

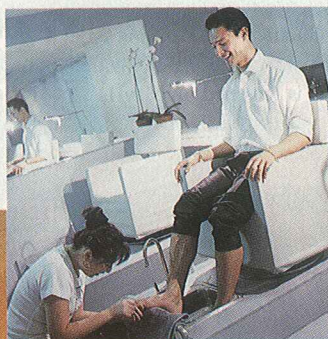
Seeking Spas

In the Big Apple, spas pop up like daisies after the rain. Here's WHERE's selective guide to the best.

By Paulette Weiss

NEW YORK CITY RESPONDS to the inherent human need to be coddled, pampered, smoothed, stroked and rejuvenated with a cornucopia of spas—big ones, posh ones, cozy ones, French ones—so many and in such variety that it's enough to make the head spin (which would, in turn, necessitate the services of a good spa for a therapeutic neck massage). Knowing that your visit here leaves time at a premium, WHERE has pulled together a selective guide to help you choose a spa that suits. Keep in mind, the best places are packed on the weekend. Odds go up on the quality of your experience if you can go on a weekday. If there's a mom in tow on this trip, note that the gift of a beauty package at a super city spa is

Spas uptown and down: Anne Sémonin at the Plaza Spa (below), Nickel for men (right).



probably at the top of her list for Mother's Day, May 12.

THE BIGGIES

WHETHER GLITTERING WITH CELEBS OR RECOGNIZED for excellence over the years, these are the spas you are most likely to have heard about before setting foot in the city.

Like Alice passing through the looking glass, walking through the red door of the **Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon and Spa** (691 Fifth Ave. at 54th Street, 546-0200, elizabetharden.com) changes your perspective. This large, established pleasure palace is a haven for the Park Avenue set, who travel from treatment to treatment in roving, robed masses. The walls are pink, the music is runway pop and the menu of services is extensive. Try the new Pomegranate Warm Stone Facial (\$120), Arden's version of the hot stone treatments that are the spa world's newest rage.

Infamous for its long wait for an appointment, celebrity clientele and stratospheric prices, **Bliss** (568 Broadway at Prince Street, second floor, 219-8970; 19 E. 57th St. between

Fifth and Madison avenues, third floor, 219-8970, blissworld.com) provides a mix of classic spa offerings and unusual treatments. Downtown is spacious, uptown is small. Go for the Fully Loaded Facial (\$185) that incorporates a head, neck, shoulder, arm and foot massage, and be prepared for some serious product pushing.

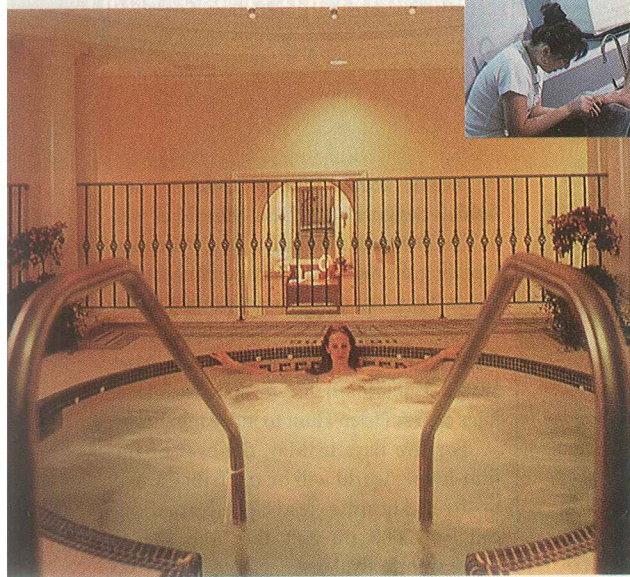
Helena Rubenstein Beauty Gallery (135 Spring St. between Greene and Wooster streets, 343-9963, helenarubenstein.com) sports an upstairs store and a downstairs spa that exudes luxury, from the flowing silver-white curtains to the padded robes to the feast laid out to nibble

