

a clean getaway

how to spoil yourself at the spa and take it like a man



When us men picture spas, we think of mud baths, cucumber eye covers, bathrobes, and, above all, a place full of women taking a day off to relax using that birthday present gift certificate we bought them for lack of a better idea.

Aside from the odd metrosexual with a fashionable \$70 mullet-hawk, not many men have seen the inside of a spa. To remedy this (and their dry skin), resident Gatewaydudes Conal Pierse, Mike Kendrick, and Mike Otto strolled awkwardly into the Spa Club on Whyte Ave last Friday morning.

While three nerdy newspaper editors by no means encompass what one could call the pinnacle of manliness, we're nonetheless a shining example of individuals who take little care of our personal

appearances and wash our faces only when shampoo runs down them. Our idea of relaxation involves a couch, television, and the freedom to scratch at will, so the idea of sitting still while somebody else poked and prodded us seemed quite alien.

However, in the interest of science, we decided to put our fears of lilac-scented candles aside and walked through the spa doors to be pampered for the first time since we graduated from diapers to big-boy underwear.

words and photos by Mike Kendrick, Mike Otto, and Conal Pierse

Conal was the first one to be called up, and was scheduled for rebalancing body work (a specialized full-body massage), the first of our three facials, and finally, a chest and leg waxing job.

Rebalancing body work—\$84*

This massage marks the earliest in the morning—and most hesitant I've ever been—when asked to remove my clothes. I'd only ever had one massage previous to this one, which amounted to a large Polish man tenderizing me like he would a rack of lamb—something I never wanted to experience again. However, seeing that there was only one exit from the room and the massage therapist was standing on the other side of it, I decided to be a good sport and modestly stripped down to my skivvies.

During the initial phase of the massage, I was under a blanket, which gave the strange impression that I was inside some kind of machine—a feeling that was further enhanced by her uncanny ability to move around me like a ninja without my sensing it.

I didn't have long to ponder this before my thoughts were liquefied by the start of the deep-tissue massage, which can only be accurately described with a very satisfied sigh. Though I consider myself a rather relaxed individual, I was carrying a surprisingly large amount of tension, and initially it felt as if she was trying to scrape cold butter onto toast, but after a few minutes, I loosened up and became a batch of slightly pink silly putty. In fact, while one of my legs was being massaged, I experienced an interesting contrast between a still tense and responsive leg with a useless sack of dough that had no interest in obeying my commands.

I'd have to say that though I am not and never will be a morning person, if this is how I got to start every day, there'd be no reason to hate Mondays.

RATING:  (5 CUKES OUT OF 5)

Facial—\$100

This treatment started out with a back massage—which brought me to the conclusion that absolutely everything in life should be offered with a side order of back massage—and after that only proceeded to get more relaxing.

When the esthetician first examined my skin under her incredibly bright portable sun, I was expecting it to

go similar to a dental check up and braced myself for the wave of criticisms about how I don't exfoliate and accusations that I don't wash my face three times a day. However, at no point did she make me feel guilty or uncomfortable, instead maintaining a safe and inviting atmosphere that made me feel as though having a couple blackheads was natural and not a big deal.

The entire process was so calming that I had to fight to stay awake, especially during the actual masking, which was not unlike having warm peanut butter spread on my face. These feelings were further enhanced by the hand massage I received after the mask was applied—a treatment that made me realize that if there's something unmanly about feeling that good, then I want no part of manhood.

Perhaps the greatest benefits of this treatment, however, were realized when I looked in a mirror and saw how good my skin looked. And though the exfoliation was not unlike rubbing your face in gravel, at the end of the day, my skin was so smooth that I couldn't help but pet it.

RATING: 

Waxing—\$55 Chest, \$45 Half leg

This seemed like an unfair end to what had started as such a good day—much like getting a shiny new bike for your birthday and then going head-first over the handlebars when you test-drive it. While the leg waxing was relatively painless, having your chest hair torn out hurts. Let me reiterate: it *really fucking hurts*—and I'm not even that hairy of a guy.

I was told that they get a number of men in for chest waxings, many of whom are dragged there by significant others, and I can tell you straight up that I will choose being single over continued exposure to borderline torture. What's worse is that I never realized how much insulation that hair added against the cold, which is making this cold snap particularly unbearable.

While I will wholeheartedly endorse the other treatments I received, if you're thinking of having your chest waxed, save yourself the effort of leaving your home and just slap your belly until it's pink and raw.

That said, she was quite thorough in her hair removal—not something I can say that I personally appreciated—so if you're looking to get this done, you won't have to worry about still having to shave afterwards. I'll also admit that though it wasn't relaxing at the time, I was considerably mellow afterwards due to the various endorphins pumping through my system.

RATING: 

Men need to learn to [themselves] a break to come in, check the door, and enjoy y



*All prices are non-member prices

