

By Cathy Henderson

Baths or spas have been enjoyed as far back as 250 B.C., when the sprawling Roman Empire ruled the earth.

Some emperors were said to bathe as many as eight times a day, apparently needing frequent respite from ruling the world. Even prisoners were escorted to the baths.

Contemporary spas can make you feel like royalty, with some modern modifications.

In the Old World, spas were social centers as well as places of healing.

Slow to embrace such ideas, the United States now boasts more than 9,000 day spas, resorts, clubs and mineral springs, attesting to our growing interest in natural healing and preventive therapies.

Think spa and we think of beauty.

Many establishments offer facials, permanent makeup (even chemical peels), waxing, manicures, pedicures and full hair services. Tracie's Beauty Cottage & Day Spa in

when you're STRESSED

DO AS THE ROMANS DID AND ENJOY A SPA



Kanawha City even provides snacks and lunch. “We like to emphasize we are the only full-day spa in the area and that spas are for health and appearance. We’re not primarily a hair salon that also offers massages,” says manager Mary Collins.

Spas, so classified because treatments are water based, also use heat, applied in many forms. Here are quick explanations for some of the more common services.

WRAPS in muslin or fleece, soaked in an herbal cocktail to draw out toxins, are wound mummy-like around the body. A hydrating lotion follows.

SCRUBS, either sugar- or salt-based, exfoliate the skin.

MASSAGES, from the quick chair variety to the full body table massage, manipulate the muscles, improving circulation as oils and lotions replenish and soothe the skin.

MUD PACKS are applied to the face or the entire body. Dead Sea mud, yes from *the* Dead Sea, is applied after the body has been prepared with hot towels and a salt scrub. More hot towels melt the mud. A light massage with lotion follows.

SEAWEED FACIALS or full-body treatments hydrate and smooth the skin. This is processed seaweed. It is green, but not long strands of slimy kelp.

HOT STONES, usually shiny smooth basalt in varying sizes and soaked in water, are placed on the bed and covered with a towel before the client lies down. Smaller stones can be placed between the toes and on the face. Larger ones are applied to the back, but not on the bones, which could cause bruising.

Lying on a bed of rock?

Crystal York, a licensed massage therapist at Visions Day Spa on Capitol Street says, “I’ve never had a single person say it’s uncomfortable. Actually, I’ve never had a single person stay awake. It’s very relaxing.”

“We offer many of the same services as a day spa but we’re also medical. We receive many referrals from doctors whose patients have had medical procedures [chemical peels, for instance] and our minimal makeup helps [the patient] conceal bruising, redness, etc. without irritating the skin,” says Deidra Neu, owner of Neu Aesthetic.

“Neu Aesthetic is what I call ‘result oriented.’ It is relaxing, like a spa, but provides noticeable results.”

Because Neu’s services extend to men, as well as women and children, she says Neu Aesthetic “isn’t fluffy, not decorated in flowers for just the feminine, but also isn’t formal or sterile like a doctor’s office. I have patients as young as 5 years, as old as 97 [years].”

Today, spa therapies are private—you won’t share your space with as many as 6,000 people like the Romans did, but you can receive the same treatments that they did. ●

Before you go:

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT: Request a brochure or visit. Most spas like Kathy's on Jefferson Road in South Charleston welcome walk-ins, but suggest calling first if you want several services.

CERTIFICATION: West Virginia does not certify spas. Look for a licensed massage therapist.

IN-TAKE EVALUATION: The spa should ask you questions before providing some services because certain medical conditions may restrict some types of therapy. You must receive one of these.

PREGNANCY: More doctors are recommending massage therapy for women with difficult pregnancies. Some licensed massage therapists specialize in this area, such as Pamela Lynn at the Natural Health Center in Charleston. Be aware, however, that untrained hands can be harmful and even induce labor.



CHARLESTON SPAS INCLUDE:

Kathy's Therapeutic Massage & Spa, 109 Jefferson Rd., Ste. C, 925-1772

Neu Aesthetic, 828 Oakwood Rd., 346-1022

Tracie's Beauty Cottage & Day Spa, 506 50th St. SE, 925-1772

Visions Day Spa, 238 Capitol St., 345-5620

Jerry Adkins, 776-0350

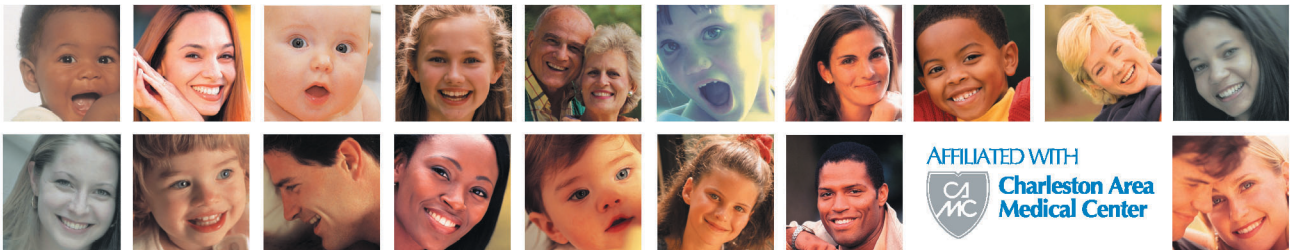


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