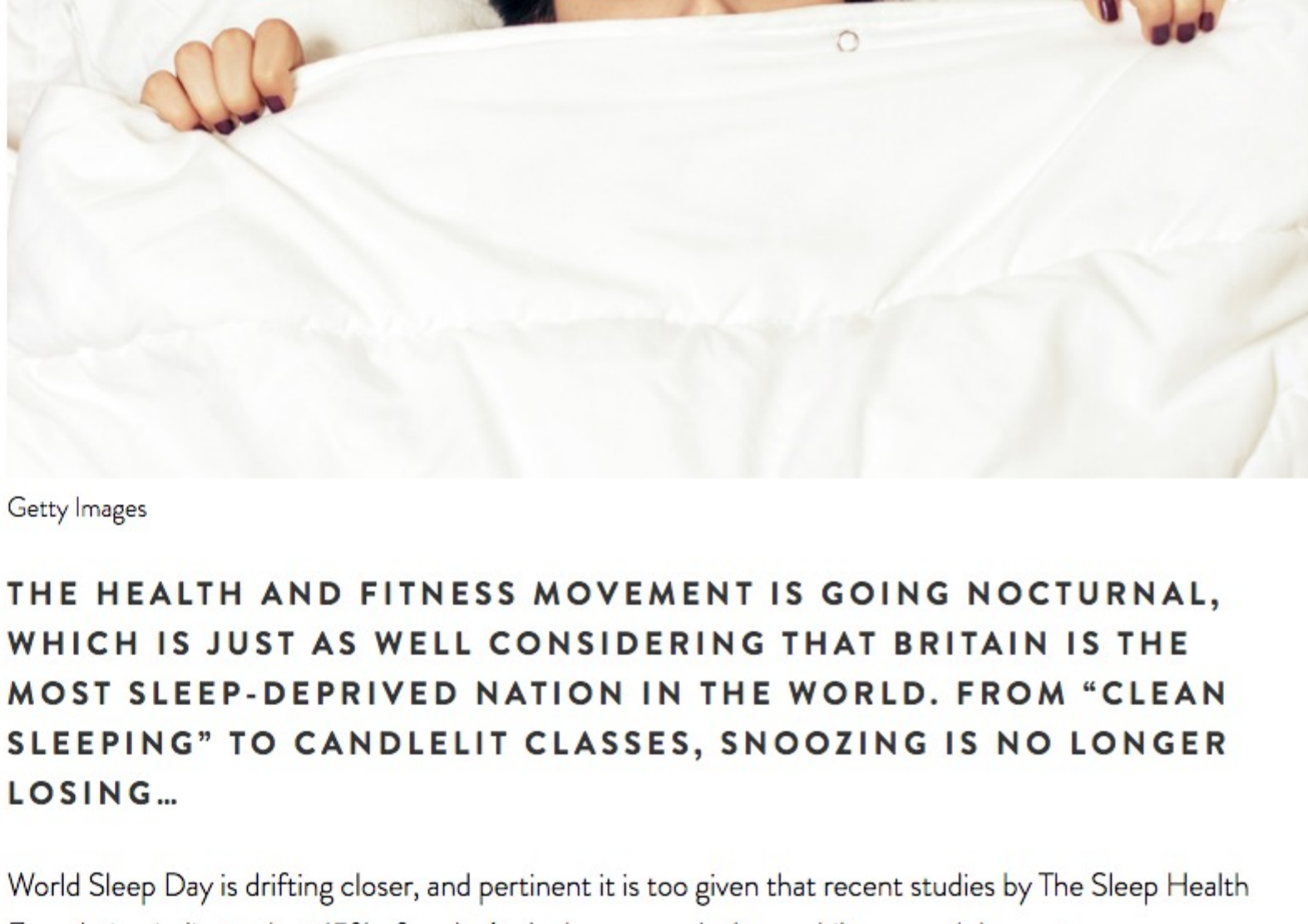


WELLBEING

LIVING THE DREAM: HOW THE WELLNESS INDUSTRY IS TARGETING SLEEP

March 8th 2017 / Anna Hunter



Getty Images

THE HEALTH AND FITNESS MOVEMENT IS GOING NOCTURNAL, WHICH IS JUST AS WELL CONSIDERING THAT BRITAIN IS THE MOST SLEEP-DEPRIVED NATION IN THE WORLD. FROM "CLEAN SLEEPING" TO CANDLELIT CLASSES, SNOOZING IS NO LONGER LOSING...

