

# european Spa

THE NO.1 MAGAZINE FOR SPA AND WELLNESS



Issue 51 | April/May 2016 | [www.europeanspamagazine.com](http://www.europeanspamagazine.com)



## ALPINE SANCTUARY

A look inside the luxurious new chalet at Spa-Hotel Jagdhof

## LET'S GO OUTSIDE

Embrace the great outdoors at Galgorm Resort & Spa

## THE WELL OF LIFE

Social evolution is on the menu at Norway's biggest day spa

## GUIDE TO TANNING

Expert advice and the best skin-finishing products









# A well of inspiration

One of Europe's most ambitious launches, **The Well** offers a world of tradition under one roof. We meet the creative team behind this spectacular and sociable spa

REPORT BY HELLENA BARNES

In a country with spa embedded in its cultural DNA, it takes a quite spectacular wellness offering to generate €1million turnover within its first month of opening. The Well, owned by Norwegian self-made billionaire Stein Erik Hagen, is just such a place. So passionate is Hagen about wellbeing that he was prepared to spend in excess of £35m (€45m) to create a property that could potentially change spa perceptions and introduce new experiential concepts to his native country.

Located within a forest ten miles south of Oslo, at Kolbotn, the newly constructed, high-specification day spa and wellness centre opened in December 2015 and has ambitious plans to attract 100,000 visitors annually. Already the owner of the country's fashionable Farris Bad spa in Larvik, and currently placed 317th on *Forbes'* billionaires list, Hagen chose his partners carefully in order to realise a concept that would provide exceptional wellness at a level people could afford, both in terms of time and money. "The Well offers unbridled, affordable luxury to anyone who appreciates wellness and needs to wind down after a hectic week," says Hagen. "You get the day pass... and the lowering of your pulse is complimentary," he smiles.

## The world under one roof

The Well's price tag makes it possibly the most expensive and elaborate day spa in Europe to date, but along with its modern aesthetic runs a sense of heritage that pervades its approach to wellness. "There are century-long international traditions that utilise heat and water for wellbeing and relaxation," says Hagen. "The Well brings a plethora of these together under one roof."

Built into the forest hillside and staged over three floors, this vast facility totals an impressive 10,500sqm. Within this space are 15 saunas and steam baths, 100 showers, 11 pools, waterfall grottos, and 25 treatment suites

**Clockwise from top left:** The Well incorporates global spa cultures in unique settings linked by a contemporary Nordic style; mellow natural tones in the two-storey blockhouse sauna; product partners include Elemis, Mii and Dermanor; the spa's vibrant 25m wellness pool





offering services from massage to manicures, with British spa brands Elemis and Mii, and Norwegian anti-ageing brand Dermanor having been selected to complement the spa's own in-house product range. Garden areas, relaxation lounges, and a 250-cover restaurant with additional outdoor seating for 100 guests are all located within the spa's bold, architectural-led surroundings.

Fundamental to this ambitious project was its creator's extensive travel experience and Hagen's desire to bring global spa cultures to the broader Norwegian population. The three-storey, adult-only spa embraces all manner of rituals and provides bespoke experiences including a Japanese bathhouse and Norway's first onsen garden; a Moroccan rasul; a Northern Light laconium; a Turkish hammam; a jungle sauna; a crystal bath; and a two-storey loft sauna, one of only a few of its kind in Europe (see box opposite for a full list of hydrothermal facilities).

"We worked closely with architect Øystein Rognebakke at Halvorsen & Reine, located in Drammen, Norway, for a couple of years before we landed a layout we truly wanted," recalls Hagen. "In addition, Thermarium was our consultant on sauna, pool and wet area design, and we collaborated with Stylt Trampoli in Gothenburg, Sweden, on the dry spaces, such as reception, changing rooms, lounges and

**Clockwise from above:** Sound therapy in the Japanese meditation sauna; the two-storey loft sauna is made from Kelo logs with brushed spruce walls; the social, Aufguss sauna can accommodate up to 50 people; the stunning Northern Light laconium; the atmospheric jungle sauna

Image: Herman Dreyer



"The Well offers unbridled, affordable luxury to anyone who appreciates wellness. You get the day pass... and the lowering of your pulse is complimentary."

