DESTINATION: SPA VACATION

Celebrate spring—and remove the ravages of a beastly winter—with a luxurious hotel spa getaway.

Best Hotel Spa for a Spiritual Retreat: Four Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado

It makes sense that you'd find a world-class spa in Santa Fe. For one thing, the glamour quotient is high—Ali MacGraw, Gene Hackman, Tommy Lee Jones, Shirley MacLaine, Alan Arkin, Carol Burnett, Val Kilmer, and Ted Turner, the single largest landowner in New Mexico, all have homes here, and stars like Robert Redford and Jane Fonda are frequent visitors. (In fact, while we were there, we bumped into the cowboy boot-wearing Fonda at **Todos Santos**, a magical little chocolate shop in the courtyard at historic **Sena Plaza**.) But perhaps more to the point, Santa Fe is a New Age-y kind of town, a place where people come to reinvent themselves and leave the stress of their previous lives far behind. With its grand skies and infinite desert landscape, not to mention a rich history dating back to the arrival of the nomadic Paleo-Indians around 10,000 B.C., America's second oldest city, founded in 1610, provides the perfect spiritual backdrop for a spa vacation. Nestled on 57 acres in **Sangre de Cristo Foothills**, just 10 minutes from downtown Santa Fe, the **Four**

Rancho Encantado's outdoor fireplace is the perfect spot to take in the beauty of a Southwestern sunset.

Seasons Resort Rancho Encantado offers 65 self-contained casita guest rooms with huge spa baths, private terraces, and stunning views. When we arrived, a bit weary from our late-night drive from the Albuquerque International Airport through almost otherworldly desert terrain (with the *Breaking Bad* soundtrack playing in our heads), a platter of homemade guacamole and chips, grapefruit margaritas, and S'mores for the kids were waiting in our casita. That, along with the fire in our Southwestern Kiva fireplace (lit by the hotel's fireplace butler) was the beginning of our spiritual experience. Of course, the centerpiece here is the 10,000-square-foot **Spa at Rancho Encantado**, honoring New Mexico's indigenous healing traditions with treatments like "Mountain Spirit Purification," Blue Corn & Honey Renewal," "Sacred Stone Massage," "Crystal Chakra Balancing," and "Altitude Adjustment Massage"—which by the way, might be needed, as Santa Fe's elevation is a surprising 7,000-plus feet. Soaking in the outdoors is part of the experience here. The spa boasts a meditation garden and private bathing courtyards in the fresh desert air, the cleanest air in the entire country, according to the American Lung Association. After a day of massage/facial/hot tub/sauna, it's hard to imagine leaving the aptly named Rancho Encantado, but should you want to, the hotel's new **Adventure Center** offers daily, complimentary guided desert hikes, as well as customized excursions—from mountain biking to skiing, whitewater rafting to hot air ballooning, archeological tours to a variety of cultural events. If you time your visit right, you'll be able to take advantage of the hugely popular **Santa Fe Opera**, held in the nearby open-air opera house (June through August), the **Santa Fe International Folk Art Market** (July 11–13), or the **Santa Fe Wine & Chile Fiesta** (September 24–28). Downtown Santa Fe is, of course, home to a huge artists' community; you can easily spend several days just touring its numerous galleries and museums, including the **New Mexico Museum of Art**, the **Museum of Contemporary Native Arts**, and the **Georgia O'Keeffe Museum**. There's also plenty of shopping in the immensely walkable downtown area, although you won't find any chain stores—all the boutiques in this charming city of nooks and crannies are independently owned, offering things you won't find anywhere else, like handmade cowboy boots (**Back at the Ranch**). If you're vegetarian or gluten-free, you're in luck: You'll find a plethora of specialty restaurants and bakeries. The kids will find plenty to love as well, including the Southwestern barbeque at **Cowgirl**. But head back to Rancho Encantado for dinner at **Terra**, where Chef Andrew Cooper offers a fresh take on classic Southwestern cuisine using organic, locally sourced ingredients. Be sure to arrive early, so you can enjoy a glass of wine while you watch a Southwestern sunset so vivid, it will look like it's been painted by Georgia O'Keeffe herself.
—*Kerrie Kennedy*

