Rating Criteria: Spa

Star Definitions

★★★★★**Forbes Five Star Spas:** Stepping foot in a Five Star spa will result in an exceptional experience with no detail overlooked. These properties wow their guests with extraordinary design and facilities, and uncompromising service. Expert staff to cater to your every whim and pamper you with the most advanced treatments and skin care lines available. These spas often offer exclusive treatments and may emphasize local elements.

★★★★**Forbes Four Star Spas:** Four Star spas provide a wonderful experience in an inviting and serene environment. A sense of personalized service is evident from the moment you check in and receive your robe and slippers. The guest's comfort is always of utmost concern to the well-trained staff.

★★★**Forbes Three Star Spas:** These spas offer well-appointed facilities with a full complement of staff to ensure that guests' needs are met. The spa facilities include clean and appealing treatment rooms, changing areas and a welcoming reception desk.

Forbes Star Rating Criteria & Expectations - Spa

During the past several years, Forbes Travel Guide extensively researched more than 300 hotel and resort spas in the United States and Canada. From this research, we narrowed down the list. To be eligible for a Forbes Star rating, a spa must meet the following minimum criteria:

A Forbes rated spa will:

• Provide thoughtful, helpful, anticipatory, and personalized services in environments that are unpretentiously luxurious and allow for an experience that can transport a guest from daily stresses

• Offer treatments that are expertly booked and executed with a high degree of respect for guest comfort, privacy, and well-being

• Offer a well-balanced selection of health, fitness, and pampering regimens that can be arranged conveniently

A Forbes Star rating will NOT:

• Be based on or influenced by the number and diversity of treatments offerings, although a minimum of three types of massages, two additional types of body services, two types of facials, and nail services must be readily available on site

• Be based solely on the reputation and/or glamour of the facility

While these factors will be considered and certainly would not hinder a spa's Forbes Star rating, the true basis of the rating rests on delivery of service.

METHODOLOGY
All of the standards that we created are designed to mirror the average traveler's needs and expectations. All inspections were performed unbeknownst to the hotel or resort. Each spa underwent the same thorough inspection process. To compare spa experiences accurately, every inspector used the same set of standards to make spa reservations and to determine which treatments to book. To retain objectivity and credibility, the inspectors paid for their own treatments when they received the services.

CRITERIA & EXPECTATIONS
The following criteria, along with the above Forbes Star definitions, are suggestions of what a guest generally can expect to find at a Forbes Three through Five Star hotel or resort spa. They are not individually mandated, nor are they limited to those items listed below. These criteria are merely a representative sampling of the hundreds of points we covered during our inspection process.

Spa Service Details
• Staff is well groomed, with neat, professional, and well-maintained attire
• Staff members encountered are pleasant, thoughtful, and professional in their demeanor
• Appointments are booked efficiently, with staff assisting and guiding the guest
• Staff knowledgeably describes treatments and their benefits
• Guests do not need to wait or wander after arriving
• Treatments begin and end on schedule
• Therapist describes treatment and inquires about any special requirements or medical concerns
• Throughout the treatment, the therapist appears to be genuinely expert
• Spa atmosphere is relaxed, quiet, private, and comfortable
• In treatment rooms and locker rooms, hygiene is outstanding and general tidiness is very good
• Following treatments, complimentary refreshment is offered, or self-service refreshments are immediately available and recommended by staff
• Therapist is aware that a guest has scheduled multiple treatments
• Staff can answer detailed questions about the products used in treatments
• There is a comfortable area (not the locker room) in which guests can relax semi-privately after treatments
• Spa has a marketing brochure with a list of services offered

Fitness Center Facility Details
• Staffed
• Equipped with separate male and female rest rooms
• Equipped with separate male and female steam, sauna, and whirlpool areas
• Equipped locker room facilities (separate male and female), complete with showers, towels, and toiletries

• Professional and polite locker room attendants
• Hygiene outstanding and general tidiness very good
• At least two different kinds of cardio machines available
• Full set of free weights available
• Nautilus-type machine available for weight-lifting exercises
• Facility is spacious and provides a comfortable workout area
• Bottled water or water station available
• Audio and/or visual programming available
• Personal headsets available
• Towels available to all guests
• Soiled towels disposed of discreetly
• Cardio and/or yoga classes available to all guests
• Personal training sessions available to all guests

Hotel and Resort Spa Incognito Service Evaluation

In a hotel and resort spa evaluation, the following categories are evaluated and scored:

- Reservation
- Spa Reception
- Spa Menu/Collateral
- Public Areas and Locker Rooms
- Fitness Center
- Treatment One- Body Treatment
- Treatment Two – Manicure, Pedicure, Facial

Within each category, questions are "tagged" for certain qualities/classifications.
Classifications:

- Courtesy/Manners
- Graciousness/thoughtfulness *and* sense of personalized service
- Efficiency
- Guest comfort & convenience
- Luxury
- Technical execution skill and knowledge
- Staff appearance
- Cleanliness & condition

Sample Service Questions from Spa Incognito Evaluation
All questions are answered with a YES or NO and then allow for comments/remarks from the inspector. Also, each question has the applicable *classification* tag in parentheses following the statement. There are over 200 questions in a standard spa evaluation.

Reservations

- Appointments are efficiently booked, with staff guiding guest to most logical and convenient sequence of multiple treatments. (Comfort and convenience)

- Staff effectively offers choices within any given category of treatment (i.e. Massage, nail services, scrubs/wraps, etc.) (Personalization)

Spa Reception

- Staff will automatically provide guest with appropriately sized spa garb that is in excellent condition upon spa check-in (i.e. robes, sandals, slippers) (Comfort and convenience)
- Spa reception staff will reconfirm treatment booked with arriving spa guests and offer at least a partial escort to locker rooms or relaxation lounges. (Personalization)

Treatment

- Therapist exhibits a genuine sense of concern for guest's comfort, including asking about lights, music and temperature. (Comfort and convenience)
- Therapist will provide adequate information to guide guest through the treatment while still allowing for a completely relaxing and restful experience. (Technical proficiency, skill and knowledge)

Public Areas/Locker Rooms

- Atmosphere throughout the spa will be peacefully distinguished from other areas of the hotel or resort through appropriate use of sound, light, scent and visual elements. (Ambiance)
- Locker Rooms will be very clean and attentively maintained; no unsightly conditions will remain for more than 20 minutes. (Cleanliness and condition)

Fitness Facility

- The fitness room is staffed and attendants actively circulate at least every 20 minutes, making themselves readily available and offering assistance, towels, water, etc. (Comfort and convenience)
- Chilled towels will be presented in the gym area and all beverages, fruits, towels, etc. will be presented in an eye-appealing manner, on/in high quality serviceware. (Sense of luxury)