



Spa Eastman started in 1977 as a rustic five-room guest house. Now it is a comprehensive wellness resort. PHOTOS: SPA EASTMAN

# SPA EASTMAN MODERNIZES WELLNESS FOR 21ST CENTURY



**ROCHELLE LASH**  
*Checking In*

Spa Eastman, one of the most comprehensive wellness get-aways in Canada, is marking 40 years at the top.

That is an extraordinary feat, given the radically changing world of wellness. Spa Eastman has not only kept up, it has been a consistent leader in healthy food, exercise, alternative medicine and beauty and body treatments. You can lose a few pounds or enhance your spirituality.

“Wellness is our mission. We are not a hotel with a spa,” said Jocelyna Dubuc, Eastman’s founder and president. “We are a holistic retreat with many paths to improve well-being and joie de vivre.”

High atop a hill near Orford in the Eastern Townships, Eastman started in 1977 as a rustic five-room guest house with shared bathrooms and three employees. Now it is a comprehensive wellness resort with 44 attractive rooms, 120 employees and a wealth of facilities throughout its picturesque estate.

The spa resort has five levels of accommodations, all impeccably maintained. The more economical rooms are decked out in darling cottage-style decor. They’re in small stone chalets tucked into the woods, about 100 metres from the main building. The main-lodge rooms are modern, some with gas fireplaces, balconies and impressive bathrooms.

**All-inclusive:** Guests enjoy three organic meals a day, a tea corner and access to walking trails, indoor/outdoor swimming pools, a gym and the Eastman-les-Bains Nordic spa.

A visit also includes a choice of several activities a day, including indoor, outdoor and water exercise classes, as well as workshops on sleep, meditation, raw food or naturopathy with experts such as Ilona Dowgiallo.

Your visit can be as simple as sipping a smoothie in a tranquil solarium lounge, or as progressive as the infrared sauna, a device used by 9/11 first responders to eliminate body toxins. You can chill on a poolside lounge chair, or get active with the Essentrics program. I met guests tossing away their cellphones in the Disconnect program, and others on a weeklong juice cleanse.

“Even a 24- to 48-hour visit is beneficial, because you can

take home so many ideas,” said Dubuc.

The seven-night Health Immersion Package (and some people stay for 14 nights) is a game-changer, adding personal consultations, a stress assessment, fitness training and followup.

The health centre’s basic principles are timeless — nutritious food, light exercise, relaxation, rejuvenation — but wellness still has evolved dramatically.

“Now we know scientifically why some things work and some don’t,” said Dubuc, “plus we can harness technology.”

So, what’s new over the past 40 years?

**Technology:** Eastman-les-Bains is based on ancient principles of energizing in a circuit of cold and hot pools, a eucalyptus steam room and sauna. Naturopathy goes back to the balm of Gilead in the Bible. And the histories of yoga and meditation go back thousands of years.

But Eastman has also embraced modern techniques. Guests can consult with a nutritionist or kinesiologist for joint and muscle work. A vibrating pod called the NeuroSpa Power Nap Station is believed to relieve stress, chronic pain, insomnia and poor circulation. And Dubuc swears by the infrared sauna for detoxification, anti-aging and a variety of ailments.



A visit to Spa Eastman includes meals, facilities and a choice of several activities each day.

Another impressive feature is that the indoor pool is lab-tested after every water class. I love Eastman’s cleanliness.

**Cuisine:** In the beginning, there was tofu, but Spa Eastman has added fish and meat and has developed a healthy fine-dining style Dubuc calls “tonic cuisine.”

Breakfast features Eggs Eastman with a hollandaise-style sauce of cauliflower and turmeric. Lunch might be steamed fish with Thai spices or lentil burgers. Dinner goes gourmet with sesame-crusted tuna or duck and lamb roasted at low temperatures. The salads and vegetables are exceptionally fresh, and desserts like tiramisu are sweetened with honey or maple syrup, not sugar.

## IF YOU GO

Eastman is a 75-minute drive from Montreal via Highway 10 to Exit 100.

**Spa Eastman:** 800-665-5272, 450-297-3009, spa-eastman.com; 895 des Diligences Rd., Eastman. Bring bathing suit, sandals, fitness/hiking gear. For ages 12 and over.

Spa Eastman also operates Spa Eastman Montreal, 666 Sherbrooke St. W.; 514-845-8455.

**Prices:** With lodging, three meals, activities, \$209-\$309 p.p., per night, double occ., or \$249-\$429 for singles (Sun.-Thurs.). Additional charge, \$15 p.p., on Fri.-Sat. and holidays on visits of fewer than five nights. Extra: treatments, personal consultations. The Girlfriends’ Getaway has triple and quad occupancy rates. Seven-night Health Immersion Package, \$300-\$400 per night, p.p., double occupancy, or \$345-\$525 for singles.

**Day visits:** Eastman-les-Bains starts at \$40, plus meals, massages and activities.

**Eastern Townships tourism:** 800-355-5755, easterntownships.org.

Eastman’s food is gluten free, dairy free and whole grain. Even the wine is organic, and many veggies are grown seasonally in the resort’s own gardens.

**Spa life:** In Eastman’s early days, it was all about sun salutations and forest walking. Today, the calendar can include Pilates, thermotherapy, water cardio or Essentrics, a workout and stretch program created by Miranda Esmonde-White, who will be at Eastman from Aug. 20 to 27 to lead a seven-night group retreat.

At one time, spas were the domain of beauty queens seeking the fountain of youth. Today, Eastman’s mother/daughter package often becomes a three-generation vacation, popular for mani-pedis, facials and pregnancy massages.

Men represent about 30 per cent of the guests. And if you’re on your own, Eastman has a singles’ table at mealtime.

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