

travel

hong kong



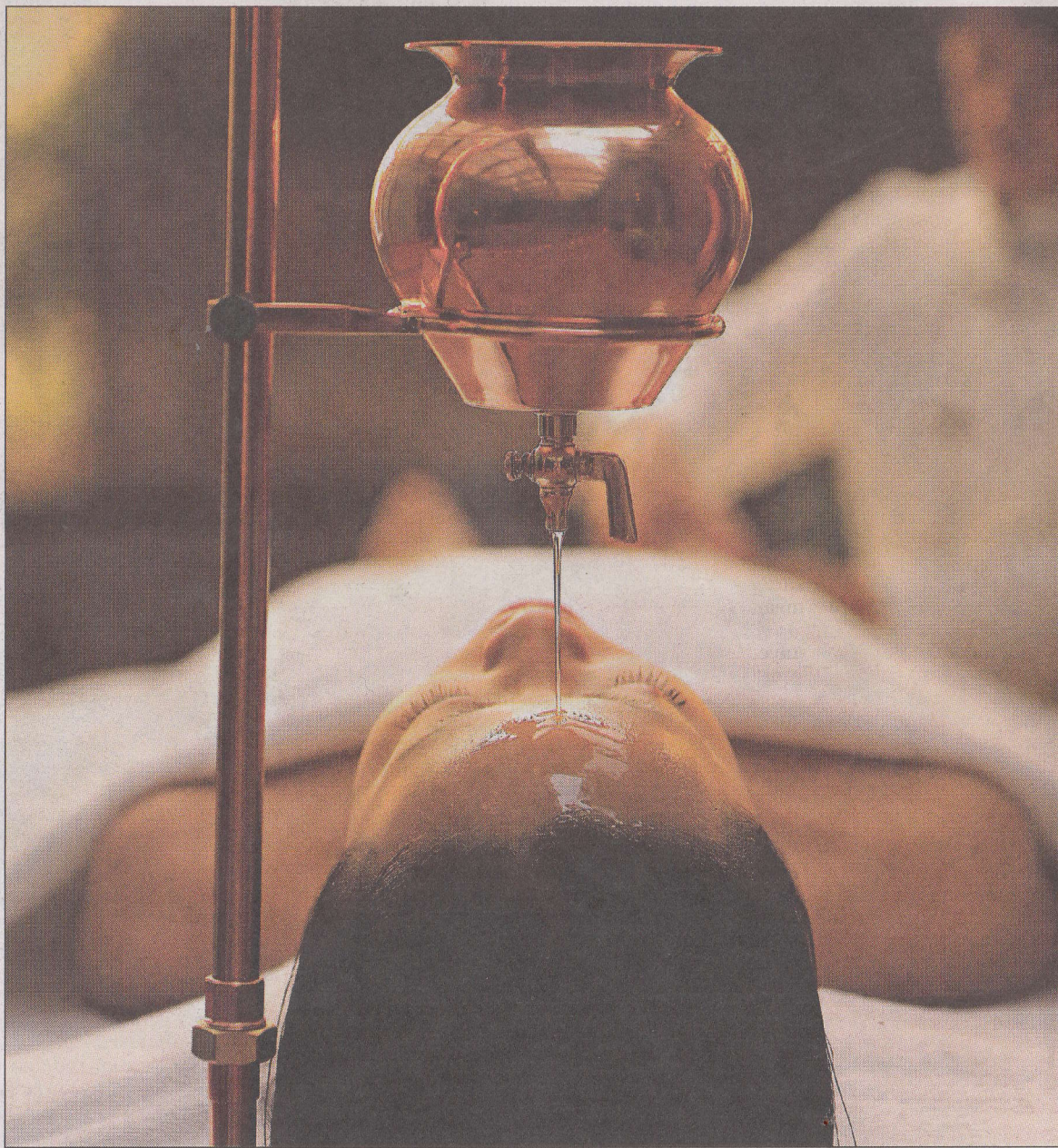
No hard feelings

What's not to like about the pinnacles of pampering in this bustling Asian hub, writes **Rachael Oakes-Ash**.

