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SOARING SPAS

Miami's Oases Get Designer Treatments

by SARA LISS

As spas have become a staple of high-end hotels and high-stress modern life, their designs have become more nuanced. Dimly-lit, Asian-inspired spas have given way to venues that embrace bright spaces, colorful fabrics and playful elements for an experience that is refreshingly upbeat. Whether a cavernous spa "library" designed by Philippe Starck, a princess hideaway from Marcel Wanders or a campus of water-based journeys courtesy of David Rockwell, each of these spas are architecturally striking.





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Aveda Spa at the Palms Hotel

The soothing sounds of falling water and the woody, spicy scents of Aveda products permeate the experience at this spa. An apothecary store smelling of rosemary, mint and citrus doubles as the entrance to the boutique spa located below ground level. Designer Allen Saunders gave the space light and connected it to the resort's expansive outdoor gardens via windows in the relaxation room that offer views of a waterfall and steps that connect to the floor above. "Most spas are dark, but we wanted something that felt light and fresh," says Saunders. A glass water wall divides the retail area and the relaxation room, providing a smooth transition between the two spaces. "It was important for us to have that eastern light come through the relaxation area through the rippling water wall into the retail space. There's a luminosity that comes through the entire space." A turquoise and beige palette dovetails nicely with Aveda's product packaging, while the steam room is outfitted in metallic gemstone-colored bisazza tile, giving it a warmth that most white-tiled steam baths lack. There's pleasure in the details here, from a small stone sink filled with cold towels that are constantly refreshed with an ice fountain to iPod docking stations in each treatment room, allowing guests to customize their own massage soundtrack.



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