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September 200

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Grayshott studio spa

You don't have to travel far to get away from it all on a luxury spa break, as **Ruth Supple** discovered when she spent a night at Grayshott Studio Spa in Northamptonshire . . .

Restored Tudor manor house Fawsley Hall is renowned as one of England's top hotels. Now it's added another luxury element with the transformation of a former stable block into a stylish new spa.

Grayshott Studio Spa features an indoor swimming pool, outdoor hydro pool, gym, relaxation area at the top of a spiral staircase and a range of lovely treatment rooms.

No matter how active, or inactive, you are feeling, Grayshott is the perfect place to unwind and relax on your own, as a couple, or for a girly break away from it all. Spa packages are available, priced from £85 for a day, and brides-to-be can enjoy pre-wedding day packages from £115.

I enjoyed a 55-minute luxury spa facial (priced £50) at Grayshott, perfectly timed after over-indulging in Bess's Brasserie at the hotel the previous night. The treatment left me feeling completely refreshed and raring to go.

Set in the stunning Northamptonshire countryside, Fawsley Hall is the perfect getaway.

You can enjoy after-dinner drinks in the spectacular setting of its Tudor Hall, complete with portraits of Henry VIII's six wives on the walls, an enormous fireplace which blazes in winter and an incredible oriel window where a former owner used to enjoy afternoon tea. Fawsley is magical.

Steeped in history, Fawsley has entertained kings and queens over the centuries and in the 19th century was home to the "Elephant Man" Joseph Merrick, who visited there for several weeks in 1887, 1888 and 1889. He had been befriended by the lady of the house, Louisa Knightley, who gave him use of a cottage on the estate.

It may be hard to tear yourself away from the tranquillity of the spa, but while you are at Fawsley take time out to walk in the glorious countryside that surrounds it.

The estate's grounds were transformed by the famous landscape gardener Capability Brown in the 1760s and 70s – and are beautiful.

Take a short walk from the hotel grounds into the neighbouring sheep-filled field and pay a visit to the quaint church in the middle of it. Generations of the Knightley family are buried inside and there are effigies and interesting tombstones to view.

Our spacious room was in the eaves of the hotel and offered amazing views across to the church. Or you can choose to stay in one of the rooms above the spa itself, making that walk in a fluffy white bathrobe a lot more practical!

■ Fawsley Hall, Fawsley, near Daventry, Northampton; 01327 892000
www.fawsleyhall.com