

As more hotels and hospitality brands across the world move towards ultra-personalised, science-backed journeys in their spa and wellness offerings, Clinique La Prairie's Longevity Hubs remain a pioneer in turning back the clock

Forever Young

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When most of us hear the word spa, the first image we tend to conjure up in this day and age is that of a massage in a soothing environment, perhaps surrounded by some candles. It's such a great way to relax that it has become an integral part of the modern luxury hospitality industry. But in 2024, a spa isn't always just a place to unwind – it can be so much more.

Whether they offer mainly massages or incorporate other holistic wellness pursuits, from meditation and yoga to steam rooms and various therapies, the bottom line is always the same: the spa is a place where people can not only relax, but also improve their health. With research showing that 75 to 90 per cent of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related issues, it figures that a place that can help you alleviate stress would be considered a sanctuary for health. But it is so much more than just relaxation. To understand just how deeply the concept of a spa is tied to the improvement of our health, we must first look to its etymology. Although the origins of the word "spa" are not concrete, one of the most commonly-held beliefs is that it

ABOVE: The Hammam room at The Longevity Hub by Clinique La Prairie, at One&Only One Za'abeel

OPPOSITE PAGE: A massage room at The Longevity Hub by Clinique La Prairie, at One&Only One Za'abeel

was derived from the Walloon word "espa", which means fountain. The Walloons were said to have developed the word from a town in eastern Belgium that is known for its mineral-rich thermal waters, called – wait for it – Spa.

It is in those mineral-rich waters that the heart of the spa concept truly lies. The curative properties of thermal springs date back to prehistoric times, and they have been embraced all over the world, from the traditional onsens of Japan to the 16th century Roman medicinal bathing habits in Bath in the UK. This water gets its healing powers from a rich variety of minerals that are said to help soothe irritated skin, improve circulation and digestion, minimise pain, aid sleep, and reduce psychological stress. Their power is such that they not only decrease our discomfort, but also improve our health, and in doing so, prolong life. And it is precisely through this philosophy that Clinique La Prairie – a pioneer of the medical spa concept – has found a way to redefine the spa of the 21st century.

Headquartered in Montreux, Switzerland, it opened its first wellness destination in 1931 following a breakthrough by its founder, Dr. Paul Niehans, in the field of cellular therapy. His goal? To slow down the ageing process, and

help people rejuvenate and revitalise their bodies, so they can live life to the fullest. By 2020, the brand took another great leap forward through the establishment of its very first Longevity Hubs: "The perfect combination of science, expertise, and a pioneering spirit with luxury Swiss hospitality to accompany you on every stage of your Longevity journey." The first two were opened in 2020 in Madrid, Spain, and Bangkok, Thailand, and in 2023, the third was opened at the St. Regis Marsa Arabia Island

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in Doha, Qatar. In January 2024, the brand opened its fourth location in the heart of the chic Songshan district in Taipei, Taiwan, and in March 2024, it opened its fifth Clinique La Prairie Longevity Hub at the One&Only One Za'abeel in Dubai in the UAE. Like Dr. Niehans' original goal, their aim is to help visitors live longer, healthier lives through ultra-personalised wellness journeys, unrivalled science, and a truly holistic approach to health and wellness.

The Dubai-based Longevity Hub boasts a 3,800 sqm space spread over three storeys in the luxury vertical resort, with offerings including cryotherapy, infrared light therapy, IV drips, supplements with tailored formulas, regenerative facials, detoxifying massages, and a number of non-invasive aesthetic beauty boosters. It also has a fitness centre where guests can work with personal trainers to achieve their physical goals, as well as explore training for the brain and mind through Neuro Wave Stimulation. Although guests can enjoy a "regular" treatment, the real benefit lies in the personalised wellness journeys and bespoke rejuvenation programmes.

"We do a three-step assessment that will give us a footprint of your biological age, and based on that, we will craft a wellness programme for you that could last either weeks, months, or a year," says Paulina Mercader Aguilar, general manager of the Clinique La Prairie Longevity Hub at One&Only One Za'abeel. "We measure the heavy metals in your body, the minerals, and we do a deep comprehensive analysis of your skin that will give us eight different markers, so we can even see how your skin will look in ten more years. Then we do the body analysis composition. All this information goes to our software, which was developed in Switzerland, so we can craft the best wellness programme for you," she explains.

