

LA TRAVEL

Beijing and Beyond

Restore,
Relax,
Revive!
Roatán, Ojai, Antigua

A Royal
Vacation
in the
Castles
of Ireland

Valentine's Day
Gifts and Getaways

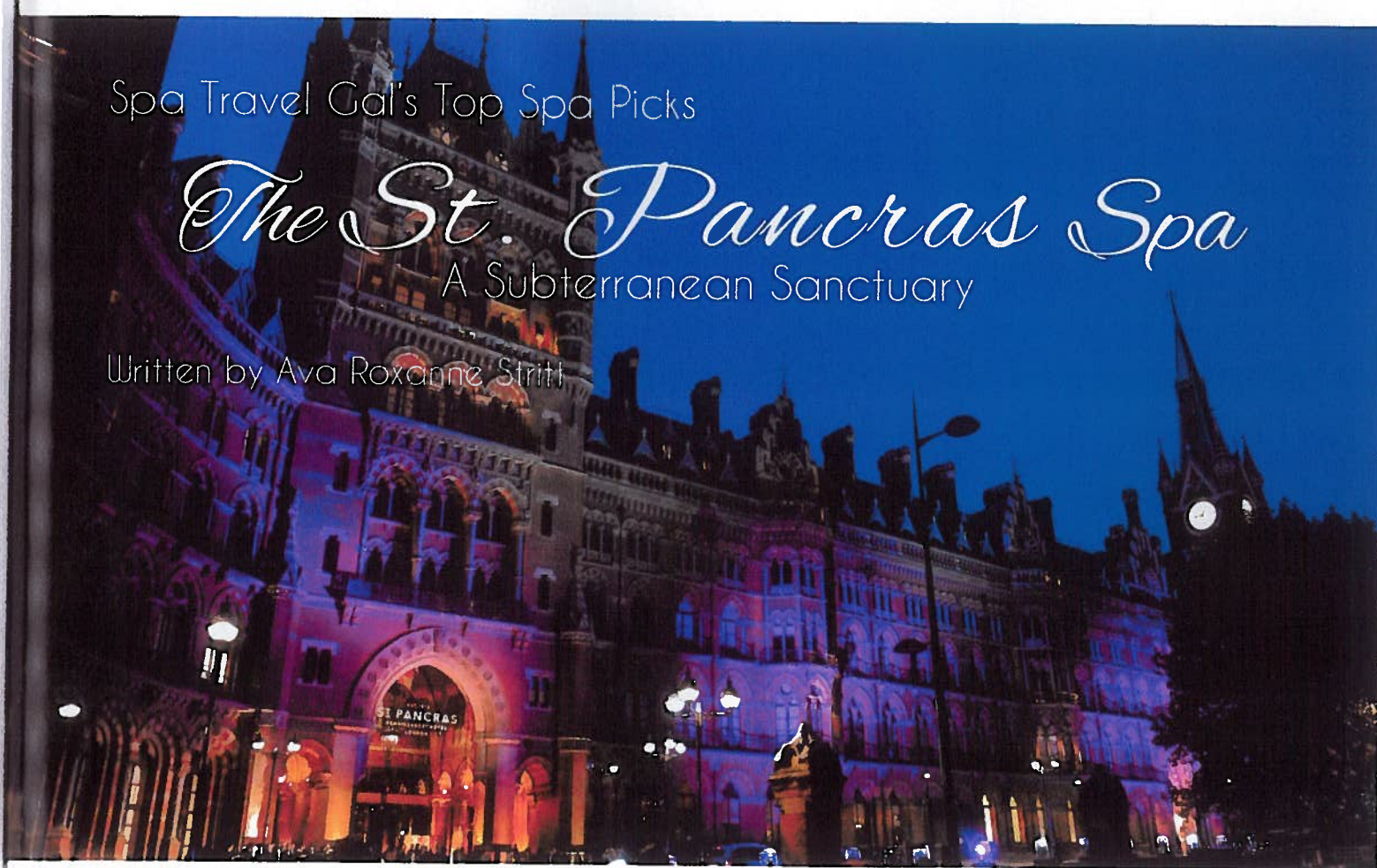
Luxury Winter Escapes: Hawaii, New York City, San Francisco, New Orleans

