

THALASSA SPA AT ANASSA, CYPRUS

by ISSY VON SIMSON



In brief

Super-solid break, even with the family

The lowdown

There is a Russian physiotherapist here called Vladimir Papakides who has been practicing at the spa for eight years. He works wonders with sports injuries, spinal ailments, torn tendons and all sorts of aches and pains. People come back time and time again for his rehabilitation therapies and thorough massages. He is a constant at Anassa and he is brilliant. The same goes for the hotel itself. It is strikingly dependable, so it's no surprise that there are so many regulars. The rooms are reliably lovely (with Provençal blue shuttered windows, huge high beds and creamy marble bathrooms; there isn't a dud out of the whole 166), the food is reliably delicious (the soft-shell crab at Basiliko restaurant, the wagyu beef in Helios, the sweet sticky nuts with local honey at breakfast) and the weather is reliably good: warm enough for T-shirts as early as March, with a balmy sea you can still swim in at the end of October. Which is why it's heavingly popular with families. And yet for all its permutations of interconnecting rooms, a Scott Dunn kids' club slicker than most [London](#) nurseries and the tireless friendliness from the staff towards tiny ones, it's a place that is also remarkably sophisticated and hushed.

Even in the summer holidays there's enough space for anyone who wants to find a private retreat. Away from the squeals and splashes of the mini pool are contemplative corridors, the gentle sound of fountains and the rustle of the breeze through 300-year-old olive trees. And the spa, flooded with sunlight and fresh air, is a serious set up, designed as much for those who want a five-day programme (fitness or anti-ageing, for example) as for those who just want the odd treatment, use the gym or swim in the saltwater exercise pool. The main focus is thalassotherapy, with water for the invigorating and restorative jet

sprays and hydro baths pumped straight from the Mediterranean. There's a comprehensive range of Ila therapies alongside QMS anti-ageing options, but it's the newly introduced Anastasia Achilleos facial that everyone seems desperate to book (ask for gentle, intuitive Claudia). This extraordinary treatment is a fully nurturing session where you are cradled in the therapist's arms while lying on a heated water pad. The attention on the face is soothing and hydrating but it's the rest of the 90 minutes that really gets interesting, with a kundalini massage using warm argan oil, abdominal work, a gentle foot rub and a scalp massage. The healing bubble doesn't burst when you emerge. As evening falls there is peace and quiet, whispered tones at supper and early nights had by all.