

# Spas going to new heights

**So many places in Whistler to get a heavenly rub, so little time**

**Sue Frause, Special to The Province**

Published: Tuesday, March 28, 2006

Too many spas, too little time.

That's how I felt after several weekends of Whistler spa-hopping. With 20 spas to choose from, it was impossible to experience all of them but I did manage to put together a list that includes both hotel and day spas. Note that they all offer in-room massage therapies.

Whatever your preferred spa style or budget, Whistler is fast becoming a wellness destination. Glenn Iles, former director of sales and marketing at the Four Seasons Resort Whistler, heads up a new company called Whistler Wellness.

As a web-based resource for "all things wellness" in Whistler, it features spa listings, yoga schedules and a directory of health and wellness practitioners. There's also information on the site about the first annual Whistler Wellness Week, held this year April 28-May 7.

"The mountains have long been associated with wellness," said Iles. "At Whistler, the numerous outdoor activities are complemented by world-class practitioners offering treatments originating from around the world."

I can vouch for that. I indulged in Chinese medicine, a Javanese treatment, Ayurveda from India and seaweed from B.C.

Spa-hopping at Whistler is a global experience, indeed.

- The Spa at Four Seasons Resort Whistler: Located at the base of Blackcomb Mountain in the rustically modern Four Seasons Resort Whistler, this spa is a respite from the hubbub of the village.

Arrive early to take advantage of the steam room and to relax in the waiting lounge with tea or lemon water. During both of my visits it was a mix of men and women, all wearing the signature Four Seasons' bathrobes.

My husband and I enjoyed a 90-minute Aroma Stone Massage in one of the two couples' rooms (there are 15 treatment rooms). The treatment combines aromatherapy with stone fusion and is pure bliss. The dim lighting in the room combined with the warm stones sent me sailing back up to my room. No elevator necessary.

My solo treatment was a Myoxy Caviar Facial. With the key words "anti-aging," I was looking forward to a more youthful countenance. For 90 minutes, my aesthetician rehabbed my winterized face, using a blend of caviar, pearl extract and Escutox (a topical natural alternative to Botox). It was delicious, indeed.

I wonder if eating caviar will help, too?

The Spa at Four Seasons Resort Whistler, 4591 Blackcomb Way; 604-935-3400;  
www.fourseasons.com/whistler

- Vida Wellness Spa at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler: I had patronized Vida's Vancouver spas at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre and Sutton Place Hotels and was looking forward to having one of their Ayurvedic treatments at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler.

As a rookie to Ayurveda, the ancient Hindu science of health and medicine, I was booked in for an Ayurvedic Swedana. My "swedana" began in one of the spa's 15 treatment rooms. Slathering my head and body with fennel, lavender, lemon grass, peppermint and sandalwood oils, my aesthetician gave me a relaxing hour-long massage.

From there it was into a handcrafted, West Coast-cedar steam cabinet, customized with herbs based on my "dosha" (they included lavender, fennel and sandalwood). The combination of steam and herbs helps to detoxify and cleanse the system. This was followed by a dry-flour brushing to exfoliate the skin and not let those nasty toxins back in.

If you're claustrophobic, no worries, your head is not enclosed and the room is well lit. My aesthetician also provided me with a handout that included exercises and recipes for my particular "dosha." Not only was it relaxing but enlightening.

Vida Wellness Spa at the Fairmont Chateau Whistler, 4599 Chateau Blvd.; 604-938-2086; [www.vidawellness.com](http://www.vidawellness.com)

- Artesia Spa at the Hilton Whistler Resort: This is Whistler's newest spa that opened in March in what was formerly the Delta Whistler Resort. Artesia Spa has six treatment rooms (one a couple's room) and a menu that ranges from a Synchronized Massage (two practitioners working simultaneously on a client) and the Nourishing Alaria Wrap.

I enjoyed this hour-long wrap that commenced with a Rockweed exfoliation, followed by an Alaria Wrap and Lamanaria lotion massage. If you're not familiar with these names, they are all seaweed products harvested from the cold Canadian Pacific by Diane Bernard (aka the Seaweed Lady) of Outer Coast Seaweeds. You'll feel like you're at the seashore and will receive a seaweed shammy to take home and use in the bath.

Adele Anderson, managing partner of the spa, is also the owner and operator of Vital Spirit Spa at three other Whistler locations.

At the Pan Pacific Whistler Mountainside, I had a most unusual massage called "Oriental Sole," where the massage therapist hung from overhead support bars and gave me a 60-minute deep tissue massage with her feet. Strange but fantastic!

