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When your muscles are tense but time is short, a massage may seem like the perfect—but impossible—indulgence. But these days, elite spas are offering **four-handed massages** and promising total relaxation in 50 minutes or less.

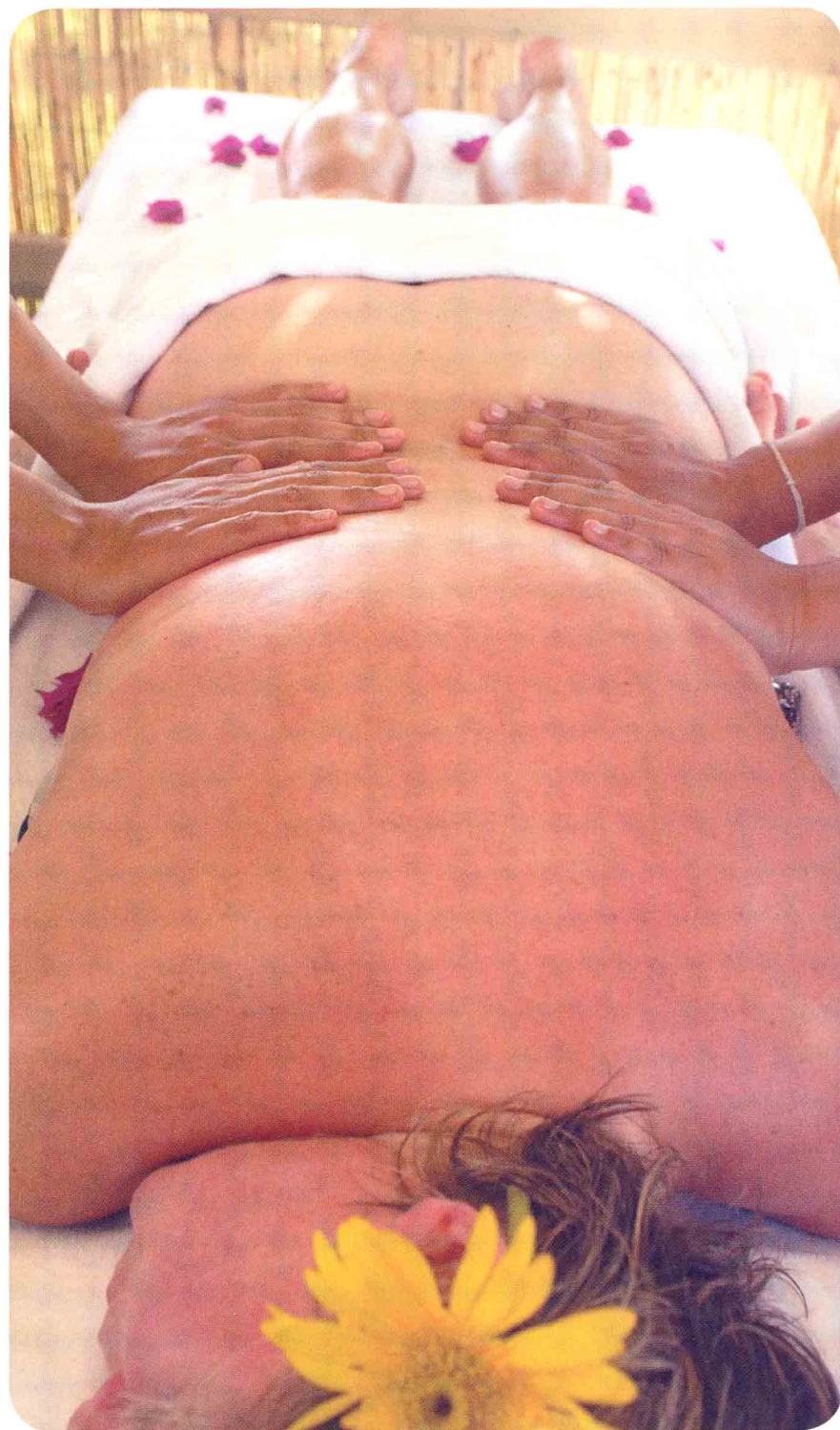
FACE DOWN ON THE TABLE, YOUR MIND FREE of its everyday clutter, you take a deep breath and then exhale. Two warm hands fall on your right shoulder, massaging gently. You breathe in and out again, and then two more hands find your left shoulder and go to work. A fantasy come true? Yes—but not *that* kind of fantasy.

Four-handed massages are among the newest and most luxurious treatments at top spas around the world, with time-crunched jetsetters among the most devoted fans. The math is pretty easy: Two massage therapists working in unison over the course of 50 minutes can get just as much work in as one might over the course of a two-hour session—and to much greater effect, some say.

“The four-handed massage is unique in that a balance is achieved that can’t be reached with a regular massage performed by one therapist,” explains Phillip Lam, the spa manager at Equinox Fitness on Manhattan’s 63rd Street. “With the precise synchronized movements of the therapists’ strokes, the clients are induced to deep relaxation while energizing and realigning the body’s muscles. Every inch of the body, from head to toe will be addressed and stress free by the end of the massage.”

The massage therapists perform almost a choreographed dance with their hands, each equally massaging one side of the body, concentrating on aches and pains specified by the client. A clear mind and focused breathing are an integral part of the client’s experience.

“At certain moments during the massage, one might



feel like six or seven hands are working on you,” says Lam. “With two hands, it takes longer to relax; with four or more, its inevitable.”

And in less than an hour, it’s clients on the go who are opting for the double-duty. Whether it’s during a much-needed lunch break from the office, or in between meetings at the hotel spa on a business trip, four-handed massages may be the quickest way to melt all that built-up tension away. —ALEX GARINGER