World Sleep Day is drifting closer, and pertinent it is too given that recent studies by The Sleep Health Foundation indicate that 45% of us don't clock up enough sleep, while research by mattress company Tempur reveals that Brits are some of the latest to bed in the world, yet the second earliest to rise, only after the French (who bed down significantly earlier).

Even when we are technically in bed, a survey of 2000 British adults by another mattress company, *Iweak*, uncovers that we wake up on average around three times during the night, with 11% of us rousing between seven and ten times. 10.5% of us toss and turn, 11% of us have regular nightmares and 6% of us are woken by sudden anxiety. One in three of us will undergo a period of insomnia in our lifetimes, and the fact that 16 million prescriptions were issued last year for sleeping tablets, according to a report by the ITV Tonight programme, suggests that our struggle to sleep is not only real, but becoming somewhat desperate. If you feel exhausted just reading this, you're the likely target audience of a new wave of 'R&R' wellbeing developments designed to help you to nod off naturally.

"IT SEEMS THAT DOWNWARD DOG IS WINNING OVER DOWNING A DOUBLE ESPRESSO IN THE LIFESTYLE STAKES"

According to leading market intelligence agency Mintel, our 24/7 culture is leading to a greater focus on 'the night shift' and pre-bed rituals in business, with winding down set to be one of the six key food and drinks trends in 2017 in particular:

"Evening is tapped as a new occasion for functional food and drink formulations. The increasingly hectic pace of modern life is creating a market for food and drink that helps people of all ages calm down before bedtime, sleep better and restore the body while they rest."

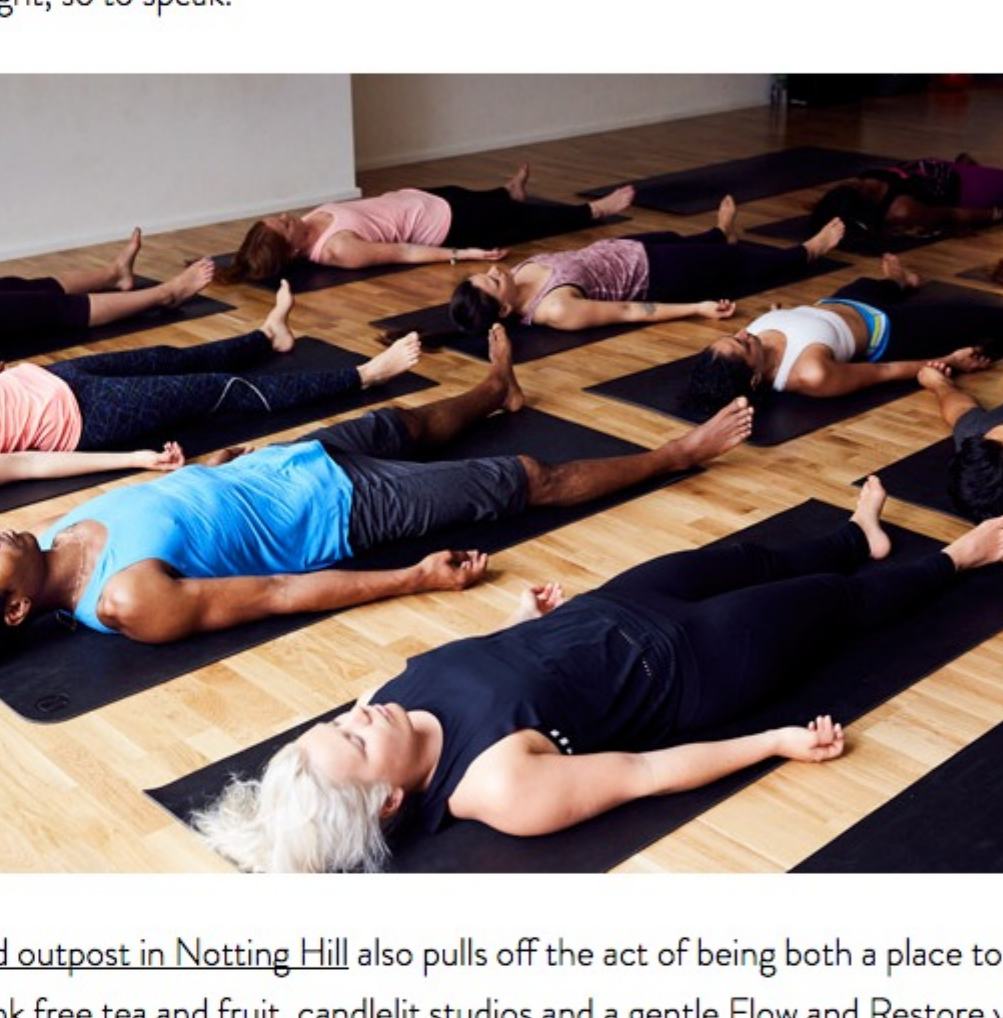
"Products can leverage the reputation of the tea category and use chamomile, lavender and other herbs as a way to achieve a sense calm before bedtime, while chocolate could be positioned as a way to wind down after a stressful day. Ahead, there is potential for more evening-focused innovations formulated for relaxation, satiety and, taking a cue from the beauty industry, food and drink that provide functional benefits while the consumer sleeps."