Artesia Spa at the Hilton Whistler Resort, 4050 Whistler Way; 604-938-9381; [www.artesiaspa.com](http://www.artesiaspa.com)

Vital Spirit Spa, Pan Pacific Whistler Village Centre, 4299 Blackcomb Way; 604-938-9750; [www.vitalspiritspa.com](http://www.vitalspiritspa.com)

Vital Spirit Spa, Pan Pacific Whistler Mountainside, 4320 Sundial Cres.; 604-905-6516. [www.vitalspiritspa.com](http://www.vitalspiritspa.com)

Vital Spirit Spa, Sundial Boutique Hotel, 4340 Sundial Cres.; 604-905-6516. [www.vitalspiritspa.com](http://www.vitalspiritspa.com)

- Taman Sari Royal Heritage Spa: Located in Whistler Village's Summit Lodge, this is the only Javanese-style spa in North America. With branches in Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan (and one opening in Dubai in April) the spa experience begins with the Javanese architecture in the lobby and traditional music playing throughout the spa. It's like entering another world.

My first experience at Taman Sari was a Javanese Lulur Body Exfoliation. This has been a health and beauty ritual of the royal Javanese women for centuries, generally given to the bride-to-be every day for 40 days prior to her wedding. The main ingredients are turmeric, rice powder, pandan-wangi leaves and temu giring that remove the dead cells and stimulate new cell regenerations.

The Javanese Hot Rocks Massage is not your typical hot-stone massage but combines stroking, kneading and friction along with both soft and powerful movements.

After 90 minutes, all my tired muscles were refreshed and Ama my therapist (who called me "Miss Sue") followed it with a 30-minute Coconut Hair & Scalp Treatment. Called a "Cream Bath" in Indonesia, it felt totally divine and left my hair lush.

Taman Sari Royal Heritage Spa, Summit Lodge, 4359 Main St.; 604-938-5982;  
[www.tamansarispa.com](http://www.tamansarispa.com)

- Solarice Wellness Centre + Spa: Located on the second floor of the Whistler Information Centre in the heart of the village, this is where the locals come. But visitors are welcomed warmly, too.

Along with its seven treatment rooms, two steam showers and a yoga and Pilates studio, there are a variety of wellness therapies offered here.

I had an appointment with Dr. Lisa Skerritt, a doctor of Chinese medicine who owns the spa with her partner Dr. Amy Rein, a registered psychologist.

As a virgin in the acupuncture world, I was enlisting Dr. Skerritt's expertise to aid in easing the pain of an old knee injury. She employed acupuncture, cupping and moxibustion (the burning of mugwort) during the hour-long treatment, and the results were impressive.

This is a casual, Whistler type of place. Clients show up right from the slopes, dressed in ski gear, as they head for a yoga class or take advantage of the many spa treatments.

The Apres-Sport is a two-hour package that would be ideal after a hard day on the slopes or trails. It includes a Chinese Herbal Mud Wrap, Aroma-Steam, Sports Massage and Facilitated Stretching.

Solarice Wellness Center + Spa, 202-4230 Gateway Dr.; 604-935-1222;  
[www.solarice.com](http://www.solarice.com)

- Sacha Spa Whistler: It was lightly snowing for my early-morning appointment at Sacha Spa. Sitting in the elegant Mediterranean lounge looking out to the falling flakes, I was greeted by Ginette from New Brunswick who guided me to one of the around-the-world-themed treatment rooms.

Although I'm an experienced spa-goer, she gave me a treatment that would be ideal for spa newbies. The Focused Tension Relief Treatment is an alternative to a full-body massage and especially good for those with chronic muscular neck and shoulder tension (think computer geeks). A 30-minute massage to the back, neck and shoulders with essential oils is followed by a mudpack to the upper back, neck and shoulders. While this oozes into the skin, Ginette massaged my sore feet with creme. If you have time, add a Vichy Shower to any of the body treatments.

And for really tired tootsies, the Lavender Foot Wrap begins with a lavender soak, followed by exfoliation and a hydrating mask. Your feet are then swaddled in heated towels and massaged with shea butter and lavender moisture.

Solarice Wellness Centre + Spa is taking over Sacha Spa Whistler's space April 1.

The Solarice team will retain the luxurious look and feel of the spa, along with the staff. It will be known as the Solarice Wellness Spa.

Sacha Spa Whistler, Delta Whistler Village Suites, 4-4308 Main St; 604-966-0888.  
[www.sachaspa.com](http://www.sachaspa.com)

- Links:

Whistler Wellness: [www.whistlerwellness.ca](http://www.whistlerwellness.ca); 604-966-7474

Tourism Whistler: [www.tourismwhistler.com](http://www.tourismwhistler.com); 1-800-WHISTLER

The Vancouver Province 2006