



THE ITALIAN AFFAIR

Discover a world of soothing treatments and Italian hospitality, luxury and pampering in a historic setting at the SPA at CastaDiva Resort & Spa at Lake Como

BY RAMA AHUJA

Driving to CastaDiva Resort & Spa through the narrow stepped lanes that climb almost invisibly from the bustling yacht harbour, but run parallel to the picturesque Lake Como, I can see why the likes of George Clooney and Donatella Versace own villas here. The eclectic mix of dreamy scenery, old world elegance and aristocratic architecture seem to be working their magic on me. And I am already

fantasising about a life in this über-romantic retreat.

As we arrive at the imposing gates of CastaDiva Resort & Spa, I can hardly wait to be at the receiving end of the impeccable service that the resort is famous for. Housed in a historical mansion that once belonged to soprano Giuditta Pasta – the muse of the 19th-century composer Vincenzo Bellini – the resort exudes a timeless appeal and boasts of an enviable location at the waterfront, secluded grounds that are





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ringed with white pebble paths and interiors that are resplendent with silks, velvets and antique embellishments. After a smooth and prompt check-in, it is time for a session at the SPA, which, with its steamboat setting, floating heated pool and suspended glass floor on a 19th-century dock, literally forms the high point of the resort.

I am immediately drawn to the signature body massage section in the spa menu; the CastaDiva Muscle Release in particular. An intensive massage to release deep-seated tension sounds exactly like what I could do with after my long flight. For now, it is time for a quick shower followed by a few minutes of quiet relaxation at the Finnish sauna. The therapist insists that I dab myself from head to toe with crushed ice from the ice cascade immediately after the sauna for a pleasant sensation of freshness and an immediate rush of energy. Her advice is well taken and a mental note is made to never skip the ice cascade in the future. I am ready for my massage.

The SPA comprises of four unique spa suites, each inspired by

the elements: fire, water, air and earth. While each of them is beautifully done up, I am delighted to be allotted Air – I am literally in my element (my zodiac is an air sign). On asking my therapist, I discover that the massage works not only on a muscular level, but also as an energiser. The session begins with the application of a De-stress Muscle Gel by Aromatherapy Associates that contains rosemary, ginger and black pepper, followed by some vigorous massage strokes with a lavender- and peppermint-infused oil. The comfortable temperature of the room, faint but calming music, pleasant fragrance of the oil and intense massage strokes all come together rather beautifully to soothe my senses and lull me into a deep sleep with just a hint of awareness of the therapist's voice asking me to turn over. As the massage comes to an end, I decide to spend a few moments in quiet contemplation in the beautiful relaxation area.

Watching the rays of the sun break into a million shimmering diamonds on the tranquil surface of the lake, I am glad that I decided to arrive at the SPA

an hour before my appointment. With all the marvellous therapies the spa has to offer, it is highly recommended that you arrive early and keep your post-therapy schedule light. I, for one, know that my appointments for the rest of the day stand cancelled. 🌿

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