"Evening is already associated with functionality in the beauty industry, where creams and serums claim to work during the overnight hours. Going forward, consumers, especially those who are accustomed to multitasking, will want to make better use of their precious nighttime hours."

Given that Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop has declared 2017 the year of "clean sleeping" (think making your bedroom a sanctuary, waking up sans alarm clock and aiming for nine hours a night) and the previous kudos of burning the candle at both ends is flickering out, it seems that downward dog is winning over downing a double espresso in the lifestyle stakes. In our book there's room for both in the great balancing act of life, but if you know that you're behind in the sleep stakes and you'd like to introduce some slumber promoting habits to your evening, the following could help to induce some peaceful zzz's.

THE CLASSES

The rise of '[low intensity living](#)' has seen gyms, boutique fitness spaces and the industry as a whole recognise the importance of proper rest and recuperation, not only to reduce the risk of injury but also to ensure that customers experience wellbeing in a more holistic way, rather than simply going hard before going home. Different days call for different activities, and if your cortisol levels are already soaring on four hours sleep, giving the punishing circuits a miss in favour of stretching and recuperating will likely lead to a better night's kip.

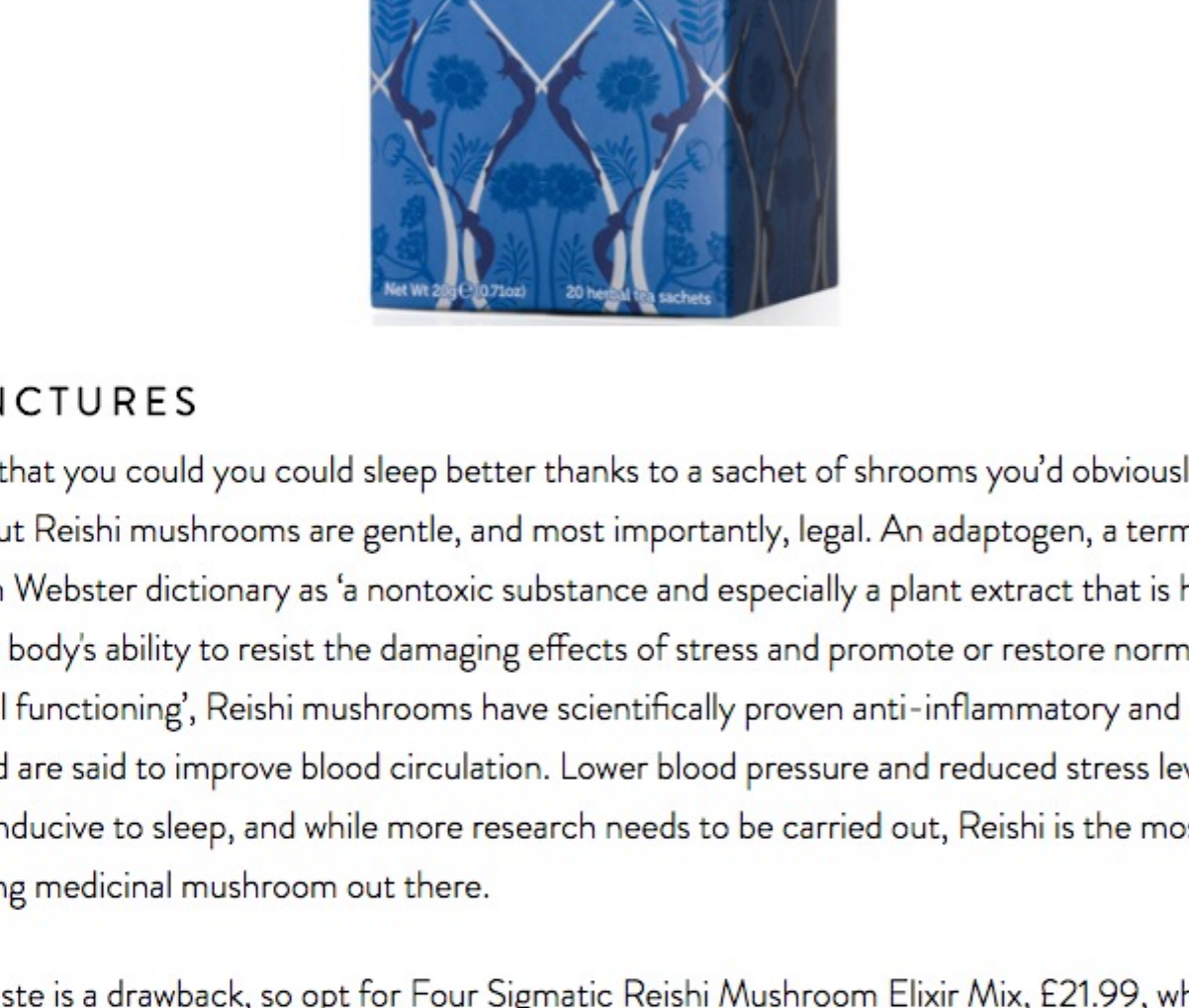


