

### Spa Spy: Sun Gardens Dubrovnik, Croatia

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By Leah Hyslop



**Our sleuth investigates the curative claims of wellbeing retreats worldwide. This week: a tranquil resort in Croatia.**

**The spa:** An award-winning spa in a five-star modern hotel just six miles away from Dubrovnik – so an ideal spot to escape from all the cruise ship crowds that throng the narrow streets of the old town in summer.

The spa was the first in Croatia to use home grown natural beauty products, fragranced with native Croatian plants such as fig and jasmine. There are three types of sauna (depending on how much heat you can handle), a hammam, steam room, a pool and even a juice bar. The 'Relaxation Zone', featuring wide canopied beds and colourful cushions, is particularly inviting.

**Spa Spy's symptoms:** Spy is suffering with stress and her perennial problem, back ache, the result of too many long days in the office – and (if she's being honest) not enough exercise.

**The prescription:** The 55-minute 'holistic massage' (595 kn/£55).

**The procedure:** Spy is asked to look at a long list of symptoms, from headaches to digestive troubles, and identify those she suffers from. Then she is gently massaged from head to toe with flower oil, with the masseuse focusing on the areas which give her most trouble.

**The verdict:** Spy's back is so sore, massages can hurt, but the masseuse is careful not to press too hard on the more tender areas. Afterwards, Spa feels relaxed and decidedly more limber. She is pleased to receive some recommendations from the masseuse – including to swim a few times a week, to try and release toxins in the shoulder area, and have hot baths with salt.

**The medical opinion:** "Using natural sources for oils such as almond, or lavender can help relax clients and so less pain is felt when working on more tender areas," says senior physiotherapist Sophie Apps. "Regular low impact exercises such as swimming, or yoga are a great way to keep flexible and improve circulation, which help with a number of health problems."

**The feelgood factor:** The hotel's seafront location, with views over the Adriatic and Elaphiti Islands, will calm visitors down before they so much as glimpse the spa. When Spy visited, it was too chilly to swim outside, but in summer, there are three pools to choose from, and you can also relax on the tranquil beach. There is a regular boat to Dubrovnik – a good way to see the rugged Croatian coastline.

**Details:** Doubles from £70 a night low-season, £190 high-season (001 385 20 361 500, [dubrovniksun-gardens.com](http://dubrovniksun-gardens.com)). Various airlines including British Airways ([ba.com](http://ba.com)) and Easyjet ([easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)) fly direct to Dubrovnik Airport, 35km from the hotel.

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