

Chill Zone

Five stress-reducing spa treatments to help brighten your mood.

By **INGRIE WILLIAMS**

This year has already been a lot. Now, the ongoing angst unleashed by COVID-19 dovetails with the arrival of winter's long, dark days and a slump in mood known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). While it won't cure despair, unwinding at the spa can give a much-needed boost. Read on to discover five of the most relaxing treatments at spas across Canada.



❷ WHERE: VIDA SPA AT WESTIN BAYSHORE, VANCOUVER
THE TREATMENT: SHIRODHARA, \$270, 90 MINUTES

"We're seeing a demand for Ayurvedic treatments because the whole concept is all about bringing balance back to your mind, body and dosha, or personality type," says Allison Hegedus, president of Vida Spas. In addition to a customized massage and oil blend designed to soothe or invigorate as your dosha dictates, the Shirodhara treatment includes warm oil poured over the forehead, or third eye, for 15 to 20 minutes. "It flows very slowly and methodically—it almost puts you in a hypnotic state," says Hegedus. "You'll fall asleep, and then you'll have the best sleep of your life that night. It's the perfect treatment for anyone who is going through any type of anxiety and needs to slow down."



❶ WHERE: UNCOMMON SPA, CALGARY
THE TREATMENT: ÉMINENCE BODY WRAP, \$125, 60 MINUTES

Uncommon Spa offers pampering services and the perks of a full-fledged organic vegan bar all under one roof. "Relaxation or de-stressing need not be just physical or mental—we wanted to make a place that is both," says spa owner Gaurav Gupta, who also runs Calgary's popular Leela Eco Spa locations. Using products from natural skincare brand Éminence Organic Skin Care, the hydrating Stone Crop Restorative Body Wrap starts with gentle dry brushing to exfoliate from head to toe, after which a body mask is applied. Once you're cocooned in a bundle of warm towels, a customized mini-facial begins. Extend your post-treatment bliss with an artisanal signature cocktail like the Lulu White—a blend of Prosecco and rose- and cardamom-infused gin served in a glass that is topped with rose petals and dusted with pink sugar.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (THIS PAGE) UNCOMMON SPA; COURTESY OF UNCOMMON SPA; VIDA SPA; COURTESY OF VIDA SPA; (OPPOSITE PAGE) SIBÉRIA SPA; COURTESY OF SIBÉRIA SPA; PROVINCE APOTHECARY; COURTESY OF PROVINCE APOTHECARY; THE FLOATATION CENTRE; COURTESY OF THE FLOATATION CENTRE.



❹ WHERE: PROVINCE APOTHECARY, TORONTO
THE TREATMENT: THE GUA SHA LIFT ORGANIC FACIAL, \$180, 75 MINUTES

At Province Apothecary, a new COVID-19 safety measure has made it even easier to unwind during The Gua Sha Lift Organic Facial. "You'll chat with the aesthetician about your skin needs at the start, but during the treatment, there's no talking; this leads to deeper relaxation," says founder and CEO Julie Clark. The holistic facial also utilizes a contoured jade stone tool that elevates sensation. "With the gua sha, you'll get additional pressure," she says. "The therapist can really go into soft tissue and muscle to release tension a bit more than they could with their hands. It's especially great for those with temporomandibular joint [TMJ] disorder."

❺ WHERE: THE FLOATATION CENTRE, HALIFAX
THE TREATMENT: SINGLE 75-MINUTE FLOAT SESSION, \$70; INTRO FLOAT 3-PACK, \$160

Overwhelmed? Immersing yourself in Epsom salt-rich water, absolute quiet and total darkness could unlock bliss. "Being able to disconnect completely from your environment, whether it's your phone, your family or your job, and letting your brain and body have that lack of stimuli does induce a relaxed state," says Lindsay MacPhee, founder of The Floatation Centre. Along with increasing the levels of dopamine and endorphins, it can also reduce chronic pain, she says, adding that floatation therapy—like meditation—is ideal as a mindful practice integrated into your routine. Since reopening the centre earlier this year, MacPhee has noticed that clients are coming in more often than they normally would—a testament to floating's effectiveness. "COVID-19 and quarantining have really made folks realize the benefit that floating is having on their mental wellness and physical well-being," she says.



❸ WHERE: SIBÉRIA SPA, QUEBEC CITY
THE TREATMENT: HEART TO HEART MASSAGE, \$89, 60 MINUTES

Sibéria Spa, a short drive from downtown Quebec City, is a year-round Scandinavian-inspired oasis that centres on a thermal experience of alternating hot, cold and repose to achieve a state of deep relaxation. "We want people to rest to the rhythm of the flowing Rivière Jaune in a peaceful and quiet environment, right in the middle of nature," says co-owner Michel Carrier. Dedicated to well-being, the Heart to Heart massage is exclusively for anyone experiencing cancer and alleviates symptoms such as pain, fatigue and nausea. "Its goal is to give the patient some of their strength back," says co-owner Julie Panneton. A thoughtful bonus: Caregivers are given complimentary spa access.