HOTEL day spas are popping up at every turn in Hong Kong, making a visit a compulsory part of the itinerary. The spas are as competitive and spectacular as the city itself, with cutting-edge design and exclusive treatments. But how to tell them apart? And which one is going to suit you?

Bliss Spa, W Hotel

the sauna, hanging in the showers and ice fountains, sipping Asian tea and drinking in the harbour view from the lounge. However, you might miss out on the volcanic stone treatments. The treatment menu is a blend of Oriental, Ayurvedic and European therapies for the body, soul and mind. **Must try** Chakra balancing with volcanic stone massage to get your



guests have complimentary use of fitness facilities including tai chi and yoga and access to the hotel

Vibe: Playful pampering With tongue pressed firmly in cheek, the Bliss Spa has put the play back into pampering with its “no zit Sherlock”, “head over peels scrubs” and other wordplays. Its 72nd-level location has floor to ceiling glass revealing views across Victoria Harbour. Guests are referred to as BIPs (Bliss Important Persons). Add a movie with your manicure, hot tubs in locker rooms and spa butlers and they’ll have to prise you from the place come closing time.

Must try The Youth As We Know It facial – 90 minutes designed to take a year off your life for every minute. No, wait, that doesn’t add up. starwood.com, blissworld.com.

MiraSpa, The Mira Hotel

Vibe: Uber-modern new kid on the block The new 1670-square-metre MiraSpa at the Mira Hotel is the latest on the scene with seven suites and two VIP suites. The spa uses Elemental Herbology’s combination traditional Chinese medicine with botanic ingredients, available only at MiraSpa in Hong Kong. An oval-shaped aura room and heated water beds are designed to induce deep sleep for those experiencing jet-lag and insomnia.

Must try The Mira Journey takes guests through a customised experience of salt scrubs, oil wraps and four-handed massage. themirahotel.com.

Espa, The Peninsula Hotel

Vibe: Sophisticated cocooning Kowloon’s The Peninsula Hotel is an institution known for Rolls Royces, helipads and Philippe Starck-designed cocktail bars. It would be enough to arrive at the hotel’s ESPA and spend the day steaming it up in

cha-chas for you want them. peninsula.com.

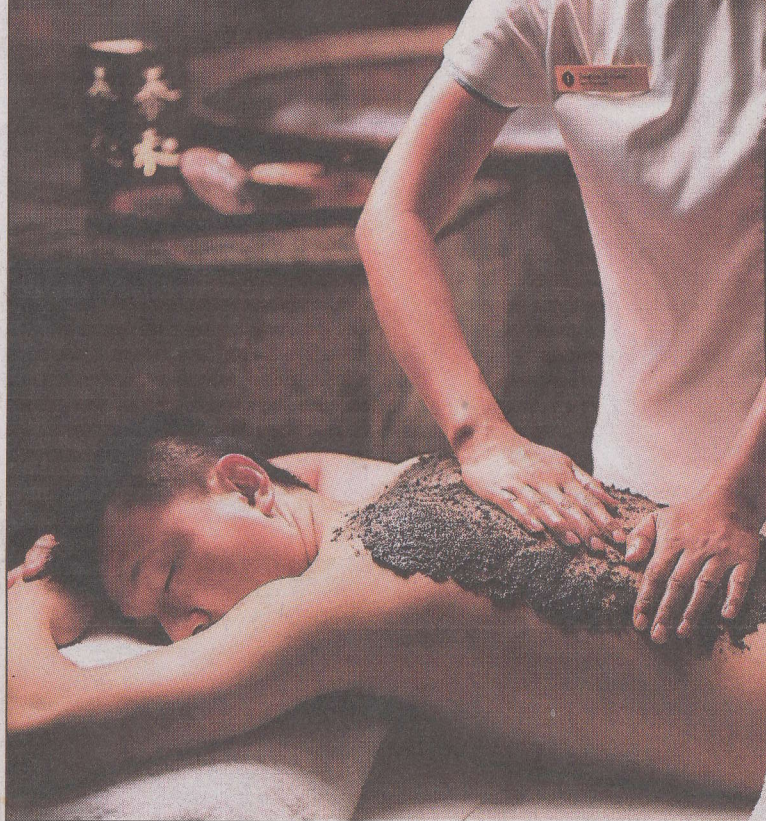
The Mandarin Barber, the Mandarin Oriental hotel

