

The Spring in Winter

RESTORATIVE MINERAL WATERS BUBBLE UP AT THE HEART OF A FIFTIES MODERN OASIS. BY KATHRYN HARRIS

The blank canvas of the Desert Hot Springs terrain—desert scrub dotted with the occasional candelabra cactus, big open skies that are blue by day and star-studded at night, snow-capped mountains in the distance—seems to impose a sense of relaxation. Factor in the hottest, most mineral-rich natural hot springs in the area, and you can't help but be filled with instant bliss. After checking in to the spare, modernist environs of The Spring, a restored mineral bath motel from the '50s, settling in is pretty effortless. The mellow sounds of Van Morrison or Miles Davis welcome you, as does a duo of white fluffy towels adorned with a sprig of lavender and a spa menu.

The ten pristine rooms (more reason to chill—the body count stays pleasantly low) form a horseshoe

around three azure, hot spring pools maintained at varying temperatures. The restrained, contemporary chic decor utilizes warm-colored, polished cement floors and putty- and sage-hued walls to submerge the man-made into the reigning design element—the natural landscape. Beds with super thick mattresses by the Denver Mattress Company (you'll want to take one home) inspire sweet dreams and make activity-kept-to-a-purposeful-minimum the next day that much easier. Soaking, napping, and rolling over followed by more soaking, napping, and rolling over should really only be interrupted for meals (best prepared in your efficiently kitted-out kitchen rather than breaking the spell and driving into Palm Springs), a local hike for sightings of quail or the odd roadrunner, and of course, luscious spa treatments. Stepping-stones across the lawn lead to a freestanding spa building where therapists with a nurturing touch deliver pretty much everything from pampering to pummeling.

Even if there's a full house—and there might well be given that winter temperatures rarely dip below 60—little breaks the sensuous quiet of The Spring beyond lawn sprinklers during the day and the buzzing whir of cicadas at night. Just soaking in the natural hot springs here is, in many ways, treatment enough. The water is laden with traces of silica, calcium, and sodium, known to naturally ease a variety of skin and musculoskeletal conditions. And heat therapy itself is a proven aid in relieving stress, tension, and soreness.

Venturing through the portals of the spa building is worth the effort, one well rewarded by one of The Spring's specialized spa treatments. The Clay and Sandalwood Wrap (\$145) is 90 minutes of relaxing bliss, initiated with a delightful preparation of warm clay and sandalwood powder applied to the entire body. Once swaddled in a cocoon of linen and wool blankets, you're left to dream while your body relaxes and detoxifies. After a rinse, a calming aromatherapy massage rounds out this soothing ritual in the desert.

Find time to: Hike. Complement your relaxation with an invigorating early morning hike before the day heats up. There are a few trails near The Spring, but venturing farther afield to Indian Canyon or the legendary Joshua Tree National Park speaks to the soul.

