

BEST SPAS CANADA



[10 NEW Spa Categories just added for 2010](#)

November 4, 2010

Check out our [Best Spas Vancouver](#)

More **BEST SPAS CANADA** coming with our November issue! While waiting you can read reviews and full stories on many of [Canada's best spas.](#)

We travel the country coast-to-coast and monitor the spa scene on an on-going basis to make sure this list of **Canada's Best Spas** is current and reflects the best of what's available on the Canadian spa scene. The list is reviewed and updated regularly and new categories are added, old ones upgraded or deleted as we see fit. This is an editorial list compiled by Travel to Wellness editor and spa journalist Anne Dimon.

Below - the Travel to Wellness list of 33 **BEST SPAS CANADA** for 2009.

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New categories for 2009 posted March 1

[Alternative Therapy](#), [New "Green" Day Spa](#), [Exotic Outdoor Experience](#), [Country Charm](#), [Country Escape](#), [Hiking Program](#), [Within the Walls of Old Quebec City](#), [Most Unusual Spa Treatment](#)

Category Updates for 2009

[Best Outdoor Experience](#), [Indoor Water Circuit](#), [Gourmet-Style Cuisine](#), [Ayurveda](#)

Other Categories from 2006, 2007 and 2008

[Couples Suites](#), [Romance](#), [Indoor Water Circuit](#), [Mountain View](#), [Ocean Front Location](#), [Mother/Daughter Getaway](#), [Historic Resort](#), [Fitness](#), [Tea Service](#), [Medi/Anti-aging Treatments](#), [Hammam](#), [Outdoor Experience](#), [Weight Loss](#), [Spa Detox Program](#), [Most Exotic](#), [City Wellness Spa](#), [Local Flavour](#), [Most Innovative New Treatment](#), [Little Extra Touches](#), [Mud Bath Spa Cafe](#)



Best New "Alternative" Therapy

[Holtz Spa](#) Ottawa (2009)

Holtz Spa's new Spirit of the Forest - Vibrational Healing Experience is a unique 80-minute experience involving the vibrational resonance of the essences of Canadian trees. Following the lineage of Bach Flower Remedies, tree essences are believed to have special healing qualities that speak to emotional well-being and vitality.

The treatment includes a verbal and vibrational assessment, then selection of an appropriate tree essence (or combination of several), a natural dry brushing over the entire body, a misting, a gentle massage, an energy balancing ritual and a relaxing tree essence beverage post treatment.

Best New “Green” Day Spa

[Infinima](#), Ste Foy, Quebec (2009)

At Infinima, located in Ste. Foy (about a 15 minute drive from Old Quebec City), the owners have introduced leading-edge “green” practices and protocols. For instance, LED lighting throughout reduces the energy impact and a “smart” heating system controls the heating and cooling of rooms automatically. The system is so “smart,” we’re told, that it “steals” heat from an area that is too warm and delivers it to an area that is too cold.

To reduce waste they give reusable plastic bottles to clients to fill from a purified water system. We also loved the décor which includes a three-level, re-circulating water feature in a natural stone-wrapped circular staircase flooded with therapeutic coloured LED lights.

Most Exotic Outdoor Experience

[Spa Ofuro](#) Morin-Heights, Quebec (2009)

Drenched in a Japanese them - pagoda-style architecture, Japanese art, furnishings and sculptures are everywhere - Spa Ofuro is Canada’s most uniquely-decorated and exotic “nature” spas.

To the sounds of a mountain stream cascading over boulders, guests breathe in the fresh air and soak up nature's benefits from one of several pools, lounge chairs set out on various decks, or while snuggling in a swaying hammock. Unlike many such spas that offer only massages, Ofuro’s a full menu of spa services including exotic-sounding signature treatments such as Summo, Tao, Yin and Yang.

Best Country Charm

[Spa at the Inn on the Twenty](#) Jordan Village Niagara, Ontario (2009)

The lovely, historic Inn on the Twenty is nestled on the tiny, perfect main street of the teeny town of Jordan, and just a few steps from the lobby, housed in its own historically-designated building, is the spa.

