

Serenity Now

Two new spas offer guests a chance to soothe the senses

BY STEFANI C. O'CONNOR

El Santuario Spa, Sardón de Duero, Spain

After almost two years of design and construction, Spain's Abadía Retuerta LeDomaine, an abbey hotel and winery in Sardón de Duero, this summer will debut El Santuario Spa, a 10,000-sq.-ft. facility created underground on the property, which has a 900-year-old history.

According to Managing Director Andres Araya, the main goal was to create a new spa structure that would not conflict with the property's historic buildings, which date from 1146 and are set among vineyards that encompass 500 of the estate's 1,730 acres.

"To have erected a contemporary building in the medieval setting would have affected the logic and nature of the project. So, we determined that the best solution was an underground spa," he said. El Santuario is located under the vineyards, where the spa impacts neither the landscape nor the historic and protected monastery buildings. Views from the guestrooms in the adjacent abbey also remain unspoiled.

Basel, Switzerland-based architects Diener & Diener became a natural fit for the project, since the firm's Marco Serra was the design architect for the overall conversion of the Abadía Retuerta LeDomaine into a hotel beginning in 2006, for which his efforts won the Europa Nostra Award for conserving cultural heritage.

Interior design architect Michele Rondelli, principal of Rondelli 1:1, also is involved in the spa design.

"The project features a full wellness oasis, with two large air- and light-supplying patios and an outdoor pool. Local materials, such as granite stones and chestnut wood, will assure a luxurious and tasteful, yet discreet, ambiance," according to Rondelli.

The spa will feature four individual treatment rooms and a spa suite equipped with a Finnish sauna, a steam bath, an experience shower, hydrotherapy pool and separate women's and men's changing areas.

Ergonomic wood-and-fabric furniture is being designed for guests' comfort, while large skylights will bring in natural light to highlight the color palette that will reflect the local environment. An indoor heated pool will complement an outdoor pool set among the vineyards.

According to Araya, the designer was confronted with the challenge of creating an underground venue under "very complicated" circumstances.

"The location is next to the Duero River with a considerable amount of phreatic layers [groundwater and steam]. To overcome the moisture levels of the soil due to the proximity of the river, the architect developed an impermeable 'shoe-box' structure and built the spa inside of it," he said.

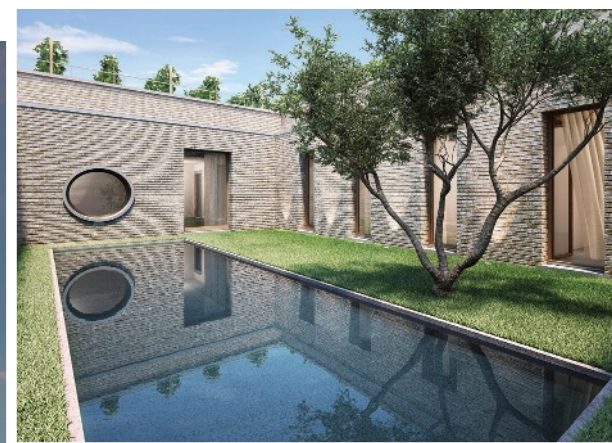
A system with advanced technology uses solar panels and groundwater pumps to generate energy for heating and cooling, while geothermal storage systems compensate for seasonal fluctuations in energy demand. A dedicated water-treatment plant allows water to be recycled and used for irrigation.

"The project is an engineering work of art that is creating a naturally sustainable spa," said Araya, bringing to fruition what was envisioned for the property.

"LeDomaine's commitment to continually enhancing the hotel and the guest experience led to our decision to add a wellness area," said the managing director. "In keeping with the renovation of the abbey, our vision was to create a model spa that placed the utmost priority on sustainability and respect for the historic property," he said.

Araya continued, "The steps we have taken will create one of the most energy-efficient and sustainable spas in Spain. Energy use at the spa, compared with conventional technology, will be reduced by about 80% for heating and 65% for cooling, while water consumption will be cut by about 75%."

Reflecting its environment, El Santuario will incorporate vinotherapy treatments as well as a spa sommelier to enhance treatments via specially designed experiences.



“We always knew that we had a huge opportunity to be different in the market. The fact that we are located in a wine environment allowed us to envision new ideas that would have positive impact for our guests,” said Araya. The spa sommelier will create personalized wellness experiences for guests who, upon arriving at the spa, will be given a selection of oils to smell and wines to taste. Depending on the their palette and aroma preferences, the spa sommelier will recommend and design the appropriate

spa experience that will fulfill the guests’ needs at that specific moment in their wellness journey. The treatment menu will be 70% classic services—massages, body scrubs, body wraps, facials and grooming—and 30% authentic, indigenous rituals based on the wine traditions of the local region and Abadia Retuerta LeDomaine’s award-winning winery.

