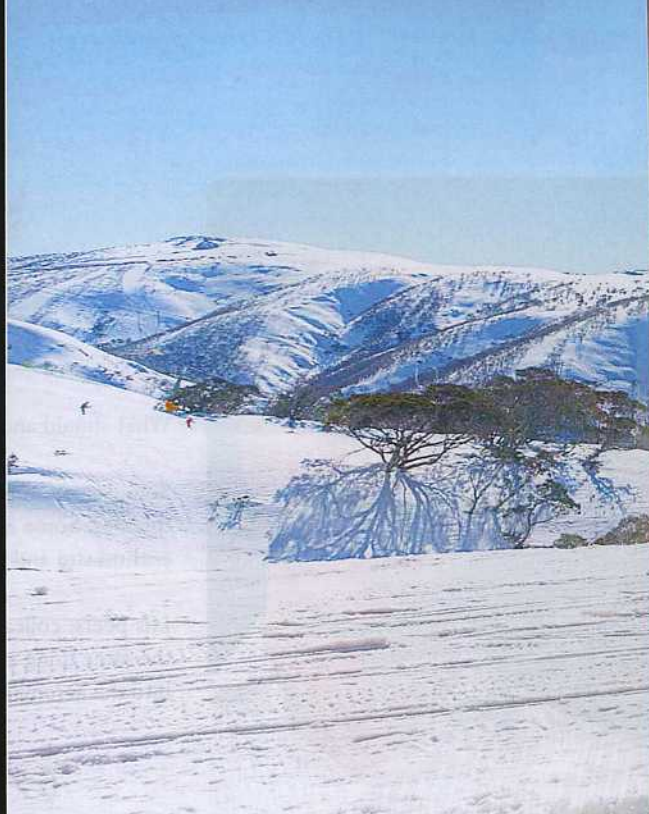


SKI IN SPA OUT

Snow spas of Down Under and Up North



Rachael Oakes-Ash explores some of the places that are committed to delivering inner and outer well-being of snow-lovers, Down Under and up in the Northern Continent.

Alpine regions of the world have long understood the power of altitude for healing. The Swiss, Germans and Italians have all perfected the Alpine Spa retreat when the Celts and Romans who settled in the hills took great advantage of the thermal springs and mountain air on offer.

Skiing introduced winter sports enthusiasts to the mountain terrain and spawned ski specific spa treatments for those exposed to the elements on a daily basis during their ski holiday.

It's not just the Europeans who know how to pummel, pound and pamper with some Edelweiss. The ski resorts of North America and closer to home, Australia, provide intimate ski in spa out services.

DOWN UNDER

Australia is known more for its harsh red centre and tropical beaches than for its alpine regions. Few know that the country's Snowy Mountain ranges provide annual snow for skiers and winter sports folk every northern summer. The Victorian region in South East Australia has taken particular note of the European spas and opened their own Ski In Spa Out day spas on the slopes of Mt Hotham, Falls Creek and Mount Buller ski resorts. It makes

sense because recreational skiers use more than 16 core muscles when burning down the piste, from the hamstrings to the gluteus.

Massage helps keep those 16 muscles limber which means less chance of injury and more chance of enjoying the snow each year. There's nothing like sore muscles to keep new skiers under the duvet while their friends are making hay on the powder.

Similarly, alpine conditions require alpine treatments with re-oxygenating and re-hydrating potions to help moisturise dehydrated skin. Treatments at altitude differ greatly from those at sea level.

Here are three of them in Australia:

The Endota Day Spa at Falls Creek understands the healing powers of indigenous essence. Native Australian aromatherapy and treatments featuring lemon myrtle and eucalyptus feature on the spa menu.

Step into Endota and experience a traditional Australian snow gum ambience with slated floors, white walls and soothing green soft furnishings. Texture abides as the skin is seduced with native mint foot soaks before each treatment. Perfect for ski boot feet.



The personal Moroccan tiled steam room opens the lungs and the pores and the outdoor private hot-tub soothes tired muscles. It's all part of the HUSKI boutique ski lodge in which the Endota Day Spa resides. Designed by Elenberg Fraser Architects, these 14 apartments form a giant wooden snowflake on which the sun's rays play.