Virgin Active's new 90 minute [Calm by Candlelight](#) class was devised with world renowned (and achingly cool) yoga expert [Patrick Beach](#) and involves holding tension releasing postures for what seems at first like an infinite length at time. I'm a particularly antsy customer, yet my mind did indeed stop whirring once I started breathing calmly in a deep Pigeon pose, which makes me see where Patrick's part physical, part mental training gets its strength- you begin to melt into poses more easily while also feeling far less frazzled after a long day. I ended the class in a kind of blissed out stupor which felt unfamiliar yet delicious, is kind of the idea according to Patrick:

"This class is great for those who lead a stressful lifestyle and need some help switching themselves off, but also for those who do a lot of sport or high-intensity training and feel sore and stiff a lot of the time. You will feel so much better physically and mentally after a Calm by Candlelight class."



Beach is not wrong. Other classes to consider for catnap potential are London based [Frame's yoga and meditation programme](#) - from vinyasa flow with meditation to anti-desk yoga to decompress after work, the extended savasanas and moves designed to help you to switch off are genius. Chase up your class with a hot drink from the cafe such as The Cuddler (hot chocolate only slightly more virtuous) and you've made your bed for the night, so to speak.



[Heartcore's second outpost in Notting Hill](#) also pulls off the act of being both a place to sweat it out and prep for sleep- think free tea and fruit, candlelit studios and a gentle [Flow and Restore yoga](#) option in a cocooning but not sweltering space.

