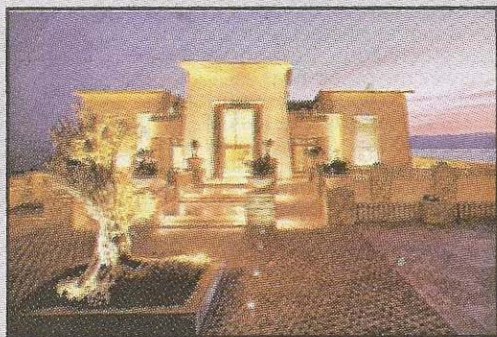


Kempinski Hotel Ishtar, Dead Sea, Jordan



NIGHTLY rates start at £165 per room for a Superior Room, on a B&B basis. For reservations call +962 5 356 8888 or visit www.kempinski-deadsea.com
On The Go Tours offer group and tailor-made visits to Jordan. Call 020 7371 1113 or visit www.onthegotours.com

Luxury for money

TOURISM is still an emerging industry here, so five-star hotels are better value than in other countries. As well as the most comfortable beds we've ever slept in, there's super chic decor and great little touches — you can borrow laptops and iPods, and drinks in the mini bar are complimentary. Yes, really!

excellent good not good

The wow factor

THE place is vast and the cavernous reception area has to be the most decadent use of space we've ever seen. However, it's so big and so minimal in design that it can feel a little unwelcoming and corporate. We much preferred the hotel's second main building, the Ishtar Villas — made from local stone, they are more low key and welcoming, plus they have great views over the Dead Sea.

excellent good not good

Slim or sin?

THE buffet breakfast is pretty special and, seeing as we were on holiday, we washed it down with a glass of Bucks Fizz every day — you can't get more decadent than that. The food at the Thai restaurant was the most authentic we've tasted outside Asia and the cocktails come highly recommended, too. It'll be a challenge to stick to the diet here.

slim sin

Range of treatments

AT PRESENT the spa menu is good, but not vast. This will no doubt all change when the 'super spa' opens (see below). In the meantime, you should try the treatments using the ultra-nourishing salts and mud from the Dead Sea — a speciality given that it's right on the door step.

excellent good not good

Pamper rating

ON OUR visit, the spa was housed in one of the huge 'royal villas', but while it made for a good temporary fix, serious spa junkies should wait for the launch of the super spa which is currently being built and is due for completion in the spring. It will have an astonishing eight swimming pools, 25 treatment rooms and possibly even a resident plastic surgeon. We'll definitely be back!

excellent good not good

And for the other half?

YOUR man will love the DIY spa on the beach. First the two of you can enjoy bobbing around completely weightless in the super salty Dead Sea, then you get out and cover yourself with the mineral-rich mud that is available from a big pot. Wait for it to dry in the sun before washing it off in the sea. Smearing mud all over yourself and others is a surreal experience that's so childish it's bound to appeal to the chap in your life.

excellent good not good

Staff attentiveness

STAFF cater to your every whim and regularly bring you chilled water and little *amuse-bouches* on the beach — bliss.

excellent good not good