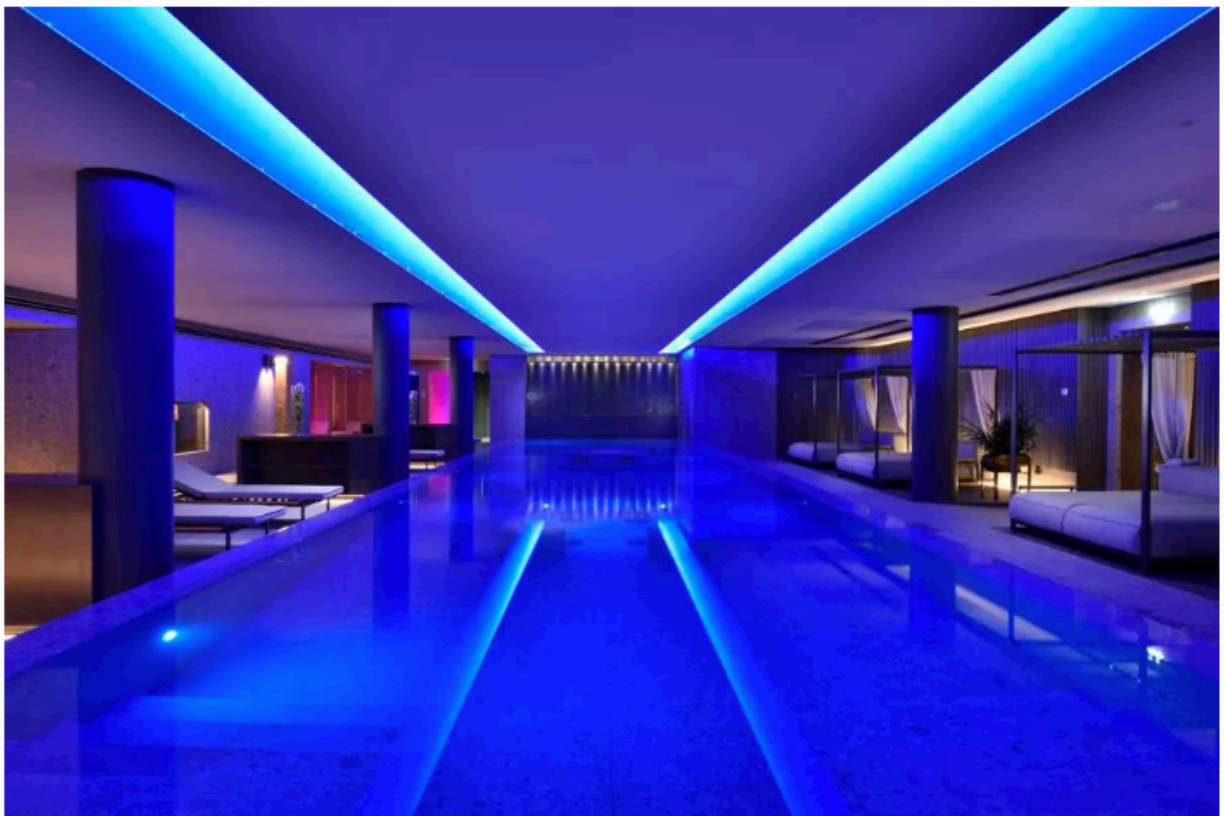


# Forbes

## Lake Como's Largest Spa Is A Wellness Sanctuary Away From The Crowds

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The Erre Spa at Grand Hotel Victoria is a hidden oasis in the northern Lake Como town of Menaggio. ANDREA GETULI

While travelling for wellness feels like a modern phenomenon, the Romans were known to travel to [thermal baths](#) as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The earliest [spas](#)—the Latin word for which, ‘salus per aquam,’ translates to ‘health from water’—were considered integral to a healthy life. Roman legionaries would sooth their sore muscles in natural spring water and thermal treatments were prescribed to relieve physical ailments. Centuries later and Italy continues to take their spas seriously.



