

Urban Sweat – Cranston’s Oasis



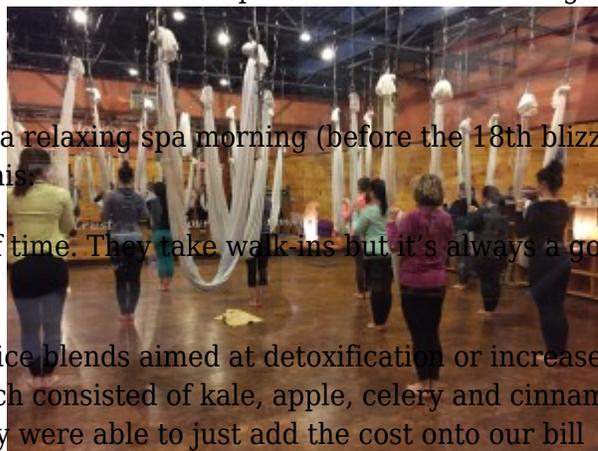
Whether you're on the hunt for an intimate retreat for you and your significant other or a relaxing solo getaway, Cranston's Urban Sweat at Raffa Yoga might just be the oasis of relaxation and respite from the snow you've been waiting for.

Yoga studios and wellness centers aren't hard to find in Rhode Island, but I guarantee you haven't experienced anything like this. Tucked away in an industrial area of Cranston, Raffa Yoga offers a sweeping and comprehensive array of health and wellness services. Though they offer wonders like anti-gravity yoga and an infrared sauna, the real draw comes from the expansive urban sweat lodge that takes up most of the square footage in their wellness complex.

I ventured out with my plus-one on Valentine's Day for a relaxing spa morning (before the 18th blizzard of the year struck) and the experience went a bit like this.

We made our 10am reservation almost a week ahead of time. They take walk-ins but it's always a good idea to make your reservation in advance.

Stop 1 was the juice bar, where they sell a variety of juice blends aimed at detoxification or increased digestion. I opted for the "Relax & Restore" blend, which consisted of kale, apple, celery and cinnamon, a refreshing and invigorating potion. Conveniently, they were able to just add the cost onto our bill without the hassle of an additional transaction; it's the subtleties that make all the difference.





First-timers will get a complete tour of the area. Each attendee is provided a locker with towel, shorts and t-shirt (both one size fits most), but all are more than welcome to wear their own clothes. From there it's a short walk into the Active Relaxation Center, which is something of a massive lounge area. There's iced cucumber water along one wall and individual sauna rooms on opposite ends. Dozens of cozy bean bag chairs litter the center with two king-sized water beds to one side of the room, rife with fluffy pillows. Urban Sweaters use this area to hydrate and cool down in between sessions in the saunas.

As veterans, we knew our first stop was the Eucalyptus Steam Room. Though similar to a traditional



sauna in size, this room is anything but typical. It's kept at 140 degrees and 100% humidity and infused with eucalyptus leaves. Every few minutes, the steamer will kick on and pump more in and you'll feel the temperature slide up and up. There's only one light in the center of the room overhead, casting an eerily pleasant green glow. The steam gets so dense that you can't see across the room, which can't be more than 10 feet across. It's the kind of tiny room you could get lost in (but in the best way possible!). After a little while, you might get a little bit disoriented, but rest assured, it's a pleasant kind of delirium.

You enter the Eucalyptus Steam Room by wading through the Urban Hamman, a marbled Turkish-styled sauna with a bit less humidity and heat, but a lot more space to lounge about. A great method is to plunge right into the Steam Room and then cool down lightly with a brief cool shower rinse in the Hamman before going back in. You could spend a whole day just drifting back and forth.

After a nice, refreshing stretch doing just that several times, we headed across the Relaxation Center into the Himalayan Salt Grotto, one of the larger sauna rooms available that's kept at 90 degrees and humidified by a salt-water fogger. Himalayan rock salts cover every surface in the entire room, even the ceiling. They crunch underfoot and glow from every corner. Most people lay directly on the salts and

just bake.



After that, it was about time to make use of the Relaxation Center. Music wafts over the area from unseen speakers, always instrumental and the kind of ethereal tunes you'd expect to hear during a session of yoga or meditation. There's an ambiance of stillness and quiet, not unlike a library, that makes every lethargic person milling about only speak in whispers. The cucumber in the water adds a light, but noticeably refreshing flavor.

Before we could fall asleep on a pair of orange bean bag chairs, we went inside the Yellow Turmeric Sauna, known for its hot, dry character and the many bags of turmeric hanging on the walls. Turmeric is a spice from India known for its detoxification effects and though it's detectable in the air, the effects are hardly pungent in the sauna. It adds a pleasant, spicy aroma.

The Turmeric Sauna, along with the Black Charcoal Sauna, are the two smallest options in Urban Sweat. There are no seats and each only fit about six or so people lying down, conservatively. The Black Charcoal is the hottest and driest of them all, peaking at 180 degrees dry heat.

There's no real right or wrong when it comes to the order, but the three different sections are undoubtedly your moist heat, your dry heat, and the Himalayan Salt Grotto is your happy, mystical medium. We rounded out the end of our day at Urban Sweat by claiming one of the water beds for a nice nap.