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Reboot Float & Cryo Spa San Francisco, California



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# THE SWANK TEAM



ALEXANDRA MAE
EDITOR-AT-LARGE
When you look up "wanderlust" in the dictionary odds are that a picture of me is in the definition.



ANDREW INNERARITY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY I prefer to let the images do the talking.



AVA ROSALES FEATURES EDITOR Wherever the destination may be, it's the villa life for me.



DYLAN BENOIT
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I'm a chef with Champagne taste and a beer budget, but always seem to find myself surrounded by the most amazing people in the most amazing places. From eating termites in the Honduran jungle to learning how to make dim sum in Hong Kong, for me treasure is in the story.



JEFFREY SOBEL
CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
All I need is a book, a bourbon and a boat
to a new destination I'll be just fine.



Dom Toretto.

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
When I am not at a music concert, you might catch me hunting down new and exciting roads to drive on the weekends.
"I live my life a quarter mile at a time."



SOPHIE IBBOTSON EDITOR-AT-LARGE

I'm an entrepreneur, writer, and lover of wild places. I like nothing more than exploring new destinations with extraordinary landscapes, rich cultures, and preferably a sprinkling of remarkable wildlife, too. A jaw droppingly beautiful place to stay is the icing on the cake.





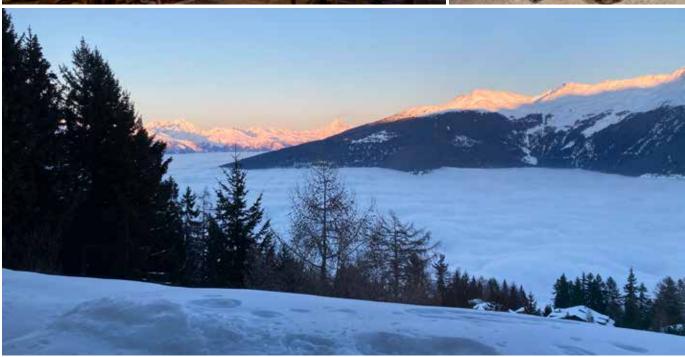
# **Hotel Restaurant La Cambuse**

Vex, Switzerland

For a long time I have had in the back of my mind what the perfect ski hotel would be like. It goes without saying that it should be ski-in, ski-out and in a picturesque location, a design which complements the surrounding landscape and vernacular architecture, and where after a long, energizing, but ultimately exhausting day on the slopes you can collapse, relax, and feel at home. I knew the moment that I walked through the doors at La Cambuse, greeted by proprietor Jerry and a roaring wood fire, that I had finally found that longed-for place.







Hotel Restaurant La Cambuse is right at the bottom of the red piste linking Thyon 2000 and Thyon Les Collons. In fact, the Matze drag lift is immediately opposite the hotel's entrance, and the resort is planning to add a new lift with a mixture of pods and chairs for winter 2023/24. This means that when you ski gracefully (or slide and tumble) down your final run of the day, everything is right where you need it.

The hotel's facade is the archetypal Swiss chalet, with dark, aged timbers, Swiss flags fluttering above the door, and for most of the winter and into the spring, a thick dump of snow on the roof. The little stone lobby

opens out onto a glorious restaurant and bar warmed by an open fire, where comfortable armchairs beckon and there's the coziest of atmospheres. The best is yet to come, however, as once you've passed the chimney and the room opens out, you will see the hotel's pièce de résistance: a glass viewing gallery looking straight out onto a panorama of the Alps. Nevermind the skiing, it's a view which could entertain you for days, and the guest rooms upstairs and the terrace outdoors have similarly spectacular vistas.





Proprietor Jerry and his team are effusive hosts, and La Cambuse's restaurant is rightly packed in the evenings: advanced reservations are recommended. Justifying it on the basis of the day's exertions, we feasted on Fondue Chinoise, delicate morsels of chicken, beef, and venison which you cook in a vegetable broth at the table. Lighter than a cheese fondue, this dish is typical of Switzerland's Valais region, and is one of those meals which warms the soul as much as the body. Combined with the views, you'll never want to leave.

www.lacambuse.ch

# **Mercure Bukhara Old Town**

Bukhara, Uzbekistan

The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bukhara has a fine selection of boutique hotels, but what it lacked until now was a luxury property for the most discerning travelers. The opening of the 4\* Mercure Bukhara Old Town in January 2023 has not only filled a gap in the market, but has done so with aplomb. This remarkable property, the first hotel in the city belonging to an international brand, has been designed with inspiration from local architecture. Its mud brick walls are perfectly in keeping with the nearby Ark fortress and madrassas, and the carved wooden pillars supporting the cool, open verandas are reminiscent of those on merchants' houses and the Bolo Hauz Mosque.











