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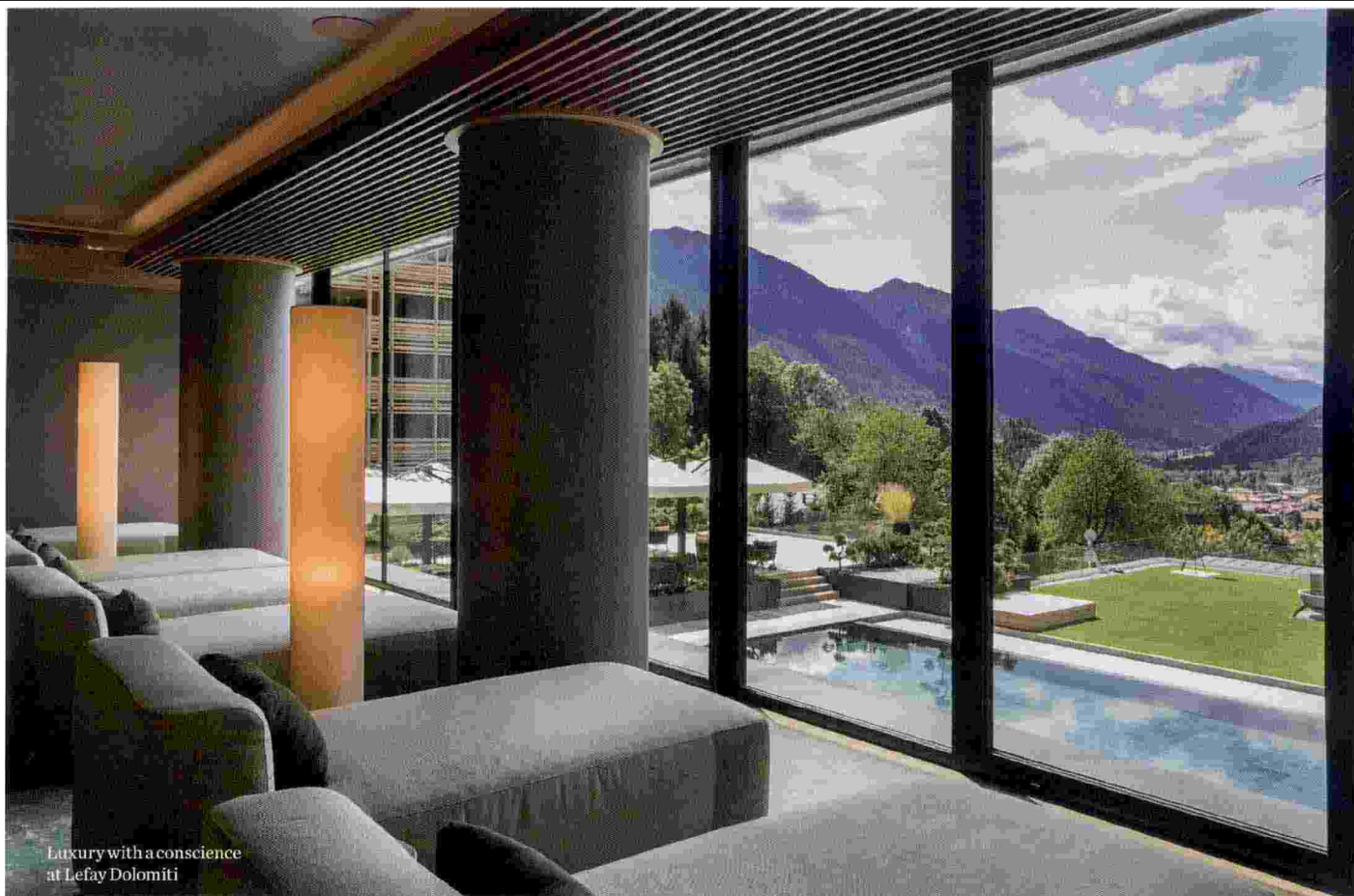
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Luxury with a conscience
at Lefay Dolomiti

THE CONSCIOUS SPA

As sustainability takes high priority, spas are combining eco initiatives with a community-spirited design approach

For some of autumn's most exciting openings, considering our place on the planet forms an integral part of the wellness picture. These spas tread more lightly, promoting trail-blazing sustainability credentials, a sense of respect for their often remote locales and a commitment to serving their communities.

The opening of Lefay's inaugural Lake Garda resort in 2008 was a revelation – here was a new breed of spa that offered the ultimate in five-star luxury while utilising renewable energy and offsetting its CO2 emissions. It's these principles that have guided their much-anticipated second property, Lefay Dolomiti (above), which boasts a vast 5,000-square-metre spa stocked with Lefay's range of sustainable, cruelty-free products developed in 2017. For designer **Alberto Apostoli**, there was the matter of 'emotional sustainability', too. 'The term sustainability has a broader meaning; it's not limited to green energy and ecological materials but also design at the service of psychological wellbeing.' To capture this, geographical context was key. 'We started with an in-depth study of the Dolomites,' he explains. 'We mainly used wood – chestnut and oak above all – and local stone tonalite' (dolomiti.lefayresorts.com).

Equally in sync with its bountiful natural surroundings is eco concept Arctic Elements Lakeside Spa, set in Finland's far north. Situated on the

shore of Lake Jeris – a location said to have the cleanest air of any inhabited area in the world – its five saunas are powered by wind, water and solar energy, while water is funnelled from a nearby spring. It's the first of its kind for the spa-crazed country, which considers the sauna as an essential space for meditation and both mental and physical health. Here, immersion in nature forms an intrinsic part of the wellbeing experience; the pièce de résistance is a glass-panelled, panoramic fifth sauna, which is dedicated to watching the aurora borealis (theaurorazone.com).

The sauna might not enjoy the same status in Margate, but a new shoreside 'bathing machine' (below), commissioned by local natural skincare brand Haeckles, is an enticing prospect. It's a story about community; conceived via a crowd-funding campaign in 2014 and designed by architecture firm Re-Works Studio, the sauna is funded by locals who are asked to contribute what they can. 'It was always intended as a gift for the town,' explains Haeckles' founder Dom Bridges of the Victorian-inspired structure, which he hopes will acquaint Margate's residents with its health-giving, seaweed-rich waters (haeckels.co.uk).

It's a reminder that wellbeing and environment are inextricably linked, and that low impact architecture is only one factor – what makes a space restorative is far harder to define.



Margate's new
'bathing machine'

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