

## spa review

### Treat Mom (or Yourself) to a Little Indulgence

written by Vivian Kelly

*busy schedules keep many locals on the constant go*, leaving little time for themselves. Taking an hour or a half-day to indulge in some much needed R&R may be just what someone in your life needs at this time of year. Send them to a spa. A certificate for services at a spa is a can't-miss gift for an anniversary or for Mother's Day. With many spas to choose from, and services that revitalize and restore from head to toe, this is one gift that truly keeps on giving.

The best news is that today's day spas are now every bit as luxurious as the far-away destination versions that require travel and a significant time commitment. Fortunately, there are a number of excellent day spas to choose from right here in your own backyard.

“ [T]he soft music, the warm bed, the dimly-lit room with the wonderful scent that only exists in spas, all made the massage a truly wonderful experience.”

*Heather Devine, after a prenatal massage at the Spa at the Brick Walk*

#### the spa at the brick walk

1229 POST ROAD, 255-8757 [THESPAATTHEBRICKWALK.COM](http://THESPAATTHEBRICKWALK.COM)

The atmosphere at this day spa is welcoming and unpretentious. Owner Emily Devejian created it with her daughter, Elaine, nine years ago. The soothing Aegean blue and white decor and seemingly countless nooks and crannies in this 5,000 square-foot day spa combines with abundant greenery and a warm reception that immediately puts a visitor at ease.

My colleague, Heather Devine, indulged in the spa's prenatal massage. During pregnancy there are few things you can do to make your changing body comfortable. Most parts of your body are "enlarging slightly," hormones are not in balance, and the "glow" you're supposed have is just from trying to maneuver your belly up a few stairs. With three part-time jobs and a three-year-old daughter, Heather jumped at the opportunity to go for a prenatal massage.

After resting a few moments in the Garden Room and indulging in the latest *InStyle* magazine (dreaming of post-preg-

*left: Caption here that describes the image(s); center: Caption here that describes the image(s); right: Caption here that describes the image(s).*

nancy clothing), the massage therapist Hillary came and found Heather. She was whisked away to a quiet large gently-lit room with its own shower. Gentle, soothing music played in the background.

Heather was told lie on the massage table under a nice warm blanket, which immediately melted away any tension she had. Hillary then had her lie on her back for a short time to work on Heather's head, shoulders and legs. Says Heather, "it was pure heaven—the head portion of the massage sent chills all the way down to my toes!"

Continuing with the massage, Hillary asked Heather to turn on her side so she could massage every inch of her back. This was just the remedy for Heather's lower back pain, a typical symptom of pregnancy.

When the hour was over, Heather wanted to stay and bask in the atmosphere: "Hillary's soothing voice and great personality, the soft music, the warm bed, the dimly-lit room with the wonderful scent that only exists in spas, all made the massage a truly wonderful experience."

**Note:** Only someone who is trained in prenatal massage therapy should perform prenatal massages. In addition, massages should not be administered in the first trimester.

“ The manicure was a winner, lasting a record nine days before the polish began to chip.”

*Vivian Kelly, on her Total Look manicure*

#### **the total look salon**

2193 BLACK ROCK TURNPIKE, 367-HAIR (4247)  
3482 POST ROAD, 255-9510  
TOTALLOOKSALONS.COM

I drove to the Fairfield flagship spa, my curiosity piqued by the witty bill boards posted along Route 1, which read, "I saw It. I want it. And now where do I get it?" (The ad refers to the gorgeous hair color for which the salon is known.)

The Fairfield flagship location has the look, and energy of a successful Manhattan salon, from the pop background music to the chic khaki, cream, and black color scheme. The front area is

chock-full of tantalizing goodies such as Mason Pearson Hairbrushes, fashion jewelry, and a selection of books pertaining to success and healing. The tri-panel bronze waterfall at the top of the stairs makes the perfect segue from the hubbub upstairs to the Esthetic Treatment Center on the level below. The spa area is an oasis of tranquility made up of three treatment rooms, a waxing room and state-of-the-art pedicure room.

My choice of treatment was a manicure with an experienced nail technician who was the perfect representative for "Total Look Hair" with glossy dark blonde locks accented with beautifully placed warm apricot highlights. (It's not surprising Total Look was voted "one of the Top 200 salons in the country" by Salon Industry Magazine.)

My technician gave me a terrific manicure, which included a lengthy elbow-to-fingertip massage. The treatment restored my garden and laptop-ravaged hands into a pair that would do a hand model proud.