Inside, too, there are plenty of features which give the Mercure a strong sense of place. The large open courtyard, the juxtaposition of bricks and colorful majolica tiles, and whitewashed arches are all typical of Uzbekistan. But if that is not enough of a reminder where you are, you only need to climb to the restaurant on the rooftop terrace and take a table looking out across the Old Town. The magnificent Kalon Minaret – which survived destruction by Genghis Khan because he thought it was so beautiful – still beguiles onlookers and is the visual centerpoint of the horizon. Beside it are turquoise domes, icons of the Silk Road, and countless other cultural heritage monuments which collectively earned the city its UNESCO status.



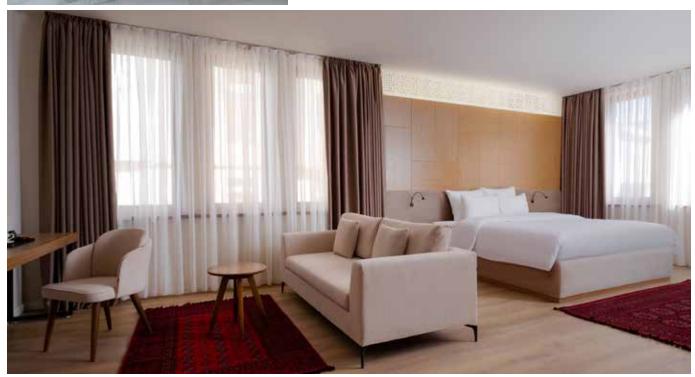


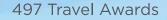




Rooms in the hotel are simple, elegant, with small details such as turquoise tiles, hand-knotted carpets, and wooden lattice screens which make each one unique. Whether your room looks out onto the street or into the courtyard, it doesn't matter; it's a quiet haven of calm, though staff are only ever a moment or two away. Should you tire of sightseeing and need to relax, the hotel's spa is a modern interpretation of Bukhara's historic hammams, Turkish baths with hot and cold pools, a steam room and sauna, and an enticing menu of massages and other treatments.

www.bit.ly/MercureBukhara





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In Europe, ske season is in full flow. I've came to Courchevel in the French alps to breathe in the fresh mountain air, feast my eyes on the snow covered landscapes, and to evalue for him walles ( The Theory of the landscape in the

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# LETTERS FR()M...

By The Swank Team

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A LETTER FROM Europe:

4 Valleys, Switzerland



# Greetings!

I have found the perfect place to escape the damp, gray days of an English winter. The skies are a brilliant blue, the bright sunshine makes the snow sparkle like Swarovski crystals, and I am sat looking out at a panoramic view of the Swiss Alps with the warmth of a wood-burning fire behind me and a glass of a crisp local wine in my hand. Truly life doesn't get much better than this!

I expect you have heard of the luxurious Swiss ski resort of Verbier; well, I am writing to tell you that those who really do know their red runs from their blacks, and their fondue from their raclette, head to the opposite end of the 4 Vallees, the largest ski area entirely within Switzerland. Here you will find a trio of smaller, much more charming resorts – Nendaz, Veysonnaz, and Thyon – which cling to the mountainsides high above Sion, the capital of Valais canton. These picturesque villages are the epitome of what I imagined Switzerland to be, with chocolate-box wooden chalets dotted between coniferous trees dusted with snow, cattle lowing in their barns, and, in a magical moment one morning, the sound of church bells ringing gently from the bell tower of the parish church.



