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# Ski & Spa

## Best of the Rockies

BY EVERETT POTTER

SPA IS FINALLY GETTING A STARRING ROLE AT ROCKY MOUNTAIN RESORTS. IT'S A MAJOR change. Even at the top Rockies ski resorts, spas have long been bit players at best, mainly because hoteliers believed guest rooms produced more revenue than treatment rooms. Moreover, a modest (or even no) spa never kept a resort or destination off a best-of list. Stein Eriksen Lodge in Park City, a perennial "Top 10," still has only a relatively modest spa, and until three years ago, there was not one luxury hotel in Aspen with a spa.

The advent of the Remède spa at the St. Regis Aspen in 2004 was a milestone and a harbinger. Like it, the spas that have opened since or are on the drawing board are big—Allegria at the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek is 30,000 square feet—beautifully and intelligently designed, and with a penchant for bold hydrotherapy facilities. You could almost make a stay at one of these hotels into a winter destination-spa experience, given the fitness facilities, the expertise on call, and the healthy choices at the restaurants.

For this Insider's Guide, I visited more than a dozen ski-resort spas in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. Eight of them (plus a curveball in Salt Lake City) made the

cut as the best ski-resort spas in the Rockies, but for reasons that varied, as you'll see in my pull-no-punches evaluations. One thing remained constant, no matter what the hotel and spa were like: the high quality of the therapists. In some cases, that more than made up for the limitations of the spa. Here's my report.

### THE TRIP AT A GLANCE

#### MOST MEMORABLE...

#### Couple's Treatment Room

Park Hyatt Beaver Creek

#### Fitness Center

Vail Mountain Lodge & Spa

#### Hotel Pool

Amangani

#### Hotel Setting

Ashiatsu at Park Hyatt Beaver Creek and deep tissue at Four Seasons Jackson Hole

**Spa Amenities** Flavored oxygen and Jacques Torres truffles at St. Regis Aspen

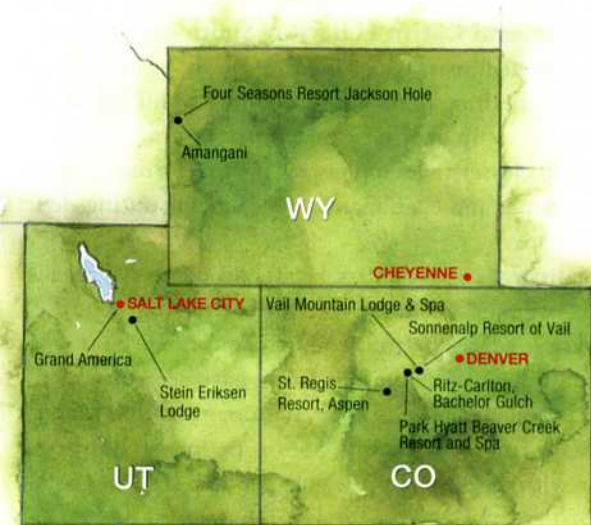
**Spa Architecture** Park Hyatt Beaver Creek

**Spa Feature** Aqua Sanitas hydrotherapy center at Park Hyatt Beaver Creek

**Therapists** Nastassja Flores at Four Seasons Jackson Hole, Brian Mecham at Stein Eriksen Lodge, and Karin Knittel at Park Hyatt Beaver Creek

#### Treatment Rooms

St. Regis Aspen





## COLORADO

# VAIL MOUNTAIN LODGE & SPA



The lodge has a 20,000-square-foot spa and fitness center—enormous for a hotel with just 20 rooms and 8 condos.

**I** CONFESS THAT I HAVE A SOFT SPOT FOR THIS SPA AND FITNESS center in the heart of Vail Village because it was the first place I encountered a climbing wall, had a shiatsu massage, used Pilates equipment, and practiced Ashtanga yoga. (That was 12 years ago, when the hotel was called the Vail Athletic Club.) The owners recently spent US\$25 million on an upgrade, and it shows. Rooms are about 450 square feet and nicely furnished in a style that could be called Colorado Pottery Barn. All of them have fireplaces, feather beds, down comforters, and iPod docks. The hotel restaurant, Terra Bistro, has long been one of the better choices in town, and it recently initiated

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Hotel hardbody,  
spa included

the “1,000 Year Breakfast”—not that it takes an eon to eat but that every ingredient contributes to longevity by being organic, natural, or free-range. This is the only restaurant

that I’ve come across that uses Ezekiel bread, one of the few tasty low-salt, whole-grain breads, for toast.

The hotel is giddily upside down in terms of room-spa ratio: 20 rooms and 8 condos, 20,000-square-foot spa and fitness center. It’s the place to stay if you like to work out hard in addition to skiing. (The lifts are just a short walk away.) There are

upwards of nine classes daily, sensibly scheduled at the beginning and end of the ski day, including three yoga choices (Anusara-inspired, vinyasa, and one for athletes), as well as Spinning and mat Pilates.

Massages are likewise geared for muscle relief, not relaxation, if my hot stone, delivered by Shinji Tsuji, the assistant spa manager, is any guide. He’s very strong, very focused, and clearly used to working on well-conditioned clients. Post-treatment, there’s a small sanctuary with a few chaises that looks out onto Gore Creek. Good skiers will revel in the no-nonsense approach; good skiers who want creature comforts and more of an experience spa should go up the road to the Ritz-Carlton or Park Hyatt.

The issue here is the health club’s substantial local membership, which means there’s a logjam in the spa and gym starting at 4:30 p.m. Still, this is an egalitarian place, with owners of multi-million-dollar condos sweating alongside ski patrollers.

US\$425–\$1,795, 970-476-0700, [www.vailmountainlodge.com](http://www.vailmountainlodge.com)

### SPA AT A GLANCE

20,000 square feet  
13 treatment rooms  
35 therapists  
4 aestheticians  
**WOW FACTOR**  
The fitness facility  
**THERAPIST**  
TO REQUEST  
Shinji Tsuji