



view gallery

All hotels have been independently reviewed by our expert writers, who are usually hosted on a complimentary basis. We will earn a commission if you book via the links below, but this never affects our rating.

# The Well

## Oslo, Norway

[View on a map](#)



8/10

Telegraph expert rating

"With no fewer than 11 pools and hot tubs, 15 saunas and steam rooms, and 25 treatment rooms, The Well is the weekend escape of choice for Oslofolk who fancy a break. Founded by Norwegian billionaire Stein Erik Hagen, the sprawling resort offers 104 rooms and two restaurants amid art-filled surroundings."

Telegraph Review

Check availability

---

Rooms from **£132** per night

CHECK IN: Tue 24 Oct

CHECK OUT: Wed 25 Oct

OCCUPANCY: 1 room, 2 adults, 0 children

[Check availability](#)

Prices provided by [Booking.com](#)

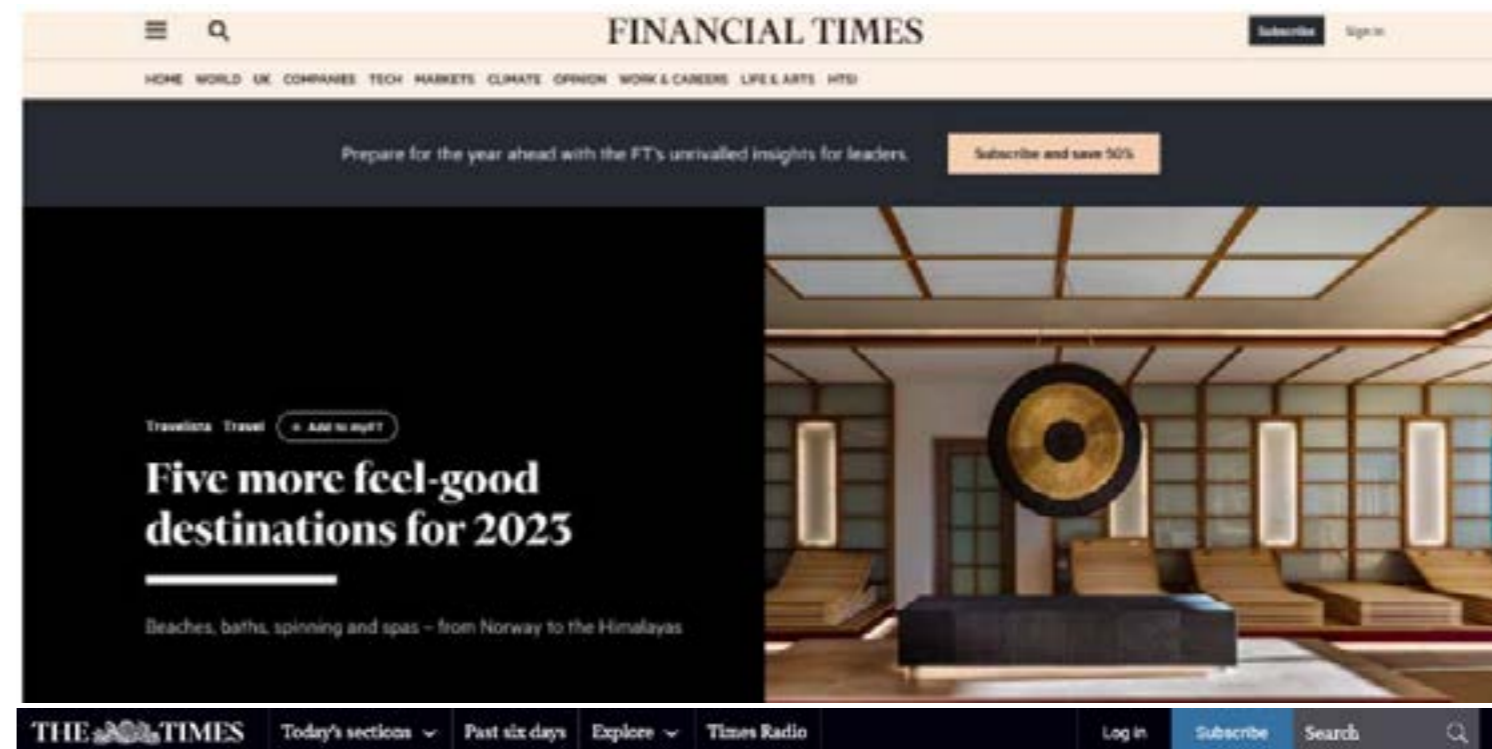
## The Well, Norway



MEDITATIVE SAUNA IN NORWAY'S THE WELL

THE WELL

The Scandi countries know how to spa, a fact underlined by this stay just a hop outside of Norwegian capital Oslo. With bountiful saunas — ranging from a high-humidity ‘tropical’ version to a northern lights-inspired laconium — plus 10 pools, myriad steam rooms and a Japanese onsen, facilities are so extensive and enthralling that you might not ever actually make it to your hotel room (which would be a shame, as they’re blissfully stylish). Word to the slightly shy: this being Norway, they do spa-ing in the buff, which means cossies are banned in most facilities apart from on Tuesdays.



### The Well

Get a full immersion in Nordic spa culture at this hotel, a 20-minute drive outside the city centre. With more than a dozen thermal spaces — including a northern lights-inspired laconium, a Finnish sauna and a humid tropical sauna soundtracked by birdsong — you could easily fill a pampering weekend here without straying into the city (note: the spa follows continental sauna traditions, so swimsuits are not allowed, apart from on Tuesdays). Rooms have pops of mustard and blue, and there are two restaurants, one, called Mori, serving Asian fusion tasting menus (five courses from £70).

**Details** B&B doubles from £255 (thewell.no)





FROM TOP: Casa Chalone, The Well, Eleven Rio Palena Lodge



## THE WELL

Kviteseid, Norway

