

Title:

Loincloths and Tenderizing at a Budapest Spa

Word Count:

644

Summary:

The Gellert Hotel Spa is renowned as the ultimate spa destination in Hungary. Here's a first hand account of the Gellert experience.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

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Gellert Hotel Spa

While in Budapest, everyone kept saying I hadn't experience Hungary until I had a spa. According to my newfound friends, "a spa" meant the Gellert Hotel Spa.

Being a macho American male, I dragged an American girl I met on the train with me to the spa. The purported purpose, of course, was chivalry and introducing her to an experience she would never forget. After paying \$2 each, my bluff was called. Women and men were separated for the treatments. I was alone and didn't speak a word of the language!

Once separated, I was sent into a large room with what appeared to be a few hundred dressing rooms. An attendant looked up from a desk, said something in Hungarian, slapped a piece of cloth in my hand and pointed to a dressing room.

In the dressing room, I prepared to change only to realize the cloth was no more than a string and a 2 x 2 inch square of cotton. For those anatomically challenged, the string went around your waste and the cloth hung in front. At this point, there was only one thing to do. Chant the traveler mantra, "Ah, what the heck. I'll never see any of these people again."

Outside the dressing room, I proceeded to immediately stand around, try to look casual and see what the locals were doing. This was a bit difficult as I was the only person in the room. Eventually a local showed up, changed and headed down a

hall. I followed and hoped he didn't notice.

At the end of the hall, we walked through two giant pools. The walls were painted in baroque styles, the steps into the pools were marble and the whole place was impressive. I nearly let my loincloth slide up.

After the pools, we approached a room that looked remarkably more industrial. There was a line out the door and I dutifully joined it behind my guide. After a few moments, we rounded the door and I saw something I did not expect. Eight loincloth clad men like myself were lying on metal tables. Large male masseuses were standing over them. They would slap them about, spray them with garden hoses, slap them about and repeat as necessary. This wasn't the massage I was anticipating, but I sure as heck wasn't getting out of line. That would be to embarrassing!

After a few moments, it was my turn to jump up on a table. My "masseuse" looked at me and said, "Americanski?" I nodded. He grinned. And the beating began. A Hungarian/Turkish massage reminded me of the movie "Rocky." In Rocky, the lead character pounds on sides of meat to get ready for his fight. In the case of the massage, I was the side of meat. It didn't hurt, but it wasn't exactly relaxing.

After a few moments of tenderizing, I was lifted off the table and sent flying through the air. As time slowly passed, I noted this hadn't happened to any of the men who went before me. I also noted the limestone and marble material used in the walls. Just as I started panicking, I splashed down into a pool to the sound of laughter. While I was trying to decide if I should laugh or be enraged, my body started sending its own signals. I was in a pool of what had to be the coldest water on the planet earth. I am talking Antarctica kind of cold.

Leaping out of the pool, the men in the room gave me a standing ovation accompanied by hunched over, gasping laughter. Now I knew Hungary.

Well, when in Rome...err, Budapest.