The thing which has struck me most, besides the weather and the dramatic beauty of the Alpine landscapes, is how quiet it is. The weather is glorious and the powder is deep and fluffy, but my friends and I almost have the pistes to ourselves. I haven't once had to queue for a lift, or struggled to find a seat on a sun-drenched terrace for a hot chocolate or midafternoon beer. When we climbed to the physical highpoint of the the 4 Vallees, which is Mont Fort (10,919 ft above sea level) in Nendaz sector, we could see miles in every direction, including to Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn, but other garishly-clad skiers and snowboarders were few and far between. It was just us, the peaks, and the snow, which is exactly how it should be. I have therefore been able to stretch myself, skiing further than usual and concentrating on my technique, without the worry of having to slalom between small children wobbling in ski school, or the erratic movements of twenty-somethings on a lads' week away. The staff in the resorts are happy to see me, not fraught and overworked, and when it comes to the all-important après ski, there's a lively enough vibe but not a scrum to get to the bar. There are certainly similarities with the French Alps, but it feels much less crowded and hence is a better experience.











This week I have had time not only to immerse myself in nature, but also to learn a little about this pristine Alpine ecosystem surrounding me. In Thyon took a walk with mountain guide Etienne Jaccottet, tromping through the forest in snow shoes. On the way from Veysonnaz to meet him, I saw a huge stag with impressive antlers at the side of the road. The stag was startled, turned, and fled to the safety of the trees, but it was the ideal introduction to the creatures living here. Etienne explained about the delicate balance between the various species and man. Wolves have been reintroduced into this part of the Alps, and the lynx population is growing, too. These predators help to keep the deer in check. If there are too many deer they damage the young saplings, and the forests struggle to regenerate and grow. We also spoke about climate change, as changing weather patterns are already adversely impacting both the natural world and those who depend on it for their livelihood. The snow came late to the Alps this year, and though the 4 Vallees is relatively high and has plenty of snow cannons to keep the ski slopes open, it is an issue which should concern us all.

On that note I shall sign off and return to my wine and the view. If you need me, you know where to find me!

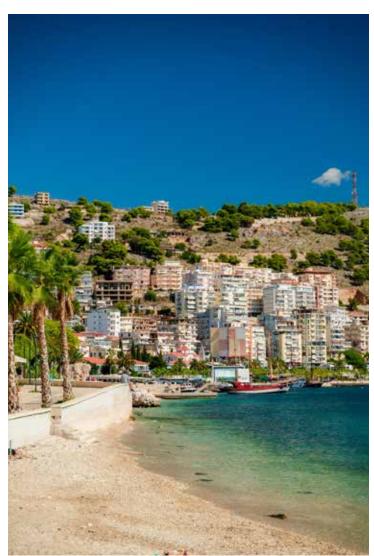
À bientôt,

Sophie

www.4vallees.ch











hen you think of the best food in the world, what comes to mind? Perhaps it's French haute cuisine, or perfectly all dente Italian pasta? Maybe you're thinking further afield and your mouth waters at the possibility of an aromatic bowl of Vietnamese pho or even a simple pleasure such as a sweet glass of Indian lassi. Whatever your fancy, I daresay that very few, if any, reading this thought about Albania. Well, dear readers, allow me to take you and your taste buds on a journey into post-Communist paradise.

Albania has a long coastline, which, naturally, means that seafood is a prominent feature on menus all along the Albanian Riviera. But Albania also shares a portion of Lake Ohrid in the west and Lake Shkodra in the north, as well as several lagoons in the center of the country, so freshwater fish are also a staple. On top of this, there are mountainous areas around Gjirokaster



and in the north, which are perfect for raising cattle. The varied terrain in Albania means that a wide variety of fruits and vegetables are grown and the diet is often categorized as "Mediterranean" owing to the olive oil base found in many foods. However, as well as obvious influence from Italy and Greece, Albania was under Ottoman rule for over 500 years, and the Turkish feel of the food is also clear.