Vibe: Old-school masculine retreat Ben Cheung is a wanted man in Hong Kong. So wanted he has a month-long waiting list for his Shanghai Pedicure, performed entirely with one very sharp razor blade to create smooth-as-a-baby’s-bum tootsies. You’ll find him at the Mandarin Oriental Barber, where pin-striped gentlemen lie back for hot-towel classic shaves using straight-edge blades, among the spa’s dark wood veneers, ironwork and Chinese screenprinted glass that pays homage to 1930s Shanghai. It’s enough to make a grown man weep.

Must try Hand your bunions over to Ben and watch him do his magic. mandarinoriental.com/hongkong.

Plateau Residential Spa, the Grand Hyatt

Vibe: Stressed-out business folk wanting to sleep over One of only two day spas in Hong Kong where you can stay the night, Plateau guests can book in to a room or suite within the spa itself, with a separate hotel reception and concierge. Treatments are then experienced in your own room or in a therapy room with infinity bath and futons. A spa cuisine menu is offered for those wishing to detox during their stay. Guests have access to the fitness facilities on the same floor, including a 400-metre jogging track. It’s the perfect retreat for those on business trips needing down time. **Must try** Champissage back, neck and shoulder massage with warming herbal oils. hongkong.grand.hyatt.com.



Doing it tough ... (clockwise from top left) an infinity pool at Intercontinental Hotel; the Rituals of the Orient spa; the I-Spa treatment.

Four Seasons Spa, Four Seasons Hotel

Vibe: Private, personalised urban sanctuary There is nothing of which Four Seasons hasn’t thought. From the two suites that feature a vitality pool for two, daybed, TV and private bar to the lounge with Finnish sauna, rhassoul chambers, floatation tanks and plunge pools. Manicure and pedicure lounges come complete with multimedia entertainment, headphones and selection of TV channels. There’s also an oxygenated yoga studio. **Must try** Jade stone therapy

massage using a combination of hot and cold jade stones said to strengthen the immune system. fourseasons.com/hongkong.

I-Spa at the Intercontinental

Vibe: Feng shui fanatics Each of I-Spa’s spa suites has a jacuzzi, sauna and steam shower, which makes leaving after a massage even more difficult. The spa was designed by a feng shui expert to keep a positive design flow and outdoor pool cabanas also offer treatments from the organic Ytsara range. I-Spa

spa’s three infinity pools, which are linked together at harbour-eye level. **Must try** Rituals of the Orient, a 90-minute treatment. hongkong-ic.intercontinental.com.

The Oriental Spa, the Landmark Mandarin Oriental hotel

Vibe: Chic shrine This place is a destination – two floors of 15 treatment rooms, two yoga studios, a Pilates studio, spa cuisine cafe and a water den dedicated to hot plunge pools, crystal steam rooms, Moroccan rasuls and water jets in gender-split relaxation areas, all designed in soothing, muted tones of stone and cream. With a Harvey Nichols store next door, guests can indulge in some retail therapy followed by massage therapy.

Must try Chinese Meridien massage for a dry acupressure massage with instant relief. mandarinoriental.com/landmark.

Chuan Spa, Langham Place

Vibe: Ancient wisdom Sleep-in-spa immersion treatments at Chuan Spa are based on ancient Chinese five-elements practice and begin with a tri-bathing ritual – an aromatic steam or sauna followed by a Japanese onsen shower and a long soak in a hot tub. After that, a therapist will lead you down a candlelit staircase to a treatment room for one of more than 60 holistic treatments. Then, if you come out of that awake, you may just be in time for some Oriental high tea in the hotel lounge. Or crawl to your bed for slumber in one of Chuan Spa’s residential suites. **Must try** The Tao of Detox for more than two hours of exfoliation, wraps and massage. hongkong.langhamplacehotels.com.