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From Times Online

March 26, 2008

Hotel Le Bristol, Paris

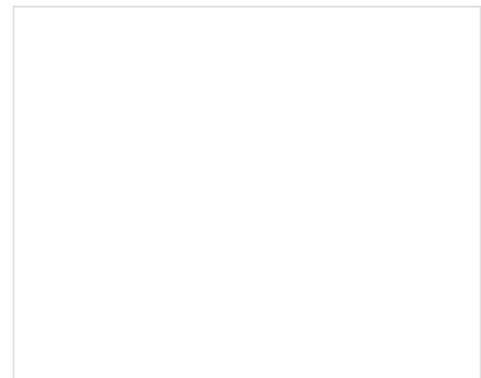
Does the Haute-Couture Getaway offer more than the world's most expensive personal trainer?

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IMAGE :1 of 2

Rachael Scott

USP The "Haute-Couture Getaway" beauty and well-being package including healthy breakfast and lunch, tailored workout and massage of your choice for three to five days.

AMBIENCE Just around the corner from the Champs Elysees, in the Parisian version of Mayfair, the Hotel Le Bristol is seductive, sexy and intimate. My room was like Cath Kidston's private boudoir, feminine and sexy. Pictures of Marie Antoinette and other similar looking ladies from pre-revolutionary France looked down on me from gilded frames. As I sat at my delicate dressing table and made notes I imagined the Queen of cake penning a love letter to her Dauphin.

All sorts of people stay here but it's a favourite of the fashion world – you can sip tea and eat cake in Le Salon Bar while models parade the latest fashions every Saturday at 3pm – which would explain why the mirrors in my suite's bathroom made me look so wonderful, even first thing in the morning. This is good because after a two-hour workout you probably won't look your best.

EXPERIENCE In all truthfulness I have never been to a gym before. But if I had to suffer my first workout it may as well be looking at a bright blue sky in Paris put through my paces by the lovely Bruno.

BACKGROUND

George V Spa, Paris
Guerlain Institut de
Beaute, Paris
Aspia Avenue Louise,
Brussels

I'd filled out a questionnaire on what my "Haute-Couture Getaway" goals would be and my workout was tailored towards losing weight, but mindful of my weak knee joints. I ran on lots of different machines that tested my blood pressure and did push ups while lying down on the floor with a small ball between my knees, another time I had to squeeze a very large ball between my thighs. The strangest exercise was pushing my legs outwards with a

large elastic band over my knees (good for the bum apparently).

I didn't really know why I was doing all these strange exercises but Bruno made it fun, sort of. His smiling, happy face was nothing but encouraging.

The Anne Sémonin Spa opened in July 2007 in a building next door to Le Bristol. It's small with three treatment rooms and classically designed with a modern, beige tones. The carefully positioned lighting gives the natural wood furnishings a golden glow. There's a waterfall in the reception area and each treatment bed is covered with a cashmere blanket. The mother-of-pearl accessory boxes are a nice touch.

I had a De-Stress Phyto Aromatic Massage courtesy of my therapist Fabienne using Anne Sémonin products including the range's Botanical Body Oil, which contained mandarin and marjoram. Fabienne can custom make a treatment to your liking using specific oils she thinks would be good for you. She recommended I use the oil morning and night on my body.

Fabienne used just the right amount of pressure for my pathetically weak legs and she concentrated on my feet, which was utterly lovely. There's an on-site hairdresser for disturbed coiffures, but the thoughtful Fabienne covered my hair so as not to get oil in it.

Other massages on offer include: 100 per cent Active De-Crease Facial, Deep Release Massage with hot stones and the 3 hour Face and Body Detox Therapy.

FOOD A breakfast of Special K, yoghurt, rye bread, fruit salad and grapefruit juice was delivered at 8.15am sharp leaving enough time before my workout and massage.

My specially prepared lunch by the hotel chef was served in Le Salon Bar. Le Bristol is a hotel for the well heeled, so I'd worn one of my best day dresses. And I'm glad I did because a large

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Susan Emmett

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SEARCH

group of stylish Parisiens were sat at the table next to me. One of them was a good-looking man in his early 50s with a younger woman who evidently adored herself. They were familiar, but I couldn't place them and I didn't like to stare.

My first course of beautifully presented langoustine carpaccio arrived at the same time as someone who looked just like Tony Blair joined the large group of posh people. Was it him? I wasn't sure. Maybe it was a look alike. Then one of the group called him Tony.

Could I be more ignorant? The good-looking dark-haired man was Nicolas Sarkozy, the President of France and the waif like woman constantly checking her face in the compact was Carla Bruni his supermodel girlfriend (now wife).

I tried to act as if this was an everyday occurrence and sipped my gazpacho. It was delicious, so I asked the waiter what was in it. "That's the sauce for your langoustine Madame," he informed me with a smile. Oh!

While Tony and Nicolas chatted, about what I would later learn was Blair's speech to the UMP earlier that morning and his bid to become the first President of the European Union, I tucked in to my next course of meaty white fish called cabio topped with lemon and butter sitting in a dark green garlic sauce. Desert was a scoop of grapefruit and ginger sorbet atop small pink grapefruit pieces surrounded by grapefruit mousse.

IN-CROWD Well-heeled ladies who lunch, the French President and former British Prime Minister.

WALLET WATCH Haute-Couture 3-day getaway: £960. 5-day getaway £1,600. Haute-Couture Getaway with accommodation in a Deluxe room: 3-day getaway: from £3,520 (2 persons sharing a room). 5-day getaway £5,878 (2 persons sharing a room). Eurostar return journeys from London to Paris start from £55. For reservations visit www.eurostar.com

NEED TO KNOW SAS Hôtel Le Bristol, 112 rue du Fbg St. Honoré, 75008 Paris France (+33 (1) 53 43 43 00; www.hotel-bristol.com)

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