My first foray into Albanian cuisine started in the capital, Tirana, at Merkata e Peshkut, where, as the name suggests, fish is their speciality. In fact, if you feel so inclined, you can pop downstairs from the restaurant to the market area and choose your fish. I took recommendations from the well-informed waiter and ended up with a feast of hot shrimps in tomato sauce with grated feta, seafood linguine, and grilled sea bream accompanied by delicately piped mounds of pureed carrot and beetroot. There was nothing avant-garde here, no fancy showmanship

or Blumenthalian science experiments, but the fish tasted like the clearest waters of the Adriatic and the seasoning was perfect. And if this menu sounds like a lot for a solo diner, you are correct in your assertion. So, when the waiter kindly brought me a ball of lemon sorbet and declared its purpose was "for repairing the stomach", it felt entirely fitting.

espite having one of the oldest wine making traditions in the world (dating back 3,000 years to the Bronze age Illyrians), Albanian wine is not often seen outside of Albania, and even in its own restaurants

you are far more likely to find a list of Italian staples with only the odd local offering. However, Albania is home to grape varieties which are simply not grown anywhere else on the planet, including the Pulës and Cërujë white grapes and the Vranac red grape. Albanica Winery, about two hours away from Tirana, provides a beautiful introduction to Albanian wine. The 12-hectare winery was opened by the Prifti family in 2006 but the neighboring Ardenica Orthodox Monastery dates back 750 years and so this is a historic terroir indeed. I was fortunate enough to enjoy a white, a rosé, and a red wine from the collection whilst overlooking the lush green slopes of the Ardenica which fall away to the basin beyond. The white wine was a Pulës 2021 which had notes of peaches and maple, in line with the deep straw color of the grape variety. The rosé was a 2020 blend which was honestly like putting my face into a bowl of fresh strawberries and pomegranate seeds, both of which are also grown around the vineyard. Finally, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, which was surprisingly light, had cherries and prunes on the nose plus a hint of tobacco. Alongside the wines, I was treated to some local antipasti from the restaurant, which opened in 2019, including Fërgesë, which is made of peppers, tomatoes, onions, and gjizë (Albanian ricotta) cooked on the stove and then in the oven to make a relatively dense sauce. As well as the vineyards, there are also 570 olive trees used to make olive oil; and multiple fruit trees, melon, basil, and nuts, which are all used to make liqueurs. Although the winery is family owned and run, the Prifti family also employs many locals, including the man who served us. He has worked at the vineyard for a few years now and told me "I love being here. It doesn't feel like work. It is really common here for local people to work in small local companies."











For a lot of travelers, there is often one meal which stands out from a trip. For me, that meal was at Centrali in Sarandë, a coastal town just across the water from the luxurious island paradise of Corfu. The restaurant, which is just a short walk away from the stylish Buze Hotel, has been a feature of Sarandë for over 20 years, but it was remodeled a decade ago when German proprietor Vasil Kondi (Ladi, to his friends) and his brother moved from Hamburg, where they already owned two award-winning restaurants, to take on a new challenge. During the daytime, you might be forgiven for assuming the restaurant is just another seaside resort bar. But don't be fooled by the down-to-earth exterior of a building tucked onto a corner of Sarandë's main promenade. In the evening, the restaurant boasts an enviable terrace with soft lighting, classy table settings, and sweeping views down to the Ionian Sea. There's no finer place to sit and enjoy a glass of Centrali's exquisite Merlot which, like so many of their wines, is sourced from Albania's best vineyards.

My first course was a simple bruschetta, but I knew by now that simple doesn't equate with plain or boring in Albania, and I was not disappointed. The tomatoes and basil are grown less than three miles away and the bread is made on site. The dish was expertly seasoned at the table in a manner which allowed all the flavors to come through beautifully without competing with one another. I was next presented with crudo, which is like an Albanian version of ceviche. The raw seafood is dressed in olive oil and citrus juice. That's all. With such basic ingredients, quality is vital and Centrali came up trumps. All the seafood on my plate was caught that morning from the seas around Sarandë; the olive oil came from the groves at Borsh, an hour up the road; and the lemons were grown around the city. The other colorful accompaniment to my crudo was pomegranate seeds, which feature heavily in Albanian cuisine. Pomegranates have been domesticated in Albania for centuries and, like many cultures, are a symbol of fertility as well as being an excellent flavor addition to a whole host of dishes.







y main course was a filet of sea bream rolled and stuffed with rocket, truffle, and pecorino which melted in my mouth alongside perfect tournée cut, locallygrown vegetables. For dessert, the sugar top of the silky-smooth crème brulée cracked satisfyingly under my spoon. And just when I thought the meal was done, the waiter presented me with a choice of chocolates which are one of the few things not locally sourced: they come from Belgium. Although inspired by French truffles, the chocolates had a variety of caramel fillings because this is more stable than traditional ganache in the heat of Albania's summers. I chose the caramel fig and immediately wondered why I had never tried this flavor combination before. I finished the evening with a glass of homemade mirto, a spirit made from the myrtles which grow wild near to Sarandë, and a chat with Ladi. I asked him what made him move from Frankfurt. He paused before saying, "you know, so much cuisine around the world focuses on looking extravagant or having unusual flavors. Here in Albania, the local produce is some of the best I've ever tasted and that's what I want my restaurant to showcase".