The “country cottage feel” is created with the help of furnishings and fixtures including beautifully-preserved golden pine floors, an old pine door converted into a mirror in one of the two private change rooms, an iron fireplace in the lounge, country-style cupboards filled with retail products in the reception area, and quilts used on the treatment beds.

Best Country Escapes

Ste. Anne’s Spa and Spa Eastman

[Ste. Anne’s Spa](#) Cobourg, Ontario (2009)

On a really good traffic day it’s a 90-minute from downtown Toronto to one of Canada’s oldest and best known spas – Ste Anne’s. The 15-room inn, a spa and six spa cottages are surrounded by 500 acres of scenic, rolling countryside (known as the drumlins of Northumberland) and beautifully maintained gardens.

The country setting allows guests to walk thru wide open fields and groomed nature trails. Outdoor hydro-therapy options include a large swimming pool, plus a year-round field-stone lap-pool and hot tub. A country décor, country-inspired meals and a full menu of treatments and therapies enhance the country-escape experience.

[Spa Eastman](#), Eastern Townships, Quebec (2009)

Tucked into the heart of Quebec’s rural Eastern Townships about a 90-minute drive from the city of Montreal, Spa Eastman is another of Canada’s most established and well-known spas.

This village-like collection of buildings - houses guestrooms, a spa, recreational facilities (gym, pool and hammam) and a dining room serving mainly healthy dishes – is surrounded by fields, forests and organic gardens. There are 15 km (just over 9 miles) of groomed trails for guided walks or cross-country skiing and, weather permitting, a natural spring water pond for swimming.

Best Hiking Program

[Coastal Trek](#) Vancouver Island, B.C. (2009)

The intimate, family-run Coastal Trek retreat, located in Vancouver Island's Comox Valley is all about health and hiking. From a selection of about 100 nearby hiking options, a different hike is scheduled each day based on the interests and fitness levels of guests. Structured programs which include yoga sessions and healthy cooking classes are all part of the deal.

While Coastal Trek is more about fitness and healthy eating than "spa-ing," there are two spa treatment rooms on site and guests select from a limited menu of services.

Best Within the Wall of Old Quebec City

[Inspirations Spa](#) at Manoir-Victoria, Old Quebec City (2009)

As of this time, the only full-service spa within the ancient stone walls of Old Quebec City, is Inspirations Spa. Located in Hotel Manoir Victoria (which coincidentally is built on the former site of an 19th century Turkish bath), the spa offers eight treatment rooms, including a mani-pedi area and a couple's room. There's a full menu of services including signature treatments using products made with local, organic maple sugar.

The spa also has a relaxation lounge and tiny dining area for those on day packages, plus guest have access to the hotel's sauna, a gym and lovely indoor pool area.

Most Unusual Spa Treatment

[Elemental Embrace](#) Brighton, Ontario (2009)

We haven't tried this yet and we're not sure we want to but it's certainly the most unusual spa treatment that has come to our attention from across Canada in the last year.

Leech therapy. Yes. The ancient therapy known as "the letting of toxic blood" is being offered at Elemental Embrace. The Ayurvedic detox treatment is administered by a qualified ayurvedic doctor with the help of leeches who suck infected blood and also salivate an enzyme which is said to have a therapeutic effect on toxic blood clots.

A specific type of leech is used, the length of the treatment can vary from 30 minutes to an hour and, apparently, it's not a painful process. Leech therapy is used to cure diseases associated with aging including paralysis, hair loss and osteo-arthritis, skin diseases, inflammation. These days, the treatment is used for anti-ageing.....we hear Demi Moore swears by it.

BEST COUPLES' SUITES

[Elmwood Spa](#) Toronto, Ontario (2008)

Downtown Toronto's landmark spa, Elmwood Spa has been recently upgraded and their two couples' suites - the Royal and Sapphire Suites both have two treatment tables, fireplaces and in-room showers under gabled ceilings. The décor and mood lighting is oh so conducive to romance.

