

SEA SPAS

Quaffing champagne while soaking in the sun deck spa pool may be the stereotypical image of superyachting, but keeping your body and mind in shape makes it all the more pleasurable. Both men and women are now demanding gyms and spa therapy treatments – and healthy cuisine – as part of their charter experience. **NICK JEFFERY** reports, from the massage table...



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A high vaulted ceiling, a five-foot-deep thermal bath, niches and alcoves around the edge with benches for bathers, and small tables for drinks and snacks, plus hot and cold pools,

towels, a steam room, sauna, exercise room, haircutting salon and a reading room/library..." Does this sound like a design brief for a superyacht owner? Add some columns and a Gorgon's head carved in stone – a powerful symbol of the Goddess Sulis Minerva – and you might be getting warmer? An Italian fashion designer's yacht? Colder. No, this is a description of a land-based spa, built some 2000

years ago in Bath, England by the Romans who referred to it as Aquae Sulis.

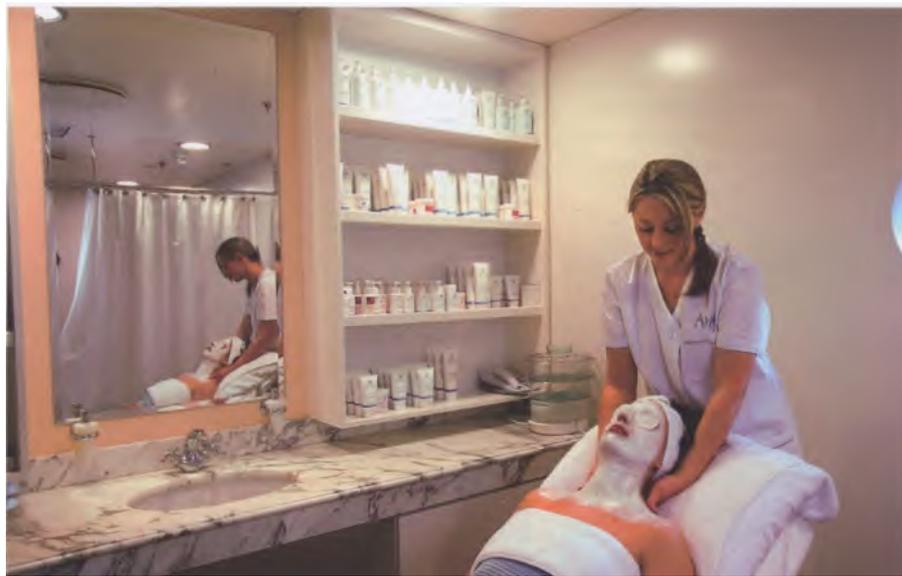
Early Egyptian palaces had spas (well-versed in the benefits of essential oils, the Egyptians imported myrrh, sandalwood, frankincense and cinnamon in 3000BC, around the same time they were starting to write), and remains of rooms in the palace of Knossos, dating to 1700BC – and drawings of bikini-clad girls working out with dumbbells – show the importance of spas in the lives of the Greeks. The Romans picked up on the idea, and at one point there were 900 public baths in Rome with 300 to 1,500-person capacity and some four to five million gallons of water per day flowing through them. After working from sunrise to around midday, the Romans spent their afternoons socializing at the baths. The ritual would often start with some sort of a workout – wrestling or ball games in the palaestra – then a wash with olive oil and scraping off the sweat with a pair of "strigils" (curved pieces of metal). Rooms included the laconicum (steam room), frigidarium (cold room), tepidarium (tepid room), and caldarium (hot room). A final massage – in the unctuarium – would leave them feeling ready for a night on the town.

Spas date back to ancient Greek and Roman times, as close to five million gallons of water per day flowed through Roman baths like this one above, while drawings of women exercising (right) were found in the ruins of the Greek palace of Knossos.





Today, a day at the spa is a much sought-after luxury, and superyachts incorporate no less than the best in onboard spa treatments for their guests. Paul Crowther of Yachtbrokers International says, "The stress of modern life is already washed away by the feeling of freedom given by an ocean-going charter yacht, but at the same time many charters are becoming more exploratory and the longer expedition cruises can involve many hours or even days at sea. This has created a new need for fresh activities to while away those hours. Spas and therapy alternatives are here to stay." Many vessels incorporate one of two types of saunas into their layouts — the Russian-style "banya" with wet steam, or the Finnish-style dry one. It is said that the benefits of the sauna are improved by gently beating the skin with some birch or oak twigs and leaves that have been soaked in water, a process that opens up the pores and increases circulation — and one that surprisingly has not yet been picked up by the English! Valeria Alekhina, Russian charter broker at Fraser Yachts Worldwide, believes saunas are not such a big attraction for Mediterranean-based yachts as they are designed for a cold climate and best punctuated with a roll in the snow. Taking a sauna in the Med would be "like drinking warm vodka



The 280ft Alysia boasts the most extensive spa facilities we've seen to date, featuring a huge marble-clad whirlpool (main photo) and offering massages, manicures, hairdressing, thalassotherapy and facials (above), along with a sauna, steam room and well-equipped gym.