

La Caldeia

A Super Spa In Andorra

By Inka Piegas-Quischote

When I made my way to Andorra two weeks ago, I packed sturdy shoes, a rain coat (just in case) and a few light sweaters. It may be the middle of summer, but the tiny country is surrounded by the mighty Pyrenees mountains, some of them snow covered even in August and wedged in between Spain and France. Therefore, I did not expect the sun drenched days of my current home town on Spain's Costa Blanca, which was my starting point.

Hiking in summer and skiing in winter, that's what Andorra is famous for. I was prepared for long walks along streams, through meadows covered in wild flowers, cobbled streets in the mountain villages and a stroll around La Vella, as the capital of Andorra is called. I was however not prepared for the surprise I got the next morning.

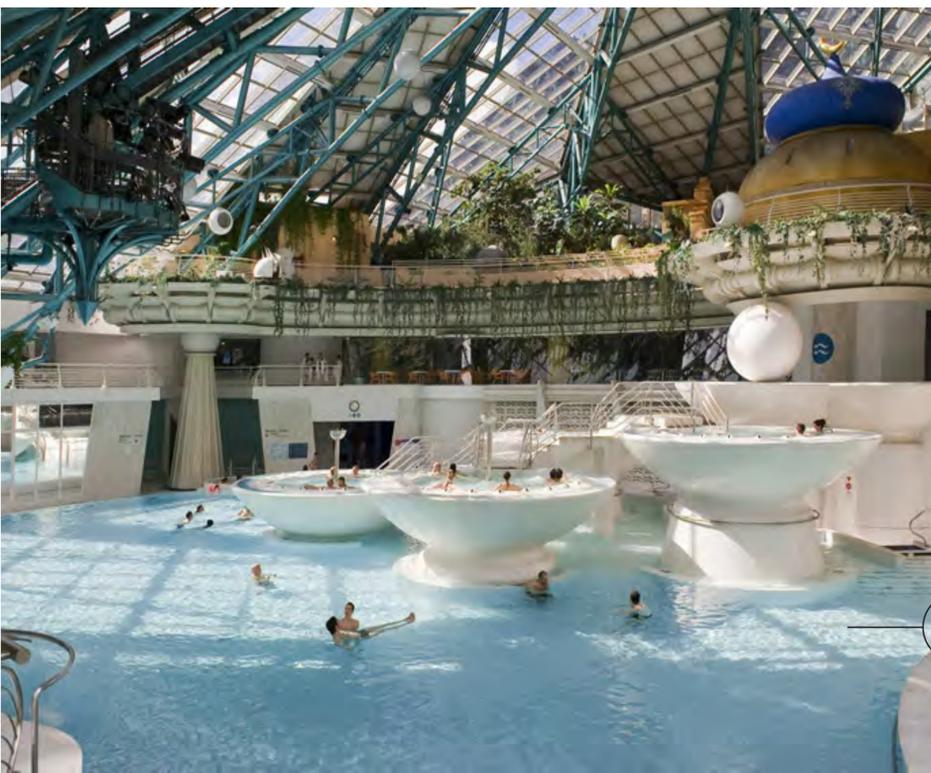
I had arrived in the middle of the night and therefore had not seen much. But, when I opened my hotel

window the next morning, I was nearly blinded by a stunning sight. The sun reflected off a decidedly futuristic structure just across the road, entirely covered with mirrored tiles. A peek pointed into the flawless blue sky and made me think that this building might be a church or even a cathedral.

But no, as my enquiry at reception revealed I was indeed looking at a place of 'worship', but to health and beauty. What lay nearby was La

Caldeia, a super luxury spa and a landmark of Andorra La Vella. Conceived by a French architect, it was designed to symbolize the Andorra mountains and to reflect the sun and, in winter, the snow; hence the mirrored tiles.

Given that I felt still a little stiff from my long journey by train and bus from Alicante to Andorra via Barcelona, I couldn't think of anything better to do but to enjoy a day in a first class spa. In 10 minutes flat, I was on my way.







Access is over a footbridge which crosses a roaring river dividing the city of La Vella. Even the bridge is covered in mirrored tiles on the outside, a theme which continues throughout. I hadn't packed a swimsuit or a bathing towel, but that was no problem. As you may know, Andorra is a tax haven. In fact, many day visitors from neighboring Spain and France only come to shop for cheap alcohol, cigarettes or any imaginable brand of designer clothes, shoes or jewelry. I didn't have to go back to one of the main shopping streets though, because, naturally, a spa like this has more than one chic boutique where I happily got what I needed.

I proceeded to reception where I was given a choice of "packages" as a day visitor. The cheapest starts at about EUROS 40 and allows you 2 hours plus 1 hour for a meal in the Oasis restaurant. I bought a bigger one and was, again spoilt for choice.

La Caldea features several indoor and outdoor lagoons, each with a different theme. Then you have the thermoludic area, fed by healing thermal springs. Baths are abundant: an Indo-Roman bath, a sirocco bath,



an Icelandic bath and a Turkish hammam; not to mention, Jacuzzis and an aqua massage area. Also, there are beauty treatments galore: manicure, pedicure and a hairdresser; and all of this in a truly vast area, connected by staircases, equally covered in mirrored tiles.

I proceeded to the beautiful changing rooms and, clad in my brand new bikini,

opted for a swim in the tropical lagoon first, followed by a water massage in the thermal area and more pummeling in the hammam. After about 2 hours of this, I felt as if I had shed ten years!

By then, I was also hungry and thirsty, so I got dressed and made my way to the breakfast bar. A five fruit cocktail, a coffee, muesli with fresh strawberries and a feather light omelet went a long way to restore me.

I know, you shouldn't swim when you have just eaten, but I couldn't resist the outdoor lagoon, particularly as this was an unexpectedly hot summer day. I did more drifting and relaxing than swimming, which was just wonderful.

And then it was time for beauty treatments. I had a facial and a manicure and had my hair streaked and cut at the hairdressers.

After all this pampering, I went to visit the Oasis restaurant and although I very seldom eat meat, I fell for a succulent sirloin steak with spinach and new potatoes.

I am not surprised that many citizens of La Vella are members of this fabulous spa and go every day.