Stein Erik Hagen, owner

the restaurant. We have worked with these companies on previous projects and they are all experts in their sector."

### Through the looking glass

As the spa unfolds to reveal the 'different worlds' within it, so the designs, scents, sounds, reflections and ambiance shift to enhance the experience. "Creating a place where modern Norwegian architecture would meld with ancient spa traditions required atmosphere and energy," says Erik Nissen Johansen, creative director and founder of Stylt Trampoli. "The challenge for us was to create global settings that would suit all people and every mood in a new, social spa environment, but with an element of surprise running through these spaces."

Johansen's brief, to create "the biggest multi-cultural spa Norway has ever seen", is something he describes as actually quite "un-Scandinavian".

"To create all of these different worlds, where Japanese onsen sits alongside a tropical jungle sauna, makes it a rather surreal spa space with a touch of *Alice in Wonderland*







## Going deeper into The Well

The expansive range of globally inspired hydrothermal experiences guests can discover at The Well include:

**Art Deco area:** With steam bath Tepidarium, hand-laid gold mosaics, feature showers, and a unique Art Deco water steam bath that combines a warm water pool with steam floatation

**Aufguss sauna:** One of Norway's largest saunas with the capacity to hold more than 50 people

**Jungle sauna:** A tropical, high humidity sauna complete with jungle sounds, bamboo walls and bucket shower

**Moroccan rasul:** Authentically built with traditional tiles, and mud from the Atlas Mountains is used for treatments

**Blockhouse two-storey sauna:** With glass shower wall to intensify the feeling of being in the Norwegian mountains

**Herbal bath sauna:** Infused with different herb varieties to enhance relaxation

**Ambilight cinema sauna:** A small, theatre-style sauna with wooden benches set on two levels and wall-mounted screening of natural images

**Northern Light laconium:** A gentle, 45°C sauna with a mystic atmosphere and a central fountain, dramatically illuminated by green lights and Nordic scenery

**Crystal steam bath:** A large steam bath designed on Roman traditions





## SPA STATS

The Well  
www.thewell.no  
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**Owner:** Stein Erik Hagen  
**Design consultant:** Stylt Trampoli  
**Architect:** Halvorsen & Reine  
**Hydrothermal consultant:** Thermarium  
**Spa manager:** Anette Ose  
**Investment:** £35m (€45m)  
**Spa team:** 130  
**Spa area:** 10,500sqm  
**Thermal/wet areas:** 15 saunas and steam baths, 100 showers, 11 pools  
**Treatment rooms:** 25  
**Suppliers:** Marset, LZP lamps, Karl Andersson och Söner, Betongdesign, Gervasoni, Point 1920, Infum Contract and Svea Contract, Manutti, Andreu World, Gervasoni, Arne Norell  
**Product partners:** Elemis, Mii, Dermanor  
**Cost of day pass:** starts at 495 krone (€53)

**From above:** As fewer young Norwegians have access to traditional, home-based spa culture, The Well has created a new, social spa scene; seven types of body massage are available in the 25 treatment rooms

▷ inspiration,” he adds. “The Well is all about escapism; providing people with the opportunity to go anywhere in the world, experience different spa cultures, and also enjoy core elements on a social level, like the bar and restaurant.”

This fairytale quality is expressed perfectly in the restaurant, where guests dine in robes on food ranging from nutritional dishes to indulgent pizza, surrounded by oversized interior features made from natural materials that distort one’s sense of perspective. “We wanted a relaxed social environment that pays homage to nature and the surrounding forest by using beech and oak in an artistic, surrealist way,” says Johansen. “The food mix was also an important part of broadening the spa’s target group.”

