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Urbana Cityspa & Teabar's lounge and teabar offer a New York loft-style escape seven days a week.



My body has morphed into a rubbery, relaxed blob, and is now congealing on the table. Somehow I manage to sit up, change and serenely float out the door, back into the real world. If you've ever been to a spa and had a massage, then you can probably relate.

Sweet Surrender

A Spa Is the Place to Shed Stress — if Only for a Day

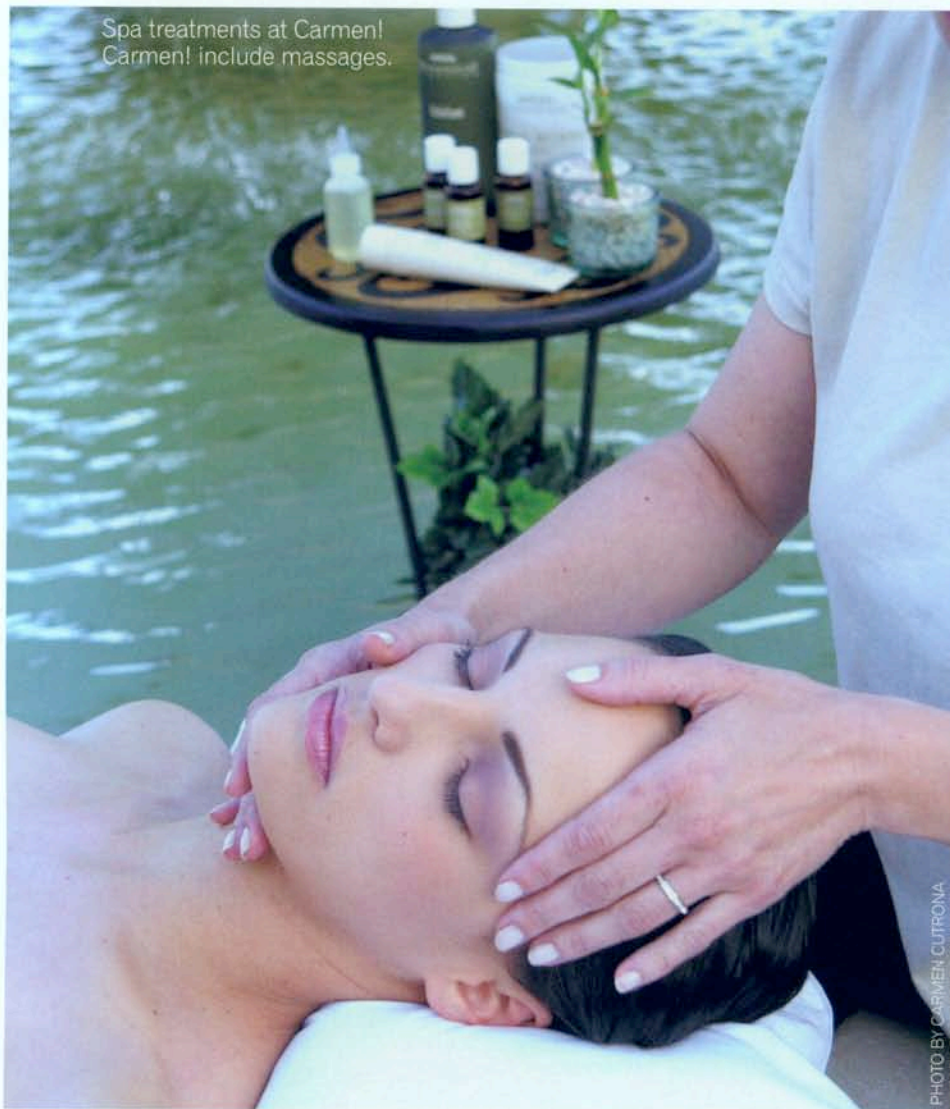
BY SAM BOYKIN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARMEN! CARMEN!
AND URBANA CITYSPA & TEABAR

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PHOTO: SCOTT BUCHMAN

Spa treatments at Carmen! Carmen! include massages.



The experience — the soft lights, the scented candles, the soothing, New Age music and, of course, the kink-releasing massage — tends to change your perspective for the rest of the day. Traffic? Work? Bills? No problem.

