

Salons & the City

Princess Soraya Salon

There's nothing we London women enjoy more than a good old pamper session. Hence our new review section here in Health & Wellbeing. In conjunction with Glamoo.com, we'll be testing the latest treatments and beauty trends that are available to you in London.

Our first stop is the Princess Soraya Salon in Finchley, North London. The salon is named after Princess Soraya Estefany Bahktary, the second wife of the Shah of Iran, well known for her beauty.

I'm greeted at the door by a petite lady of indomitable age dressed in a white beauticians outfit, with tube socks and pristine white trainers. Her hair is also immaculately coiffed and flicked. It's Firozeh. Ahah, the salon owner. There's something very so accurate about Firozeh, her air says 'trust me, it'll do you good, and you can't help but believe her. With over 30 years of alternative and beauty therapy experience, I have no reason to question her.

Ok, so when we think of salons we envisage orchids and white tiffany chairs. You won't get that at the Princess Soraya Salon. Upon entering, I realise I am sitting in a lounge and that Firozeh, the owner, has a very professional business that is operating out of her live-work space. But don't be deceived. Her surroundings are of her high-end spa – if not better.



After a very hospitable Gin & Tonic, I am led upstairs to a bathroom and told to undress; I'm handed some disposable undies and a dressing gown. There are only two placers for disposable undies: hospital and the spa. When I put them on, my thoughts of standing in someone's home slip into oblivion.

Every treatment of the salon comes with a £5 complimentary paraffin hand treatment. The £5 goes towards replenishing the wax. A small price to pay in my books. Once my hands are waxed and gloved I get on the trolley in preparation for my facial. The treatment I have in store is a Hydration Facial.

"Dehydration shows itself with very fine lines on the skin. It's not related to age; the person hasn't all of a sudden become old. It's just because the skin doesn't have enough fluid. And fluid is separate from oil – you can be hydrated and dry. Dry means you need nourishment and oil. Dehydration doesn't work with oil; it needs fluid! And fluid was exactly what I was going to get with my facial, but in the most unconventional way...

First comes the complete cleansing and toning. All remnants of make-up are completely removed leaving the face a fresh blank canvas. Then I wear a hot pad and a nifty gadget that blows steam at my face is placed on a tray on my lap. The cascade of steam around my face is refreshing and, because of the comfortable sitting position, very relaxing.

When the pores are well and truly open, Firozeh goes in for the kill. With a blackhead extractor she skillfully removes ones I didn't know existed, while I sit quietly, inwardly mortified. You see the steam

process brings the impurities to the surface. Needless to say this isn't the most comfortable experience, but hey, no pain no gain, and nobody past the salon doors need ever know. Once my skin is in tip-top condition, Firozeh applies a heavy-duty exfoliator to remove the dead skin cells. I can feel a tingling sensation, both from the strength of the product and the bareness of my skin. By the time this process had finished, I feel buffed to perfection.

"Now for the facial."

When Firozeh says these words, my eyes nearly fall out of my head. Nothing in the Princess Soraya Salon is done by halves.

"It is only now that the skin is clean enough to accept the quality ingredients of the facial I am about to do." The Princess Soraya Salon uses facial products from a European company called Germaine de Capuccini, which has a big presence in Spain, Italy and Portugal.

"The reason I chose them was because their products are very very strong and I really get fantastic results. I work by results; this product produces results so I'm happy with it. And more importantly, the clients are happy with it." First my face is covered with a strong hydration gel from the Germaine de Capuccini's Hydro Swan range. This is where things get very modern...

Firozeh uses a machine emitting galvanic current to push the gel into the depths of the skin cells. Yes, you heard me right. You hold a rod with a negative

charge, while she rolls another rod with a positive charge over your face. Don't worry, you can't get an electric shock – but you do have a current flowing through you and that does push the hydrating gel into your skin cells, helping to hydrate and plump them. After this process, a serum is massaged on your face and neck, followed by a hydration gel mask. You're left with the cool mask and the sounds of the forest playing in the background while you drift away.

I find myself floating out of the door with my face the cleanest it has ever felt in my adult life. Ok so this isn't a plush West End salon, but is Firozeh qualified? Absolutely. Does she have all of the state of the art equipment? Definitely. Could this be the best facial I have ever had? Quite possibly. Will I be back... without a doubt. Watch this space. The In Depth Hydration, Cell and Winkle Plumping is £60.