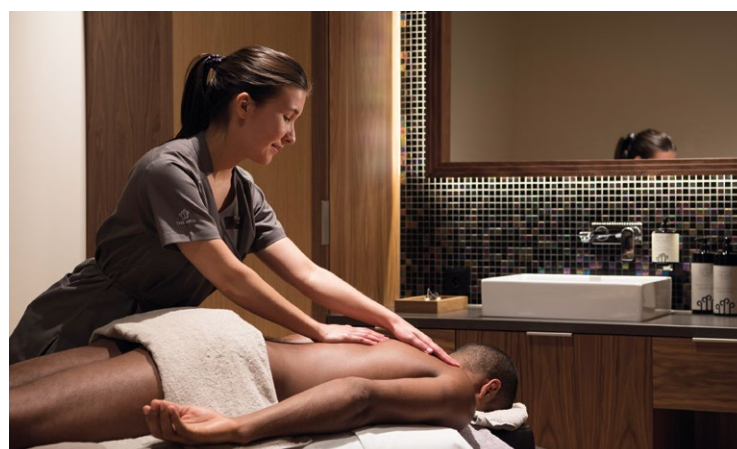
Another standout piece of design is the keyboard-style stairway that connects the spa’s three floors. “Music starts to play when guests enter on the piano staircase and it is designed to wash them towards a slightly supernatural feeling with anticipation of the unexpected,” adds Johansen.

“The Well is the first serious destination day spa for Norway and working with the visionary Stein Erik Hagen was amazing,” Johansen enthuses. “He already owned the forestland, on which they discovered an ancient well, and that is how the name came about.”

### Stylish centrepieces

Central to The Well’s offering are its 25m wellness pool, set at 35°C, and the two-storey loft sauna, in which temperatures can rise to 100°C. The huge pool area is surrounded by complex columns that give the space a sacred character, and the surrounding gallery provides views of the illuminated vitality pool with relaxation zones and air tube beds.

The rare loft sauna structure, built from six-metre-tall Kelo logs with walls clad in brushed spruce, was assembled



in Austria with timber from Siberia, before being dismantled and shipped to Oslo for installation on site. Additional sauna experiences, set at various temperatures and humidity, include the 50-person capacity Aufguss sauna, one of the largest in Norway, where rituals are performed throughout the day.

Adrian Egger, managing director of Thermarium, says the company was first approached to work on The Well’s wet area concept, engineering and design in 2011. “This is a unique and beautiful concept in look and feel,” he says. “The owner was so passionate about the design details and I believe he chose Thermarium because he liked the ideas we presented to bring the vision alive. Everything is created in a laid-back Nordic style with no heavy elements, just simple, beautiful details and high-quality natural materials.”

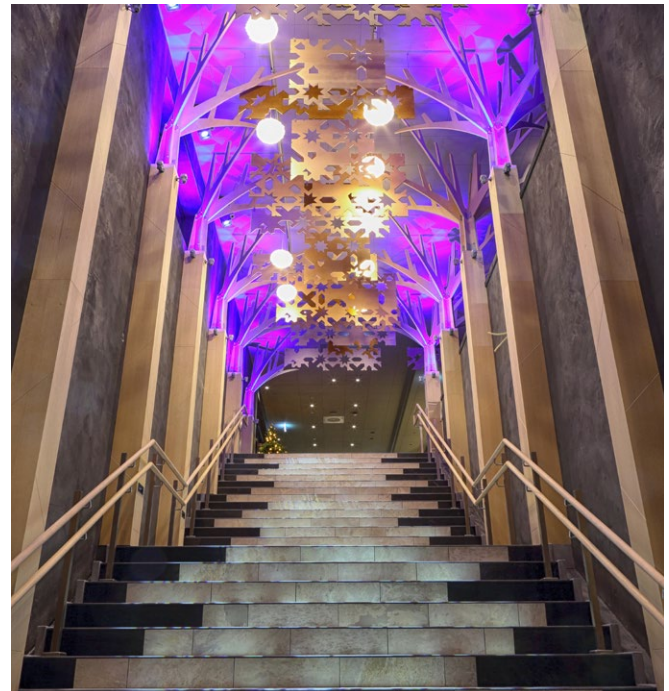
Thermarium’s brief was to combine a contemporary design concept with individual ambiances for each wellness experience. A sense of adventure and movement was created between the different spa cultures by the inclusion of relaxation points, so that when guests progress, they feel as though they are ‘emerging into another world’.





“The Well is all about escapism; providing people with the opportunity to experience different spa cultures, and also enjoy core elements on a social level.”

**Erik Nissen Johansen**, creative director and founder, Stylt Trampoli



**Clockwise from top:** The stylish pool area is both sociable and relaxing; music plays as guests enter the keyboard-style staircase, creating a 'supernatural' ambience; enjoying Norwegian nature in the outdoor Jacuzzi

“The challenge here was to give guests the feeling of one overall design lead that was spacious and airy, using unobtrusive and native materials in the general areas,” explains Egger. “This was completely different for the individual spa areas, which feature narrative concepts, stylish and complex materials, and lavish colours.”

