

Seven Stars and Stripes...

The Alchymist Grand Hotel and Spa

By Thorsten Buehrmann



Once upon a time, Swiss International Airlines carried a Seven Stars and Stripes review team from Zurich to Prague, where they landed on an unseasonably mild evening in February, their destination - the Alchymist Hotel and Spa.

At the end of the 16th century, when Prague became the center of occultism, alchemists from all over Europe came to Prague to take advantage of the generous backing of the Imperial Court. Rudolph II employed more than 200 alchemists in the hope of discovering the secret formula for converting basic metal to gold. Considering Rudolph's love for gold, the surreal, beautiful Alchymist Hotel could easily have been one of the homesteads of the eccentric emperor or his court. Today, gold once again dresses the historic walls of this oh, so gracious storybook estate. Our Topas Gold Rimowa luggage, easily recognizable for its quality and style, were well suited to these

splendorous surroundings.

Our arrival was dramatic; excited, we stepped onto the almost unreal historic cobblestone street where we were welcomed with gracious, unpretentious hospitality – a feeling that would not leave us during our entire stay.

Prague's Alchymist Hotel and Spa is privately owned, and proprietor Giorgio Bonelli is passionate about his mission to preserve history through innovation and creativity. Guests are treated as royalty and welcomed as friends, clearly extending the spirit of the historic, fascinating city of Prague. Prestigiously located in the heart of that city, the Alchymist Hotel and Spa is ideally placed to discover all major tourist attractions, shopping, dining and of course, entertainment and business centers.

We settled into the famous Alchymist Suite, a unique, elegant one-bedroom suite with a luxurious, spacious living room, a fairytale bed and a huge marble bathroom featuring



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303

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a claw foot bathtub, placed in the middle of the expansive bathroom. A private terrace allows a romantic view of the inner courtyard. The furnishings resemble a blend of 16th- to 19th-century, almost eccentric, and feature sumptuous decorations in luscious Renaissance red. Other suites, some in royal blue, include living rooms and intimate dining areas; some have balconies or terraces with private, little gardens. All accommodations feature high-speed Internet access and other essential gadgets, nicely hidden but anticipated by the modern luxury traveler. Some suites and halls feature dramatic restored 15th-century vaulted ceilings and walls and are officially accredited for authenticity by the National Historic Society. The magnificent work depicts gaming events and other scenes carved and painted on the sides of the main beams and along the frieze.

The Alchemist's hidden oasis is the Ecsotica Spa, entirely dedicated to one's well-being, rejuvenation and relaxation. The spa is a sparkling wonder, attracting guests with luxurious comfort, cutting-edge, hidden technology, world-class facilities and intuitive, traditional service. The spa includes several private treatment rooms, where guests may experience skillfully administered massages and body scrubs and wraps, and indulge in exotic bathing rituals. The spa also features a spacious suite designed for couples wishing to share a more intimate spa experience. We highly recommend it.

The Ecsotica Spa began as Giorgio Bonelli's dream many years ago. An extensive traveler, Bonelli visited numerous spas to develop the

feel for his spa's personalized experience. Our Seven Star spa experience began with amenities such as luxurious, plush, white embroidered terry robes and slippers. My wife committed her feet to Miss Jessica for "cultivation" and "to achieve lovely nails through a unique technique and use of exceptional products" while I got to indulge in Ecsotica's Bathing Ritual described as "Calming yourself in a soothing, heavenly-scented bath as water jets pamper your body while you delight in the pure pleasure." The entire lavish setting of rose petals surrounding the bathtub with aroma-infused, therapeutic, sweet water and jets massaging my body in every direction was indeed a delight.



Alchemist Bedroom Suite



Escotica Juice Bar



I then had a body wrap while my wife got to experience a one-hour Darphin Facial Treatment, which she described as a highly pleasurable aromatic treatment with a deep cleansing effect and an instant lift that was felt long after. The body wrap cocooned me in a promised “weightless enclosure” for my body to absorb the active ingredients that “indulge the senses with exotic scents” while I got to rest, and rest I did. At 1 o’clock we reunited, with glowing faces, at the Escotica Juice Bar for a “Light Bathrobe Lunch.” Not everything was light on this luscious spa lunch buffet - but so far, it was the most unique and elaborate spa lunch we have experienced without leaving the actual spa facilities.

I must mention the superb, fresh oysters, served with the water of the sea in the shell, succulent and delicious, although I do suggest having the lemon served on the side. There were exquisitely designed raw plates of sushi and sashimi and vegetables, as well as fruits and salads to die for. We had a full, long hour for this one-of-a-kind spa feast (that one should definitely make part of one’s spa day), so we were able to spend relaxing quality time together.

After our feast, we were scheduled for a 90-minute traditional couple’s massage, Balinese-style – a deep-tissue technique using thumbs and long strokes to stimulate blood flow and muscle relief. We looked into each other’s eyes and smiled.

While our spa day was a couple’s experience, single guests can refresh in the spa’s adjoining men’s and women’s facilities. We received not only fantastic service by a gracious team of



Balinese experts but also an amazing display of mood, or soulful, food at the spa feast. The Alchemist Hotel as destination spa makes for an ultimate spa experience and could be a perfect retreat for executive meetings as well.

The Alchemist’s elegant, intimate banquet facilities offer an opportunity to celebrate life’s most precious moments in its historic halls. The lavishly decorated ballrooms are tastefully furnished and make a prestigious place to dazzle guests at social gatherings or executive retreats. The ballroom is the ideal place for a dream wedding, combining expert event planning, service experience, deep tradition and superb cuisine.

The Alchemist Grand Hotel and Spa is universally recognized for its overall commitment to guest satisfaction and attention to detail. The staff is clearly proud to be part of a fine team dedicated to professionalism, quality of service and appearance. We long to return.●