

WELLNESS

## Shh! The Latest in Spa Trends is All About Staying Quiet. Here's Why.

by DENA ROCHE



Alpina Grand

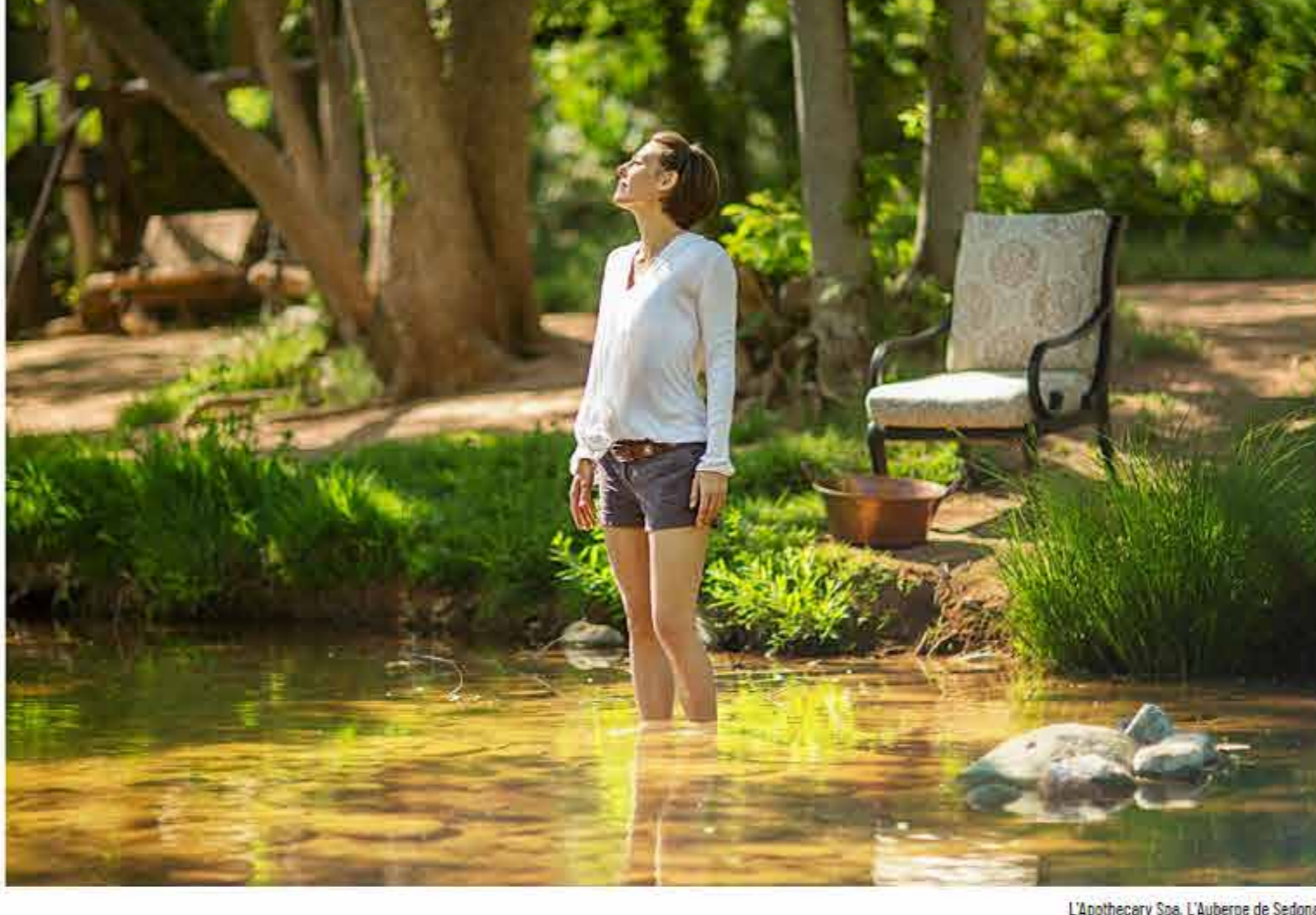
In an ever increasing noisy world, the sounds of silence are rising up everywhere lately. With text notifications, music, and sensory input coming from all directions, we're overloaded and it's not healthy. In an effort to quiet the mind and the environment, silence is becoming an almost necessary trend.