The Well plunges deep – from sustainability to spa immersions, there's nothing half-hearted here. The largest spa in northern Europe (13 kilometres outside Oslo) does the maths with aplomb: 11 pools + 15 sauna and steam rooms + 100 showers + 10,500 square metres nudged up against a forest = bliss for newbies and spa pros alike. The choice is almost overwhelming – onsen or hammam; rhassoul or banya? Soft sauna with tropical soundscape or with gong meditation? Northern lights laconium or art deco tepidarium? Aufguss rituals? There's one for every mood and time of day. Every available centimetre of its roof is solar-panelled; heating is geothermal; 70 percent of water is purified and recycled, and heat is recovered from shower water (which can't be recycled). Even the in-house swimwear collection is made of 82 percent recycled materials. The ethos is Roman – spa as a place to meet, talk and read as much as to float, scrub, ablate. The food (robust brasserie or bijoux Japanese) is fabulous; the hotel is supremely comfortable with immaculate attention to detail. There's a side order of wow factor art (owner Stein Erik Hagen collects art alongside saunas); the staff are delightful and it's remarkably good value. All in all, a perfectly balanced equation.

**BOOK IT:** Doubles from £160 B&B. Spa day passes from £47. [thewell.no](http://thewell.no)

## ELEVEN RIO PALENA LODGE

Patagonia, Chile

There is a reason why Patagonia piques the interest of intrepid souls. In an age when every corner of the planet is accessible, the vast landscapes that traverse Argentina and Chile still offer the kind of hard-to-reach remoteness that allows for a journey of discovery and reconnection. Perched on the banks of the River Palena in a pristine Andean valley, Eleven Rio Palena Lodge is best known among anglers for its bountiful fly fishing. However, the beautifully appointed seven-bedroom refuge is a perfectly placed portal for adventurers looking to explore the verdant forests, jagged peaks and glittering glacial lakes Patagonia is so famed for. Under the expert guidance of the Eleven Experience team, guests spend days hiking to tumbling waterfalls, kayaking the river and its rushing rapids, and embarking on flights with 'EcoCopter' to azure alpine lagunas high up in the Andes, activities described as an adventurer's equivalent of a beach day. Returning to the lodge just as golden hour gives way to a firmament aglow with stars, residents are invited to gather for a traditional asado (barbecue) before the generous supply of fresh air, locally farmed fare and pisco sours induce a deep night's sleep.

