



# top tips

JESSICA MILLN DISCOVERS  
HOW A TOUCH OF COLOUR  
TO THE FINGERTIPS CAN LIFT THE SPIRIT

Photographs by **Sam Morgan Moore**/[westcountryphotographers.com](http://westcountryphotographers.com)

I'm having an odd experience here at the keyboard. It appears that someone else's fingers are doing the typing. The hands that tap and flit before me have shiny red tips that belong to the very glamorous. My own nails, the last time I gave them a cursory glance, were hard-worn, chipped and uneven.

It so happens that us girls generally sit in two camps. It's as if there's an invisible dividing line between those who've had certain experiences and those who have not, from childbirth, which is huge, to the seemingly most trivial. I'll dare to admit that even my first waxings, eyebrow plucking, hair-colouring moments have felt like mini rites of passage. And certainly, after you've sat in both camps and passed from one to the other, you never quite relate to your old self again. How could I have thought that having children would spoil my fun or that an interest in making myself look and feel better was just silly vanity?

I've just had a proper nail manicure – the first in my life as it happens and, frivolous though it sounds, there was a tiny

life-changing moment even in this.

The last person who painted my nails was my bridesmaid, with a translucent gloss. We'd agreed on a natural look, but the older I get the more a vampish, scarlet-lips-and-nail girl inside is screaming to get out. I'm up for any quick fix solution that'll make me feel less like a drudge, more like a female again.

The Clearing Spa, at The Cornwall Hotel, is situated within stylishly converted 19th-century stables and is no more than a mile outside St Austell. Adjacent to a beautiful walled garden and within a woodland estate the spa is perfectly situated for its function to 'clear and cleanse'. The Spa has five treatment rooms offering a wide range of luxurious therapies from the internationally acclaimed Aromatherapy Associates. In addition to these therapies and the new manicure offerings, the extensive treatment menu also includes waxing, tinting, facial mapping, pregnancy and teenage treatments. The Spa also houses a spectacular infinity-edged pool, a sauna, steam room, and

gym complete with state-of-the-art fitness facilities, personal trainers on hand and local membership available.

I came to try out Shellac gel, a new nail product designed to withstand the rigours of a busy lifestyle. "But how will it cope with weeding and gardening?" I asked Verity, my manicurist for this session, while she carefully filed my rough nail ends. I was having mixed feelings. After all, beautiful nails are a bit high-maintenance and I wasn't sure I'd be able to shirk house and home tasks in order to preserve them.

"The great thing about these Shellac gels," said Verity, showing me a range from pretty pinks, vivid reds, a deep purple to a statement black, "is that they dry instantly and last without incurring chips, scratches or smudges for weeks and keep their shine and shimmer." That sounded pretty good, but to reassure me yet more she added: "We have ladies who come in for this treatment who garden or keep horses. They certainly don't want to worry about needing to protect their nails."

Another first try was a facial. Paula, another therapist at the spa, led me into one of the treatment rooms where soft and relaxing music seems to seep into the soul. The lights are dimmed, aromatherapy oils infuse the atmosphere and tea candles set the mood. A facial is as much a cure for tension as it is beauty process for the face. Although Paula listed a series of ten different products she used from cleansers, tonic, oils, serums and various moisturisers, I was barely aware. Every motion of application is a gentle massage to the face, the neck and then the head. For 25 minutes I was transported to a new level that was both relaxing and reviving. Afterwards, I couldn't resist a final 20 minutes of steam, sauna and a refreshing dip to wash away the last vestiges of stress in the pool.

A few hours' escape from a busy life, to wile away time at The Clearing Spa, is as good as a mini-break. I came away tranquil and reinvented - and, I'm proud to say, with my newly red nail-varnished fingertips looking positively daring and definitely divine. I can now choose to glam up like a diva and put on killer heels without feeling like a fake, I can emerge bedraggled from the sea in a wetsuit and feel a little like a Bond girl, or, but whisper it quietly, I can slum it all day in paint-marked jeans and an old sweatshirt and still feel like a woman. My sons have been stunned into silence; my girlfriends have squealed in excitement; and my husband has taken me out to dinner.

Next time I'm treating my toes to this kind of attention. It definitely makes sense. **CT**

#### INFORMATION

- ▶ The new nail treatment with Shellac Nails costs £25 for either hands or toes. The high shine, instantly drying, gel nail polish lasts up to two weeks on the hands, six weeks on the toes
- ▶ A Rose Facial costs £30. The result is a smooth, radiant complexion and a relaxed state of mind.
- ▶ For more details of The Clearing Spas treatments and membership packages contact: The Cornwall Estate, Pentewan Road, Tregorrick, St. Austell PL26 7AB  
01726 874055 [www.thecornwall.com](http://www.thecornwall.com)