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SUNNY FRANTZ (TOP), KAIA CALHOUN (MIDDLE LEFT), THE PFISTER HOTEL WELL SPA + SALON (MIDDLE RIGHT), HILLARY SCHAVE (BOTTOM LEFT), AND SHANNA WOLF (BOTTOM RIGHT).



LAPPING UP THE LUXURY THE PFISTER HOTEL'S WORLD-CLASS SPA

BY KRISTINE HANSEN

ALL OF THE GRANDEUR at The Pfister Hotel—from the world-class Victorian art collection to bellmen in gold-button suitcoats—makes ducking into this downtown Milwaukee hotel seem more like a jaunt to Europe. You half expect to pull back a curtain and see a glimpse of the Eiffel Tower, not the crisp-white Burke Brise Soleil wings atop the Milwaukee Art Museum (although that view is equally stunning).

This luxury includes the hotel's lower-level Well Spa + Salon in the exact spot where Turkish-style baths were in the hotel long ago is a pampering oasis. In a nod to the Old World, the spa offers 30-minute treatments in the Hammam steam shower, with a coconut-lime masque (\$60), recommended as an add-on to a service (only available weekdays). While treatments are what you'd expect at a spa—massages, facials and salon services like manicures—the experience makes you feel like the Duchess of Cambridge (aka Kate Middleton). Every treatment is serviced in a private two-room suite that includes a massage table and full bath with a shower. Each room has a name (mine was Aspen).

The level of customization is what sets the spa apart. Clients choose from musical themes (I opted for nature sounds) or plug in their own iPods. And after inhaling the scents of various essential oils, the choice that resonates most is used for the treatment (Peace drew me in with its blend of bergamot, ylang ylang and patchouli).

For the signature facial (\$225), there's a reliance upon sea minerals from a brand called Phytomer to tighten and firm the skin. This is done by stimulating the collagen, elastin and hyaluronic acid. Sourced from the sea in the south of France, Phytomer's products date back to the 1970s. But it's more than just a facial; this treatment is worth the splurge. Included in the 90-minute appointment is a mud application to the back, paraffin wax for the hands, light massaging of the body throughout and a recommended enhancement (I chose a coconut-sugar foot scrub).

Winter is a great time to visit because of the spa's heated floors, heated robes and the comfort of a heated massage table. All in all, a warm experience head to toe. 🍷