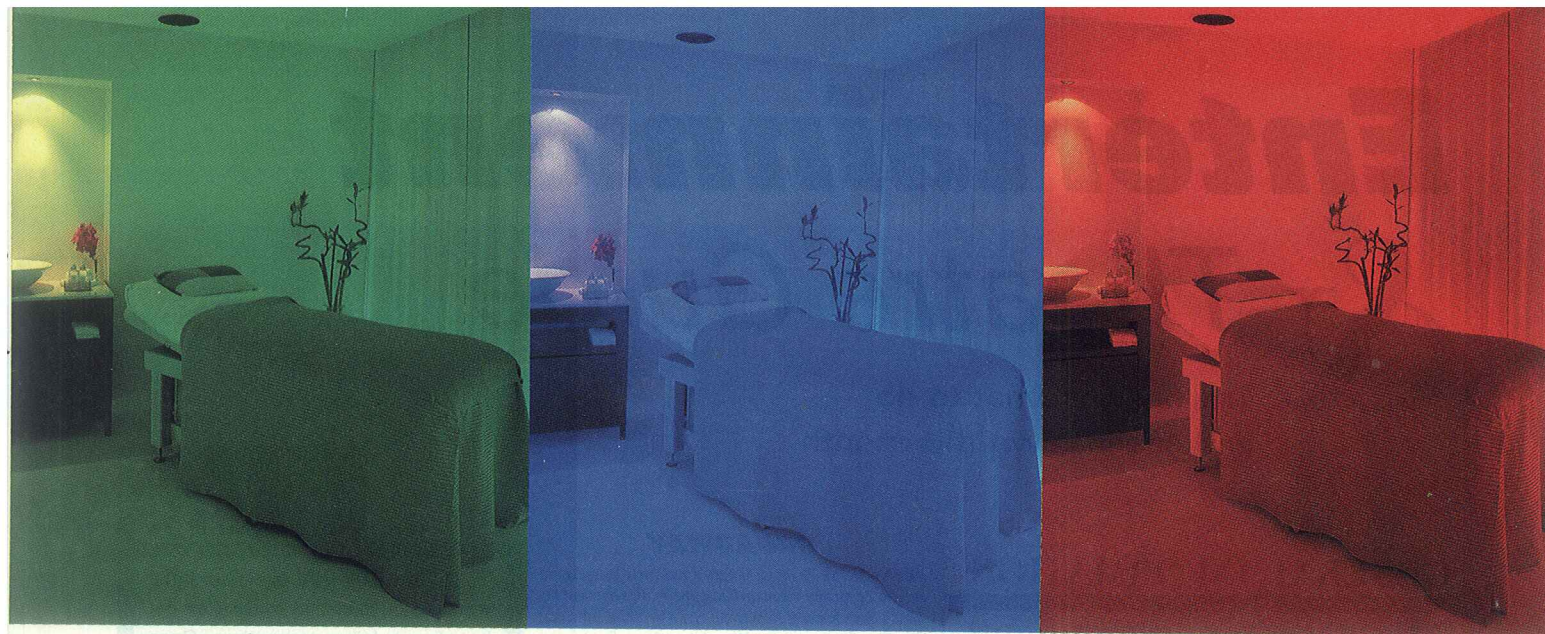
on in the waiting area. Pricy, but worth it. Opt for the Art of Spa Energizing Treatment (\$155), a combination body wrap and pressure-point massage, and don't miss the 7-foot-tall lipstick wedding cake as you pass through the store.

If you remember the door-to-door Avon lady, erase that memory from your conscious mind. The **Avon Centre Salon & Spa** (725 Fifth Ave. between 56th and 57th streets, 755-8660) is a luxurious spa, with a reception area that resembles the living room of a Fifth Avenue mansion. Here, it's truly best to make a weekday appointment. Avon is famed for the eyebrow-shaping skills of Eliza's Eyes. Eliza herself (she has earned the celebrity status of Cher or Madonna and uses her first name only) charges \$100 for a first shaping, although, as one client puts it, she is "booked until the Second Coming." Her estheticians charge \$45.

Nestled in a lovely town house is **Anushka Spa & Cellulite Clinic** (241 E. 60th St. between Second and Third avenues, 355-6404, anushkaonline.com). The 30-year-old spa has attracted a glittering clientele including models and beauty editors who are devoted to its European-style services (body wraps, facials, massage, body contouring, manicure and pedicure) and famed cellulite treatments (\$85).

Raves from the public and the press have made **Oasis Day Spa** (1 Park Ave. between 32nd and 33rd streets, 254-7722; 108 E. 16th St. at Union Square, 254-7722, nydayspa.com) a new Manhattan beauty destination. There are two sleekly modern locations of this full-service spa, which has won accolades from such prestigious sources as *Vogue*, *Allure* and *GQ* magazines. In addition to a full line of pampering services including massage, skin care, acupuncture, yoga, and hair and nail beauty, Oasis provides off-premises massage for those of you who just can't make it out of





your hotel room. Of special note are unusual services including flotation tank therapy (\$100) and the warm lava stone treatment (\$110).

THE NATURALS

HEALTH IS THE FOCUS OF THESE SPAS, WHICH use natural products or favor holistic treatments. Though health is Job One, beauty and pleasure are natural by-products.

