

Near Escapes
Rebecca Philps
Vancouver Magazine
March 2008

Need a little personal restoration? Here are six exotic pampering options--some no further away than your neighbourhood spa.

A Steamy Affair

Surinder Bains opened her **Miraj Hammam** (a Turkish steam bath) eight years ago, inspired by the Parisian hammams she would frequent on regular visits to the City of Lights. These hammams, imported from North Africa, are social gathering spots and a favoured escape for frazzled fashion editors during pret a porter. At Miraj Hammam, find mums and daughters enjoying girl time in the scrupulously clean space with beautiful tile mosaics and ornate wrought-iron window coverings.

Go For: The hammam and gommage (\$109, 60 minutes). Wrap yourself in a cotton slip and move between the low mist and high-intensity steam chambers in the main hammam room. Then, lie back on a slab of Jerusalem gold marble where a therapist gives you a vigorous rubdown (gommage), using black Moroccan soap infused with eucalyptus, to remove dead skin cells and stimulate circulation. Finally, move to the silk-cushioned Sultana Lounge where honeycake and tea are served on silver platters under the watchful eye of Bains's mother, whose portrait hangs above the door.

1495 W. 6th Ave., 604-733-5151.

Mirajhammam.com