**BOOK IT:** Doubles from \$2,501, all inclusive, plus guided activities, drinks and ground transfers. [elevenexperience.com](http://elevenexperience.com)

## Escape: Spa break

You won't sweat the small stuff at this swanky Norwegian spa where nudity is celebrated

# Naked and unashamed

by JANE ALEXANDER

**W**E'RE men and women of all shapes, all sizes, all ages – and all starkers. A lithe woman (clad in swimsuit and sarong) is dancing around the sauna, artistically waving a towel to spread the heat and scent from the coals.

Her wiley is in sharp contrast to how I'm feeling. I've always hated my body (my mother put me on my first diet aged eight – which pretty much wrecked my body image). So it's no wonder I approach my visit to The Well, just outside Oslo in Norway with trepidation.

The Well is the largest spa in northern Europe – sprawling over 10,500 sq m with 13 pools, 15 saunas and steam rooms, and 140 showers.

It is the water baby of Stein Erik Hagen, the second richest man in Norway and a confirmed spa fanatic.

He has cherry-picked the best spa traditions from all around the world, spent £30million, and collocated them under one enormous solar-panelled roof.

The spa and its 104-room hotel are in the village of Sofienyr. The lobby has the air of an art gallery rather than a hotel. Hagen collects art on a monumental scale. He's also big on 'natural nakedness'. Apparently, it's for both health and hygiene reasons. Sweat

evaporates more easily when it's not absorbed by swimwear, plus synthetic fabric is a breeding ground for bacteria and fungi. It's enough to make you strip off.

Hagen also wants to encourage his fellow Norwegians to embrace the body acceptance culture of mid and northern Europe. It turns out Norwegians are only slightly less prudish than we Brits and baring all is a stretch for them, too.

So, while nakedness is encouraged in the saunas and pools, it's not

remotely obligatory. You can buy hygienic swimwear (from £12) for the pools and you can cover up with a peshemal (hammam towel; £6) for the saunas. And beyond the pools and saunas, everyone wears robes.

I encounter a group of women from Birmingham who have lacked a couple of nights on to a weekend break in Oslo. The nakedness has come as a surprise.

'But, actually, we've found it rather fun,' says one of them. 'It

feels lovely swimming nude.' I had not expected to love this place but fall for it hook, line and sinker. It is deeply unpretentious, friendly, open-minded and huge-hearted.

Tiny details make the difference. A waterproof wristband acts as door key, spa entrance, locker key and cash card. Each spa robe has a letter of the alphabet on the back so there's less chance of walking off with someone else's.

I spend hours bobbing from the



Liberating: A sauna master twirls a towel to spread the heat and the wellbeing at The Well

Northern Lights laconium to the crystal cave steam room; from the waterfall shower room to the super-hot Russian banya. I become smitten with onyusa, the sauna ritual in which balls of ice laced with essential oils are placed on the coals.

A sauna 'master' twirls towels and fans to spread the heat and scent to mood-shifting music. It's totally addictive.

The Well takes its wellbeing seriously, but it's never po-faced or stern. This is a sociable spa, taking its lead from the Romans where bathhouses were social hubs – where good conversation and great food were as important as relaxation.

In the main bistro-style restaurant, everyone wears robes (even for dinner). It's an equal mix of men and women (no children – The Well is adult-only) and everyone is chatting and laughing. It suddenly strikes me that nobody is scrolling through their phones.

Eventually – albeit slowly – I come to embrace the naked thing. You realise people do, indeed, come in all shapes and sizes; that nobody cares how you look except you. And yes, swimming naked does feel wonderfully liberating.

### TRAVEL FACTS

The Well hotel ([thewell.no](http://thewell.no); +47 480 44 888) costs from £360 per night B&B. A day pass to the spa costs from £47. British Airways flies to Oslo from Heathrow, from £80 return ([ba.com](http://ba.com)).









THE WELL SPA RESORT  
REVIEW - A STUNNING,  
TRANSFORMATIVE SPA  
LIKE NO OTHER

TRAVEL

FIND OUT MORE

SORT BY... MOST RECENT