#### **derma clinic, european day spa**

299 POST ROAD EAST, PLAYHOUSE SQUARE, WESTPORT, 227-0771  
DERMACLINICDAYSPA.COM

Patricia O'Regan Brown's spa left me breathless. My visit was simply perfect, from check-in to the downtime in the Retreat Room to the superb facial and makeup application I received.

The essence of the spa felt like Palm Beach. The cool teal and warm rose color scheme with wicker furniture created a cozy ambiance. The gift certificates are equally posh and include "The Swiss Bank Account," a \$500 and up guest passbook to any services at the spa.

I relaxed in a plush powder pink robe in the retreat room sipping on spring water served by a white uniformed attendant. Mila, my facial expert, an experienced esthetician with 22 years experience under her belt, ushered me into the cocoon-like massage room and helped me into an ergonomically-designed bed, shaped to the contours of a woman's body. Mila gave me a customized facial, which allowed me to sample a variety of treatments on the menu including: scalp aromatherapy and massage, and a light glycolic acid treatment. "Done properly," Mila reassured me, "it won't hurt, nor will you get redness." While enjoying a wonderful paraffin hand massage, Mila filled me in on the Clinical Oxygen Facial, which uses medical oxy-

gen, the same sort of oxygen that was proven effective in helping burn victims.

Afterwards, Michele, one of the resident makeup artists, treated me to a delicate makeup application, using GloMinerals makeup loaded with vitamins and SPF as well as from the spa's private label. Michelle worked with a deft, sure hand. While her inspiration is actress Angelina Jolie, she also knows how to tone it down. The look she gave me was that of a polished Park Avenue Princess.

Mrs. Brown and her staff were friendly, attentive, and unobtrusive. A seasoned veteran, this owner understands that clients come here to relax. This is the Waldorf Astoria of day spas. Our skin still felt wonderful over a week later, without any signs of redness, as promised.

### **pia lauren spa di bellezza**

1828 POST ROAD, 254-8308 PIALAUREN.COM

A warm and caring atmosphere envelops the Pia Lauren Spa. The holistic spa is located in an inviting small white brick-columned building with a red door in downtown Fairfield. Formerly the home to a fine antiques shop, the house is a curious but pleasing *mélange* of references. "It's a little bit French, a little bit Italian," Pia explained. "It's got all the things that I like, which is definitely a mixture."

There's a sunny downstairs parlor, where the reception desk and manicure stations are located. The mint and aquamarine walls and floral chintz curtains are warm and appealing. Not surprisingly, Pia decorated the space herself, as she takes an interest in every single aspect of the spa. While the *décor* certainly made a good impression, what wowed us is the friendly relaxed ambiance that fills the place.

The charming Nick Petrone, a skilled clinical massage therapist with a healing touch, performed my massage. He combines shiatsu, Swedish massage and acupressure in a way that relieved me of nagging post-flu lower back and neck pain.

Next, the custom facial treatment Pia gave me was healing in nature. It began with a skin analysis. Then there was a peel composed of papaya and apple enzymes combined with a suitable essential oil. The mixture stays on for 15 minutes to help erase fine lines. It gave a slight tingling sensation. Next a calm-

ing clay mask—mixed with the ingredients appropriate to your skin—is applied. The peel functions as "the negative" in Pia's equation, as it stimulates the skin. The calming clay masque is "the positive," adding moisture to penetrate the skin opened-up by the essential oils and acids. The end result was glowing dewy skin.

After the facial and a half-hour massage, I left the spa completely and utterly relaxed, and ready to face the chill and winds outside.

### **turquoise**

1275 POST ROAD, 319-1900 TURQUOISEMEDICALSPA.COM

Upon entering the aptly-named Turquoise spa, editor Deb Owens felt as if she was "surrounded by tranquil Caribbean waters." There's a two-story high waterfall on the wall that fills the waiting area with the relaxing sounds we associate with vacations and relaxation. A perfect way to start a spa experience.

Deb was taken back to the clean and pleasant locker room where she donned a heavy, thick robe and slippers. "I already felt a million miles away from home," she tells us. Deb's service was a hot stone massage performed by Kim. Turquoise, unlike many other spas, has a 30-minute massage option, which is what our busy colleague choose. She wasn't sure that it would be enough time, but found that it was. "It's amazing how long a half hour can feel when you're in a state of total relaxation," says Deb. "It really is a nice option for busy women. And it left me enough time to take a hot shower and get ready to get on with my day."

