



## World Cup Event

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Why live cheek by jowl in the flabby doughnut when there's no jam in the centre?  
Jeremy Clarkson

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From Times Online

March 26, 2008

## Kempinski Grand Hotel Spa Heiligendamm

An historic spa resort on Germany's Baltic Coast now has an alternative therapy health farm favoured by world leaders



IMAGE :1 of 7

Rachael Scott

RECOMMEND?

**USP** An alternative therapy health farm sheltered by a forest of beech trees and the sweeping sandy beaches of the Baltic Sea. Impressive; even during a grey February day it's easy to see why it was chosen as the venue for the 2007 G8 Summit.

**AMBIENCE** Germany's first seaside spa resort. Founded in 1793 by Grand Duke Friedrich Franz I of Mecklenburg-Schwerin the spa was used as a holiday destination by Tsar Nicholas I and his family because of the Baltic's "curative" qualities. Over 200 years later international leaders still "take to the waters".

The 2007 G8 Summit was quite an event for the town's mere 200 residents who usually venture to the oldest racecourse in continental Europe for their excitement or closest town Rostock – as cute as Prague's chocolate box buildings. Eastern Germany was never meant to be this pretty.

The hotel was a former naval academy of the Third Reich and then a Cold War sanatorium before it became a Kempinski hotel in 2003. All the original buildings, including a small castle, have been renovated with new ones added. The hotel comprises of a series of pristine white washed colonnaded villas looking out on to the sea like Greek temples. They're commanding presence is classically romantic.



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**EXPERIENCE** German spas get a bum rap even though they've been doing it for centuries. Heiligendamm is part of 200-year old spa town, Bad Doberan, 6km away. The word 'Bad' that appears at the beginning of many German town names, Baden-Baden for instance, actually means 'spa'.

The Latin inscription "Heic Te Laetitia Invitat Post Balnea Sanum" ("Pleasure awaits you here once you emerge from the healing baths") greets you on entering the original bathhouse, now the Kurhaus Restaurant. Today the spa is located in the Severin Palais and is as beautiful as you'd expect from such

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magisterial surroundings.

The spa offers a wide range of massages including luxury treatments such as the Baltic Sea Hamman, traditional Thai. Acupuncture, reiki, yoga and beauty treatments by La Prairie are also available.

I had the Thalgo Suprême Sculpt Corps, which is a body wrap good for cellulite and slimming. I'm not a fan of wraps. The claustrophobic combination of being covered neck to foot in a cold cream while

wrapped in heated tin foil is more like a pneumonic cold sweat than a pampering session.

Fortunately my therapist Jana gently massaged cream with coconut and red marine algae extracts into my body to remove any dead skin. After I'd showered she massaged a ginger scented cream all over my body and wrapped me up in aromatic hot compresses and a padded blanket to sweat out toxins. I was left for ten minutes and didn't suffer from my usual hot/cold, hot/cold panic attack. This wasn't the most enjoyable experience I'd had in my life, but it certainly wasn't unpleasant.

Jana then gave me a full body massage with creams derived from extracts of algae, almond proteins and karate butter and afterwards I felt refreshed and my skin smooth.

The German reputation for austerity is disproved at Heiligendamm. Staff couldn't have been friendlier minus any sycophantic grovelling. Yes, they are über-efficient, but who wants to visit a spa that's run in a shambolic fashion?

While you make the most of its extensive menu there's an 18-hole golf course round the corner to entertain your other half and the Polar Bear Kid's club in one of the villas with three themed floors (jungle, space, Wild West) and a cinema to keep the children quiet.

**FOOD** The spa bar located by the pool area serves healthy 'Vitality Lunches' including teriyaki, Caesar salad, tabbouleh, an assortment of teas and Aloe Vera cocktails. A medley of breakfast options is served in the Michelin starred Kurhaus Restaurant.

**IN-CROWD** Families making the most of Heiligendamm's many activities, honeymooning couples and world leaders.

**WALLET WATCH** A Thalgo Suprême Sculpt Corps costs £110 for 90 minutes. Consultations for bespoke massage packages targeting specific concerns are available on request. A Severin Palais Sea Suite costs £610.

Heiligendamm SPA Days include four nights full board with an aromatherapy massage, reflexology, Pantai Luar, Hammam, algae pack in a waterbed, Thai-massage, facial and access to all saunas, ice room and gym. Price per person in a double room from £845.

Lufthansa return flights from London City Airport to Berlin-Tegel start from £86. For reservations visit [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com). Heiligendamm is two hours drive from Berlin. The hotel will provide transfers or you can catch a train from Berlin to Rostock.

German train journeys can be booked from the UK on [www.bahn.co.uk](http://www.bahn.co.uk) For guided tours of Rostock contact [www.germany-tourism.co.uk](http://www.germany-tourism.co.uk)

**NEED TO KNOW** Kempinski Grand Hotel Heiligendamm, 18209 Heiligendamm, Germany (+49 38203 740 0; [www.kempinski-heiligendamm.com](http://www.kempinski-heiligendamm.com))

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Dr Mark Porter

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