There is a proverb in Albania: bukë, kripë dhe zemër. It means bread, salt, and heart. Simple ingredients prepared with love and shared warmly with family, friends, and treasured guests. As I sit in my room at Buze, looking out at the sea, thinking how the water gently laps against the promenade with the sound of wooden fishing boats clacking together, I honestly can't think of a better way to describe Albania and its food.

www.regent-holidays.co.uk/country/albania-holidays

SR)

# Story By Andrew Innerarity





# **TODAY**

I had my choice of Reboot Float Spa's 3 Bay Area locations, San Francisco's Mission and Marina Districts and Oakland. I head in, knowing they will succeed where the Atlantic, Pacific, Caribbean, Mediterranean, Aegean, Dead Sea, the Adriatic and even geothermallyheated Icelandic fresh water have failed.

I'm going from a sub-zero cold stand-up treatment to body temperature prone experience, so after checkin, I hit the changing room, before my hour of lying down I'm fully enclosed in the Cryo tube where liquid nitrogen cools the air, depending on the user's comfort level from -165 to -220 degrees F. The idea is, during my 3 minutes of exposure in the telephone boothsized compartment is for the sub zero temperature to activate a whole body "cold-shock response" in which the body's release of endorphins promotes a "feel good and energetic" response. I find this super cooled method far more efficient, shorter and pleasant than standing in a waist deep ice tub. Reboot also offers a localized cold therapy treatment for those who prefer to have the treatment from a seated position administered by hand wand to specific body parts.



With the standup portion complete, I head down the hall to a private floatation room, swapping the dry world's "vertical clothing" for garb appropriate to my horizontal liquid world. After the shower, my briefing with Elisa, the site manager includes her description of the egg-shaped floatation pod, how to enter and exit the unit, an option to leave the lid open if I'm at all claustrophobic, how to choose from a rainbow of lights which can illuminate the pod, how the mechanism circulates, sanitizes for bacteria and physical objects the size of a hair, and maintains the water and its 1,000 pounds of dissolved Epson Salt's temperature so close to my body and pod 's air temperature, the different sensations between my solid body, the air and the liquid suspending me are close to indistinguishable.

**REB**(



# **FOR**

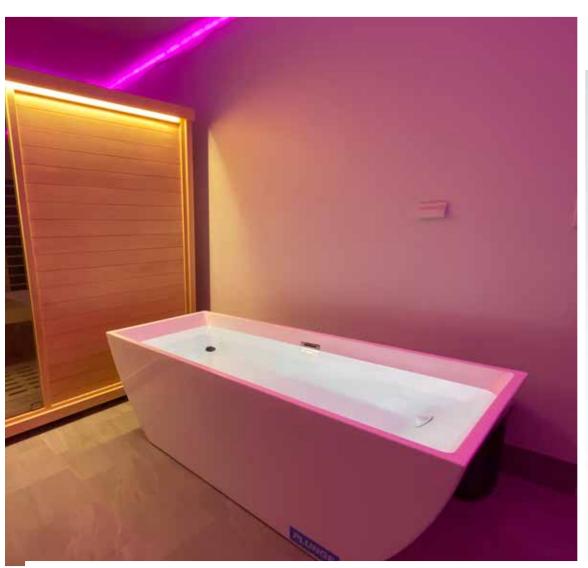
my impression of Neil Armstrong, I take "One small step for a man " the pod's water is deep enough to touch the bottom of my calf, I'm surprised at how my foot's almost rejected by the extreme buoyancy, as though this heavily Epsom Salted water is a liquid spring, simultaneously inviting and suspending me. Things got strangely "springier" as I lay back and stretched out in the pod, but in a moment I went from thinking "This is warm and springy-weird" to "Ha! I'm floating for the first time in my life, wow!"