The massage itself consists of the placing of smooth, hot stones on the muscles of the body. Oil is applied first, and the masseuse slides the stones firmly along the shoulders, back and neck for a deep tissue massage that has the added benefit of penetrating heat. "It was one of the best massages I've had," notes Deb, who described the sensation as if her back was a warm skating rink and the stones were like hockey pucks gliding along. "It sounds strange, but there was something extra-soothing about the movement of the stones. Even the sound of them clicking against each other was relaxing."

Turquoise is proving to be a popular destination and our Publisher, Peter Baker, decided to give it a whirl too. The spa is a

bit different from others in the area because it is a “medical day spa.” This means there are medical professionals on hand to perform clinical treatments such as varicose vein management and laser hair removal. Peter, who has suffered from disc problems in his back, felt comforted by the knowledge that medical professionals run the place. Of his massage, he said, “it was not the deepest massage I have received, and I am typically one who likes the massage as deep as possible. However, amazingly she really was able to work every inch of my back with her fingers without the pressure and get to the areas that hurt. It was very different from any other massage I had. My back felt much better after the massage.”

### **moda capelli**

1172 POST ROAD, 254-0586 MODACAPELLISALON.COM


We sent our intern, Diane Szmidt, to check it out. Diane met Moda Capelli’s esthetician, Rina, who has been in the business for 17 years. She has worked with all different skin types, genders, and ages. “With her beautifully flawless skin and knowledge, you quickly realize that you are in good hands,” according Diane.

What makes a teenage facial different from a regular facial (used on adults) is the way that the facial is performed. “Teenagers need more than adults, because most of them don’t understand how to take care of their skin,” says Rina. Hormones and puberty play a big role in the appearance of teenage skin, and Rina wants her client to leave with knowledge about skin care and a boost in self-confidence.

The teenage facial is performed in a private room. The lightly painted walls of peach and pastel colors create a soothing environment, and the privacy allows Rina to speak candidly with her teenage client. Plus, it gives the teen the opportunity to ask questions without feeling uncomfortable during the facial.

Rina begins the process by cleansing the skin, Next, she performs a skin analysis to determine what is best for the client’s specific skin type. Rina then moves on to the exfoliation process, removing dead skin and reducing any blemishes or redness. The next step is to do a mild extraction to remove blackheads. Finally, a serum and mask are applied. The facial takes about an hour.

According to Rina, most clients leave with immediate results. She asks them to continue the skin regimen she has designed for them, and even schedules a follow-up appointment. If problems persist, Rina may suggest a visit to a dermatologist.

Diane was more than satisfied with her experience: “I was completely thrilled with my newly glowing skin, and now have a new appreciation for skin care.” 

## SIDEBAR -- SHADED BOX PLEASE

### Finding Inner Beauty

Sabita, the young and energetic owner of Sabita Holistic Center, invites Fairfielders into “the global experience of this little pink house.” The little pink house to which she refers is the landmark building on the Post Road in Southport where her center is located (upstairs, above Twice is Nice). The global experience is what makes Sabita Holistic Center unique.

The center and its impressive range of professionals offer personalized therapeutic attention to clients. Available services include acupuncture and acupressure sessions with physician Dr. Jing Zhang, Reiki performed by a Reiki Master, and a variety of massages such as hot stone, ayurvedic and deep tissue. She just added Thai massage to the list. (If you haven’t heard of it, it’s a bit like “assisted yoga,” according to Patrick Casey, who just spent four weeks in Thailand learning the practice.)

Sabita herself gives medical massages that are personalized to the needs of her client. In other words, she doesn’t follow a choreographed routine like most massage therapists. Rather, she meets with the client beforehand and alters her techniques—which include Eastern pressure points, passive stretches and shiatsu—during the service as she works with your body. When she comes across areas that are particularly tight or problematic, she stays there and works them out. It’s a noticeable difference. Afterwards, the client receives a self-care worksheet to take home.

Sabita is Connecticut’s only trained cancer therapist—she trained at Sloan Kettering and she attended school for medical massage—and she’ll make house calls for cancer patients. “I believe in Karma,” she says, “and this is my service.” In the same vein, the center offers free guided meditation sessions for the community, provides chair massages at charitable events such as golf tournaments and gives discounts to police officers, firefighters, priests and other community servants.

Sabita also reaches out to corporations, encouraging them to develop corporate care programs. “Give your employees a 15-minute chair massage,” she advises. “It will lead to increased awareness and productivity. It’s so much better than a cigarette break.” Or a pile of donuts in the conference room.

To learn more about Sabita and her holistic center, visit [Sabitaholisticcenter.com](http://Sabitaholisticcenter.com).

Sabita Holistic Center is located at 3517 Post Road in Southport and 501 Kings Highway in Fairfield, 254-2633.