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# Inside ilāpothecary, the Meghan Markle-Approved Spa Coming to New York



by Rachel Epstein Aug 16, 2019



It's not uncommon for customers to cry tears of happiness the moment they walk into Denise Leicester's London spa, ilāpothecary. While the flagship store, located blocks away from Kensington Palace, only opened a year ago, the celeb-approved British herbal wellness brand, ilā, has been around for more than a decade. And everyone from Gwyneth Paltrow to Natalie Portman to \*whispers\* Meghan Markle are fans. After talking to Leicester, I can tell why.

Back in the '80s—way before "organic" and "holistic" were wellness industry buzzwords—Leicester began to explore natural remedies. Leicester was a caregiver for a member of the UAE's royal family; when the standard medicinal practices didn't seem to be aiding his ailments, she started to use essential oils and massage therapy to nurse him back to health. Suddenly, he started to walk and eat. She was originally hired for three months, and ended up staying for four-and-a-half years.

"There was something that definitely wasn't written in my medical books. When I came back [from the Middle East], I wanted to understand what was happening and study what complementary medicine could do for us," explains Leicester, who enrolled in the Institute for Complementary Medicine in London. "I think it awakens that ancient healing and energy within us. We just get disconnected from it."



Inside the ilāpothecary London store where Meghan Markle and Prince Harry visited in April 2019.

This revelation led Leicester to India, where she would go on a *Eat, Pray, Love*-like journey studying yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda (an ancient holistic healing experience developed thousands of years ago to promote good health). It wasn't until Leicester was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome that she fully applied this practice to all aspects of her life. She started teaching yoga classes for women and holding retreats to share this lifestyle with others, which inspired her to create a line of products known today as ilā—the Sanskrit word for Earth—sold on cult-favorite beauty sites like [Goop](#) and [Dermstore](#).

"It was part of my healing to produce products that not only nourish our skin, but our hearts and souls as well," says Leicester. "I saw in India that Ayurvedic products could be made in a very peaceful environment where there's nothing negative to affect the mind. I really wanted to do the same when I first started [ilā], so I went on a journey of finding a spa. I found a beautiful practitioner to come and help me choose the right place where the energy was right. ilāpothecary is an incredible environment. It's imbued with vitality and a calm, harmonious energy."

In April, while Meghan Markle was still pregnant, she and Prince Harry visited ilāpothecary in London, and, [according to royal reporter Katie Nicholl](#), spent nearly two-and-a-half hours inside. The most popular in-store treatments include the "[Beat the Blues Back Massage](#)" and "[432 Re-Balancing Reflexology](#)," though it's unconfirmed which of these therapies, if any, Meghan and Harry chose. Leicester is unable to discuss specific details on her celebrity clientele, including the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, but she did tell me how over-the-moon she is to be acknowledged by such well-known people.



Denise Leicester, ilā and ilāpothecary founder  
Courtesy

## Shop Denise's Favorite ilā Products



**Face Oil for  
Glowing Radiance**

ilā

Dermstore

\$118.00

[shop it](#)



**The Big Sleep Bath  
Salts**

ilā

£32.00

[shop it](#)



**Body Oil for Vital  
Energy**

ilā

Dermstore

\$78.00

[shop it](#)



**Face Serum For  
Glowing Radiance**

ilā

£75.00

[shop it](#)

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Considering Meghan has always been a proponent of [holistic wellness](#), it makes sense that she would use Leicester's products. All ilā ingredients, including Himalayan salts, Moringa oil, lavender, beeswax, and rose water, are sourced from local farmers and blended in the brand's barn in [the Cotswolds](#). The countryside destination is one for customers to receive massages, facials, mini rituals, and other therapeutic treatments away from, well, everything.

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If hopping on a plane to England seems too impossible to achieve the zen you're looking for, there's great news: ilā is opening its very own 7,000-square-foot spa inside NYC's [Lotte New York Palace](#) next month. (Yes, the same Palace where *Gossip Girl* was filmed.) It will feature a private yoga studio and seven treatment rooms, including a VIP suite, with incredible views of the city. Energy-boosting massages and sound baths will be available in addition to manicures, pedicures, and facials using the ilā products.



The ilā spa in the Lotte New York Palace Hotel, opening in September.  
Courtesy

As ilā continues to expand across the globe, Leicester hopes to encourage people to open their minds and integrate a more holistic approach to their lifestyle. "It's about not using chemicals—instead it's using herbs and plants and things that come from nature that you can touch that are pathways that lead us back inside [of ourselves]," she says. "My company is based on the premise that it's not about what's wrong with you; it's about helping you rediscover and reconnect with what's right."

[book an nyc ilā spa reservation](#)