

of Mathilde Thomas, daughter of the estate's landlords. From discovering the properties of grapeseed polyphenols, Caudalie cosmetics was born. To this day, Mathilde continues to create new technologies based on the cosmetic values of the simple oval piece of fruit the region is famous for—the grape. The spa is a luxury oasis to restore the skin, body and mind. It includes a large indoor pool filled to the rim with natural hot spring water drawn from 540 metres beneath the earth, which is rich in minerals and oligo-elements and the results of the most recent beneficial discoveries of the grape and the grapevine. The spa also boasts a steam room in the shape of a dome to circulate the steam to its best benefits, and along the edge of the spa, relaxing lounge chairs are facing the outdoors to indulge in the views of the domain. During the summer, the doors open onto wooden viewing decks and an outdoor pool area, and even a hot tub disguised as an enormous barrel heats up for a calming dip.

The spa offers many treatments, such as Caudalie wraps, massages, scrubs, facials and even products with their magical grape powers. Their grape products make sense and give hints of what women consider as vital beauty products, “I believe in a greener planet and more committed cosmetics. I formulate my products for all women who, like me, don't want to choose between effectiveness and naturalness, between glamour and ecology,” says Mathilde who has a strong environmental sense to her business.

My choice, out of the options, was to indulge in an eighty-minute long massage. When I'd walked in, I'd noticed that the treatment rooms were incredibly calming. The music softened, and the lights dimmed, luring me into a relaxed state of mind.



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The eighty minutes were not wasted, as the therapist made sure that literally every muscle in my working body was professionally kneaded, softened and loosened, whilst light lavender scented oil was warmed before it touched my skin. I was then led back, still in a slight haze from the soothing environment of the tranquil spa. The space was softened by the lowering sunlight entering through the large window panes, just in time to finish the day with a cinnamon infused tea, more grapes, and a beautiful sunset.

Food for the soul

The remainder of the day was

spent in a relaxed state-of-mind, and just as I was about to settle into my luxurious stand-alone bath and order myself some room service, I saw the lights in the main building switched on. It was the French café full of lively folk. I changed my plans and decided to get my heels on, shower, and join the crowd.

After a beautiful dinner made with fresh French produce at the Country Inn, the evening ended with a coffee on the private deck of my suite before I dove under the crisp white duvet, eager to start the next morning fresh with a dip in the pool. The hotel's 15 metre indoor pool is a unique experiment housed in the

imposing greenhouse built from 18th century timbers. The bottom of the covered swimming pool is used as the photographic canvas of artist and sculptor Mathilde de l'Ecotais, who painted a gold tinted Japanese puffer fish, which changes tones by the incoming sunlight—it's a stunning view to be swimming lengths above.

I indulged at breakfast, knowing that an 8km bike-ride was on the schedule for later that day. For breakfast, elegantly decorated tables were adorned with delicious freshly squeezed juices, yoghurts, home-made mueslis and cut fruits, loaves of country breads,