

SPA EXPERIENCE

Teen puts on brave face for spa treatment

JOANNE ELVES
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

It wasn't a question as much as a statement.

"What if my friends see me!" My teenage son was standing on the third tee of the Sonora Dunes golf course in Osoyoos when I told him what was on the agenda after the game.

"That's for women!" he yelled. "I'm not going to A SPA!"

I told him to quit scaring the rattlesnakes that lurk in the sage beside the fairways. Of course he could go to a spa.

Like many before him, he'd go in a skeptic, but come out a convert. It was time for him to clean up that teenage face with a proper facial done by a professional.

But what I saw as a treat, he saw as a trap.

We were on holidays, staying at the new Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa in Osoyoos, B.C., in Canada's only desert, and up until that moment it was perfect.

After dropping our bags in the condo style hotel, we didn't need the car at all.

A two-minute walk in any direction had us at the golf course, or the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre, the Nk'Mip Cellars and wine tasting room, the vineyard, the pool, the Passatempo restaurant, and the Sonora Desert Spa. Or as Clay would shrill it — THE SPAAAA!!!

As a yellow-bellied racer snake slithered swiftly from his probing golf club, Clay forgot about the spa treatment. He wasn't really poking the snake; he was looking for his ill-aimed golf ball.

The Sonora Dunes is a nine-hole par 35 course that snakes its way up the valley shoulder, offering spectacular views of Osoyoos Lake with Washington state in the distance. Because the fairways are lined by such indigenous desert foliage as sage and cactus, it's home to native creatures as well — especially rattlesnakes.

Because of that, it's easy to find lost, and abandoned, golf balls of the more fearful patrons.

Clay found his ball and two more from a bank-sponsored tournament near where the racer was discovered. Unfortunately, our quest to spot a rattlesnake fell short, but he was pleased to find six more balls.

By the time we finished the ninth hole, we were parched in the 30C heat, so a visit to the spa sounded refreshing — to me, anyway.

Walking toward the adobe style building, Clay's wide eyes darted from face to face as we passed other guests. When he felt it was safe — he dashed into the spa and hid against the wall.

It didn't matter that we were a good 10-hour drive from home. Being 13 years old and getting caught in A SPA would ruin his life.

If You Go

- nkmp.com
- sonoradunes.com
- sonoradesertspa.com
- spiritridge.ca

Behind the privacy door, Clay let down his guard and changed into a robe and slippers. I could see his toes kneading the soft terry insoles as the relaxation music went to work; already he was starting to relax — and we were only in the lounge. When esthetician Audrey Blanchette came to take Clay to his treatment room, I explored the brand-new facility with owner Melissa Redfern.

"Being that we are situated in a desert, we've altered our treatments to really refresh the body and bring back the moisture lost in the desert heat," says Redfern.

Spa experiences range from massage and esthetics to a comprehensive gentleman's menu in tastefully designed private and semi-private rooms.

I peeked into Clay's dimly lit room to find him totally at peace with the world. I think every one of his best pals could've paraded through and he wouldn't have lifted an eyelid.

He was trapped under Blanchette's magical fingertips as she lightly

worked cleansers into his skin, drawing out the embedded yuk from years of only waving washcloths across his skin. His hands draped loosely at his sides and his jaw was slack.

Blanchette softly explained how to keep blackheads and blemishes from forming, how to wash and what to use. He just mumbled in agreement, but it sounded like this time he meant it.

At the end of his treatment he was refreshed, reformed and glowing. Leaving the spa, he didn't even look both ways to see who might be watching.

"Going into the spa, I was wondering what you'd got me into this time. Guys don't go to spas," said Clay as he walked into the sunlight.

"But it actually turned out to be nice. It was awkward at first, but when I relaxed it felt pretty good. Now my skin feels open and fresh. The scalp massage was the best."

I reached for his face (yes, he's already taller than me) and he was right. It was cool and clean.

I figured I was on a roll and asked if he'd do it again. He paused and thought about it.

"Yeah. I'd do it again on holidays . . . but further away."

Sounded to me like he was fishing for a tropical getaway.



Clay Wearmouth learns that a facial isn't just for women anymore as he subjects his pores to Audrey Blanchette's cleansing procedure.

Photos, Joanne Elves for the Calgary Herald

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