



skiⁱⁿspa**Out**

snow spas down under

Alpine regions of the world have long understood the power of altitude for healing. The Swiss, Germans and Italians have all learned to perfect the Alpine Spa retreat beginning from the time of the Celts and Romans who settled in the hills and took great advantage of the thermal springs and mountain air on offer there.

Elsewhere in Australia the art has evolved. Australia is known more for its harsh red centre and tropical beaches than for its alpine regions. Few know that the country's Snowy Mountain ranges provide annual snow for skiers and winter sports fanatics come every northern summer.

The Victorian region in South East Australia has taken particular note of the European spas and opened their own Ski-In-Spa-Out day spas on the slopes of Mt. Hotham, Falls Creek and Mount Buller ski resorts. It makes sense, because recreational skiers use more than sixteen core muscles from the hamstrings to the gluteus when tearing down the piste.

Massage helps keep those sixteen muscles limber and this can mean less chance of injury and greater enjoyment on the snow each time.

There's nothing like sore muscles to keep new skiers under the duvet while their friends are making hay on the powder.

Similarly, alpine conditions require alpine treatments with re-oxygenating and re-hydrating potions to help moisturize dehydrated skin. Treatments at altitude differ greatly from those at sea level.

Rachael Oakes-Ash visited the three newest editions committed to the inner and outer well-being of Australian snow lovers.

The Endota Day Spa at Falls Creek understands the healing powers of indigenous essence. Native Australian aromatherapy and treatments featuring lemon myrtle and eucalyptus are served on the spa menu.

Step into Endota and experience a traditional Australian snow gum ambience with slated floors, white walls and soothing green soft furnishings. Texture abides as the skin is seduced with native mint foot soaks before each treatment. Perfect for ski boot feet!

The personal Moroccan tiled steam room opens the lungs and the pores and the outdoor private hot tub soothes tired muscles. It's all part of the HUSKI boutique ski lodge in which the Endota Day Spa resides. Designed by Elenberg Fraser architects, these fourteen apartments form a giant wooden snowflake on which the sun's rays play.

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It's not all girly spa action either, "Bloke massage" is tailored specifically for the male physique using 'made for man' herbs. For pure blizzard bliss the Never Never Land treatment is an excellent choice -- three and a half hours of massage, exfoliation and Australian clay cocooning. The Witchetty Scrub is another one to slough away dead cells. Next door to it is the Produce Store run by Melbourne gourmet, Zeth Romanis. It is simply the most perfect post massage pit stop for a glass of local cold climate wine and a peruse of the spa menu for the next day's blissful booking.

Where: Endota Day Spa, HUSKI, 3 Sitzmark St, Falls Creek

Cost: Treatments start at AU\$55 for thirty minute massage

Bookings: Visit www.endota.com.au or call + 61 2 5758 3848

Further info: Stay at HUSKI for massage on your doorstep www.huski.com.au

The mirrored treatment room at the **Mt Hotham White Mountain Day Spa** is affectionately referred to by staff as the narcissists' den. Frosted

mirrors line the walls and ceiling creating an illusion of never ending space.

Narcissists' den is one of four rooms used for a range of healing treatments from reflexology to reiki, hot stone massage and the unique Guasha style massage using soothing buffalo skin utensils to release heat toxins built up in the muscles.

The feel of gentle buffalo skin scraping is meditative in rhythm and nature. Before you knew it you'd have entered another realm. Try the four hands treatment for pure decadence when two therapists massage your muscles simultaneously.

At a cost of over half a million dollars, and designed by Italian architect Giovanni Ambrossie, The White Mountain Spa Retreat features floor-to-ceiling glass for ethereal views of Mt. Hotham's Swindlers Valley from the soothing pre- and post-treatment waiting room.

The complex is owned by two local Mt Hotham skiers, Alison McEwan and Lisa Parkinson. Together they had fourteen years in the spa industry and in the snow. This can only mean they understand the specific needs of ski-weary bodies and skin ravaged by alpine weather. Pevonia Swiss formulated facial products are the beauty product of choice for their ability to provide intense hydration in harsh winter conditions. Ginkgo Biloba eye treatments and Litho-Cal body peels compliment the Pevonia experience.

Where: White Mountain Spa Retreat, Hotham Central, Great Alpine Rd, Mt Hotham

Cost: One hour massages costs AU\$99.00 for hot stone, aromatherapy and the like.

Bookings: Visit www.whitespahotham.com or call +61 2 57593360

Further info: The spa offers a Prestige Chalet Service. Massage therapists will come to you in your chalet. \$125 for sixty minutes.

Enter Mt Buller's Breathtaker All Suite Hotel and Spa Retreat and you'd be forgiven for thinking you were in Switzerland. The luxurious lap pool is bordered by floor-to-glass ceiling and exposed sandstone. The invitation says "jump right in".

At Breathtaker on High it's all about the water. Geisha hot tubs, Jacuzzis and water treatments utilise air jets to relax muscles prior to massage. Thalassothys products are in keeping with the aqua theme of Breathtaker and utilize marine algae from the surface, the middle and the greatest depth of the sea. Marine algae are known to contain ten times more trace elements than terrestrial plants. This means the skin gets a chance to absorb ten times more nutrients.

The good news is the spa is strictly adults only. No screaming children will be allowed to shatter the harmony. Couple treatments feature double geisha hot tubs and double massage rooms for time out together. Stay at the Breathtaker All Suite hotel and you can be carried to your room post treatment.

Where: Breathtaker All Suite Hotel and Spa Retreat, Breathtaker Rd, Mt Buller

Cost: A thirty minute back and neck massage costs AU\$55.00

Bookings: Visit www.breathtaker.com.au or call 1800 088 222

Further info: Room rates at Breathtaker All Suite Hotel start at AU\$445.00 per night for a one bedroom deluxe apartment during peak season. ●