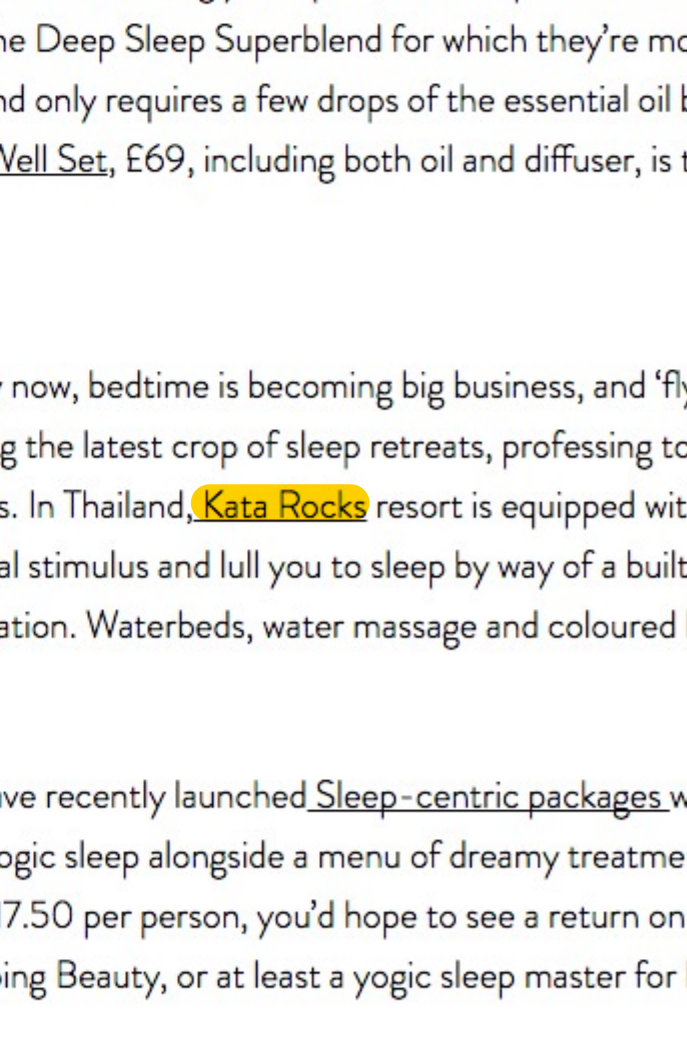
[KX Gym's Yoga Sleep class](#), based on yoga nidra (a deeply relaxing state somewhere between the conscious and subconscious), also promotes zoning out in a positive way at the end of the day. For something more interactive, [Triyoga's free Sleep Better Now Workshop](#) on World Sleep Day (Wednesday 15th March) will equip you with soothing sequences and calming breathing exercises, as well as techniques to 'sleep-proof' your day from start to finish, plus ways to identify and overcome your personal sleep saboteurs.

THE TEAS

Perhaps a counter to our communal coffee addiction, soporific teas are nothing new, but the market is brewing afresh with recent mainstream additions, such as [Twinings Sleep](#), £1, and higher end [Sleep Welle Fortified Calming Tea](#) by [Elle MacPherson's WelleCo](#), £48.



The latter smells rather funky (that'll be the naturally sedating valerian root) but blends high quality herb and fruit extracts such as hops and lemon balm, which are renowned for their tranquilising properties. As an alternative to the more alcoholic variety of nightcap, it certainly has promise, and the pale blue caddy is a keeper.



In the budget aisle, [Clipper Snore and Peace](#), £2.10, and [Pukka Night Time](#), £2.49, both opt for a cocktail of lavender and chamomile, amongst other herbs and flowers famed for their drowsy-making effect. Making a tea isn't a miracle insomnia cure, but the ritual is calming, as us Brits well know, plus the additional hydration and lack of caffeine can only enhance your chances of dozing off peacefully.