Of course massages are just one aspect of what most spas offer today. As spas have become more popular and mainstream, they've introduced an increasingly diverse selection of amenities and services, and Charlotte spas are no exception. We decided to explore some of these services and amenities — a tough, thankless job, we know, but it's all for the benefit of you, our dear readers.

For the most part, spas are women's turf. Industry experts say that men represent about 29 percent of the clientele, although that number has increased over the past few years. But as a member of the male species, I must admit that spas still seem rather eso-

teric, full of mysterious gels and oils, bizarre procedures like body wraps and facial peels, and something called exfoliates.

But today, most spas have something for everybody. And when we spend so much time with a cell phone in one hand and a to-do list in the other, who couldn't benefit from an hour, or day, of stress-free relaxation and pampering to recharge the batteries and unwind?

Luring Guys and Golfers

Which brings us to The Spa at Ballantyne Resort. The 20,000-square-foot, European-style spa and health facility, which opened in 2002, offers over 60 body, beauty, and therapeutic spa and salon treatments. These include everything from facials, nail treatments, hair services and decadent baths, body scrubs and body wraps. The spa also has several treatments especially for men, including facials, and

for the golfer, "Fore Your Feet," in which the feet are soaked, exfoliated, massaged, wrapped in hot towels, and the nails are trimmed and shaped.

And of course there's a full-range of massages available, the most popular being the classic Swedish massage, which uses medium pressure and long flowing strokes to induce relaxation and improve circulation.

Kirsten Wilkens, The Ballantyne Resort spa director, says what sets it apart from other spas are the luxurious his and hers locker rooms, which both have steamrooms, saunas and lounge areas.

"It's an escape without having to leave Charlotte," Wilkens says. The only real difference between the locker rooms is that the women's has a big picture window that overlooks the golf course, while the men's has a big-screen TV. "This seems to make the men happy," she says with a laugh.

Mark and Jaci Leitgeb visit Ballantyne massage therapist Tonya McClendon almost weekly for a dose of muscle release and relaxation. "I pretty much do everything — facials, hair, nails — and we both love deep-tissue massages," said Jaci Leitgeb. "We're very much into healthy living, and for us, going to the spa is part of that lifestyle."

While the full-service salon and day spa Carmen! Carmen! puts more emphasis on hair and beauty needs, it also offers a full line of spa treatments, including manicures, body wraps and massages. Carmen! Carmen! opened in Charlotte over 30 years ago, and now has four locations, including the main one in the Cotswold Village Shops, a hip, modern space with a full wall of body and hair products, and a flat-screen TV that shows models vamping down the runway.

On the day I paid a visit to the Cotswold location, owner Carmen Cutrona himself was there cutting hair, a rapt audience hanging on his every word and scissors snip. In addition to the hair salon, there's also the day spa, essentially a series of rooms down a darkened hallway, in which customers can get massages, body wraps and facials.

Teddi Orr, a self-proclaimed "spa girl," has been a regular at Carmen! Carmen! for nearly 16 years. A mother of two who also runs a women's ministry, Orr says getting



calls a “chill space” — as well as full-service tea bar that serves wine and chocolates. The 3,500-square-foot space, located in the Carmel Village shopping center, features massage treatment rooms, each with a different theme, including Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy, in which the masseuse hangs from bars across the ceiling and walks on a client’s back.

“Urbàna is truly a hybrid,” says Goodwin. “It has a hip lounge atmosphere that many spa-goers have never heard of before. This is no beauty salon. There are no hair dryers, bright lights or TV’s. The focus is on relaxation where both sexes can enjoy themselves.”

According to the International Spa Association, spas are designed to “enhance overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit.” Based on what Charlotte spas have to offer, this should be a piece of cake for just about anyone, regardless of whether you’re looking for beauty treatment or simply an escape from daily stresses. ☒

her eyebrows waxed, hair styled or a body massage is a nice way to reward herself after a hard day.

“I enjoy the whole experience,” Orr says. “The staff will do whatever it takes to make you feel and look great.”

‘Truly a Hybrid’

One of the newest spas to open in Charlotte is also one of the most unique, forging an interesting niche in the Queen City market. Urbàna Cityspa & Teabar, which opened in April, has a spacious lounge — what President Nancy Goodwin