



Splash in the mountains.

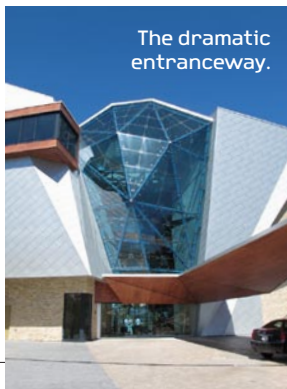
# Crystal CLEAR

A "WELLNESS HOTEL" OPENS IN B.C.

Yesterday's spa — the one that dealt with your exterior (manicures, pedicures) as opposed to your interior (circulation, stress) — is going the way of the dodo. Replacing it are wellness retreats that begin with solutions for health problems and end with a revitalized you. Compared with Europe, Canada hasn't had an impressive track record with such facilities. Fortunately, that changed in May when **Sparkling Hill** opened its doors.

Perched on a cliff overlooking a sapphire stretch of B.C.'s Okanagan Lake on one side and the mighty Monashee Mountains on the other, this resort will thrill any Canadian who's ever dreamed of a fresh path to well-being in a gorgeous location.

While the views are unparalleled, the key attraction may be the 40,000-square-foot KurSpa and its icebox (actually, a cold sauna — the first in North America). Known as cryotherapy and long used by Europeans, the -110C sauna looks like a giant walk-in



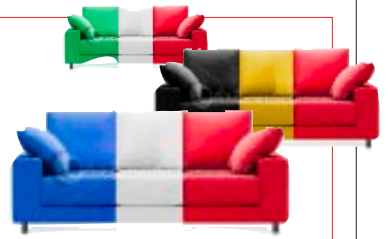
The dramatic entranceway.

freezer. Limited to three-minute exposures, the bone-chilling temperature is known to assuage pain, enhance mobility, diminish rheumatoid arthritis, reduce swelling and even replenish a challenged nervous system.

As for KurSpa's other enticements? Magdalena is the reigning queen of anti-aging (I swear she peeled a decade off my weathered visage), and Stephen is the massage champ (tell him what ails you, and he will find a way to get it working again). Feeling 100 per cent improved at the end of my weekend stay, I chalk it up to the heady combination of fresh food, artisanal wines, daily steams (did I mention there are seven steam rooms and saunas with infusions ranging from rose to herbal to salt?)

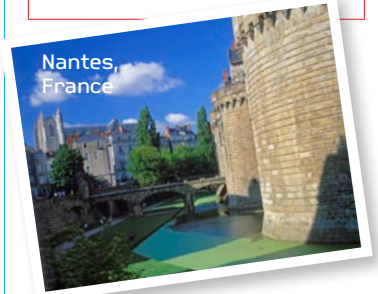
and a roster of saltwater pools (one even boasts underwater music).

More good news: One of Sparkling Hill's mandates is to keep its prices affordable. The closest airport is Kelowna, where you can catch a free shuttle to the resort ([sparklinghill.com](http://sparklinghill.com)).



## SURFING the SOFASPHERE

If anything triggers memories of your long-ago wanderlust years, it's crashing on a pal's couch. What if you could recapture those days, sleep your way around the globe and save scads of money? With [couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org), a free couch almost anywhere in the world is just a click away. Even if couch crashing is mere fantasy at this point in your travel career, your freewheeling kids may want to make it a reality ([couchsurfing.org](http://couchsurfing.org)).



Nantes, France

## GREEN MACHINES

Closet rainbow warriors will be pleased to hear a panel designated by the European Commission recently chose six eco-friendly cities as competitors for the 2012 European Green Capital (Stockholm currently holds the 2010 title and Hamburg will take over the following year).

The nominees are Malmö, Sweden, with its improved air and water quality; sustainable Nantes, France; geothermal Reykjavik, Iceland; Barcelona, Spain, which has visibly reduced its carbon footprint; Nuremberg, Germany, with its huge interior forest; and the heart of Basque Country — Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain — where being green is a civic duty.