In England, a fitness chain launched silent hours with no announcements or music, and retail store Asda Living, offers quiet shopping hours with no music, TV displays or even escalators. Taking silence almost to the extreme, Japanese restaurant chain Ichiran, which just opened an outlet in Brooklyn, offers silent dining where solo diners sit facing a wall, with no interaction with hosts or waiters—a light shows open tables and ordering is done electronically. Even airports, one of the noisiest experiences around, are trying to get in on the silent trend. The Barcelona, Warsaw and Helsinki airports have stopped blaring announcements, with flight communication provided via silent kiosks, displays and texts.

Speaking of Helsinki, the entire country of Finland jumped on the silent bandwagon turning it into a selling point with a tourism campaign called "Silence, Please" promoting Finland's silence and stillness.

*Two hours of silence daily increased cell development in the hippocampus, the region of the brain centered on memory, depression and dementia.*

"When you have the tourism board of a country choosing it as a promotion strategy, it's pretty indicative [that silence is important]," says Susie Ellis, CEO and Chairman of the Global Wellness Institute.



L'Apothecary Spa, L'Auberge de Sedona

It turns out that from a health standpoint, silence truly is golden. A 2013 Duke University study found that two hours of silence daily increased cell development in the hippocampus, the region of the brain centered on memory, depression and dementia.

It makes sense that spas are leading the silent charge.

"Spas are one of the last places in modern society where people can go to disconnect," says Jeremy McCarthy, Group Director of Spa & Wellness for Mandarin Oriental Hotels.

Here are a few standout spas where you can get some R&R in complete silence:



The Landmark, Mandarin Oriental

### THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL

For the fourth year, Mandarin Oriental hotels across the globe host Silent Night this December 19. For one night the entire spa goes quiet—no talking, no music and no social media communication from the hotel, all in an effort to give people the disconnection needed for quiet contemplation.

"In the digital era of streaming content, we rarely give our minds a chance to rest," says McCarthy. "Silence is one of the luxuries of the modern age. We want to give our spa guests a chance to truly disconnect while in the spa and explore the inner workings of their own mind."



### LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT

The Lake Austin Spa in Austin, Texas employs Blue Mind philosophy to silence the outside world and quiet the Red Mind. Blue Mind philosophy is rooted in science, and uses the proven calming power of water to relax the "Red Mind", a state of agitation, edginess and stress that most of us spend our daily lives stuck in.

Neuroscience has found that the brain naturally relaxes around water, and takes on an almost an involuntary dream state. The spa, which is on the shores of Lake Austin, offers more than 30 Blue Mind activities like the Blue Mind Eco Paddle, Blue Mind Yoga, Lake Fit group exercise classes and Driftaway, a unique floating meditation.



