

HOW PSYCHEDELICS WENT MAINSTREAM / THE START-UPS MODERNIZING THE \$2-BILLION FUNERAL INDUSTRY / HOW TO FIGHT PROXIMITY BIAS IN A BORDERLESS WORKFORCE / INSIDE PINTEREST CANADA'S VIBRANT NEW OFFICE

**CB**  
CANADIAN BUSINESS

# DOCTORS WILL SEE YOU NOW

THE RISE OF PRIVATE VIRTUAL HEALTH CARE

# Running Hot and Cold

Nordic-style thermal spas are opening across the country—a boon for Canada’s wellness industry

by Ingrid Williams

**S**candinavians have touted the relaxing and detoxifying benefits of hydrotherapy for hundreds of years, but thermal spas were relatively uncommon in Canada until quite recently. Over the past decade, dozens of Nordic spas—where guests cycle between hot and cold pools, saunas and steam rooms—have opened in Canada, several in the past year alone. While some of these projects were delayed by the pandemic, others were born out of our newfound focus on mental health and self-care. These businesses, which promise a tranquil escape from the grind of everyday living, are primed to cash in—the global spa industry is expected to reach US\$118 billion by 2028. Here, five new Nordic spas across Canada.

**14.6%**  
The rate at which the global spa industry is expected to grow in the next 10 years



PHOTOGRAPHS BY (NATURE FOLK) JUSTINE BARNHART; (SPA AT Q) COURTESY OF 124 ON QUEEN HOTEL & SPA; (MYSA) AL DOUGLAS; (RITUAL) DASHA ARMSTRONG; (ECLIPSE) COURTESY OF ECLIPSE NORDIC HOT SPRINGS

**1. NATURE FOLK**, the brainchild of partners Ashley Cluett, Kristen Morse and Anna Tremblay, is located in a renovated former city-hall building in Dartmouth, N.S. The 465-square-metre space was unveiled last August and is an expansion of their previous spa, which opened in 2019. Anchored by a communal bathing facility, the new space also includes two large Finnish saunas, warm and cold plunge pools and a movement studio. It was designed by the team at Halifax firm Hewn + Barter, who incorporated a mix of rugged and refined elements in stony hues. Further expansion plans include an outdoor space for yoga and lounging. [naturefolk.ca](http://naturefolk.ca)

**2.** A new 1,115-square-metre luxury spa opened in March 2022 in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s historic 124 on Queen Hotel. **THE SPA AT Q** features a dry sauna, eucalyptus steam room, cold and hot pools and sensory showers, but its most distinctive attraction is its “snow room”—a frosty indoor space with an imported Austrian snow machine mounted on the ceiling. Software pros turned hospitality entrepreneurs David Jones and Nick Capasso aim to combine the benefits of Scandi-inspired spa services with Niagara’s natural bounty: They are currently constructing a massive outdoor garden where local wines can be enjoyed. [124queen.com/spa](http://124queen.com/spa)

**3. MYSA NORDIC SPA & RESORT**, in St. Peter’s Bay, P.E.I., was designed to showcase waterfront views. Opened in December, it features an 85-person thermal bath, a spacious mezzanine dedicated

to meditation classes and a restaurant led by award-winning chef Seth Shaw. This year, it will add German Aufguss sauna ceremonies to its offerings—the ritual involves rhythmic towel waving that circulates essential oils in the air. Owner-operator Isaac Murphy grew up in the family-run Murphy Hospitality Group, which oversees multiple restaurants, boutique hotels and the Prince Edward Island Brewing Company. His goal is to provide an oasis for local islanders while also promoting tourism in the province. [mysanordicspa.com](http://mysanordicspa.com)

**4.** Inspired by her Finnish grandmother, who had a sauna at her lake house in Ontario, Marci Hotsenpiller had the idea to bring the benefits of Scandi spa culture to Victoria. After being turned down by three lenders, Hotsenpiller secured funding to bring her \$1.5-million vision to life and opened **RITUAL** in February 2022. The spa focuses on the communal aspect of Finnish sauna culture and welcomes all genders to its circuit, which is made up of

a steam room, a sauna, a cold plunge pool, a Himalayan salt lounge and a Nordic bucket shower. [ritualnordicspa.com](http://ritualnordicspa.com)

**5.** At Whitehorse’s **ECLIPSE NORDIC HOT SPRINGS** guests can gaze at the northern lights while lounging in geothermal-heated pools. Blending Scandinavian and Japanese self-care practices, the saunas, steam rooms and cold plunges sit next to Onsen-style mineral-water pools built using hundreds of stone boulders. Originally set to open mid-2020, the \$8-million project, which was a decade in the making, welcomed its first guests last June and will soon be joined by a hotel and restaurant. [eclipsenordichotsprings.ca](http://eclipsenordichotsprings.ca)