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ARTICLE: **BATHHOUSES IN NEW YORK - THE CITY'S BEST DAY SPA ESCAPES**

Bathhouses in New York - The City's Best Day Spa Escapes

By **Leslie Nipko**, Contributing Writer

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Visit New York’s various international bathhouses and you may be poached in wine, spanked with branches or plunged into an icy pool. To visit these unique locations is to step naked (or nearly so) into a foreign land. Whether the spa is high-end or lowbrow, you are guaranteed to leave feeling detoxed and steam-cleaned. Conveniently most of the below locations include bars, so you can begin your re-tox right on the premises.

Korean: Spa Castle

Take the Number 7 train to the last stop in Flushing, then hop on the complimentary shuttle bus to Spa Castle, New York’s largest Korean-style jimjibang. The lobby resembles a bus terminal, but you are there only long enough to receive a bar-coded wristband; services, drinks, and snacks—all reasonably priced—are charged with a swipe, paid for when you leave. (Make sure you check your bill.) Spa Castle features seven varieties of sauna, but the trippy Jade sauna, which resembles an igloo made of geodes, is not to be missed. There are sundecks, indoor and outdoor tubs with abundant jets and what may be the only swim-up bar within city limits. The clientele is diverse and unpretentious. After all, it’s tough to put on airs in Spa Castle’s mandatory uniform: pink and orange for women and a slightly more appealing blue for the guys. A day trip that feels like a spa vacation. 131-10 11th Avenue, College Point (nyspacastle.com; 718-939-6300)

Japanese Bathing Ritual: Shibui Spa

A visit to the Shibui Spa, which is located in the basement of the Greenwich Hotel, feels like being teleported to Japan. Indeed, the swimming pool, lit by lanterns, gleams under the roof of a transplanted 250-year-old bamboo farmhouse. Here, baths are serious business, designed to foster balance and calm. Seasonal baths are designed to counter weather stressors; in winter, for example, ginger boosts heat and circulation and ramps up

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the immune system. Bathe in hot sake year-round to ease jet lag or free-floating Manhattan anxiety. Try the Elemental Detox before a big event and skip the Spanx. Thirty minutes of private soaking time will set you back \$75; two can soak for \$95, and you'll be conserving water besides. 377 Greenwich Street (thegreenwichhotel.com/spa/; 212-941-8900)

Red Vine Barrel Bath: Caudalie

It's not really a barrel, and you're not exactly bathing in a vat of wine, but at Caudalie, you can spend fifteen minutes (and \$75) soaking in a tub of water and grape or red vine extracts while a therapist rubs your head. Wine—or "vinotherapie"—is the theme at Caudalie; pre- or post-soak offerings include alcohol-tinged scrubs, facials, wraps and massages. The theory is that the wine extracts help circulation. The wine list and artisanal cheese selection certainly do. A definite high-end experience, Caudalie's Vinotherapie Spa is located at the legendary Plaza Hotel. To make a truly memorable day of it, follow your treatment with Afternoon Tea in the Palm Court. 1 West 58th St (caudalie-usa.com/site/caudalie_spa.html; 212-265-3182)

Turkish & Moroccan Hammam: Trump Soho

Imagine lying naked on a marble belly stone, being basted in oils and soaps, then buffed to a sheen. If your rough skin requires more strenuous strafing, opt for the Moroccan version—black olive oil soap with crushed olives (and pits) for max exfoliation. Detoxifying clay is an option, as is a head rub. Bliss. Be prepared, however; the front desk staff make no bones about catering to tourists who wield their credit cards like ninja throwing stars. The exceptional hammam notwithstanding, the more down-to-earth New Yorker may want to skip Trump in favor of a more relaxed, authentic sweat elsewhere. Why pay through the nose to feel invisible? 246 Spring St (trumpsohohotel.com/Spa-At-Trump/The-Experience.asp; 212-842-5505)

Tenth Street Russian & Turkish Baths

The Tenth Street Baths is a genuine, no frills schvitz. Many of the clean but clearly well-used "robes" are missing both sleeves, but go with it; nobody's looking. First-generation Russian men and women have been sweating out last night's vodka on Tenth Street since 1892, and, from the look of the place, not much has changed. The Russian Room resembles a dingy (but clean) cave built around an oven, holding 20,000 pounds of baking rock. Sooner or later, as you sizzle, a helpful regular will fill a wooden bucket with ice cold water and dump it over your head. Another might ask you, "Platza?" If you look receptive, he or she will beat you with a sheaf of soapy oak leaves (\$35). The experience is bizarrely addictive and worth doing at least once. Post-platza, hit the cold plunge, snooze on the roof deck, or treat yourself to some pickled herring and a bowl of borscht. 268 E 10th St (russianturkishbaths.com; 212-674-9250)