I close the lid and the "whoah, I'm not gonna sink to the bottom, as usual" is over in a few seconds and I relax into the situation, experimenting with legs crossed at ankles, limbs spread eagle, fingers interlaced across chest coffin-style, I settle on fingers interlaced behind the head and legs crossed at the ankles.

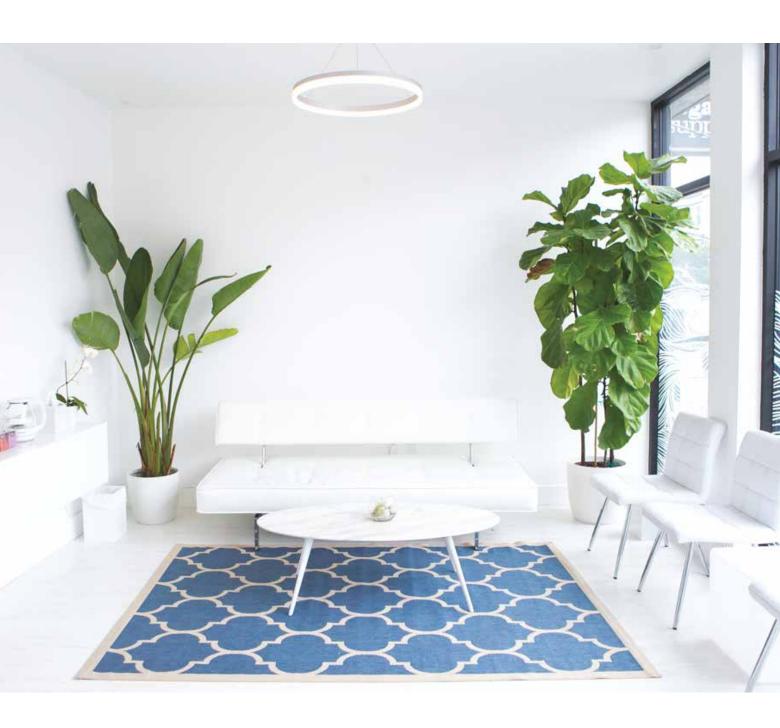
Knowing I won't need the audio "Mute" button on my left, or the "Lights On" button to the right, I appreciate how relaxed I am. In the first few minutes of floating, I'm happy with Elisa's "Pro Tips" she's been working at Reboot since 2018, managing since 2019: Don't take too hot a shower before getting into the pod ... avoid getting the extremely salty water in the eyes, but if you do there's a fresh water spray bottle and a dry washcloth on my left.

I relax into a Thunderstorm and Rain Track from their Spotify stream to my pod for my hour session for the first 10 minutes, then silence to accompany my hour of darkness until the last 5 minutes when storm noise returns as notice my time as a liquid astronaut will soon end. I can't help but wonder how many levels of advantage there are to this process I'm enjoying, from a chemistry class long ago I remember Epsom Salt is basically used to replenish Magnesium in farm soil, today I'll see what it's doing for me. Maybe I'm part astronaut farmer. Between the chemistry, the darkness, the antigravity qualities of the super buoyancy, I feel like the world's most relaxed astronaut. While Reboot recommends three float sessions to see how one truly feels, I was hooked at ONE, fish-pun intended.









I think I fell asleep at least three times, blame the uncertain count on me being so mellow I couldn't differentiate sleep from conscious relaxation.

Thunderstorm audio breaks the silence, the last 5 minutes of bliss pass all too quickly. Reluctantly I open the lid, ease my way out of the pod and shower up. My skin certainly feels smoother from the "float" Mentally refreshed, I'm even feeling taller, was that because I dreamed I was as tall as Bay Area-resident Steph Curry, a Reboot Float Spa user whose video I watched on Reboot's site as part of my visit prep.

Dried off, relaxed and halfway through the final stage of this blissful afternoon, as I wait for the Reboot Compression Garment secured to my lower body to release the pressure on my thighs and abs I'm feeling almost ready to reenter the world, and as we debrief, I ask Elisa which is more relaxing, floating or a massage? Her answer: Why not go with both?

SR

# CREDITS

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UNESCO World Heritage Site

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Reboot Float & Cryo Spa