It's not all girly spa action either, "Bloke massage" is tailored specifically for the male physique using 'made for man' herbs. For pure blizzard bliss, the *Never Never Land* treatment is three and a half hours of massage, exfoliation and Australian clay cocooning. Or you may want to choose the Witchetty Scrub to slough away dead cells. The next door Produce Store run by Melbourne gourmet, Zeth Romanis, is the perfect post-massage pit stop for a glass of local cold climate wine and a peruse of the spa menu for the next day's blissful booking.

Where: Endota Day Spa, HUSKI, 3 Sitzmark St, Falls Creek

Cost: Treatments start at AUD55 for 30 minutes massage

Bookings: Visit www.endota.com.au

Further info: Stay at HUSKI for massage on your doorstep. www.huski.com.au

The mirrored treatment room at the Mt Hotham White Mountain Day Spa is affectionately referred to by staff as the narcissists' den. Frosted mirrors line the walls and ceiling creating an illusion of never ending space.

Narcissists' den is one of four rooms used for a range of healing treatments from reflexology to Reiki, hot-stone massage and the unique Guasha-style massage using soothing buffalo skin utensils to release heat toxins built up in the muscles.

The feel of gentle buffalo skin scraping is meditative in rhythm and nature, and before you know it you've entered another space. Try the four hands treatment for pure decadence when two therapists massage your muscles simultaneously.

Costing over half a million dollars, The White Mountain Spa was designed by Italian architect Giovanni Amborossie. It features floor to ceiling glass for ethereal views of Mt Hotham's Swindlers Valley from the soothing pre- and post-treatment waiting room.

The complex is owned by two local Mt Hotham skiers, Alison McEwan and Lisa Parkinson. Together they have spent 14 years in the spa industry and the same time in the snow. They understand the specific needs of ski-weary bodies and alpine skin. Pevonia Swiss formulated facial products are the beauty product of choice for their intense hydration in harsh winter conditions. Gingko Biloba eye treatments and Litho-Cal body peels compliment the Pevonia experience.

Where: White Mountain Spa Retreat, Hotham Central, Great Alpine Rd, Mt Hotham

Cost: One-hour massages are AUD99 for hot stone, aromatherapy and the like

Bookings: Visit www.whitespahotham.com

Further info: The spa offers a Prestige Chalet Service. Massage therapists will come to you in your chalet. AUD125 for 60 minutes.

Enter Mt Buller's Breathtaker All Suite Hotel and Spa Retreat and you'd be forgiven for thinking you were in Switzerland. The luxurious lap pool is bordered by floor to glass ceiling and exposed sandstone. The invitation says: "Jump Right In".

At Breathtaker on High it's all about the water. Geisha hot-tubs, Jacuzzis and water treatments utilize air jets to relax muscles prior to massage. Thalassothys products are in keeping with the aqua theme of Breathtaker and utilize marine algae from the surface, the middle and the greatest depth of the sea. Marine algae are known to contain ten times more trace elements than ground plants. This means ten times more nutrients get on to the skin surface.

The good news is the spa is strictly adults only. So, no screaming children to shatter the harmony. Couple treatments feature double geisha hot tubs and double massage rooms for time out together. Stay at the Breathtaker All Suite hotel and you can be carried to your room post-treatment.

Where: Breathtaker All Suite Hotel and Spa Retreat, Breathtaker Rd, Mt Buller

Cost: A 30-minute back and neck massage costs AUD55

Bookings: Visit www.breathtaker.com.au

Further info: Room rates at Breathtaker All Suite Hotel start at AUD445 per night for a one bedroom deluxe apartment during peak season.

UP NORTH...AMERICA Colorado

No one mentions the dryness. They're happy to sing their praises of the majestic mountain vistas, the jaw-dropping bowls of snow, the alpine tree lines and the benefits of après ski drinks each afternoon at four but the dryness they keep under their cowboy hat in Colorado. It's like mentioning the war, you don't.

