

My First Spa Experience

By Christine Alhambra

I've always wanted to get a massage and facial. The closest thing I've ever had to a spa treatment was an eyebrow waxing. The opportunity to be treated to a day of pampering at St. Michaels Harbour Inn and Spa, owned by Bob Pascal, was an experience I looked forward to.

As I drove along Route 50, on my way to the Eastern Shore from Annapolis, I thought I heard a pop. Pulling to the side of the road, to my dismay I discovered a huge gash in my tire. "Perfect timing! I'm not going to make my appointment," I thought. Not only was I not going to be able to get my scheduled facial and massage I was going to have to stand in the 95 degree weather waiting for a tow truck. As the beads of sweat ran down my face I worried that the closest I would get to a spa treatment that day was a natural sauna.

But my luck started to change when two good Samaritans offered to change my tire and I was back on the highway. When I pulled into the inn's parking lot, I took a deep breath. I was ready to start my spa experience.

I entered the spa on the third floor of the inn and started to relax, looking around and noticing the warm colors and recycled oak wood floor. Spa Director Lynsey Roper describes the atmosphere of the spa as, "earthy, clean, and contemporary." The lulling sound of water cascading down a 5-foot-tall slate wall fountain began to soothe me, and I could feel the stress of my car problem slowly disappearing.

The cheery receptionist showed me to the changing room, where I was given a locker, robe, and complimentary slippers. Throughout the spa, I noticed aromatherapy steam rooms, multi-jet showers, stone tile, and marble counters. Down the hall was a cozy relaxation lounge where I later enjoyed teas and light snacks.

My massage therapist, Isabel, took me back to one of the four treatment rooms and talked to me about what she would focus on while giving me a personal Swedish massage. The massage was amazing. I felt completely relaxed. If you want something different you can mix it up and get a Wild Lime Scalp and Body Massage (\$110) or Hot Stone Therapy (\$175).

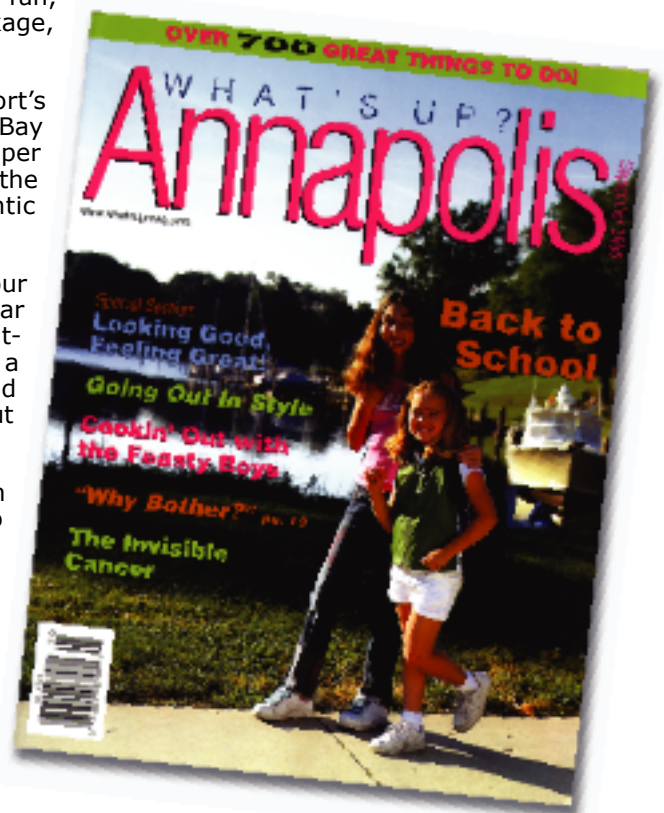
Next I was ready for my facial. My esthetician, Denise, was sweet and easygoing-I immediately felt comfortable with her. My favorite part was when she looked at my skin closely and told me where my dry/oily spots were and what she recommended for my skin type. I even walked away with a SkinCeuticals sample to try. The spa offers a variety of custom facials that run from about \$95 for the Men's Rescue Facial to about \$125 for the SkinCeuticals Firming Facial. In addition to the massage, therapy and facials, the spa offers body treatments such as a Body Polish (\$75) or self-tanning application (\$110), hand and foot treatments (\$30-65), and body waxing (\$15-70).

Along with the regular spa menu, St. Michaels Harbour Inn and Spa offers packages such as their signature "Plan Your Perfect PJ Party" package. This package puts you and your friends in control to enjoy overnight accommodations in a waterfront suite, customizing your own girls' night in. Ladies choose the theme of their party from a wide selection of music, movies, games, snacks, and drinks. Included are comfy pajamas for everyone in your party to take home. Rates for the PJ Party package range from \$525 to 950 and include spa services, accommodations, tax and gratuities. While the ladies are having fun, the men can enjoy the spa's "Gentlemen Prefer Spas" package, which includes a facial, massage and manicure (\$210).

After you're done pampering yourself at the spa, the resort's complimentary shuttle service can take you to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum or to stops in downtown St. Michaels. Roper recommends trying Harris Creek Kayak Tours or sailing on the Selina II-a 1926 historic gaff-rigged catboat, for a romantic champagne sunset sail, private charters, or overnight outings.

Once you arrive, there's no reason to move your car. The Harbour Inn offers a wide array of amenities including 46 spectacular waterfront suites and guest rooms (\$159-525), a fifty transient-slip marina (with wireless Internet), conference facilities, a harbor-side pool and Jacuzzi, and the Shore Restaurant and Lounge with both indoor, outdoor, and poolside dining throughout the day.

Bruce Wise, general manager of the Harbour Inn, says his main focus is the customer experience and four-star service. "We do what it takes to make people happy," he says, "and we apply that across the board." If every customer's experience is similar to mine, then Wise is true to his word. My spa experience is certainly worth repeating!



The Spa at Harbour Inn
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