Spa Travel Gal's Top Spa Picks

The St. Pancras Spa

A Subterranean Sanctuary

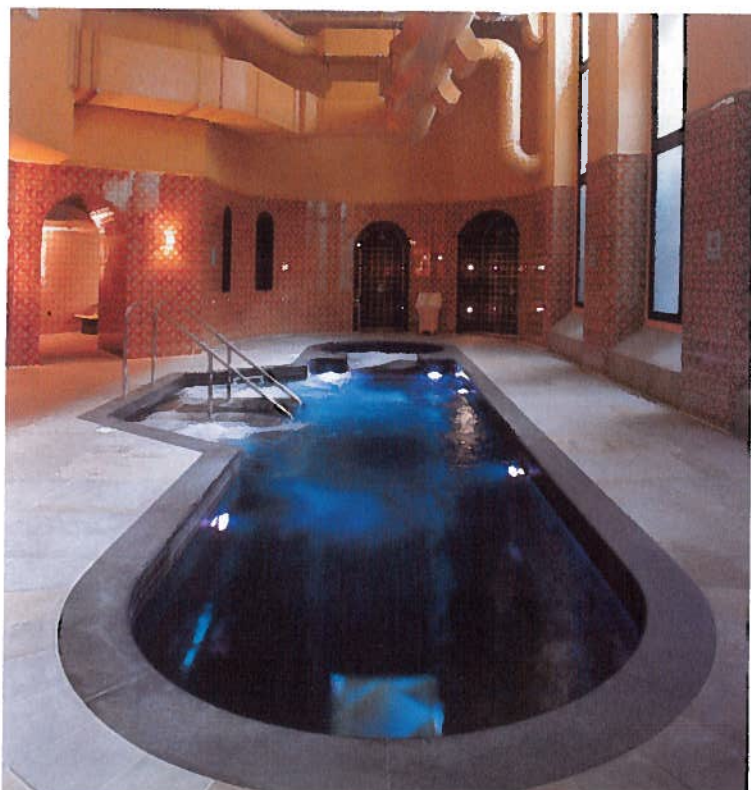
Written by Ava Roxanne Stritt



When many Americans think of Europe, they dream of castles rising up toward the sky. Yes, they are stunning, but I have found something even more spectacular for the weary traveler. This year, I discovered a structure that matches the splendor of many castles, and it also houses a remarkable luxury spa deep inside. The splendor of the St. Pancras Renaissance Hotel rises from the King's Cross Station area of London. The hotel is located in the St. Pancras International Train Station, alongside Eurostar.

The hotel was originally designed by the famous architect Sir George Gilbert Scott. Here, his Gothic-Victorian style now meets modern luxury after a recent renovation, which added a spa to the lower level. Once closed for 78 years, the cathedral-like stature now stands tall with grace and exemplifies pure luxury.

The history here is legendary, but pop culture also embraces this hotel. The famous Grand Staircase has been featured in many films and videos, including the famous Spice Girls' "Wannabe" video. And yes, I danced my way down the stairs, too, and my daughter has the video to prove it. Multiple movies have also been filmed here, ranging from "Bridget Jones's Diary" to two Harry Potters. You, too, will feel like you stepped onto a sound stage -- but I assure you, your destination is real.





When I travel, I always want to be comfortable. I wear my OkaB Taylor flats, take a pair of fleecy leopard-print Kushyfoots, relax in my soft, cute Tribute dolman top and yoga pants, utilize my HoodiePillow to take a catnap during flights and even drag along my enVy beauty rest pillow to utilize in my hotel room. Still, it seems that a traveler's lifestyle can take its toll.

Upon arrival, I needed a refresher. And the St. Pancras delivers. Knowing that I was about to take the Eurostar the next morning for a day trip into Paris, I knew I had to be my best self. A cycling tour with Tours by Locals led by the lovely Susanne van Duijnen, through all the *arrondissements* of Paris would require me to be well rested and refreshed. I knew the hotel's spa would be the perfect place to make this happen.

As I walked into this subterranean sanctuary, I was never rushed, even though I had arrived just on time. I was treated to a unique tea ceremony that included a tall, glass teacup filled with green tea and a magical growing hand towel that reminded me of a mushroom.

After my check-in, the spa attendant guided me to the changing area, which housed a locker with the most luxurious robe I have ever found. After changing, I flowed toward the relaxation room. This room was so relaxing, combined with the jet lag that I feared I would drift off to sleep before the attendant called my name. Miraculously, I was still awake when the attendant arrived to lead me down the dim hallway to my treatment room.

The St. Pancras Spa boasts five treatment rooms and a refined couple's suite; a Eucalyptus steam room and saunas; and a state-of-the-art gym. Within the spa itself is a Victorian-tiled relaxation pool with hydro loungers, which creates a sophisticated and tranquil oasis.

Spa treatments here are inspired by travel and the hotel's desire to take you to far-away destinations. It utilizes Cinq Mondes' Beauty Rituals of the World products to create a sensorial experience unique for every guest. This place is definitely your ticket to tranquility.

Perfect for reviving a traveler is the spa treatment called "Arrive and Revive." The treatment journey starts with soothing and relieving sore muscles, softening the skin and boosting the circulation. With a choice of recipes from their Spicy Aromatic Scrub to a Black Soap Scrub, there is something for everyone.

Your transformation completes with a Balinese Radiance Facial. This treatment, combined with a massage of the face, neck and scalp according to Bali ritual, delivers cleansing, harmony and beauty. You will leave with your body awakened, feeling ready for whatever the day throws at you.

The spa experience does not stop in the spa. In my lovely Chambers Suite, I found a limited-edition collectable rubber duckie to enjoy in the marble bath. What makes this luxury bathroom over the top are the full-size REN amenities in the room, presented in a lovely wooden case.

On your next visit to London, do the afternoon right and book the "High Time for Tea" spa package, which includes the British tradition of a proper teatime, along with pampering. Want even more indulgence? Top it off with a glass of champagne.