There's simply not enough water in the air to rehydrate so expect 3.00 a.m. carpet mouth wake-up calls when skiing these slopes. It's the price you pay for some of the driest powder snow in the world. Skiers paradise comes at a price. Constant exposure to the dry air at oxygen deprived altitude means cracked skin that sucks up moisturiser by the bucket load. Thank God for high altitude spa treatments.

Aspen

The Remede Spa at St Regis sits at 2,400 metres at the base of Ajax Mountain and favoured by celebrities such as Jennifer Aniston and Vince Vaughan. Set in the hotel basement floor, time is suspended by the comfort lighting and lack of windows to tell the outside time. Altitude headaches instantly disappear when inside the oxygen relaxation room. Here guests recline on contemporary chaise lounges with micro-fibre cashmere rug and hypnotic flamed fireplace for meditation. At this altitude we tend to intake a mere 18% of the life giving gas, twenty minutes on pure oxygen treatment and the blood is reoxygenated and the body feels better.

Where: St Regis Hotel, Aspen

www.stregisaspen.com

Cost: USD160 for one hour customized massage

Bookings: Visit www.remede.com

Further info: Soak in the confluence room of warm and cold waterfalls for added relaxation.

The Aspen Club and Spa is pure decadence with personal chauffeur service to collect you from your hotel residence. Bring work-out gear for walking, running, spinning, swimming, climbing, tennis, racquetball, squash, basketball and volleyball. This is indoor spa and recreation heaven.

The 'Krauter Kur' high altitude skin treatment with Alpine Rejuvenator Body treatment is a favourite come winter time in these parts. Exfoliating 'kur' minerals rid the body of its scaly flesh and the steam towel instantly puts skin at rest. Organic pine oil is applied to one's epidermis which soaks it up with glee.

Where: The Aspen Club, Crystal Lake Road, Aspen

Cost: High Altitude massage USD125 for 50 minutes

Bookings: Visit www.aspenclub.com

Further info: Try the new one, two or three day wellness retreats.



Telluride

The Golden Door Spa at the Peaks in Telluride is famous for its holistic spa approach high up in the mountains. The Peaks Resort sits in the box canyon mountain village of Telluride with its year-round breathtaking views. Choose from Dosha Balancing Massage or the warmed herbs of Bindi Balancing massage. Ayurvedic treatments sit side by side with natural mud and sea wraps all served up in one of forty treatment rooms. The Alpine Strawberry Smoother uses fruit acids to exfoliate the body and the Live Oxygen Facial brings skin back from the dead.

Where: The Peaks Resort, Telluride

www.thepeaksresort.com

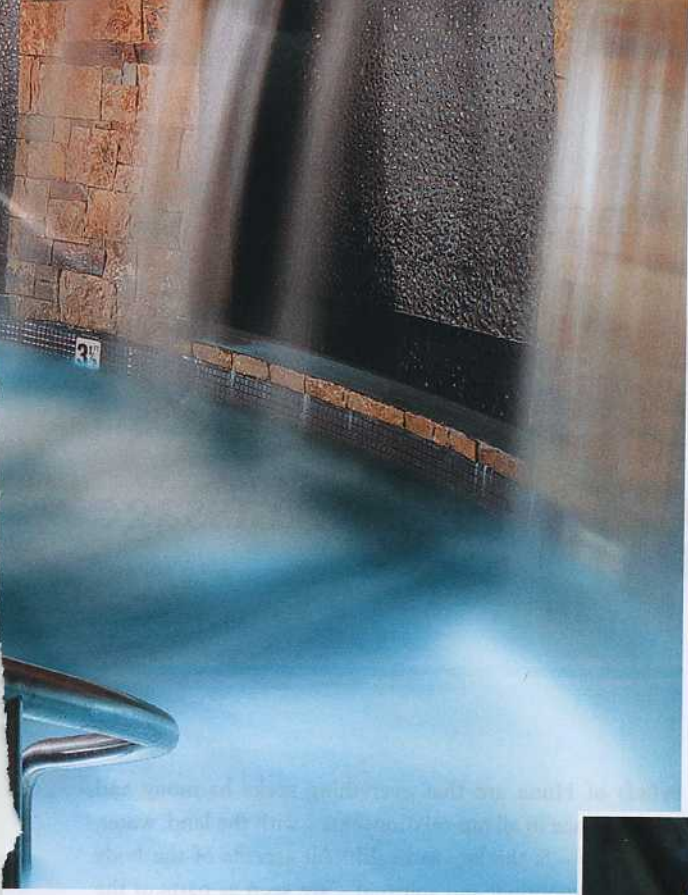
Cost: USD135 for 50 minutes Bindi Balancing

