

Spa Spy

Our health sleuth investigates the curative claims of wellbeing retreats worldwide

Oriental Spa at Es Saadi, Marrakech

The spa: Just outside Marrakech's medina, Es Saadi is set in three acres of aromatic, sub-tropical garden. Its Oriental Spa offers a novel range of musical therapies, as well as more conventional treatments.

Spa Spy's symptoms:

A sedentary office lifestyle and bad posture has made for an achy lower back and persistent muscle tension in the neck and shoulders.

The prescription:

Spa Spy's problems were deemed severe enough for Qi Gong - which is meant to harmonise the body through movement, sound and visualisation of colour. Next, an hour of Chinese music therapy conducted by a "music therapist" named Natalie, who recommended a curious massage involving tuning forks.

The procedure:

Performed outdoors, the Qi Gong involved lots of standing on one leg while slowly rotating, breathing



out and thinking of the colour red. The massage, known as the "musical spine" (£35 for 50 mins), proved one of Spa Spy's strangest experiences, during which humming tuning forks were placed on the back, head and limbs. Natalie offered to

Melodic massage: during treatment tuning forks are used to locate your 'musical spine'

strum, blow and honk a range of musical instruments over Spy's prone body, but he deemed this a step too far.

The verdict: The Qi Gong left Spa Spy feeling stretched. The tuning forks appeared to have no effect - but when Natalie hit the right spot, vibrations tingled through the body. Spa Spy found himself slipping into a blissful sleep, helped by hot towels. Spa Spy awoke feeling refreshed and de-stressed.



The medical opinion:

"A growing body of evidence suggests that music therapy can have tangible benefits for a number of conditions, from schizophrenia to stroke," writes Dr Max Pemberton. "The mechanism is poorly understood, but is likely to be a result of music's ability to improve mood, which has an impact on how symptoms are experienced."

The feelgood factor:

Es Saadi translates as "the contented one" and the complex

lives up to its name.

● The Palace, the suite-only hotel within the complex (00 212 24 44 88 11; www.essaadi.com), costs from £360 per night. EasyJet (www.easyjet.com) flies from Gatwick, from £88.98 return. Thomsonfly (www.thomsonfly.com) operates from Gatwick and Manchester, from £61 return.

● Spa Spy is going on a non-spa holiday and will return in four weeks