

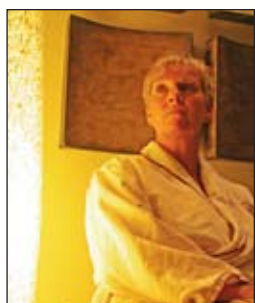


spa

spa-ing by numbers

Spend some quality time with key people in your life

Story and photo (lower left) by Roberta McDonald



Above: Gloria Christie says a group spa is a way to set aside some exclusive time with friends and family.

"I'm very big on spending time with the important chicks in my life," says Gloria Christie, owner of Ultimatechicktrips, a thriving tour business for women.

So it's no surprise that Christie is big advocate of group spa-ing, which she describes as an ideal way to carve out some time with friends and family amid today's frantic schedules.

"It's great to have a group spa," she says. "I think it's a great place to bond. You get that undivided attention with one another."

Whether it's a chatting while enjoying a luxurious pedicure or moisturizing facial, sharing a variety of spa services in the company of close friends or colleagues has become increasingly popular, says Heather Greene director of marketing at the Spa Ritual.

From birthdays, to corporate outings, to bridal showers, it's all about unplugging from the daily grind and spending quality time with key people.

"Group spa-ing has been a hit," says Greene, whose facility can be booked for groups ranging from 20 to thirty guests. "We've touched on something that the community and city has been missing."

Greene adds sharing various rituals can enhance the spa experience for today's "time-starved" professionals — from an authentic Japanese tea service to massage therapy and esthetic services.

Spa Ritual, in Crowfoot Centre, took five years to develop, with artisan woodwork imported from Bali and India, lush bamboo, and mosaic tiles providing a tranquil environment.

In addition, soothing music is piped throughout the spa, with the scent of eucalyptus in the air.

"Our main imperative is to be as authentic as possible and offer Calgary a luxurious experience that is very grounded," says Greene.

A private dining area with majestic wooden doors provides a serene enclave to dine and converse.

"It was created to be a space where people can have privacy and convene. Guests can really customize their experience here," she says.

The spa also provides a concierge service that takes care of organizing lunch, services, and any special requests, leaving guests free to luxuriate and rejuvenate in the facility.

The Spa Bistro serves locally sourced, organic lunches and smoothies, while the products used are botanically derived.

"Our commitment is to bring guests wellness products and services in an environment that is non toxic for them. It's important to us and I think to our guests as well," says Greene.

For Christie, spending the afternoon with colleagues was an experience bordering on the divine.

"When I walked out, I just felt so relaxed," she says. It was marvelous. Women really need to do this more often."