

finding your bliss

rejuvenating spa treatments

by Amy Hegarty

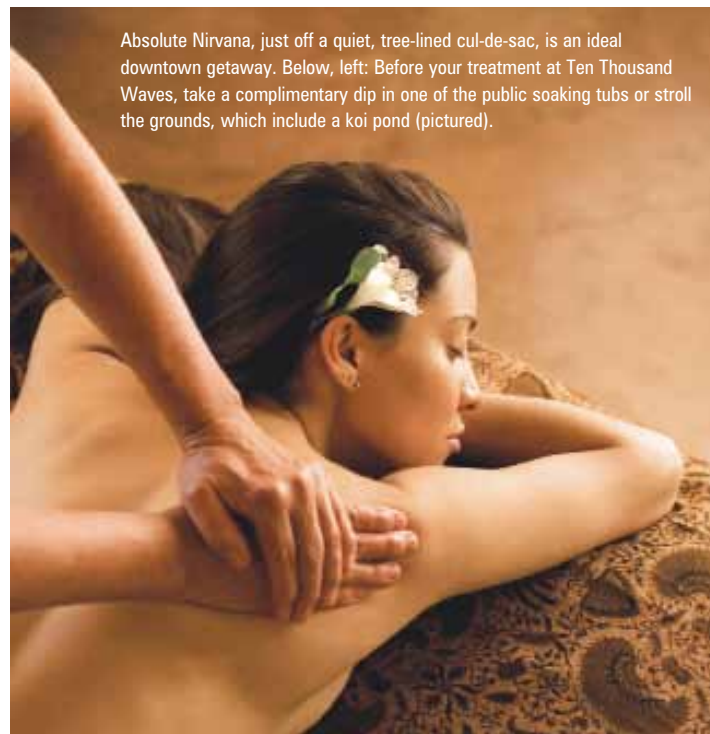
WITH THE EXCITEMENT OF THE NEW YEAR drifting into distant memory and the outside temperatures still hovering around the freezing mark, there's no time like the present for a mid-winter pick-me-up. Here, discover some of Santa Fe's unique, rejuvenating massages—massages that go beyond the standard feel-great offerings and provide some serious TLC from head to toe and even inside out.

All-Over Care: "Nose to Toes"

80 minutes, \$149

Ten Thousand Waves, 3451 Hyde Park Road
tenthousandwaves.com

One of the most comprehensive treatments in town, Noes to Toes at Ten Thousand Waves is the gift (to yourself) that keeps on giving. Combining modified versions of a number of the Japanese spa's signature offerings, Nose to Toes (which was revamped this past July) offers a total-healing experience for every part of your body. Therapist Valli began our session with a long-stroked full-body massage that helped me to quickly decompress and ease into the process. The decompressing continued with gentle but deep Thai stretches; an upper-body Yasuragi treatment, which relieves tension in the head, neck, and face; and an Ashi Anma foot massage. (Ashi Anma draws on authentic Japanese shiatsu techniques and uses stretching plus focused pressure from the technician's fingers and palms to induce all-over relaxation.) My feet and calves were scrubbed with a mixture of rice bran, adzuki bean powder, and green tea, then wiped clean with warm towels. The most surprising part of the treatment was the light yet vigorous full-body exfoliation. The combination of the external friction and increased blood circulation created an instantly warm feeling that eased every ache and pain and made me feel like I was detoxing on the spot. By the end of the session the transformation was complete: I had arrived for my appointment a bundle of stress and left feeling as limp as a rag doll.



Absolute Nirvana, just off a quiet, tree-lined cul-de-sac, is an ideal downtown getaway. Below, left: Before your treatment at Ten Thousand Waves, take a complimentary dip in one of the public soaking tubs or stroll the grounds, which include a koi pond (pictured).

Neck and Shoulders: "The Ultimate Stress-Buster"

90 minutes, \$175

Absolute Nirvana, 106 E Faithway Street
absolutenirvana.com

Since Carolyn Lee opened her downtown getaway in 2005, Absolute Nirvana, which centers on Balinese health and beauty rituals, has been ranking at the top of superlative spa lists. As the name of this particular massage indicates, The Ultimate Stress-Buster was designed to remedy the pernicious effects of stress, from sore muscles to overall tension and anxiety. A full-body massage at heart, the treatment, which senior therapist Lauren Janson began with deep stretches of my arms and upper body, pays particular attention to the neck and shoulders. A powerfully penetrating white-flower analgesic—which alleviates ailments from arthritis to muscle strain—was mixed with a warm oil base and massaged all over my body. Vapors from the mixture applied to my neck, chest, and shoulders eased sinus pressure, as did a warm towel draped across my face. When the massage itself ended, I retreated to a private steam room, where the analgesic was able to penetrate even further.