[Spa at Fairmont Chateau Montebello](#) Montebello, Quebec (2007)

Ideal for romance or girl time, the spa's spacious doubles treatment room is classically decorated with a gas fireplace, Japanese soaker tub, multi-jet rain shower and side-by-side beds perfect for chit chatting (or hand-holding) through treatments ranging from the yummy maple sugar scrub to a full-body massage. If you're feeling peckish, there's room for private fireside dining with Bento Box selections, champagne and wine available.

[Spa Utopia](#) Vancouver, B.C. (2006)

Spa Utopia's large and beautifully-decorated suite is one of the signature features of Vancouver's largest downtown spa.

BEST FOR ROMANCE:

[Wakefield Mill Inn & Spa](#) Wakefield, Quebec (2008)

Romance, of course, depends more on who you're with than the setting, but the intimate (just 27 rooms) and historic Wakefield Mill, is mightily conducive to romance.

Sitting like a little gem next to a 28-foot waterfall in Gatineau Park, the Wakefield Mill offers guests fine dining, an outdoor spa lounge with a great view of the falls (so close you can feel the spray), and beautifully decorated guestrooms – some with fireplaces and exposed beams, brick and stone from its days as a mill. About 75 percent of leisure guests visit for birthdays, anniversaries, engagements and honeymoons or simply a romantic getaway.

[Millcroft Inn & Spa](#) Alton, Ontario (2008)

[Amerispa at Le Chateau Bonne Entente](#) Quebec City, Quebec 2006

BEST FOR INDOOR WATER CIRCUIT:

[Kingfisher Oceanside Spa](#) Courtenay, Vancouver Island, B.C. (2009)

Designed to emulate the island's natural seaside elements, the Kingfisher spa's Pacific Mist Hydropath, cave-like feel reminds of Adler Thermae Spa Resort in Tuscany.

The Hydropath has eight stations including a Swiss shower stall carved into natural sandstone rock, a mineral massage pool, a powerful waterfall massage, a steam cave, a chilly glacial waterfall and a compact "river walk" a two-part station that exposes guests to first warm then cold water according to the Dr. Kneipp's therapeutic philosophy. Dim lighting adds to the mood and it really does have that misty, cave-like quality throughout.

[Willow Stream Spa](#) at the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel (2007)

BEST FOR AYURVEDA

[Vida Spas](#) Vancouver and Whistler, B.C. (2009)

Vida continues to be our top pick in the Ayurveda category. On Vida's spa menus in Vancouver and Whistler (there's also a Vida spa in Seattle) there are seven different Ayurveda therapies including the newest - the Nidra Sleep Treatment. Nidra means "deep sleep" in Sanscrit. Wall Centre Hotel in Vancouver and Fairmont Whistler offer a Nidra Sleep-Enhancing Getaway Package. Vida also has an Ayurveda-inspired product line customized for the various doshas, and they send clients home with tips on how to eat for your dosha.

[Vida Spa at Fairmont Whistler](#) Whistler, B.C. (2007)

[Elemental Embrace](#) Brighton, Ontario (2006)

BEST FOR ONSITE GOURMET-STYLE CUISINE

[Treetops Tapas & Grill at Grotto Spa, Tigh Na Mara Resort](#) Parksville, British Columbia (2009)

Last year Treetops Tapas & Grill at Grotto Spa was our choice for Best Spa Cafe (it still is) plus this year it's our choice for Best Gourmet-Style Cuisine. The food is fabulous - healthy, delicious and beautifully presented with a gourmet feel. Before or after treatments, you can nibble on "little dish" tapas the likes of Pan-Seared Scallops, Smoked Paprika Red Onion & Blood Orange Marmalade; Open Faced Ravioli of Spinach & Chestnuts Steamed Yellow Zucchini and Roasted Shallot and Portobello Mushroom Pan-seared Spinach, Buttermilk Dressing. Tiny portions, big flavour. It's all good!

