

20 SUPER SPAS: RELAXING SUMMER RETREATS 20
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Western Spas

IN THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF OUR ONGOING COVERAGE OF GREAT WESTERN SPAS, WE CHECK OUT NEW MEXICO AND COLORADO HAVENS OF HEALTH AND PAMPERING.

by Wolf Schneider and Ellise Pierce

The West has more than its share of great spas. Nowhere is this truer than in the Southwest. Maybe it's because the weather is so dramatic: the sunshine so brilliant one instant, the clouds so moody the next. Or because the indigenous cultures still have such a presence here and their ancient healing ways find a perfect modern home in the latest treatments. Surely the expansiveness of the Southwestern sky gives a feeling of endless possibilities and reminds us that nature is often the biggest component in our healing. We focus our first spa report on New Mexico and Colorado. Read on for mind-body-spirit journeys of healing with wild-crafted sage, blue corn, chocolate mole, chile, Zuni mineral salts, and restorative mountain vistas.



Ten Thousand Waves

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

The Setting: Ten Thousand Waves is Santa Fe's most talked-about spa. Perched amid the Sangre de Cristo Mountains just outside city limits along Hyde Park Road, this Japanese/Rocky Mountain spa has a minimalist Zen aesthetic that's invigorating and authentic. It's not for the bashful: Showers and lockers are group affairs segregated only into male and female. Popular outdoor hot tubs are a mix. Treatment rooms are usually private. In the waiting area, there are wooden benches, large picture windows, blond-wood slanted roofing, a wood-burning fireplace, ferns galore, and an open airy floor plan. Guests rush by in white robes and striped rubber sandals as the spa efficiently schedules a bevy of appointments. "For Santa Fe, we're the only real spa service you can get"—so contends Liisa Fischer, director of guest services. "Because we're in the mountain setting and we have the aesthetic we have, we're the closest thing to *real*. We're modeled after a Japanese *onsen*—the wood, the architecture, the indoors incorporating the outdoors and vice versa, the hot tubs, except for one, being outside. We don't have 12 different facials—we have two, plus a men's and a back facial. We try to perfect the treatment. It's more communal here; you're not in a sterile room." Simply put: Free spirits thrive here.

Signature Treatment: Japanese Hot Stone Massage (\$139). No wonder there are folks who swear once you have a hot stone treatment, you'll never go back to regular massage. Using 54 heated basalt rocks and 18 cool marble rocks, all from the Southwest, Kathleen deftly massaged me all over. "The rocks are a buffer and absorb energy," she says. "Especially because of their warm and cool temperatures, the rocks increase circulation and relax the nervous system. The alternating of hot and cool is key: the cool is very delicious." Oh, yes. It's earthy, it's grounding, it was my favorite treatment here! If you can, book yourself into the private garden room just behind the cedar tree. Hot stone treat-



ments like this, so the rage now, were invented by Arizona's Mary Nelson just 11 years ago. In this age of techno innovation, how do you like that? Back to rocks.

Most Relaxing: Yasuragi Head and Neck Treatment (\$49). Just zone out as warm camellia oil for lustrous hair is repeatedly drizzled onto your scalp.

Most Restorative: Japanese Nightingale Facial (\$99). This sounds bizarre and it's certainly unique. I lay on my back and my face was cleansed and steamed; then Christopher brushed on a mask of *processed bird droppings*. Uh-huh, that's right. The Japanese nightingale

droppings, which are processed into a light green powder, are only available stateside at Ten Thousand Waves. The mask magically performed a natural exfoliation while—get this—Christopher performed gentle extractions *through* the mask. My complexion was smoother afterward.

Bedding Down: The spa's 12 casitas are the closest lodging to the national forest in all of Santa Fe. Called the Houses of the Moon guest suites, most have fireplaces stocked with logs for burning. Check out Luna, with its high ceilings and cozy fireside seating. Accommodations, \$190-\$260 nightly.

House Drink/Dish: Organic Mint Fields Herb Tea, Odwalla AntioxiDance cherry fruit juice, chicken salad on nine-grain bread. They keep it healthy.

Only Here ... can you saunter into the blond-and-orange-toned communal sauna in a robe or towel, take a seat on the teak bench, and

admire knockout views of the mountains from a large window. It's the coziest sauna of any spa I visited. Someone inevitably ladles water onto the hot rocks to steam things up.

Unforgettable Moment: Upon leaving, I ambled down the outdoor hillside stairs to my car feel-

ing lighter, leaner, and younger. Inhaling the pinyon-laced mountain air from a body that felt toned up, I got the Ten Thousand Waves mystique.

Guys' Pick: Premium private hot tubs like Waterfall—a warm tub with flagstone deck, wet/dry sauna, and private cold

plunge—all in the woods (\$27 per person, maximum of 12 people).

In a Nutshell: Exhilarating.

Getting There: From Santa Fe, drive 3 miles east on Artist Road.

Contact: (505) 992-5025 or www.tenthousandwaves.com