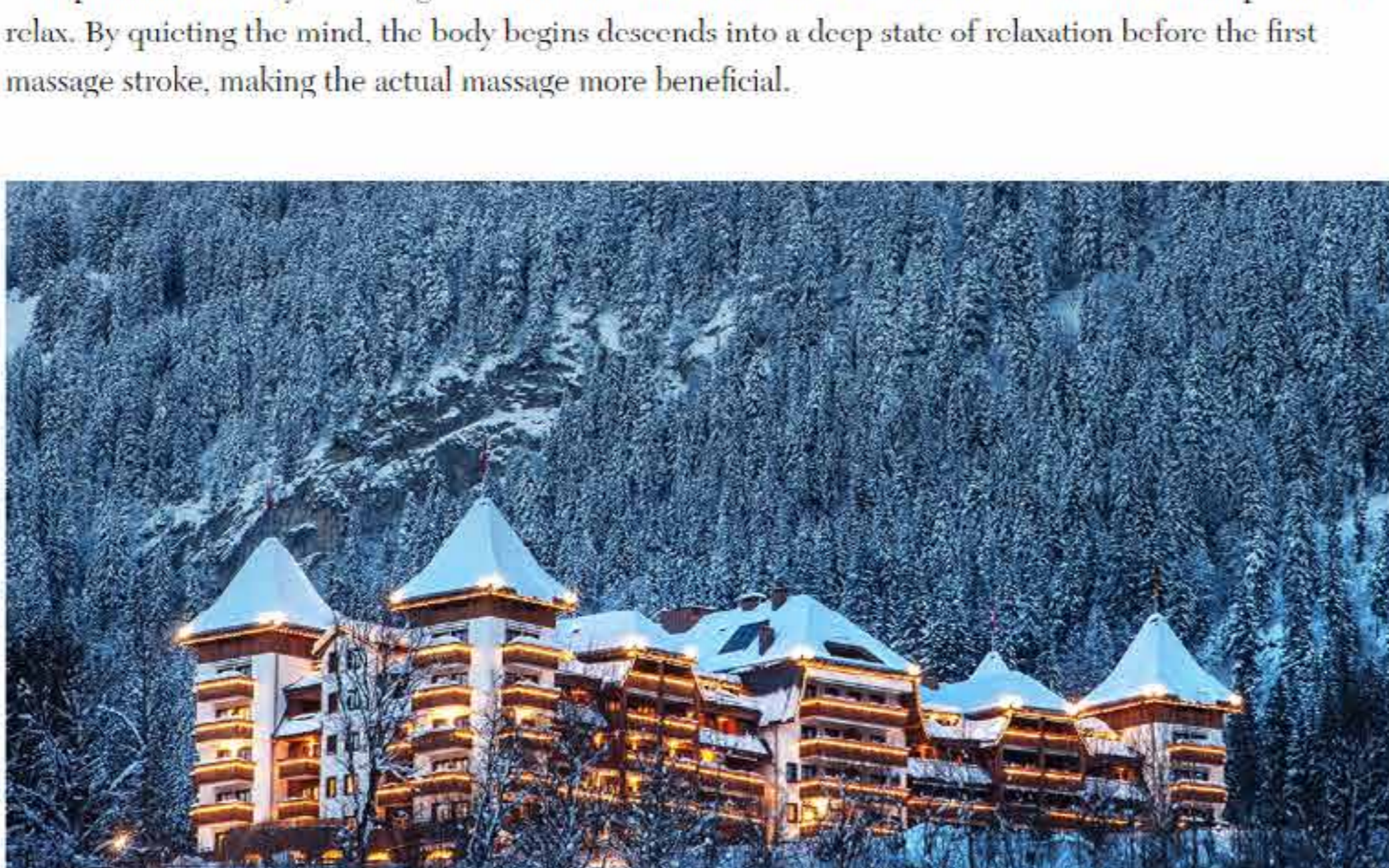
"Silence itself has a relaxing effect on our brains. Although our brains are never completely silent, by omitting external sound and immersing in the auditory embrace of water, we plunge our minds into a deeper place of relaxation, recovery and back to our natural 'default mode' the place that allows insight, 'a-ha moments', creativity and mental breakthroughs," says Director of Fitness, Outdoor and Lake Activities, Cindy Present.

In the spa itself, water is used in several treatments to achieve similar results. One of the most unique services is the Aquatic Craniosacral service, which uses the healing properties of water to help rebalance the circulation of cerebrospinal fluid. The water, coupled with the therapist's light touch produces a deeply relaxing and healing effect.



