

Mike Otto stepped up for a glacial clay & seaweed mineral body firming wrap, his very own facial, and a manicure.

Seaweed Wrap - \$110

After a facial similar to Conal's, I was moved from one candlelit room to another. The esthetician handed me a small plastic bag with what looked like a napkin in it. It's disposable underwear, she pointed out, but thankfully I could keep my boxers on if I so chose. Being the curious guy that I am, I tried the paper drawers on anyway; afterwards, I was inclined to keep my boxers on. Further advancement is needed in the man-friendly paper-underwear industry.

Once I was suitably undressed and under a towel on the bed, the spa lady returned, and after a short back

massage I was covered in the seaweed spread. It was then that I fully appreciated the fact that I was on a plastic sheet of some sort. She wrapped me up in the plastic and blankets and I was left to bake on the warmed bed.

Remember that scene in *Home Alone* where Joe Pesci walks into the cling wrap covered in clear silicone? That's what being covered in seaweed spread and wrapped in plastic is like. It was an unpleasant feeling at first—at least until I was warm, which took ten out of the 20 minutes.

Unwrapping was extremely cold, which was mercifully followed by a hot shower. After that, a layer of lotion was applied, and I was done.

Though the 20 minutes of cooking was relaxing, the wrapping felt strange, and unwrapping was even worse. It was definitely a less enjoyable experience than the facial; I would give it a score of two out of five, if it weren't for the fact that my skin is astoundingly smooth. I'd recommend you skip this—just go for a massage instead.

RATING: 

Manicure - \$60

Like everything else at the spa, there was more to the manicure than I expected. The first half was the usual:

my nails were sanded and buffed, and my cuticles were oiled and, uh, pushed. After that, I was given a hand massage, which was alright, followed by paraffin wax and moisturizer. All in all, it lacked the relaxing effects of the other two procedures. Sure, my hands look nice, but they're just going to get dirty again.

I see no especially compelling reason to get a manicure, save perhaps for a very special occasion (one's wedding day?), but aside from that, this is one procedure you can leave to the ladies.

RATING: 



Mike Kendrick sat down for a pedicure and facial, followed by a lavender soy body exfoliation, ending with a restorative hair treatment and a gentleman's haircut.

Pedicure - \$85

Much like its attractive cousin the manicure, pedicures involve some intimate attention given to your digits. While the obvious first step is removing your shoes, things get a lot more complex from there.

I started with a foot bath, treated with an assortment of moisturizing oils. My esthetician explained that this would prepare my feet for the procedure ahead, softening my toenails to the gentle touch of her file. After a few minutes, I stretched out on the spa table and wiggled away the remaining lint that was stuck between my toes.

My toenails had no need for trimming (normally, the next step in the process), so instead, out came the file. With short, deliberate strokes that I barely noticed, my jagged edges were smoothed down into gentle curves, akin to the dull edge of a kindergarten's safety scissors.

From nails to callouses, the esthetician used a tool reminiscent of a carpenter's sanding block to painlessly smooth down the thick and worn skin at the balls and heels of my feet. Following an exfoliating foot scrub, she applied an arcane draught to my toes that she explained was a cuticle softener. Then, with the surgical precision of an artisan fencer, she employed a series of tools to push back my cuticles and trim away the dead, excess skin. I was worried about experiencing some pain in this step, but honestly, I didn't feel a thing. I began to suspect that this woman had been dabbling in the dark arts to achieve such a magical touch, but before I could press the matter, the massage began.

Nobody told me that there would be a massage with the pedicure—and it was certainly a massage to remember. Lasting about 20 minutes, she used a moisturizing lotion to release stress and tension from my feet and legs and relaxed me to the point of giddiness for about 19 of those minutes. After

this came the paraffin wax treatment, which basically meant that my feet got dipped into plastic bags filled with molten wax until it set. While the concept may sound alarming to some, this was quite possibly the best part of the ordeal, sealing the pleasure of the past hour like a chocolate-dipped ice cream cone. The whole procedure took a huge stress load off my feet and fended off the aches of my pedestrian lifestyle for days to come.

RATING: 

Lavender Soy Body Exfoliation - \$75

Going in to this one, I honestly had no idea what to expect. The concept of exfoliation had only been fully explained to me hours before, and for a process which I likened to building a very wet sandcastle on my skin, I had difficulty comprehending how this would work over my entire body.

My massage therapist for this round explained to me briefly what would happen. From what I gathered, this would be a massage for my pores rather than my muscles. A freshly prepared massage table surrounded by aromatic candles in a room playing soothing ambient tunes awaited. Cracking a joke about all of the changing in and out of clothes we were doing this afternoon, she suggested I could do this one commando-style.

Considering that at the halfway mark I would be covered from shoulder to toe in an exfoliating cream (which she scientifically dubbed "the goop"), it would be an unpleasant ordeal getting my underwear down my legs in any sort of clean manner. This was probably the most enlightening part of the procedure: typically, the male presence in the spa is overshadowed by the image of a stereotypical bourgeois who's unable to separate business from pleasure. This is obviously less common than it seems—I

found myself surprisingly comfortable wearing nothing but a bed sheet in the presence of an attractive girl in what was anything but a sexually tense setting.

The procedure itself was relatively straightforward. After the exfoliant stage, I took a quick rinse in the shower and the lavender-soy massage oil was applied. The whole process left my skin feeling comfortably soft and refreshed—though it did seem a bit short. While it wasn't quite as drawn out and relaxing as a traditional full-body massage, overall, I was left with a positive impression.

RATING: 

Hair Restoration / Gentleman's Cut - \$35

There's not much that one can say about a haircut unless it's done by someone who knows what they're doing. Sporting a newly coiffed mohawk, I was curious how they would step up

to the challenge of having so little hair to work with—but in the end, I was pleasantly surprised.

As with most salons, I started at the washing basin, where my hair was treated to a conditioning product that it hasn't seen since my high school graduation. Since then, I've essentially destroyed my hair with spiking spray since in going for the punk-rocker look, but it was restored to its former glory in a matter of minutes.

From here, my stylist sent his magic clippers to work and cleaned up the mangled mess that was sprouting above my cranium. As his scissors danced across the lone strip of hair, I almost felt a tinge of regret that I didn't have more for him to work with. However, with a one-two punch from his straightener and a bottle of hair gel, he brought a refreshing look to even my most questionable of coiffures.

RATING: 

Leaving the spa, we couldn't help but feel that we had been lied to our entire lives about what exactly spas were. Frankly, it's completely silly to think that, as a man, you somehow aren't allowed to enjoy simple pleasures for fear that you might end up smelling like something other than Old Spice. The only noticeable difference about us from our time spent there was that we were more relaxed and had considerably less stress.

You don't have to be an effeminate male or one whose medicine cabinet is stuffed full of exotic products and oils to take pleasure in the spa, just like you don't have to be a plaid-wearing lumberjack to appreciate a finely grilled steak.

As Rob, the owner of the spa, put it to us, "Men need to learn that [they] can give [themselves] a break sometimes. You need to come in, check your manhood at the door, and enjoy yourself."

Feel like you could use a day at the spa? Go to the features section on our website and tell us why you deserve to be pampered. The ten best responses will receive a \$15 gift certificate to The Spa Club on Whyte.

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—Rob
OWNER, THE SPA CLUB