Best Hotel Spa for Southern-Style Pampering:
The Houstonian Hotel

Southern belles know their pampering, so it's no surprise that one of the best spas in the country is located in Houston. Situated on an 18-acre wooded oasis in the heart of Houston, **Trellis Spa at The Houstonian Hotel** draws the Who's Who of Houston's elite—on the lounge chair next to you, sipping a glass of the spa's signature cantaloupe juice, you might find a high-profile socialite (Lynn Wyatt is reportedly a frequent guest), an oil heiress, or perhaps an energy executive. Years ago, you would have found George and Barbara Bush as well—at one time, Suite 271 in The Houstonian was Bush's official voting address. He often ate dinner in the hotel's restaurant and, for years, worked out in the hotel's exclusive fitness center and got his hair cut at the spa. Presidents aside, Trellis knows how to cater to Southern belles. The ladies' locker room, for example, is staffed with assistants who will make sure you're fully stocked with towels, water, juice, snacks, magazines… and hair styling tools. Thanks to the fantastic supplied curling irons, we emerged post-massage with curls befitting Scarlett O'Hara, but we needn't have bothered, because we later found out there's a full-service hair salon within the spa. There's also a manicure/pedicure salon, a makeup station, six facial rooms (their aestheticians are some of the best), eight body treatment rooms, two couples' rooms, several VIP rooms, hydrotherapy rooms, steam rooms, a quiet room, a gorgeous upstairs lounge with a fireplace, and **The Houstonian Club**, a massive 120,000-square-foot fitness center that gives added meaning to the phrase, "Everything's Big in Texas." The hotel itself, darkly paneled with a huge stone fireplace in the great room has a rustic, masculine, lodge-like feel. Its fine-dining restaurant, the Mediterranean-inspired **Olivette**, is equally relaxing and appealing, with big windows overlooking idyllic grounds and a refined, sophisticated menu. Named by *Forbes* in 2012 as "the coolest city to live in," Houston, the birthplace of the fajita, has been redefined by such culinary standouts like Oxheart, Underbelly, and Uchi. Besides its trendy restaurant scene, Houston is a shopping mecca—from the magnificent **Galleria**, famed for its indoor ice skating rink, to more quaint and eclectic shopping in **East End** and **Rice Village**. But Dallas' smarter, hipper big sister boasts more than just shopping. Its Museum District, surrounded by the beautiful Hermann Park, features 19 museums, including **The George Bush Presidential Library and Museum**, **The American Cowboy Museum**, **The Houston Museum of Natural Science**, **The Museum of Fine Arts Houston**, and **The Houston Zoo**. The 17-block **Houston Theater District** features nine performing arts venues, including the **Wortham Theater Center**, home to the **Houston Ballet**, one of the largest professional ballet companies in the country. A trip to Houston would not be complete without a visit to the famous **Space Center Houston**, where you can touch a moon rock and take a tram ride to Mission Center. Cap off your stay with a drive through another universe—the River Oaks neighborhood, home to some of the most impressive mansions in all of Houston, not to mention at least one or two notable Southern belles.

—Kerrie Kennedy

Left: a relaxation pool at Trellis Spa. Below: the massive Great Room at the Houstonian Hotel.

The column-ringed pool, reminiscent of a Roman bath, at Espa Spa.

Best Hotel Spa for a European Experience:
Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa

"You may wonder why you are getting a foot massage during a facial. That is the Japanese way. It's a welcoming way to establish the therapist and client relationship and how we are here to serve you," says the massage therapist as she expertly rubs our feet and dips them into a soothing warm water bath.

