



## HOTEL PALACIO ESTORIL

CASCAIS, PORTUGAL

### STATE-OF-THE-ART MEDICAL SUPPORT FROM A LONG-TIME STAR PLAYER

The restorative, recalibrating effects of being close to blue spaces – sea, rivers, waterfalls – is increasingly being recognised through scientific study. But those visiting the seaside town of Estoril have long known this, taking its waters since Victorian times. The three-storey spa at the Palácio, a marble-sleek Thirties hotel where David Niven would have felt at home, only arrived in 2010, but continues the aquatic traditions with gusto. It's best to pack at least two swimming costumes, as a lot of time will be spent immersed in water. The spa is accessed from the hotel via an underground passage, so people can pad there in robes and slippers without crossing the road. At the base is a scent-infused outpost of the Banyan Tree, an enveloping, warm embrace of Thai massages, scrubs and beauty treatments. On top of this is the clean-cut wellness centre, two floors with less ritualised medical and sports sessions on the timetable. The fitness programmes are naturally centred around the gym and personal training (no rest until those planks are perfected), but there's also a rota of relatively unusual classes that can often be booked at short notice. Pool Pilates, underwater spinning and hydrogymnastics will leave you with the core strength of a mermaid. The Palácio also has a surprising reputation for its physiotherapists and osteopaths, making it an excellent under-the-radar place for those with postural concerns and troublesome sciatica. Carla Bangueses's private Pilates slots are not to be missed. She has an assort-

ment of beautiful wood-and-leather equipment in her studio, curved and honed like an oversized shape-sorter set, which she adjusts as you raise arms and legs. And consider biofeedback – a little *Dr Strangelove* but entirely painless – in which electrodes are taped to the body and a flurry of frequencies bounced off to be analysed. It's a technique used by professional athletes to speed up injury recovery and check the state of muscles. The fleet-footed, multitasking team in white coats are highly personable and talk to each other all the time, swapping notes on guests and suggesting tweaks to treatment plans.

Curiously, there's a little too much of a lift culture here – more could be done to encourage people to use the stairs. But no one needs a nudge to head outside, back to the

sea. The hotel sits on a sweet spot on the Portuguese coast; around an hour by train from Lisbon, a taxi ride from *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*-pretty Sintra. So get out and get moving. Make like the locals and quickstep along the coastal path to Cascais for seafood and sand. This grande dame is a great trick to have up your sleeve for a last-minute reboot.

**INSIDER TIP** Go off-piste and book watsu (water shiatsu) with Paulo Fonte, learning to let go while being slowly swished around the pool in his arms.

**BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; [healingholidays.com/condenast](http://healingholidays.com/condenast)) offers a seven-night Physical Rehabilitation programme from £1,585 per person, including flights, transfers and breakfast.

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