Feet: "Sole Revival"

50 minutes, \$125; 25 minutes \$75

Inn and Spa at Loretto, 211 Old Santa Fe Trail
innatloretto.com

This dedicated reflexology treatment with a punny name not

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only feels good, it *is* good—for your tired, aching feet as well as your taxed internal organs. Tracing its roots to ancient times, modern reflexology centers on the belief that reflex points in the feet correspond to other parts of the body—from the lungs to the liver, from the appendix to the adrenal glands. Focused, skilled pressure applied to those points is credited with relieving stress, releasing feel-good hormones, and facilitating self-healing. Therapist Halimah Seidel led me through the elegant spa of the landmark Loretto Inn until we came to a dark but warmly lit room, where I laid on a wonderfully heated, pillow-soft table. A weighted mask was placed over my eyes, shutting out all distractions and allowing for major relaxation. The treatment featured deep, fast, deliberate movements and was topped off with a warm towel rub that also involved massage-like pressure. While there are virtually no bells and whistles with Sole Revival, the focus and precision of this treatment made it one of the most relaxing experiences I'd ever had.

Inner Peace: “Energy Balancing”

60 minutes, \$80

Body of Santa Fe, 333 Cordova Road
bodyofsantafe.com

The stresses of everyday life can leave us feeling out of whack. Energy-balancing sessions are a popular tool for restoring harmony and balance to one's body, mind, and spirit, allowing for physical and mental relaxation as well as the removal of blockages that keep us from achieving true peace and happiness. Opened in 2004 by Lorin Parrish, who's practiced and taught energy medicine and developed several bodywork programs, Body of Santa Fe offers a rich selection of energy treatments, such as reiki therapy and cranial-sacral massages. For my visit, I chose to focus on my chakras, which practitioners say are the body's energy centers. Corresponding to a holistic set of life issues, the seven chakras affect everything from self-worth to relationships, from creativity to financial independence. Therapist Lynsey Rubin began our session with a light massage and explained that physical relaxation is a key part of the experience, which is dependent upon feelings of trust, comfort, and safety. This state of relaxation also helps the therapist become attuned to his or her client, she added. With deliberate hands and breaths, Lynsey evaluated the state of each of my chakras, eventually telling me that my system was “clean” (which, I admit, I was relieved to hear). She did note, however, that there was what she called congestion in one of my chakras, and then set out to remove it. With more hand-and-breath work, accompanied by a series of gentle questions, she manipulated the energy flow in that chakra. The goal was to redirect the flow and restore balance, relieving me of any stuck or frozen energy. Lynsey explained that energy work requires an open mind,



Above: The spa at the Loretto Inn offers renowned comfort in a landmark setting. Left: Relaxation is a key element of a chakra-balancing session at Body of Santa Fe.

and that the healing it brings about happens on a more subtle level than is the case with other kinds of treatments. For me, the benefit of this session was an increased thoughtfulness and self-awareness with regard to a certain area of my life, as well as, upon getting up from the massage table and heading back into the world, an overall feeling of bliss. 

First and Last Resort

Take your mid-winter pick-me-up to the next level and book a getaway at one of Santa Fe's world-class resorts. **Encantado** (encantadoresort.com), set on 57 stunning acres of former private ranchland in the Tesuque Valley, offers 65 casitas that combine historical charm with modern-day luxury. The full-service spa takes inspiration from local traditions and cultures, offering treatments that honor Santa Fe's reputation as a center of healing and spirituality. One good rejuvenating bet: **Mountain Spirit Purification** (120 minutes, \$300), which includes a sage smudge, adobe-clay body mask, and scalp, foot, and juniper-sage hot-stone massages.

Also in the Tesuque Valley, the 450-acre **Bishop's Lodge Ranch Resort and Spa** (bishopslodge.com) offers high-end amenities as well as scenic adventures such as guided horseback rides through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Its SháNah spa (which means “vitality and energy” in Navajo) has a robust list of packages and à-la-carte services. **SháNah Magic** (150 minutes, \$325) combines a custom massage, custom facial, and “ultimate” manicure for an experience that is sure to leave you refreshed, rejuvenated, and restored.