For guests who do not drink alcohol, the wines will be replaced with hot teas in winter and cold grape juices in summer that have the required characteristics to

determine a wellness plan, according to Araya.

“The spa will add a new dimension to the hotel that did not exist previously, and is expected to become an integral and much-used component of the guest experience,” said Araya. “LeDomaine is a relaxing, genteel destination in an isolated location on a private medieval estate in the Duero wine region, where guests enjoy exquisite accommodations, one Michelin Star dining and beautiful nature. The spa is a natural extension and addition to the hotel.”

The Rittenhouse Spa & Club – Hair by Paul Labrecque, Philadelphia



Photos: BLT Architects

The Rittenhouse hotel, which occupies a historic Philadelphia location, has been staying contemporary via a multimillion-dollar renovation that’s been underway since 2012.

The capstone to the \$4.7-million effort is the recent completion of The Rittenhouse Spa & Club – Hair by Paul Labrecque facility, which features a health club, salon, indoor swimming pool and outdoor garden terrace, by BLT Architects (BLTa) and concept design firm Richardson Sadeki.

Tasked with creating a new atmosphere in the 116-room, independent hotel by owner Hersha Hospitality Trust, the two firms collaborated on making distinct use of the approximately 15,000-sq.-ft. space.

“The thought was to create an urban retreat using top-quality materials and design with elegant but understated style,” said Reginald Archambault, general manager of The Rittenhouse.

The 5,000-sq.-ft. spa features private and group massage rooms, and access to the club’s new locker rooms, with saunas and steam rooms. The 3,000-sq.-ft. salon features 10 styling chairs and offers hair-styling and nail services, scalp treatments and makeup application. There also are multiple rooms for yoga and aerobics classes.

Heidar Sadeki, founder and creative director of Richardson Sadeki Interiors, noted, “The design intention was to create a modern and intimate environment, and make it possible to navigate between these programs freely.”

In addition, said Archambault, given the “hushed sense of luxury throughout the property,” there was a desire for the design “to be elegant and uncluttered, giving our guests a sense of ease and comfort at every turn.”

According to BLTa Senior Associate Donna Lisle, the design and construction took approximately

15 months. The new Rittenhouse Spa and Club replaced the existing spa, pool, fitness center and salon, while layering in additional space.

“The former spaces were completely demolished to the concrete structure because the design was a completely new reconfiguration of spaces, lighting and mechanical systems,” said Lisle, who noted there were challenges. “This particular area of the building is where structure and mechanical systems collect in unexpected ways. During construction, we frequently had to make changes to the design, as we didn’t have existing drawings.”

Though it’s not a LEED-certified project, there was a commitment to design for daylight and efficient mechanical systems, she added.

“The design brought an atmospheric and expansive, yet connected, feel to the old plan. Bringing the perimeter outdoor light deep into the square interior plan was key,” said Lisle. “For this, the use of various transparencies of glazing was essential. The flow of space was further emphasized by the focus on minimal details, frameless glass merging into planes of large tonal tiles and silvery wall coatings.”

Among the interesting features is a wet lounge inspired by a traditional hammam.

“The lounge is composed of a waterproof sitting area and steam room with rain shower,” said Sadeki. “The steam room is also a product-application room, where body and facial products can be applied and washed [off].” Guests may use the minibar in the lounge, order refreshments from the hotel or order spa services, such as massages, to be performed in the lounge.

Sadeki indicated the overall look marries complementary features.

“The salon reception that also functions as the spa check-in and the hair stations are modern

and minimal, while a barber shop within the salon is classical and reminiscent of the 1940s with a scotch bar and nostalgic artifacts on the shelves. The spa lounge is comfortable and pampering, with modern furniture and a customized chandelier. The wet lounge is a quiet space and has a modern baroque accent,” he said.

Archambault said guest reaction has been excellent. “Our guests have universally embraced every aspect of the new spa, salon and health club. The Rittenhouse is very much a destination unto itself, with every amenity available in the hotel, in addition to the best location for nearby shops, parks and restaurants just outside our front door.”

He noted the salon, in particular, is important in terms of being a neighborhood hotel that serves its local community. “Paul Labrecque is an ideal partner in that he shares our belief in providing the finest products and services in a welcoming atmosphere, where each guest leaves feeling pampered. The biggest benefit is seamless service that is perfectly aligned with our goals as a hotel to be regarded as the best in class,” said the GM.

Sadeki felt the overall designs were able to convey The Rittenhouse brand message. “Through unique programs that create a unique ensemble, and through a precise design language that recognizes and enhances The Rittenhouse brand...we bring a modern language to a slightly traditional hotel, [maintaining] a classical vocabulary within the modern design,” he said.

“The renovations made to The Rittenhouse Spa & Club reflect the aesthetics of the classic hotel and residences to ensure that The Rittenhouse remains a Philadelphia landmark destination, and one of the top hotels in the country,” added Eric M. Rahe, a principal at BLTa.