Bookings: Visit www.goldendoorspa.com

Further info: Celeb spot in the Peaks Resort foyer Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks and Tom Cruise all own property in Telluride.

CANADA

Still further north sits the majestic territory of Canada's own Rocky Mountain ranges. Skiers flock to Alberta and British Columbia in search of heli-skiing, mammoth mountains,



remote wilderness and purpose built ski towns. They find what they're looking for in the historic town of Banff Springs deep in Alberta and the contemporary village of Whistler/Blackcomb just outside of Vancouver.

Banff Springs, Alberta

The Willow Stream Spa at Fairmont Banff Springs Resort is a landmark in these parts. The castle-style hotel has been lording over the village of Banff since 1928 and brings opulence to all who step through the front doors. Thirty eight thousand feet over two floors is dedicated to the Willow Stream Spa which sits around a mineral spring pool high in salts and minerals with cascading falls into plunge pools. Altitude ailments are taken care of with Rockies Rehydration body treatment, High Altitude bath and massage and Herbal Kur therapies.

Where: The Fairmont Banff Springs Resort

Cost: Mountain Stone massage CAD159 for 60 minutes

Bookings: Visit www.fairmont.com

Further info: Stay at the Fairmont Banff Springs resort in a 'spa room' for easy access to Willow Stream in your slippers.

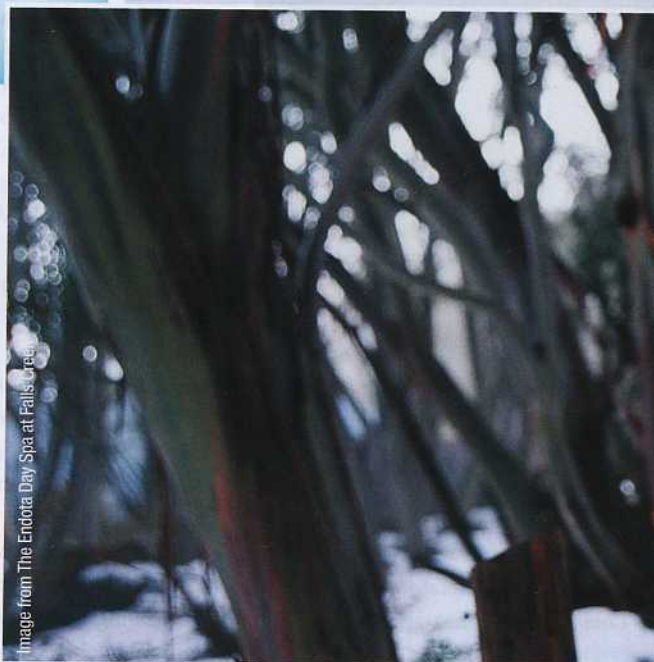


Image from The Endota Day Spa at Falls Creek

Whistler Blackcomb, British Columbia

Hang up your skis at the door because once you enter Solarice Wellness Centre and Spa at Whistler village you may not want to leave. Emphasis here is on mind, body and soul with Tai Chi and Yoga to stretch out weary ski muscles, Chinese moxabustion and acupuncture to heal insomnia and fatigue and Swiss steam therapy to warm the body through. Add facial and body treatments and

this could take a while. Special events are held regularly, so plan your visit to coincide with a 'wine and spa' evening.

Where: Whistler Blackcomb ski village

Cost: Tui Na Massage and steam to align energy flow CAD160 for 75 minutes

Bookings: Visit www.solarice.com

Further info: Two locations in the one ski village means more treatment options and times to suit you. **sa**



endota spa