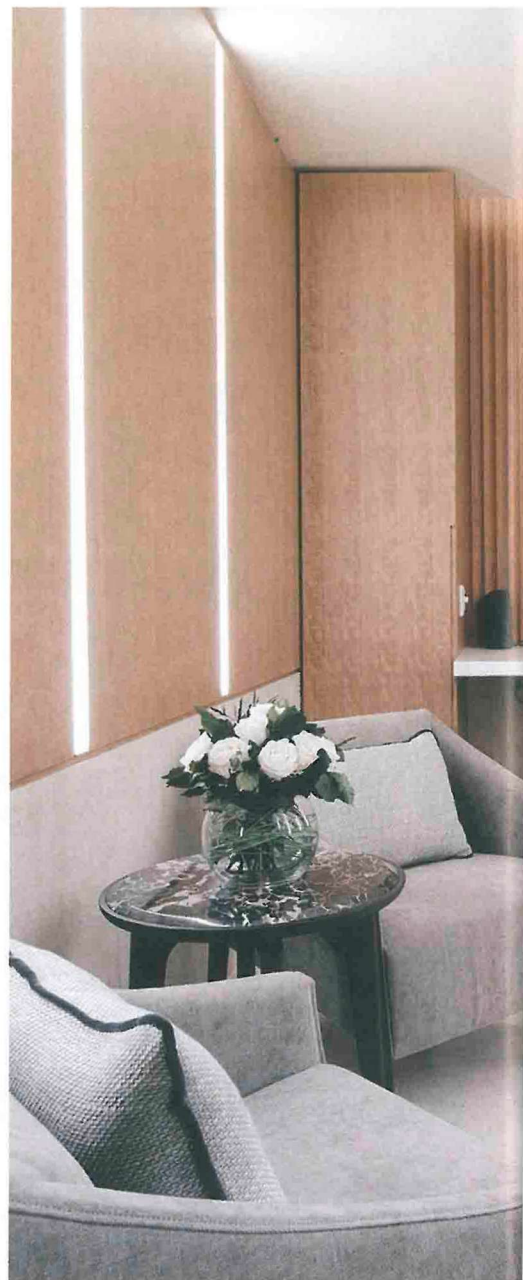


## STORES

# Harrods offers a wellness super boost

John Ryan visits The Wellness Clinic and finds serenity amid the world's most famous department store



At some point in the relatively recent past the concept of ‘wellness’ surfaced and clinics purporting to make this a purchasable reality began to appear.

The fact that most of us are well most of the time and you might be inclined to wonder whether attending a wellness clinic implies that you are in some manner ‘unwell’ is by the by.

Wellness is a growth area that shows no sign of slowing, and Harrods is the latest retailer to respond to this trend, by launching The Wellness Clinic on its fourth floor.

For those assuming this is an extension to a hairdressing salon, think again – the store already houses a hair and beauty centre, Urban Retreat, on the floor above. The Wellness Clinic measures 10,500 sq ft and there’s not a wannabe Vidal Sassoon in sight.

Perhaps the most curious thing about this space is that it is almost invisible from the arrival point on the fourth floor.

Architect practice Stanton Williams has managed to dedicate more or less two-thirds of the entire floor to the clinic, without cramping the space for the young fashion and kidswear offer, also on the same floor.

## Spacious but secluded

All of which is rather the point. The Wellness Clinic is as much about discretion and service as it is the results of the treatments.

There are two entrances. The first is a standard doorway from the main floor and leads directly to a retail and reception area. The second is a discreet doorway for the mainly “international clientele”, as a Harrods spokeswoman puts it.