One of several thermal pools at Erre spa. GRAND HOTEL VICTORIA

North Americans flock to Lake Como for its tranquil waters sheltered by colorful villa-dotted mountains, but few venture as far north as Menaggio. It's worth the trek to experience Lake Como's largest spa, hidden underground at the [Grand Hotel Victoria](#). The 12,800-square-foot [Erre spa](#), puts North American spas to shame with an impressive range of wellness experiences.



The Erre Spa offers saunas of varying temperatures. GRAND HOTEL VICTORIA

While the dark, cool oasis doesn't have any lake views, many of the treatments have been inspired by the natural beauty of Lake Como. The walls of the 'silent room,' for example, are made entirely of moss, a sea vegetable you can find in Lake Como. Containing 92 of the 102 [essential vitamins](#) and minerals our bodies need to thrive, and believed to increase oxygen and remove toxins from the body, this nutrient-rich plant is a welcome addition to the relaxation room.



Erre Spa elevates the traditional relaxation lounge with a 'fire room' and 'silent room.' GRAND HOTEL VICTORIA

Another relaxation room option is the 'fire room' which features a 13-foot fireplace, perfect for warming up after the 'ice room.' As cryotherapy (cold therapy) gains popularity for [reducing](#) pain and relieving mood disorders like depression and [anxiety](#), this 'ice room' is unique for having ice particles that fall from the ceiling to rub on pressure points. It's meant to be completed in a circuit with the two saunas—one Finnish-style and one infrared.



Inspired by Lake Como, Erre Spa has an intricate series of showers for a full hydrotherapy ... [+] GRAND HOTEL VICTORIA

The thermal circuit is also offered through the '[Kneipp Path](#),' a hydrotherapy treatment in which you alternate walking in hot and cold water. Named after the German doctor who invented the treatment, the thermal shock of switching between 90- and 68-degree Fahrenheit water is believed to stimulate circulation and the immune system. For a full-body hydrotherapy experience, you can take a tour through the series of waterfall showers, each with a different temperature, chromotherapy hue and aromatherapy scent (think, a cooling shower with mint and a warm shower with orange).



The 'ice room' at Erre Spa. GRAND HOTEL VICTORIA

If you especially like the aromatherapy aspect of the showers, the steam shower adds the moist heat of steam to really give the scent a full effect. There is even a 'water bucket shower' meant for cooling off after the dry heat of the Finnish sauna. If bathing is more your style, a 65-foot pool and warm jacuzzi (complete with a twinkling ceiling meant to replicate a starry night sky) are ideal for soaking.



Innovative treatments utilize local ingredients like seaweed mud and green clay. GRAND HOTEL VICTORIA

Where nature really shines is in the spa treatments. Natural ingredients are used in body treatments like the 'nourishing endorphin invasive' in which chocolate is poured over the body followed by a massage and the 'anti-cellulite slimming toning' where a wrap of seaweed mud and green clay follows a ten-minute session in the Himalayan salt room. A wide range of massages target every kind of need—from reducing stress to detoxification to relieving tension for expecting mothers. Even more extensive are the facial offerings which are designed for every type of skin. With spa treatments for children, there truly is something for everyone.



The lobby of the Grand Hotel Victoria, a restored 19th century neoclassical villa. ANDREA GETULI

Upstairs, rooms prioritize rest with bedside-operated black-out curtains, tailor-made pillows and comfortable beds. Staying in a 19<sup>th</sup> century neoclassical villa that during the Belle Époque period had European nobility arrive by carriage, it's hard not to feel like royalty here. The restored property exudes all of its historic glamor with soaring ceilings, ornate columns and sparkling chandeliers. While popular Lake Como towns further south are a bustling frenzy of tourists, the Grand Hotel Victoria's location in the quiet town of Menaggio make it a secluded wellness getaway for anyone seeking calm and rejuvenation.