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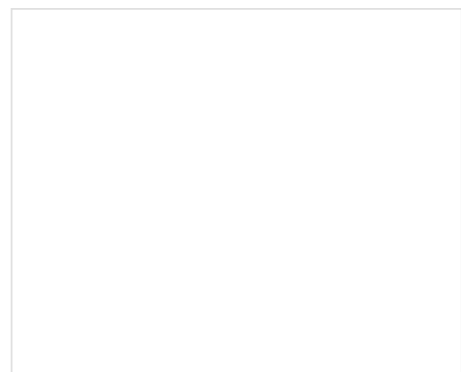
October 24, 2007

## Aerospa, Gramercy Park Hotel, New York

Two treatment rooms and plenty of treats at this minimalist spa in Manhattan

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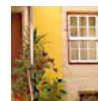
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Rachael Scott

**USP** A utility spa for hotel guests popping in for a quick treatment before beginning their busy schedules.

**AMBIENCE** The Gramercy Park Hotel's lobby could be somewhere a conquistador might hang out after invading a small state. Hotel entrepreneur Ian Schrager commissioned artist and filmmaker Julian Schnabel to redesign the jaded site in 2006 and received a flurry of enthusiastic reviews. Schnabel's beautifully eccentric design incorporates Old World grandeur with modern aesthetic. A matador jacket looks on to a roaring fireplace, artworks by Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring hang below beamed ceilings on plush maroon wallpaper.

Schrager, who is often credited with inventing the 'boutique hotel', hasn't extended his style savvy to the walls of the Aerospa where Andy Warhol's friends are sadly absent. Aerospa is a franchise consisting of two treatment rooms tucked behind a small gym. There is no relaxation room, lockers to store your belongings or changing rooms and while I waited for my therapist I perched on the end of a running machine.

**EXPERIENCE** I'd stepped onto JFK tarmac three hours previously and couldn't think of a better way to perk up than a bit of pampering in the city where a facial is an obligatory part of a girl's beauty regime.

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Staff at the Aerospa are welcoming and friendly and once I started my Botoprogram facial I forgot about the arduous flight. My therapist Nagine enquired about my skincare routine and examined my face under a bright light. She was full of information about the best way to look after my skin, a benefit to someone who finds approaching the China Doll ladies behind cosmetic counters an intimidating experience.

The moisturiser I occasionally get around to using contains retinol, a natural exfoliator apparently. The daily buffing of dead skin cells leaves my skin more prone to sun damage therefore a Factor 30 sunscreen is highly recommended. I should know these things, but I'm lazy and would rather watch paint dry than read the beauty pages in a fashion magazine.

After cleansing and toning my skin Nagine wheeled over a facial steamer, a robotic looking contraption with a fixed spray arm that ejected steam onto my face for ten minutes opening pores and promoting circulation. This was an unpleasant experience that made breathing difficult, but my motto was no pain, no gain.

Aerospa favour products based on seaweed and this was followed by five replenishing treatments, including a lovely ten-minute cold hydrating mask while Nagine massaged my arms, neck and shoulders. The experience was extremely relaxing except I could hear clattering outside and the toilet flushing in the room next door.

While I lie there I noticed that Nagine always made sure the physical connection between us was never lost. This was comforting when your eyes are covered and dense creams are restricting your face.

Nagine recommended a facial every 4-6 weeks and she also performs Reiki for interested clients.

**FOOD** The Wakiya restaurant serves nouvelle Chinese created by a Japanese chef. Bottled water is available in the spa.

**IN-CROWD** Well-heeled bohemians fussed over by attractive staff.

**WALLET WATCH** Botoprogram costs \$262 (£130) for 60 minutes. Other treatments include a 60-minute Aerowarrior wrap, an Algaelif facial and an after-spa-hours room massage

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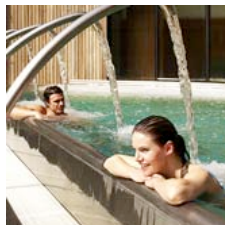
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Claire McDonald

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**NEED TO KNOW** Aerospa at the Gramercy Park Hotel, 2 Lexington Avenue, New York NY 10010 ([001] 212 920 3300; [www.gramercyparkhotel.com/spa](http://www.gramercyparkhotel.com/spa))

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