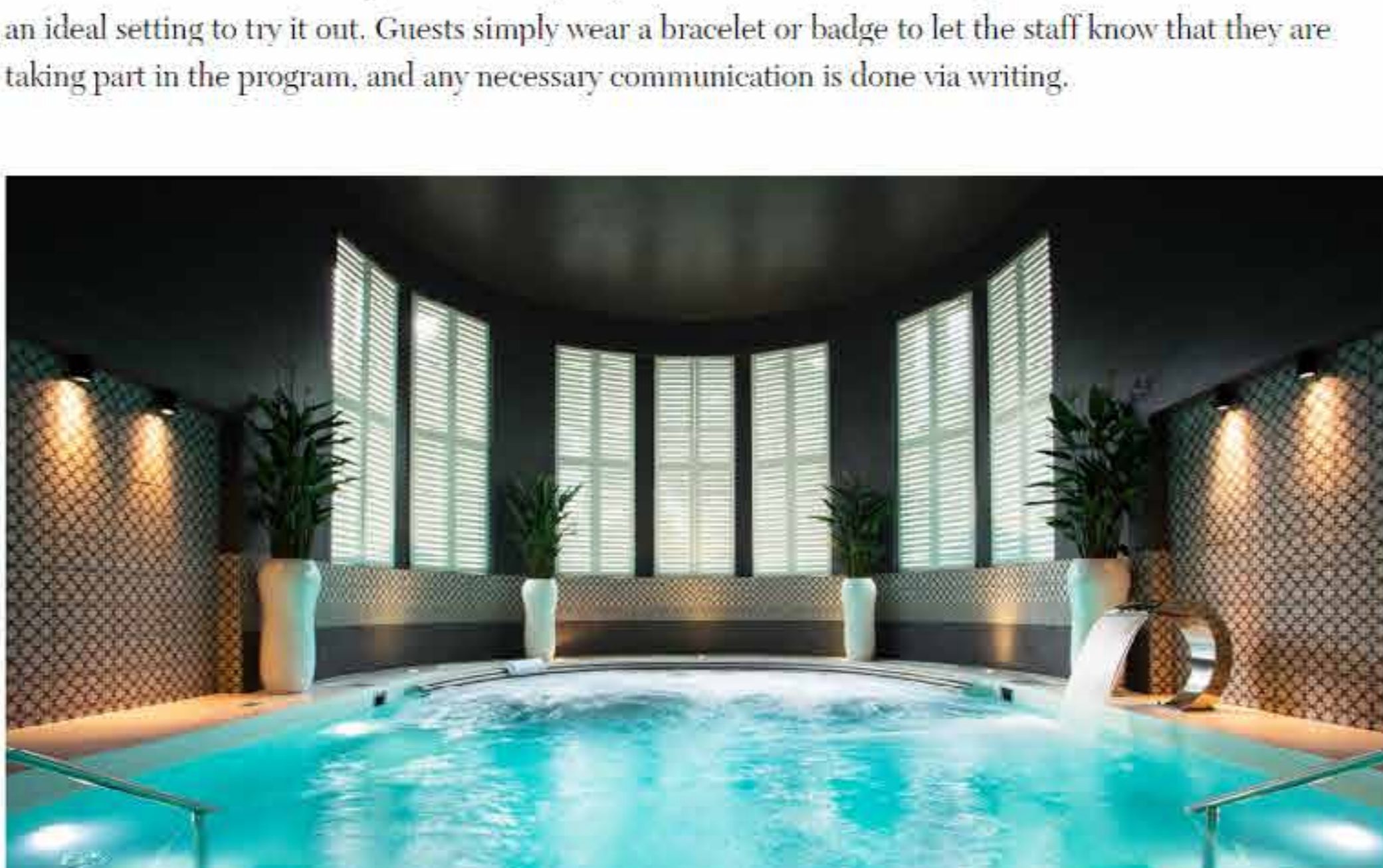
### L'APOTHECARY SPA AT L'AUBERGE DE SEDONA

The beautiful scenery combined with the Zen vibe already make Sedona, Arizona an ideal place for reflection. Add in the Quiet Mind treatment at L'Apothecary Spa at L'Auberge de Sedona and you have the perfect silent getaway. The service is perfect for Type A who have trouble relaxing and are just starting to let go just when a standard 60-minute treatment is winding down. Before the massage, the therapist guides you in breath work and meditation designed to calm the mind, bringing awareness to each point of the body. Soothing scents of Bird of Paradise and Passion Flower are used to help the client relax. By quieting the mind, the body begins descends into a deep state of relaxation before the first massage stroke, making the actual massage more beneficial.



### ALPINA GRAND

The Six Senses spa at the luxurious Alpina Grand in Gstaad, Switzerland is taking silence beyond the spa into all aspects of the hotel with its Silent Stay program. The idea is to replace speaking with silence to see how that shift causes you to reinterpret your environment. The tranquil mountain location makes an ideal setting to try it out. Guests simply wear a bracelet or badge to let the staff know that they are taking part in the program, and any necessary communication is done via writing.



### HEDON SPA & HOTEL

Traditionally, spa is about taking the waters, and the silent spa at the Hedon Spa & Hotel in Estonia is about doing just that in silence. The Silent Spa ritual is designed to last two or three hours and includes a tepidarium, a sauna room with salt in the air, a caldarium, an aroma steam with warm stone seats, a laconicum (dry sauna), salt and massage pools, footbaths, Finnish sauna and outdoor pool. Body care products are provided to enhance the silent spa experience.

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