Science lies at the heart of everything the hub offers, and in a field where new developments are constantly possible, it's important to stay ahead of the game. "You might think innovation sounds exciting, but it can also be quite challenging," says Olga Donica, head of innovation at Clinique La Prairie Montreux. "Being a science-based company, it is important for us to maintain that authenticity and expertise, along with this luxury touch."

"In this day and age, we look at health in a completely different way. It's no longer about just being healthy on the surface, it's about what we can do to improve ourselves at every level. We look at how we're eating, sleeping, and how we are taking care of ourselves; how we can spread happiness and shine as we build happy relationships with others as well. It's a much more complex, broader space that encompasses elements including medical care, nutrition, well-being, and exercise, with a synergy between all of these components, because it's the only way that we can address how complex we are as humans. Ten years →





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ago, we were mainly talking about genetics in the context of a hospital or medical clinic. But now, we are using this knowledge and information to drive personalised programmes that enhance every aspect of our well-being, in a way that is just as unique as we all are.”

Donica explains that right now, their main focus is on finding ways to help people add years to their life, and to spend the largest number of those years in good health. Technology is, naturally, one of the most important tools enabling them to do so. One of the biggest recent findings in the fields of longevity and ageing, she says, is that when interventions are not personalised, they aren't anywhere near as effective. “Until today, we also thought that ageing was a static process – something that we couldn't do much about. But in reality, ageing is a highly regulated process, and we can and do have the possibility to reverse certain aspects of ageing. If we are capable of changing our environment, sleep quality, stress levels, exposure to pollution, mental health, and other such components, it can truly make a difference. I believe that the next boom in this field will be through technology; for instance, being able to place a device in your arm that can instantly assess the true dynamic of your health in seconds and in real time, and from there, start to explore our extremely individualised interventions that can be the most meaningful to you,” she says.

We can, and we do, have the ability to reverse certain aspects of ageing

FROM TOP: Relaxation areas, and hammam facilities, at the Longevity Hub by Clinique La Prairie at One&Only One Za'abeel

It's a bold dream, and one that we'd expect no less than from a brand that started offering its longevity-focused services long before anybody else. Yet while it could very well be the future of the spa, it is still relatively niche, says Simone Gibertoni, CEO of Clinique La Prairie and co-founder of Clinique La Prairie Holistic Health.

“There are not so many people who are ready to invest [in this], and you do have to invest quite a bit of money in this,” he says. “Take supplements, for instance. While [people] are often ready to spend US\$500 on a cream, they're often not so ready to spend that on a longevity supplement. It's a difficult buy, even though one is simply a topical treatment, while the other is one that you ingest. So building this kind of model needs to be economically sustainable. A lot of what I see in the market today is not, so our effort is also to have a model that is economically sustainable.”

Gibertoni is committed to enabling more people to scratch beyond the surface when it comes to well-being. “If you look at the macro trends in what's happening in health and wellness, lifespan is decreasing. So there is a lot that we can do by introducing people to longevity. There are many things that make us different, but the first one is the fact that we have 50 doctors; we invest in and spend a lot of time on our research, and what you'll find here is always thoroughly tested. You won't find fads here,” he says.

Cutting-edge technology is key, and as pioneering machines and systems that were once only offered at their Swiss clinic now become more widely available, the clinic is already looking towards the next way to take longevity treatments further. They aim to use groundbreaking tech to not only develop new preventative treatments, genetic interventions, and more, but also to make it easier for people to access these treatments, whether that's through a user-friendly app, or the option for guests to use any of their interconnected hubs around the world while they travel without losing a beat. And underlining it all, they hope to educate.

“Even if people only have three or four hours to get a glimpse into the world of longevity, we want to inspire and help them, whether they continue the journey with us, or with somebody else. What is important is that they're introduced to this serious methodology we've developed,” Gibertoni notes.

Clinique La Prairie hopes to eventually establish 40 locations across the world. Next year, it will launch a health resort at AMAALA – a wellness-focused luxury giga-project at Saudi's Red Sea. “It's going to be the biggest development ever created in wellness,” Gibertoni says.

The day spa will always have its place as a beautiful tranquil environment in which to relax and pamper ourselves – after all, self-care is also integral for good health. But for people looking for something deeper, the Longevity Clinic could well be their spa of the future. ■