We also like the fact that it's a "robe attire only" environment.

BEST FOR MOUNTAIN VIEW

[The Willow Stream Spa at Fairmont Banff Springs](#) Banff, Alberta (2007)

BEST OCEAN FRONT

[Wickaninnish Inn & Ancient Cedars Spa](#) Tofino, B.C. (2008)

BEST SPA AT A HISTORIC RESORT

[Fairmont Algonquin](#) St. Andrews by the Sea, New Brunswick (2006)

BEST FOR FITNESS

[The Spa at White Oaks Resort & Spa](#) Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario (2006)

BEST TEA SERVICE

[Away Spa](#) at W Montreal, Montreal, Quebec (2008)

The spa is intimate - just five treatment rooms - and the tea service is impressive. A menu of exotic teas, prepared and served by an attendant on small silver trays, in china cups and with honey pearls to sweeten is what makes the service special.

BEST MEDI/ANTI-AGING TREATMENTS

[Sante Spa](#) in Calgary, Alberta and at Bear Mountain, Vancouver Island, B.C.

Both Sante Spas have resident doctors to administer anti-aging treatments including Botox and fillers. Both one-stop shops for "time management."

BEST HAMMAM

[Ten Spa](#) Fort Garry Hotel, Winnipeg, Manitoba (2007)

A chic, modern interpretation of the Turkish-Roman hot-air bathing ritual, which was done regularly in ancient times to detoxify the body, strengthen the immune system and encourage wellbeing. Here, the mosaic-tiled, indigo-hued bath is kept at a toasty 45 degrees with a light mist of steam hanging in the air. Heated stone platforms are reserved for individual treatments, such as the traditional olive-oil soap scrub. The hammam is co-ed and can also be booked for private groups.

BEST OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

[Le Scandinave](#) Mont Tremblant, Quebec (2009)

Considered the grand dame of Quebec's Nordic-style spas, Le Scandinav is not only the oldest, but the largest. Perched on the banks of the Diable River (good for devilishly cold dips), the spa offers rooms for massages, a collection of pools, saunas, steam rooms and hot tubs spread around a multi-terraced lot, plus various relaxation areas both indoors and out. I especially liked the Zero Gravity Room where lounge chairs fold down flat for easy napping in a serene environment. A small onsite bistro serves soups, salads and sandwiches.

[Le Scandinave Spa](#) Blue Mountain, Ontario (2008)

It doesn't get much better than when you're taking in fresh air and great views while up to your neck in therapeutic waters. The outdoor water circuit is a collection of Scandinavian baths and water features that takes you from hot to cold to hot (and repeat), which can be as stimulating as climbing Blue Mountain itself. While you're there, also try: The saunas, steam rooms and relaxation solariums to enhance the experience. Extend the value of the visit with a leisurely bistro-style lunch enjoyed fireside in the lounge.

BEST WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM

[Hills Health Ranch](#) B.C. Interior (2007)

A variety of weight-loss and fitness programs – from six to 30 nights and longer – make success almost guaranteed. An extensive staff of medical and wellness professionals, including MDs, nutritionists, a kinesiologist, certified behavioral counsellors and personal trainers, allows for total program customization. The full-service spa, horseback riding, mountain biking, canoeing and nature tours with a microbiologist are just a few of the activities on this 20,000 acres ranch.

BEST DETOX PROGRAM

[The Millcroft Spa Centre for Well-Being](#) Alton, Ontario. (2008) (Editor's note posted January 2010: This spa is no longer offering this detox program)

The four-night, naturopathic spa detox getaway at the Millcroft Inn & Spa in Alton, Ontario, means never having to say, "I'm starving." There's a growing number of detox programs available through spas and many of them encourage guests to fast on soups and juices. This one is a little different. Not only is it designed and managed by a local naturopathic doctor, but you get to eat. Meals and snacks are of the gourmet variety – but no wheat or refined sugar. Spa detox programs are considered good for those who want to cleanse the body of environmental pollutants, toxins and chemicals. Along with accommodations and gourmet meals, spa treatments and a one-on-one with the naturopath are all part of the deal.

