



**2019  
WINNER**  
BEST FOR  
TARGETED  
HEALING

## HOTEL PALACIO ESTORIL NEAR LISBON, PORTUGAL

### POSTURE-FIXING AND WATER-BASED THERAPIES AT THE HOTEL THAT INSPIRED JAMES BOND

There's a marvellous sense of the clandestine at this chandeliered seaside hotel. During the war, Ian Fleming came spy-watching in the bar and jotted down the idea of a certain well-tailored secret agent. Now you can slip away from the ornate Thirties building via a marble-lined underground passage, disguised only by a towelling robe, and reappear in the clean-cut wellness centre, where a floor of scented, sure-handed Banyan Tree treatments is capped by two floors of fitness and medical. Fashionable Portuguese have been taken the waters at Estoril since the 19th century, and the spa funnels that tradition through jets of hydro-massage, Vichy pampering and sessions in the therapy pool – wobbling to maintain yoga poses on an oversized surf board; pedalling underwater while a sergeant-major voice instructs you to 'push the water'. In the dynamic pool, the strong current sends you floating merrily round on spin cycle until you clock that you're supposed to be flipping upstream like a salmon. The Palácio also has a surprising reputation for its physiotherapists and osteopaths if you have postural concerns. Dr Isabel Tomás will cast a beady eye as you touch your toes and slowly straighten up, before manipulating back ligaments and devising corrective exercises. Physio-trained Carla Bangueses holds one-on-one Pilates sessions in her studio of beautiful wood-and-leather equipment, and there are various encounters with the aquiline Paulo Fonte, who has the eyes of a poet and quite a following among repeat guests. He went to Taiwan for a year to learn Traditional Chinese Medicine but stayed for five, picking up qigong along the way, which he uses in his postural re-education workshops, the class rotating limbs with views of the seafront. For a TCM massage, he'll ripple through your muscle fascia, folding as he goes. Rusty Tin Man joints are softened, shoulders fall back. Watsu is a gentle treatment that can have a big impact – cradled in Paulo's arms, it's easy

to regress to childhood (some have been known to cry), and you emerge super-relaxed, like a scene from *Cocoon*. The bio-feedback consultation is a painless, fascinating process in which frequencies are sent into your body via sensors and the responses deciphered by Dr Margarida Garcia into actionable advice. A dip in B vitamins, perhaps, or a hormonal readjustment that can be dealt with using osteopathy and nutrition changes. She'll also run your blood under an electron microscope to see how switched on it is. The team are highly personable – your Thai therapist may tell you her favourite local wines, and Paulo will argue the case for Taipei having the best food in the world. Unless you're here to lose weight, don't skip the *pastéis de nata* and port that's brought to the room on arrival (Those actually on diets will have their minibars confiscated.) There's chicken with pineapple pesto at the spa café, juices and a light menu (monkfish carpaccio, beef in tamarind) devised by the nutritionist. But everyone should have one supper in the old-school grill, a vision in autumnal colours with something of the Lutyens hunting lodge about it and a pianist with a nice line in self-deprecation ('I don't drink – it only makes me play better'). And for shellfish-brilliant bars, the village of Cascais is a walkable distance away. All that negative-ion air must be doing something – doorman José Afonso, who made a cameo in the Sixties Bond film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, which was shot here, still stands strong aged 84. A get-fresh, limber-up trip with serious medical clout, which you'll depart from walking taller and stronger.

**INSIDER TIP** While you're here, explore the pink-concrete-pyramid gallery devoted to artist Paula Rego, famous for her dark take on fairytales, in Cascais.

**BOOK IT** Healing Holidays (+44 20 7843 3592; [healingholidays.co.uk/condenast](http://healingholidays.co.uk/condenast)) offers a seven-night Physical Rehabilitation Programme from £1,645 per person, including flights and transfers.