But we're not in Japan. We're at the five-year-old **Sensai Select Spa**, the only one of its kind in the world, at the historical, five-star **Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa** in Interlaken, Switzerland. Sensai products are unique in that they derive from the cherry blossom and feature silk from the Koishimaru silkworm, a species indigenous to Japan. The silk is said to boost production of hyaluronic acid synthesis, which serves to hydrate and cushion the skin. The effects are best appreciated through a three-hour Indulgence in Silk treatment, which includes a body peel, facial, silk bath, and massage. And these creams are an indulgence. Let's just say Sensai's Ultimate The Cream sells for $740 at Neiman Marcus. But our skin really did feel as smooth as silk afterwards. The 18,000-square-foot Victoria-Jungfrau spa is a world of wellness. Inside are not one, but two spas, Sensai and **Espa Spa**. Fittingly, Sensai's design leads visitors past silk panels hanging in layers from the ceiling to a circular, cocoon-like waiting room which wraps the guest in a soft glow of light. Espa Spa has 16 treatment rooms and no fewer than 30 different types of treatments. There's also a full fitness center with personal trainers, classes, fitness analysis tests, a café, and salon. At the heart of the spa is the dramatic, column-ringed pool, reminiscent of a Roman bath. Swiss hospitality has been at home here since the hotel welcomed its first guests in 1865 and has since received such guests as Mark Twain, Tchaikovsky, and the Emperor of Brazil. The Victoria-Jungfrau has long enjoyed international acclaim as one of Switzerland's leading luxury hotels and one of the truly great hotels of Europe. After being pampered, dine at the hotel's French-inspired **La Terrasse** with its crystal chandeliers, captivating candlelight, and views of the Jungfrau. **Jungfrau Brasserie** offers up upscale Swiss cuisine. It's worth a 10-minute walk across the river for **Benacus**, a chic, urban spot with tasting menus and small plates. For more local fare and ambience, try **Restaurant Chalet** just down the street. The village of **Interlaken** has long been a famous tourist destination and for good reason: impressive mountains, crystal clear Alpine lakes, and so much to see and do. Interlaken is an ideal starting point for countless excursions. More than 45 mountain railways, cable cars, chair lifts, and ski lifts lead to 125 miles of ski runs and a dense network of hiking trails. There's plenty of shopping (watches, chocolate, and, yes, Swiss Army knives) on the main drag of **Höheweg**, which runs between the two main train stations. The must-do here is a train ride up to the **top of the Jungfrau**. The Jungfrau is the third highest peak in the Bernese Alps, but its massive north face makes it one of the most recognizable. Once difficult to access, the spectacular **Jungfraubahn Cog Railway** now goes to the Jungfrau Railway Station, at 11,332 feet, the highest in Europe. At the top, besides the stunning views, there is a large complex of tunnels built into the mountain including a hotel, restaurants, an observatory, a research station, a small cinema, a ski school, and the Ice Palace, a collection of elaborate ice sculptures. On the way back down, stop in the cute town of **Grindelwald** for a Swiss hot chocolate, of course. Then head back to the Victoria-Jungfrau to catch the sunset as it hits the Alps with its warm pink glow. *–Lisa Lubin*

Best Hotel Spa for a Glamorous Girls' Getaway:
Eden Roc Miami Beach

When you want it all in one weekend—beach, spa, sun, nightlife, restaurants—**Eden Roc**, located on Miami Beach's historic **Millionaire's Mile**, delivers an attractive package, a mere three hours away. Home to the first-ever **Elle Spa**, a joint venture between *Elle Magazine* and Eden Roc, the 22,000-square-foot spa, with its floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the ocean, is an oasis amidst the high-octane party atmosphere of Miami Beach. Instead of a party track, the only sound you'll hear in the spa is tranquil new age music, the perfect complement to its soft, white washed, natural wood and stone décor, a welcome departure from Miami's usual splashy, flashy aesthetic. Known as one of the top (and certainly most beautiful) spas in this "Mecca for the Bronzed & the Beautiful," Elle Spa offers something other spas cannot—the seasoned knowledge of its magazine's beauty editors, who have designed such treatments as the Runway Ready Facial, the Sleek and Chic body treatment (guaranteed to make you swimsuit ready in a flash), and the Elle Spa Signature facial, a vitamin and mineral-rich facial with oxygen therapy and essential oils, created by beauty expert Tammy Fender. In fact, after our massages, manicures, and pedicures, we decided to spend the day taking full advantage of the sauna, steam room, and cold plunge pool, followed by a nap and reading in the relaxation room, a light lunch out on the terrace, and blowouts in the salon. We even managed to squeeze in some shopping at the spa's boutique, which features products, apparel, and accessories hand-picked by *Elle* editors. (We picked up a sheer floral cover-up from Trina Turk.) Built in 1956 by architect Morris Lapidus, who also designed the **Fountainbleu** next door, Eden Roc Miami Beach boasts a glamorous past, in its heyday attracting such guests as Elizabeth Taylor, Katharine Hepburn, Lauren Bacall, Humphrey Bogart, Ann-Margret, Lucille Ball, and Desi Arnaz. Several episodes of *I Love Lucy* were filmed here, and the hotel's former supper club, the Pompeii Club, once drew such A-list performers as Nat King Cole, Milton Berle, and Harry Belafonte. Today, you might be more likely to bump into Kim Kardashian, Tinsley Mortimer, or Kerry Washington, all relatively recent guests, and instead of a supper club, you'll find **Haute Cuisine 1500**, a farm-to-table restaurant with a steakhouse sensibility (steaks are broiled to perfection at 1500 degrees). Sadly, the Al Hirschfield mural that once hung over the hotel's bar—depicting caricatures of celebrities enjoying the Eden Roc in its Rat Pack-prime—was removed during a renovation (the hotel has gone through several renovations as well as an expansion), but its **Cabana Beach Club** is still one of only three restaurants on Miami Beach that offers alfresco dining on the beach, perfect for lunch. For breakfast, grab a coffee at the Eden Roc's on-site full-service **Starbucks** before heading over to the iconic **News Café**, the best way to begin a day of exploring in South Beach. But when you're ready to escape the trendy crowds, a decidedly more old-school experience awaits at Eden Roc, the Grande Dame of Miami Beach. —*Kerrie Kennedy*