### Setting the menu

The second floor of the spa provides access to the treatment area with a reception, retail space, and 25 rooms where therapies including seven types of body massage, facial and cosmetic treatments, and manicure and pedicure services are performed. In addition, hot stone and Thai massage are available as well as dry floatation and a hydro pool.

The hammam is also situated here with an oriental steam bath and showers, while adjacent is the relaxation room and soap massage room, designed with marble, golden mosaics and handmade wall finishes.

To entice visitors to The Well and encourage them to stay, a menu of products and treatments was required that reflected global wellness traditions as well as contemporary spa offerings. “Most of our guests spend the entire day with us, arriving when we open at 10am and staying to enjoy both lunch and dinner,” says spa manager Anette Ose. “For them

we have created a daily activity plan with items such as The Well body scrubs, Japanese tea ceremonies, and thermal experiences, all of which are included in the entrance fee. Of course, a large number of guests also like to book additional treatments to really make the most of their stay.

“We have developed our own products and rituals to guide guests through the spa journey. During their ‘tour’ they can try our signature hair treatment, facial mask, body peel, or footbath. A lot of guests really appreciate our guidance through these rituals and this is an excellent way for them to get to know The Well.”

To complement its in-house range and provide guests with indulgent skincare, facial and cosmetic treatments, The Well’s choice of product partners includes British brands Elemis and Mii. “Our main skincare supplier is Dermanor, which is very well established in the Norwegian market,” says Ose. “However, our key spa product line is Elemis. Both Dermanor and Elemis are very experienced in professional protocol training for therapists.”





“The Well has introduced a new art of spa socialising, a way to meet new people and experience wellness that takes the Nordic spa culture to another level.”

**Adrian Egger**, managing director, Thermarium

▷ “No matter where in the world you book an Elemis treatment, be it on a cruise ship or at The Well, it is instantly recognisable to spa guests, which makes it easy for us to maintain the best quality delivery for each and every treatment.” For its makeup services, Ose says Mii cosmetics and Brow by Mii are professional lines that fully address the needs of The Well’s clientele. “It’s also very exciting to work with a brand that is new here,” she adds. “Mii has already received very positive reviews in the Norwegian media.”

#### A social spa scene

In addition to a steam bath and sauna, the top floor of The Well houses its Japanese fire room and onsen garden, with a traditional Japanese hot pool and freestanding showers overlooking the outdoor onsen pool. The Japanese meditation sauna offers sound therapy delivered by a large gong and smaller singing bowls that are activated by therapists during relaxing and re-energising ceremonies.

This floor is also home to the restaurant, bar, terraces, the African lounge, a library, an outdoor pool with decks, and an outdoor Jacuzzi and sauna.

While Norwegian spa culture has traditionally been centred around the home, the fact that land is now at a premium and new-build apartments are getting smaller means this lifestyle is less available to young professionals, especially in the capital. “In general, Norwegians do not use public spas because people have their own private saunas and steam rooms at home,” explains Adrian Egger. “So, we designed the spa treatments and thermal rooms in a way that is perfectly acceptable to traditionalists, but The Well has introduced a new art of spa socialising, a way to meet new people and experience wellness that takes the Nordic spa culture to another level.”

Erik Nissen Johansen agrees. “People here are really getting into the vibe. The meeting rooms are perfect for party groups and conference events – it’s become a cool place to have a brand launch – and The Well’s introduction of the Friday Night Lounge, with a DJ, has extended the audience further, especially the male market who want to meet up for a beer and a sauna.”

And it is not just music, The Well may introduce art works in the future. “Stein Erik Hagen truly appreciates art and is one of the biggest collectors in Norway, so it could be a focus for the future, to align spa with the broader cultural scene” says Egger. “Visitors could enjoy art without going to a museum and experience it like never before.” ●●●●●



**From top:** The stylish Art Deco steam bath tepidarium; the enchanting restaurant; a total of 100 showers have been installed in The Well; Stein Erik Hagen’s creation is a symbol of luxury; dry floatation in the second floor treatment area

