

# Sierra Refuge

## Stillwater Spa

### OWNER

Hyatt Hotels & Resorts

### OPENED

2003

### THE SPACE

20,000 square feet, including men's and women's locker rooms with steam rooms and saunas, 14 treatment rooms, 2 couples' suites and a relaxation lounge

### STAFF

Spa director, assistant spa director, lead spa concierge, lead massage therapist, lead aesthetician, 13 massage therapists, 6 spa attendants, 5 estheticians, 4 concierge members, 4 cosmetologists

### MOST POPULAR TREATMENTS

Ultimate HydraFacial (50 min./\$225), Lake Tahoe Stones Massage (80 min./\$245), Moroccan Oil Hydration & Exfoliation Ritual (50 min./\$180)

### PRODUCTS USED/ RETAILED

Alo Yoga, FarmHouse Fresh, Hampton Sun, HydraFacial, Intracuticals, Jane Iredale, Kerstin Florian, Mala+Mantra, Moroccan Oil, Naked Princess, South Seas Skincare, Tara Spa Therapy, YogaBalm

### WEBSITE

hyattstillwaterspa.com



On the shores of world-famous Lake Tahoe, Stillwater Spa has cultivated a deeply authentic sanctuary.

It was a brisk but gloriously sunny day as my best friend Alison and I meandered our way through the Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe. The Northern California resort, tucked into the Sierra Mountains, features 422 guest rooms and lakeside cottages, a heated deck with a lagoon-style pool and two Jacuzzis, a fitness center, private beach and the waterfront Lone Eagle Grill. Our final destination, however, was the resort's coveted Stillwater Spa. Though we'd escaped our respective Los Angeles and Oakland lives to be in one of the state's most revered ski destinations, the only things on our to-do list for this rare BFF weekend getaway were glasses of wine by the fire, healthy meals, long hikes and as much time within Stillwater as possible.

Billed as a mountain getaway destination for families, couples and duos like us, Stillwater is tastefully decorated to follow suit. In the retail area, an oversized leather



Couples' Suite



couch, positioned in front of a hardy fireplace, practically begs spa-goers to sink into its well-worn yet luxurious cushions. An array of apparel, jewelry and skin care decorate robust wooden displays, adding to the space's cabin-like feel. From the moment we approached the reception desk, the passion and attentiveness of Stillwater's employees shone through.

Each employee was friendly and personable, as excited to usher us into our blissful afternoon as we were to partake in it. Once we slipped on our robes, we began to take in the sprawling space. Beige, taupe and light brown decor is enhanced by turquoise blue and chocolate brown accents. A eucalyptus steam room and cedar sauna flank one end of the hallway; at the other, rows of plush chairs with blankets invite patrons to cozy up and stay awhile.

This meticulous attention to detail is apparent everywhere—from a selection of all the potential toiletries guests might need, to the carefully stacked towels and cold compresses in every nook. "Hyatt's philosophy is centered around the word CARE, which stands for Creating Authentic Relationships Everyday," explains director of spa Erica Korpi. "That applies to how we care about our guests and our fellow employees. We care for our people so they can be their best."

## It's All In the Details

Alison and I met our therapists Oran and Katie in the lounge and they guided us up a curved wooden staircase and into a warm couples' room, complete with a fireplace and snug armchair. Our aptly named Escape package (75 min./\$230) began with the application of an Herbal Relief wrap—a concoction of ginger root, rosemary, allspice berry, eucalyptus and clove, plus an essential oil blend of thyme, fennel, juniper and cinnamon—to relieve muscle tension, eliminate toxins and increase vitality.

When selecting her partner brands and customizing protocols, Korpi keeps two notions in mind. "For one, I need my team to feel equally compelled by that company. They need to love the



products and believe in their results,” she explains. “Second, there must be a caring and thoughtful relationship between the spa and the vendor. A spa will only be successful if both of these are true.”

Small but key details—a warm lavender eye pillow, a gentle spritz of neroli facial water and our therapists’ willingness to adjust the room temperature, face cradles and even the position of our limbs as we lay cocooned in the wraps—left both of us feeling comfortable, attended to and extraordinarily relaxed. Especially appreciated: our last-minute request for particular focus on our necks, shoulders and backs, and Oran and Katie’s impromptu adjustments.

## Empathetic Experts

Staff with excellent skills and attention to detail comes as no surprise—management has worked hard to hire, train and maintain stellar, experienced therapists. To start, potential hires go through an extensive interview process involving at least three one-on-one interviews. “It’s very important for the candidate not only to have the talents and tools needed to perform the job, but also for them to understand what our culture is all about and if they can see themselves working for our company,” details Korpi. “Our ideal candidate understands empathy and care; they are energized to work with our guests and create memorable experiences.” She notes that whereas training new hires on standard operating procedures can be straightforward, teaching empathy is not. In Stillwater’s hiring process, empathetic therapists who show they can connect fluidly with guests already have a leg up.

Aside from a remarkable staff, Korpi reports that a major aspect of running such a sought-after respite is being hands-on and consistently involved in daily operations. “I’ve always been the type of leader who takes time every day to be on the floor with my team: Interacting with guests, helping attendants pick up laundry, assisting with a check-in, chitchatting with my service providers... I do it all,” explains the industry veteran.



## Marketing Magic

Both the hotel's and spa's staff work tirelessly to spread the word about Stillwater by utilizing a wide range of online campaigns via Google, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Yelp and other review sites. According to Korpi, the spa's Facebook and Instagram video campaigns have been hugely successful. "We ended up paying less than one cent per view and received more than 20,000 views from local, targeted users per month," she shares. The resort's on-site marketing team handles social media inquiries and concerns, both positive and negative. "We take the time to embrace all feedback and give a thoughtful and caring response, which circles back to our company's philosophy," Korpi explains.

Creative marketing projects are a big source of pride. Locals make up 28 percent of the spa's annual visitors, and to lure in more residents from Tahoe's



Incline Village, the staff has developed a Hyatt VIP Locals card that gives guests a 20 percent discount at the spa and all on-property restaurants.

The real all-stars, however, are the spa's Luxurious Locals Spa Soirees. Hosted twice a year by Stillwater, these parties are free for loyal guests and feature complimentary spa treatments, makeup demos, raffles, silent auctions and live music. "Our Winter 2015 party

resulted in more than \$10,000 in service packages and retail sales, and was designed to encourage attendees to take care on their holiday shopping—while treating themselves too!" reports Korpi. "With an ROI of more than 5:1, it's creative campaigns like this that enable us to see successful financial results, but also connect with and treat our most dedicated fans." 🍷