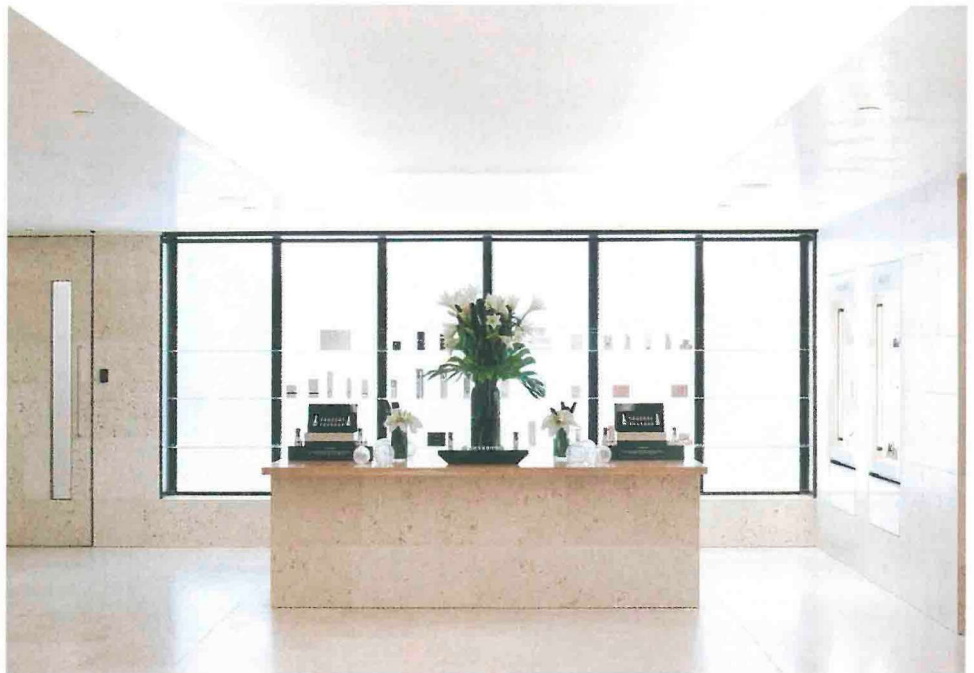
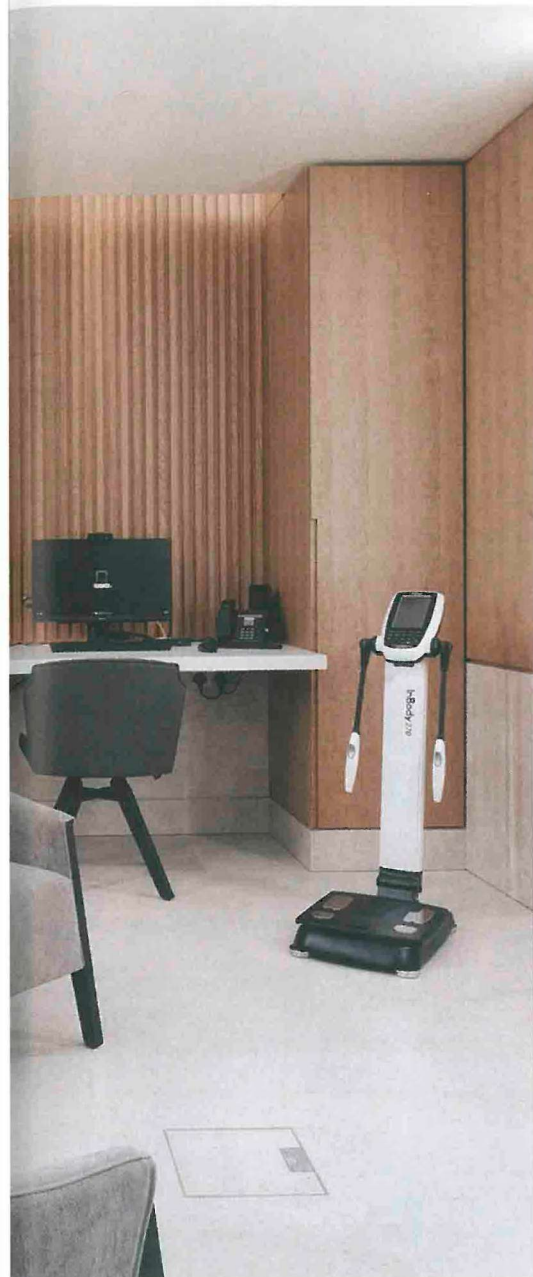
This is a place where the very well-heeled can go and sort themselves out as far as body ‘aesthetics’ are concerned and, as might be expected, the ambience is calm and quiet to add to the holistic ‘inner and outer’ beauty ethos.

Functionally this means a reception area which, as well as being where clients are met, is also the retail side of the operation.

Backlit shelves bear a range of potions and unguents, but this is top-end retail-space-in-a-clinic and so the merchandise is deliberately thin on the ground – adding to the sense that things will not be cheap. All this is confirmed by the liberal use of marble and subdued lighting, which creates a soft-focus interior.

A point of difference to many other clinics, there is no music in the reception. The overriding sense is one of hush.

How German supermarkets have  
made convenience more congenial  
[Retail-Week.com/Frankfurt](http://Retail-Week.com/Frankfurt)



## The Wellness Clinic, Harrods

**Knightsbridge, London**

Location Fourth floor

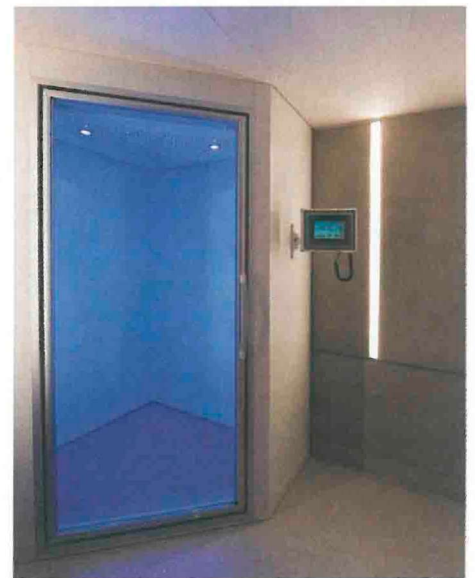
Design Stanton Williams

Size 10,500 sq ft

Ambience Bond villain hideout

Clientele International

Reason to visit To look good



Beyond the spacious reception is a large and comfortable waiting area, devoid of people. Few are kept waiting and customers are likely to be on their own in this area, before heading down one of the several low lit, beechwood clad corridors.

Discreet treatment rooms cater for all manner of the latest treatments, equipped with everything from 3D body imagers to a 'cryo' chamber, where the brave don slippers and gloves (and not much else) and head in to a pod that is chilled to -92C – good for a variety of things, apparently.

In total, it is hard not to be reminded of an early Bond movie where unspeakable things were done to people behind closed doors, while smiling, serene villains welcomed visitors.

This is Harrods, however, and emerging from the Wellness Clinic rejuvenated in some form

**It is hard not to be reminded of an early Bond movie where unspeakable things were done to people behind closed doors, while smiling, serene villains welcomed visitors**

or another, you are back in Knightsbridge and walking around debatably the world's most well-known store.

With the Wellness Clinic, the 'top person's store' has jumped aboard a train populated by health conscious consumers, most of whom are convinced that they can be 10 years younger on production of a credit card.

Maybe so, but what the west London department store has also done is to create an environment that is some distance in terms of ambience from the rest of the store and which does make the visitor feel as if they are in a sanatorium being taken care of.

In terms of design, this is bang on what you would expect in a ritzy German spa and the white-coated staff reinforce this sense.

Harrods Wellness Clinic looks set to do very well for itself. **rw**