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Spa and away in Latvia

We check out Latvia's luxe spa offerings

by Amy Harker

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Looking for somewhere to retreat to with golden beaches, fresh forests to walk in and luxe spa treatments, plus nearby vibrant nightlife? Well Latvia, that's right, Latvia has it all. Not your immediate thought for a chic break with the girls but this incredible country really is a diverse nation with rich offerings and plenty to entertain.

Savvy travellers, who like to keep ahead of the crowd have long been travelling to Riga, the capital of Latvia, known as the Paris of the Baltics. The buzzing atmosphere and stunning architecture is full of charm and delights, which will please at every corner. From fine dining and boutique shopping to unique one off vintage shops, street markets and intimate cafes, the UNESCO World Heritage city centre, which feels more like a small town, has plenty to offer.

But away from the glitz of this gorgeous city, you can escape to an altogether different world in nearby Jurmala, just 15 minutes from the city. This beachside, forest encased town is home to the glorious Amber Spa, one of the best hotels from where to make the most of the resort's mild climate, healthy air and curative mud and mineral waters. The area has long been a medicinal resort with visitors from all over the country arriving in their thousands!

The Amber Spa Boutique Hotel, just one minute from the sea, is a perfect retreat, to get away from it all. The spa's belief is that people are born with a reserve of health which gets dissipated throughout their lives, as a result of unhealthy living! So, in order to combat the depleting reserve we need to boost it every so often! They offer personalised holistic programmes and an extensive menu of traditional and modern spa treatments, such as massages, facials, hydro and mud therapies and also thermotherapy and electro stimulation! They use products which include local herbs, mud, amber, buckwheat and birch juice as well as Sothy's Paris professional skincare line.

As well as this they have a traditional Russian Bath, which is not only great for your wellbeing, but for us visiting Brits it is also great fun! It's a far cry from our idea of a spa day, where we relax in quiet beds, reading a magazine and popping in and out of the sauna and hot tub between treatments. Rather the traditional Russian Spa is a very social and loud fun filled occasion! The locals do it on a weekly basis, from when they are very little and it is very much a part of their social lives. As friends they meet up for a full day at the bath, where in the communal areas they chat, catch up, watch TV and eat plenty of delicious food such as traditional potato and sauerkraut dishes. The baths themselves see you move from the extreme hot to extreme cold and offer treatments such as steam besom treatment, body wraps, peeling and Russian soap massages.

The boutique Amber Hotel and Spa is attached to Balans sports centre and bowling alley, so there is plenty to keep you busy! What's more, nearby to the spa you can enjoy an abundance of healthy excursions. Strolling along the miles of golden sand is a must. The beaches here are full of locals enjoying the great outdoors. It's a far cry from Blackpool or Brighton, where us English loll around on the beach, burning to a crisp and chomping on ice creams! Everyone here seems to be active – there are volleyball games going on, racket ball, football and plenty more. You could always take a trip to the pretty town centre, lined with lovely wooden buildings, to pick up some local fruits and veg and pack yourself a delicious picnic to enjoy on the beach or in the stunning forests that line the sandy shores.

Meanwhile, for eating at the hotel is a true pleasure as well. The hotel restaurant, My Life, serves up some delicious food. The traditional and homemade dishes alongside contemporary international cuisine are absolutely tantalising with a good choice of vegetarian treats for the non meat eaters amongst you. Breakfast is a full on buffet affair, though you can order cooked items if you wish. All the scrummy pastries are baked on site and you certainly won't be going hungry! A detox menu is also available, as well as individually tailored menus, for those who seek a really healthy retreat. While, for the less virtuous, the Gourmet Bar offers carefully selected fine wines and a wide range of whiskies, malts and liqueurs, as well as organic coffee grinds. The barmen, famous for their mixology skills, prepare delicious cocktails using natural ingredients

Less than three hours flying time from the UK (remember to carbon off set your flight) a trip to Latvia and the Amber Spa is a must for those wanting to go somewhere a bit different but experience pampering and relaxation. Prices start from 80EUR per night.

www.amberspahotel.lv/en/

