

Spa life is so mainstream that travelers can sweat in a Turkish steam bath or have a Thai massage almost anywhere from Russia to Rimouski, Beverly Hills to Bhutan.

Once the rare truffle of travel, a temptation smacking of indulgence and extravagance, spas now proliferate at all styles and prices. Nature-lovers sporting Birkenstocks and backpacks can fuel up on granola before hiking or rock climbing. The rich and famous who favour the chi-chi pleasures of Chanel and champagne pay big bucks to nibble on arugula and spend hours soaking and scrubbing in buck-naked bliss.

It's safe to say that everyone is getting in on the act. About 70 per cent of spa-goers are women, but men have their specialized havens, too. And Disney World is opening a resort in Orlando that will treat little girls as young as four to My First Manicure and My First Facial. The posh Peninsula Hotel in Chicago offers massages for dogs and even prison inmates in Kitchener enjoyed a spa day, complete with pedicures and aromatherapy.

All that's required is to decide where to go and what to do, and there's no shortage of choices: Will it be weight loss, fitness and toning, body and skin care, relaxation, managing stress, medical care or spiritual awakening?

Erotic, exotic -- no private part of life or remote corner of the world is left untouched by today's comprehensive spas. Enhancing your sex life is the goal at the oceanfront Surf & Sand Resort in Laguna Beach, Calif., which runs intimacy weekends featuring couples' massages, aphrodisiac cooking classes and tips on sensuality.

Taking it a step more scientific, the outstanding Miraval, Life in Balance Resort in Arizona, has a medical sex expert on staff. Dr. Lana Holstein (EDITOR-SHE IS A MEDICAL DOCTOR), author of *Your Long Erotic Weekend*, gives workshops called *Awakening Aphrodite* and *Partners & Pleasure* which explore female sexual energy, self-discovery and physical technique.

Miraval, A FAVORITE STOP OF OPRAH WINFREY, has swept all awards for best spa in the U.S. in recent years. It's a dream destination for its stunning Sonoma desert setting at the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains and its stress-free formula that coddles guests from airport pick-up to meditation labyrinth. Miraval mixes Southwestern décor in private casitas and Arizona aloe treatments with Zen gardens and an Asian yoga centre. After hot-stone therapy, guests can hike for health on a 130-acre desert oasis with palm trees, cacti and wildflowers.

In the realm of outdoor sports, the Kelea Surf Spas with locations in Hawaii and Costa Rica combine muscle treatments and riding the waves. At Swift Level horse farm in West Virginia guests refine their equestrian skills and then wash the trail dust off with facials and body scrubs. Heading north, the bracing fresh air of Vermont's mountains, forests and lakes are the focus of New Life Hiking Spa at Inn of Six Mountains in Killington. At Whistler, B.C. the new Summit Lodge and Spa offers yoga kits and Javanese (EDITOR—CORRECT, JAVANESE) massages for après-ski recuperation.

For the ultimate in movie-star glamour, the new Laprairie Spa has opened at the landmark Beverly Hills Hotel in California. If lovely skin is a girl's best friend, Laprairie's "Diamond Perfection" body care uses an exfoliation cream studded with thousands of tiny jewels. More pampering for Beverly Hills princesses includes a facial with caviar as a firming cream and a treatment for tired tootsies called the after-shopping paradise.

Owned by the Sultan of Brunei and known as the "pink palace," the Beverly Hills Hotel is a destination for showbiz royalty - its swimming pool and Polo Lounge have been see-and-be-seen gathering spots for A-list celebrities since 1912. Recent guests included Jennifer Aniston and Brad Pitt at an Academy Awards party catered by celeb chef Jamie Oliver.

The body has been salved, now to soothe the soul, the Chopra Centre at the Doral Golf and Spa Resort in Miami uses Ayurvedic medicine from India to balance the physical and the metaphysical.

Also focusing on spiritual as well as corporal wellness, Como Hotels and its in-house Shambhala Spas have opened two exquisite retreats, Uma Ubud in the lush hinterland of Bali, and Uma Paro in a magical Himalayan valley in Bhutan. Former Montrealer Kuno Fasel, an executive with Singapore-based Como, says: "These two resorts represent the ultimate in serenity combined with the excitement of experiencing beautiful, unspoiled countries."

The Shambhala spas blend fascinating local culture, light adventure, yoga and Asian-inspired spa treatments. The Bhutan resort has superb guest accommodations with private gardens and infinity-edged pools. The deluxe thatched-roofed huts look local but camouflage avant-garde décor and superior amenities.

A world away in the big city, only steps from the Kremlin, the Ararat Park Hyatt Moscow has opened one of Russia's most advanced health centres. Quantum Fitness, a state-of-the-art gym and spa, offers four-handed massages, aromatherapy, anti-cellulite treatments and lymphatic drainage. The signature treatment is as Russian as vodka. Patrons steep in a hot bath and bake in a sauna where they flail themselves with birch branches, all while sipping hot Russian tea laced with honey.

En route to these far-flung destinations, ragged travelers can perk up and beautify at airport spas in Calgary, Vancouver, Toronto, New York and many other cities. Fly Virgin Airlines and you can maintain the mood with in-flight meditation and relaxation techniques at 12,000 feet.