MOST EXOTIC

[Sunmore Ginseng Spa](#) Kamloops, B.C. (2008)

In addition to it being the only ginseng-based spa in Canada – perhaps on the continent – it also holds the distinction of having the most spacious treatment rooms.

There are just five treatment rooms here and each is beautifully decorated with Asian furnishings and artifacts. Ginseng, grown locally, is used in a selection of spa treatments. The spa's Tea House includes exotic teas as well as dishes made with ginseng.

EXTRA LITTLE TOUCHES

[Fox Harb'r Golf Resort & Spa](#) Wallace, Nova Scotia (Closed January to mid May) (2007)

The most luxurious spa on Canada's East Coast, the spa at Fox Harb'r offers clients so many little extras that's it impossible to list them all. Here's what impressed us most: The professional comfortzone products available in the locker rooms, personal CD players in each of the eight treatment rooms so clients can choose their own type of music, special red lighting in each treatment room for warmth and enhance the look of skin, electric fireplaces in several treatment rooms, fibre-optic starlit ceiling in the manicure room, ice-cream scoops to dish out mani-pedi exfoliation products, self-help and inspirational books (like those written by Wayne Dyer) to flip through in the lounge and during a pedicure, complimentary professional makeup application after each customized facial (yes) and free shipping for any retail products purchased.

BEST MUD TREATMENT

[Ste Anne's](#) Grafton, Ontario (2007)

The Moor Mud Bath at Ste Anne's is the real thing - thick, rich, earthy mud from Casselman, Ontario. You feel as if you're wrapped and suspended in a mud cocoon. It's the perfect signature treatment for this beautiful country setting.

BEST WELLNESS SPA IN A CITY

[Health Winds - The Health & Wellness Spa](#) Toronto, Ontario (2008)

Located on the lower level of a medical building in uptown Toronto, Health Winds gets the nod because of its 15-year foothold in the spa business and the services offered beyond the treatments include health assessments, and wellness and nutritional counseling. Of course, the spa also offers facials, wraps and mani-pedi but that's a bonus. Eighty per cent of clients who book Health Winds do so initially in response to a health condition or stress.

BEST FOR LOCAL FLAVOUR

[Relais Sante Le Baluchon, Auberge Le Baluchon](#) Saint-Paulin, Quebec (2008)

Traditional French Canadian country. That's the flavour you get from the moment you drive up to the collection of manoir-inspired buildings of Auberge Le Baluchon. The inn's full-service spa has a signature cherry treatment (using local cherries) and spa guests slip their feet into slippers made with buckwheat grown in a nearby village. Adding to the sense of place, the inn makes their own maple syrup, and the eco-café serves local products. Fine French Canadian cuisine is served in the dining room.

MOST INNOVATIVE NEW TREATMENT

[Susurrus Spa at Poet's Cove Resort & Spa](#) Pender Island, B.C. (2008)

Yes, it's a facial....butt....with a new spin. The Fanny Facial is for the skin on your derrière. In an industry where too many of the treatments are the same, same, same, how brilliant. Former spa manager Alana Delcourt created the 45-minute Fanny Facial because she wanted something new to offer her clients. The skin on the butt is often overlooked but it needs TLC, too. As with the traditional facial, the Fanny Facial includes cleansing, exfoliation, a mask and moisturizing. Feels so good you'll want to rush out and buy a thong.

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BEST SPA CAFE

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Serving a selection of tapas - the Spanish word meaning "little dishes" - Tree Top's is exclusive to spa guests and really does overlook the tree tops as well as a collection of log-framed spa bungaloes. The food is fabulous - healthy, delicious and beautifully presented. Lunch here is a wonderful treat before or after any treatments or a bit of hydro therapy in the indoor water circuit.

[Back to top of page](#)

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