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A Pilgrimage To Switzerland's Temple of Beauty



Inside the six-story building on the Rhône River next to Boucheron, Israeli beauty doyenne Ronit Raphael can change your life. Middle Eastern princesses, Hollywood A-listers and Formula 1 race car drivers worship at her altar, trusting that her L. Raphael prescription can halt aging, reverse skin damage and make them their best and most beautiful selves. The first floor boutique is lined with her signature orange boxes but the real magic takes place upstairs.

“Orange was always my favorite color,” Ms. Raphael says with a sunny smile. “It’s the closest color to God.” She’s certainly performed miracles for clients whose skin was so

bad they refused to leave the house for years, and her combined approach of beauty with technology has revolutionized the industry. She was recently recognized for her pioneering vision at the Global Wellness Summit in Italy.

L. Raphael’s flagship Temple of Beauty in Geneva was just renovated this year, with additional services like yoga, nutrition, electrical muscle stimulation and an infrared sauna added to broaden the focus on wellbeing. The 10 treatment rooms including two suites are each uniquely decorated, offering a glamorous setting designed by Alexandra de Gari-del that balances spa-like elegance with ruthless technological efficiency.



Treatments here are unlike anything you might find at a typical hotel spa. Forget a four hands massage, you might have six hands working on you at once. One therapist delicately infusing pricey serums into your face, with another performing reflexology on your feet and a third body sculpting your legs with vacuum therapy to reduce cellulite. “I am not a specialist in the spa industry,” Ms. Raphael says. “I am a specialist in beauty and technology.” She’s best known for her 11 different oxygen treatments, featuring ingredients like diamond powder, caviar and pungent white truffles. An oxy scalp treatment promotes hair growth and body treatments can tighten and slim the physique.

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Aside from her Geneva Temple of Beauty, a few of these signature treatments can be also found at a handful of exclusive spas globally: the Four Seasons New York, Montage Beverly Hills, Hotel Martinez in Cannes and even a spa in Kazakhstan. For her best clients, Ms. Raphael has been known to open private spas on yachts, private jets and in homes.

Ms. Raphael personally tests every new treatment for months (they're currently getting ready to launch laser acupuncture) before introducing for her clients, and her perfectly coiffed hair, plump lips

and bronze tan make her a poster child for the lifestyle and philosophy she espouses. After a detailed personal consultation, Ms. Raphael and her team of beauty consultants create a plan based on the seven foundations of beauty: medical, nutrition, physical activity, aesthetics, age management, stress management and leisure.

She firmly believes that a multi-faceted holistic approach is the only way clients will see significant and lasting results. "Honestly, can any intelligent woman believe that a cream will change your life?" she muses. Although you can find certain L. Raphael products for purchase online, Ms. Raphael doesn't promote her products on the internet. "This ampoule costs \$1,000," she tells me, gesturing to an nondescript glass vial on the table between us. "Do I believe it will reduce your wrinkles? No. I would be lying to you. There's not a single product out there that can do that." Instead, it's a combination of intense treatments, regular home maintenance and lifestyle changes that can really make a difference.

For example, when it comes to physical activity, there's nothing more efficient than electrical muscle stimulation. You put on a damp suit to better conduct electricity and are hooked up to a dozen electrodes which the trainer calibrates until you feel a sufficient electrical current. Then you run through a series of simple movements – squats, lunges,



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She never studied at university, but began renting a spot at a local salon to help people with facials. For the first few years she didn't charge a dime but 32 years ago, she opened her first cosmetic medical center in Israel. "I specialized in acne and hair removal, because these were my problems," she says. Now she has 15 Ronit Raphael clinics across Israel, but it wasn't until she moved to Geneva and opened the Temple of Beauty in 2005 that she brought doctors, estheticians, nutritionists, hair dressers and makeup artists all together under one roof.

On her wrist, Raphael wears a Patek Philippe watch with an orange face encrusted with diamonds that was custom made for her. She counts Philippe Stern as a dear friend and mentor and has become part of a tight-knit community in Geneva, in stark contrast to her impression of New York. "Everybody takes care of everybody," she says. "They want you to be successful."



Several of her team members, like 70-year-old hairdresser Patrick Paris-Nicolini, have been with her since the beginning. A few years ago, she started an invite-only beauty club for her most loyal guests, those who spend between thousands with L. Raphael each month. There are only around 50 beauty club members in the world, and they have access to unlimited treatments at any location worldwide.

"We never talk about money," she says. "Money is not the subject. These people have money. They don't have time or the education on what to do."

Although she makes it look effortless, being a glamorous, high-powered CEO and mom to three while jet-setting around the world is not easy. "My kids know I'm a workaholic," she says. Balance is something she's working on, but nobody is perfect. "At 65, I will move to Italy and study Italian, cooking and architecture," she says matter-of-factly. But first, she still has a lot she wants to accomplish.

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“We’ve changed the spa industry but I hope that we can change the cosmetic industry too,” she says. “I hope that one day Estee Lauder and La Mer will be my competition.” At this time, Ms. Raphael shows no signs of stopping. She wants to be careful and strategic in her growth, and is committed to making all her products in Switzerland.

“The next generation will be about preventative beauty, like preventative medicine,” she predicts. “It’s like brushing your teeth. You can’t just wait for the wrinkles to come and then try to fix it.”

