plus-year-old Bio-Hotel Stanglwirt in Austria, a massive organic farm with a hotel in it; it has a nature-comes-first, sheep-grazing-on-grassy-roofs attitude to natural architecture, and is heated by its own mountain spring.

In Italy, the gorgeous Lefay Resort & Spa is the first in the country to receive the 'Excellence' level in 'Being Organic and Ecological' by world-respected Ecocert; their clever water-supply system reduces consumption for flushing systems and bath taps by 50 per cent. Meanwhile, Gwinganna Lifestyle Retreat, set in 500 lush Queensland acres, is one of the most self-sufficient spas in the world, relying on collected rainwater. EcoTourism-certified, it has a resident botanist, organic gardens and six beehives. Even rainy old England needs to conserve water. The new Ridding Park in spa town Harrogate collects spring water from the grounds for its indoor pool, with plans to bottle its own water for guests.

Stylish Vana in India is a good case study for how sustainability doesn't have to be dowdy. Minimalistic buildings flanked by foliage morph into the landscape, and local bamboo, chemical-free paints and natural fabrics have been used throughout. Electricity, heating and cooling are sourced from organic matter and solar panels, and the Vana bottling plant will help them save up to 100,000 plastic bottles a year.

Finally, farm-to-face is now a thing. At the Alchemy Bar at Six Senses Douro Valley, Portugal, you can create your own mix 'n' match, 100 per cent organic scrubs, face masks, lipbalms and home fragrances, all from produce grown in the gardens. And Scarlet spa in Cornwall is big on local clay, herbs and sea salt, while the natural pool has a reed bed for filtration, and towels and sarongs are upcycled into eye-pillow covers and scrub mitts. □