

Amerispa expanding its reach and offerings

Now runs 12 spas, including three new ventures in Quebec

BY ROCHELLE LASH, THE GAZETTE JANUARY 18, 2013



The Amerispa Sheraton Laval has a new VIP lounge with indulgent sojourns of massages, hot-tubbing and Champagne.

Photograph by: Rochelle Lash

Amerispa appears to be everywhere.

The largest group of beauty and body treatment centres in Canada is growing like mad, keeping pace with the escalating spa industry at home and abroad. With new ventures in Laval, Bromont and Gatineau, Amerispa now operates 12 spas, most paired with a quintessentially Quebec experience.

Three of the company's spas are Nordic-style: The woodsy Amerispa Station Baltique is tucked into the woods on the outskirts of Morin Heights, appealing to Laurentian sportsmen and nature lovers. The sports- and esthetics-oriented Amerispa Château Bromont is strategically situated for golfers, cyclists and skiers, and connected indoors to a hotel where fine food and wine are part of après-spa life. And Amerispa Station BleuSpa opened two months ago in Cantley in the Gatineau Hills to pamper the citizens of Ottawa and Gatineau.

"These are destination spas and people can make a day of it," Mag Kassis, the new vice-president of marketing for Amerispa, said. "Guests can check in after a morning of sports, then relax in the baths, break for lunch and then have a massage or facial."

Amerispa Station BleuSpa is the company's newest enterprise, a takeover of an existing spa hidden among the pines, maples and birches on the outskirts of the village of Cantley, about 20 minutes north of Ottawa and Gatineau. BleuSpa is a full-fledged Nordic-style centre with thermotherapy. That adds up to both relaxing and stimulating the body by alternating hot and cold experiences in a steam room, a sauna, whirlpools and an icy waterfall to regulate your body temperature — the fast way.

Amerispa also recently bought existing facilities at Château Bromont and has added its menu of beauty and body services that is available at all of its spas. What to choose? There are more than 20 possibilities, including hand and foot care, esthetics and bodywork, plus specialized services for men such as massages and a detoxifying facial.

Elaine Cabana, associate director of operations, suggests the Elixir ice cider exfoliation for women to keep their skin smooth: "It's one of our signature services and it uses products that represent Quebec. It's a gentle body scrub done with ice cider crystals that is particularly beneficial during winter when your skin is exposed to extreme cold and dry indoor heat."

Cabana says most men choose the therapeutic massage because the masseur tailors the rubdown to work on specific muscles that a guy might use in sports or physical work. So, shoulders for golfers, legs for skiers, the back for construction workers, and so on.

The unique part of the Bromont spa is its aquatonic circuit, a series of 15 underwater stations for therapeutic exercises. Here, in comfortably warm waters, your muscles will relax while pedalling on a submerged bicycle or walking against a current.

Bromont also embraces complete Nordic baths, which also have potential for the rejuvenation of tired bodies. By adjusting the timing of the hot and cold dips according to three specific protocols, the water experience can help fight inflammation, re-energize muscles or stimulate both mind and body to improve your sports performance.

Besides Nordic spas, Amerispa also owns nine other centres in urban, suburban and countryside hotels. The Amerispa Sheraton Laval is the largest. Its 20-plus treatment rooms serve the hotel's clientele, as well as spa-goers from Laval and environs — and Montrealers and West Islanders who make the 10- to 30-minute drive for a day of indulgence.

The Sheraton is a sleek business and conference hotel with 244 rooms and a website in eight languages, including Italian and Japanese, with Cree in the planning. It's not pastoral, but it is well-equipped. Plus, you'll need a break if you have shopped 'til you dropped at Carrefour Laval, the Montreal region's largest shopping centre, which is home to the province's first Crate & Barrel and Victoria's Secret stores.

Amerispa was so keen to be part of this swish package that it built a passarelle to connect its spa pavilion to the hotel's water complex — an indoor saltwater pool, a sauna, steam bath and hot tub. The Laval spa's newest installation is its sexy, almost decadent VIP Lounge, the ultimate hideaway for couples who want to stop time, reconnect and spoil themselves in total privacy. A boudoir-like vision in

red decor, the lounge encompasses a whirlpool tub to heat up, a large glass shower to cool down and a sofa for a cat nap.

The Oasis de détente package includes a glass of Champagne and gourmet treats, and you can choose your own spa treatment. I recommend the tandem warm pebble massage. And a visit to Victoria's Secret on the way.

IF YOU GO:

Amerispa central: 866-AMERISPA/866-263-7477, www.amerispa.ca.

Amerispa Station BleuSpa: 819-335-1555; Cantley; access to baths, \$45 incl. locker, bathrobe and towel or \$35 with a treatment; Signature massage, \$150 for 80 minutes.

Amerispa Sheraton Laval: 450-682-3365; 2410 autoroute des Laurentides, Laval. VIP Lounge: \$325 for two people for two hours, or \$375 for three hours; Tandem Warm Pebble Massage, \$190 for two. Hotel Sheraton Laval: 450-680-5755, www.sheraton-laval.com; Spa Package (Thurs.-Sun.): \$140 p.p., double occ., one night's lodging, 90 minutes of treatments, use of indoor pool, hot tub, sauna, steam, fitness room.

Amerispa Château Bromont: 800-567-SPAS (7727); 90 rue de Stanstead, Bromont. Access to Aquatonic baths, \$45 or \$35 with treatment; Elixir Ice Cider Exfoliation, \$120; Ski Bromont pass-holders get discounts. Château Bromont: 888-276-6668, www.chateaubromont.com. Évasion Amerispa package: one night, breakfast, dinner, a 50-minute massage, baths, starts at \$243 p.p., double occ. on Sundays and increases by \$10 p.p. on Saturdays.