THE TINCTURES

If I told you that you could sleep better thanks to a sachet of shrooms you'd obviously assume the worst, but Reishi mushrooms are gentle, and most importantly, legal. An adaptogen, a term defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary as 'a nontoxic substance and especially a plant extract that is held to increase the body's ability to resist the damaging effects of stress and promote or restore normal physiological functioning', Reishi mushrooms have scientifically proven anti-inflammatory and antioxidant prowess, and are said to improve blood circulation. Lower blood pressure and reduced stress levels are certainly conducive to sleep, and while more research needs to be carried out, Reishi is the most studied and promising medicinal mushroom out there.

The bitter taste is a drawback, so opt for [Four Sigmatic Reishi Mushroom Elixir Mix](#), £21.99, which combines the mushroom with star anise, liquorice root, mint and stevia leaf extract for a borderline tasty beverage. Alternatively go into full snooze mode with a mug of [Mushroom Hot Cacao Mix](#), £11.99. It's not quite Cadbury's, but it's a superior sleep tonic to a cup of Dairy Milk.

Equally wacky is [Moon Juice Goodnight Dust](#), £50, which claims to stabilize the REM cycle, stimulate melatonin release and regulate blood flow. A few of the 'wildcrafted' ingredients you will recognise, namely chamomile and stevia; zizyphus, polygala and schisandra, not so much. The idea is to add the powder to hot milk or water, or a bedtime smoothie if you so desire, and wait for the pleasant drowsiness to descend. Aside from the much lauded chamomile, both zizyphus and schisandra are used as sedatives in Chinese medicine, and of course Goop and co swear by this stuff. Many nutrition experts remain to be convinced, but anecdotal evidence for its knockout powers is strong. In short, if you've tried everything, it could be worth a shot.

A more literal relaxant is [Better You Magnesium Oil Goodnight Spray](#), £12.20, which, when massaged in, helps to relieve muscle tension, and hopefully mental stress too given the chamomile essential oil in the formula. Studies show that magnesium is best absorbed transdermally (when applied directly to the skin), so magnesium baths, oils and body lotions could all help to bring down inflammation and stress levels, while loosening tight muscles and relieving cramping. With 70% of us apparently deficient in magnesium, possibly owing to our cortisol revving modern lifestyles and mineral depleted modern diets, a bedtime massage is a low risk way to begin addressing both cause and effect.

For an aromatherapeutic approach, pillow sprays are common on many a bedside table (Welleco's Sleep Welle Tea can be purchased with an accompanying Calming Mist for a belt and braces experience), but blends are going beyond your average lavender and chamomile blitz. [Therapie Sleep Drops](#), £48, do indeed include lavender, but aromatherapy expert Michelle Roques O'Neil has gone above and beyond in terms of sourcing and creating a concentrated sleep aid. From uplifting bergamot to peace-inducing sandalwood and soothing jasmine, the oil is complex and comforting, and can be added to a bath, dropped in steam in the shower, dabbed on the soles of the feet or soaked into a cotton wool pad or muslin for instant exhalation.

Lastly, for a more expansive take on scenting your space, the sleep authorities at This Works have created a portable diffuser to disperse the Deep Sleep Superblend for which they're most famed to whet your curiosity. It's powered by USB and only requires a few drops of the essential oil based elixir to work its magic. If you're tempted, the [Scent Well Set](#), £69, including both oil and diffuser, is the best value for money.

THE RETREATS

As you'll likely have noticed by now, bedtime is becoming big business, and 'fly and flop' takes on a whole new meaning when considering the latest crop of sleep retreats, professing to refresh you on landing and deliver takeaway sleep benefits. In Thailand, [Kata Rocks](#) resort is equipped with customised nap pods to cocoon you away from external stimulus and lull you to sleep by way of a built-in Bose music system, gentle light variations and vibration. Waterbeds, water massage and coloured light therapy complete the spa's snooze worthy offering.

Meanwhile Six Senses Spas have recently launched [Sleep-centric packages](#) which aim to teach guests the techniques and principles of yogic sleep alongside a menu of dreamy treatments. Given that five day package pricing starts at €1,217.50 per person, you'd hope to see a return on your investment by way of becoming a modern day Sleeping Beauty, or at least a yogic sleep master for life.