Eden Roc's beach front setting has been drawing A-listers for years.

Best Hotel Spa for Oenophiles and Foodies:
The Allison Inn & Spa

The Willamette River Valley is one of the most populous areas of Northwest Oregon, a region sheltered by mountains and rendered fertile by Ice Age floods. A few of its numerous agricultural treasures include hazelnuts, hops, and some of the finest Pinot Noir in the world—so if you're looking for a delicious escape, The **Allison Inn & Spa** in Newberg offers a full menu of luxury for body and mind. Located 25 miles west of Portland, The Allison is dedicated to total relaxation, health, and indulgence, all with a green approach. Set on 35 acres of stunning hillsides and its own vineyard, the hotel and its 15,000-square-foot spa offer a view that's as easy on the eyes as it is on the spirit. One of the few hotels worldwide to boast a LEED Gold Certification, the property also boasts environmentally conscious features such as solar hot water, photovoltaic cells that generate 7 percent of The Allison's electricity, and eco-green roofing on the west wing. This thoughtful approach is in every detail of the hotel, from its common areas to the local artwork displayed on its walls. Each room in this three-floor establishment has a private terrace or balcony and custom-built furniture, upholstered window seats, and a functioning fireplace. The result is a getaway perfectly set up for achieving serenity. While enjoying your spa treatment—we recommend The Allison's signature Grape Seed Cure, which begins with an exfoliating scrub and ends with a sea butter massage—make sure to arrive early in order to enjoy the steam room and the soothing lounge area. After your treatment, relax with a glass of the spa's signature nonalcoholic Mimosa, or prepare yourself a cup of tea from the sidebar of refreshments. The Allison is also home to **JORY**, an elevated-dining restaurant that pays homage to Oregon's bounty. From breakfast (we recommend the house-made brioche French toast with fig compote) to dinner (local salmon with seasonal vegetables from the on-site chef's garden) to late-night small plates, Chef Sunny Jin's menu is a destination in and of itself (as is Pastry Chef Shelly Toombs' cookie plate). If you feel like venturing farther afield, the **Red Hills Market** in town offers excellent picnic fare. There are more than 200 wineries in the valley, and The Allison's concierge staff will be the first to help you arrange tastings and transportation, recommend must-see vineyards, and ship your purchases home. We're still thinking about the signature Pinot Noir vintages we sampled at **White Rose Estate**. Not much for wine? The region has other activities in abundance, from horseback riding and golf to hot air balloon rides, hikes, and a thriving local art scene. (Art Elements Gallery, whose owner Loni Parrish curates the art displayed at the hotel, is well worth a visit.) Additionally, the **Pacific Ocean** is a scenic, hour-long drive away. Lincoln City is a popular coastal destination that boasts plentiful restaurants, activities, and the **Tanger Outlet Mall**—need we remind you that Oregon has no sales tax?

—Katie Rose McEneely

JORY pays homage to Oregon's bounty.