Tucked away in the Bergdorf Goodman department store, the **Susan Ciminelli Day Spa** (Bergdorf Goodman, 754 Fifth Ave. between 57th and 58th Street, ninth floor, 872-2650, susanciminelli.com) is an oasis in the retail tumult. Ciminelli, an early advocate of holistic treatments to detoxify and nourish the body, provides pampering services that promote health and well-being. All products are organic. The Pumpkin and Prune Fruit Enzyme Peel is good enough to eat (\$35 additional to any facial, \$25 hands, \$300 full body).

The same sea that gave birth to all living creatures gave birth to the marine-inspired treatments found at **Repêchage Spa de Beauté** (Galleria Building, 115 E. 57th St. between Park and Lexington avenues, 721-2500, repechage.com). This spa with French flair has won accolades for its treatments from *Elle*, *The New York Times*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Mademoiselle*. A specialty here is thalassotherapy—seaweed treatments to relax, heal and purify.

Le Cachet (39 E. 30th St. between Park and Madison avenues, 448-9823) is a holistic skin-care spa offering innovative treatments for skin and body using only natural products. Outstanding here is the Pan-Thermal treatment provided by a body-encasing machine—the only one of its kind in the city—that steams, oxygenates and provides an aqua massage (\$75 half hour, \$110 full hour). Although skin care is a specialty, this is a full-service spa, offering nail services, hair removal and hairstyling.

Located in a quiet, sunny space off Madison Avenue, **Advanced Skin Care Day Spa** (532 Madison Ave. at 54th Street, third floor, 758-8867, advancedspa.com) offers top-to-toe pampering with a scientific edge. Traditional Eastern European treatments are blended with advanced beauty techniques in state-of-the-art facilities. The spa is known for its expert facials, including the Y2K Facial Treatment (facial and protein-enzyme treatment for \$200) and also offers a full menu of body wraps and scrubs, massage, dermabrasion, peels, nail services and more.

NEW

NEW SPAS OPEN ALMOST DAILY IN THIS EGO-centric city. These are among the best.

Just opened on April 29 in the new Ritz-Carlton Hotel, the first New York location of Europe's prestigious **La Prairie** spa (50 Central Park South at Sixth Avenue, second floor, 521-6135) offers the ultimate in luxury. The luxe caviar skin rejuvenating treatments that make La Prairie an international destination for the world's wealthiest women are offered here at prices so high they could not be revealed, but rumor has it that a tiny jar of the caviar cellular eye cream, sans treatment, goes for \$250.

Men and women at the top of the food chain are perfectly attuned to **Anne Sémonin at the Plaza Spa** at the grand hotel (Fifth Avenue at Central Park South, lower level, 546-5444). Outstanding in a posh setting of Italian marble and European antiques is a luxurious whirlpool bath set in an atrium. The Plaza Spa recently partnered with Sémonin, who is the force behind a prestigious chain of European spas, and now offers her unique treatments including the famed Jet Lag treatment that relaxes the weary traveler's spine with warm, bubbling algae-and-mineral mud (\$90).


A spa to die for, **Maximus on Mercer**

(15 Mercer St. between Canal and Grand streets, 431-3333) offers high-tech pleasures in a sensually enticing setting.

The huge space is graced with a two-story-high cascading oil sculpture. The hair salon features massaging armchairs, the glass walls of massage rooms slowly change color to promote desired moods, and each room has a feather bed. The pièce de résistance treatment is the voluptuous Water Journey (\$140), which incorporates a full-body exfoliation, a Vichy shower, a hydrotherapy tub, a waterfall shower-and-steam in an enclosed cylinder, a full-body massage and more sheer pleasure than the human species was meant to endure.

Another newcomer to SoHo is the **Oscar Bond Salon Spa** (42 Wooster St. between Broome and Grand streets, 334-3777, oscarbondsalon.com). This high-tech addition to the burgeoning downtown beauty scene has its roots in hair—Bond is a hairstylist beloved by top fashion models and his wife, Wendy, is the resident colorist—but it has gone the spa route with the addition of services including facials and massage. The Self-Renewal Face & Body treatment is a top-to-toe (literally—it includes a foot and scalp massage) treat (\$105).

ONE FOR THE GUYS

FINALLY, A SPA WHERE MEN CAN LET THEIR hair down. **Nickel** (77 Eighth Ave. at 14th Street, 242-3203, nickel.fr) is a posh new French day spa for men only, the first U.S. branch of the two Parisian Nickels frequented by Jean Paul Gaultier, Thierry Mugler, Issey Miyake and John Malkovich. This space is huge, all chrome, glass and cobalt lighting—very masculine, yet very pampering. A highlight of the spa carries no price tag, yet is worth a million bucks. It's a napping room, a cozy room designed to provide the ultimate luxury, a midday nap in the middle of Manhattan. 

The many moods of Maximus, a new high-tech SoHo spa.