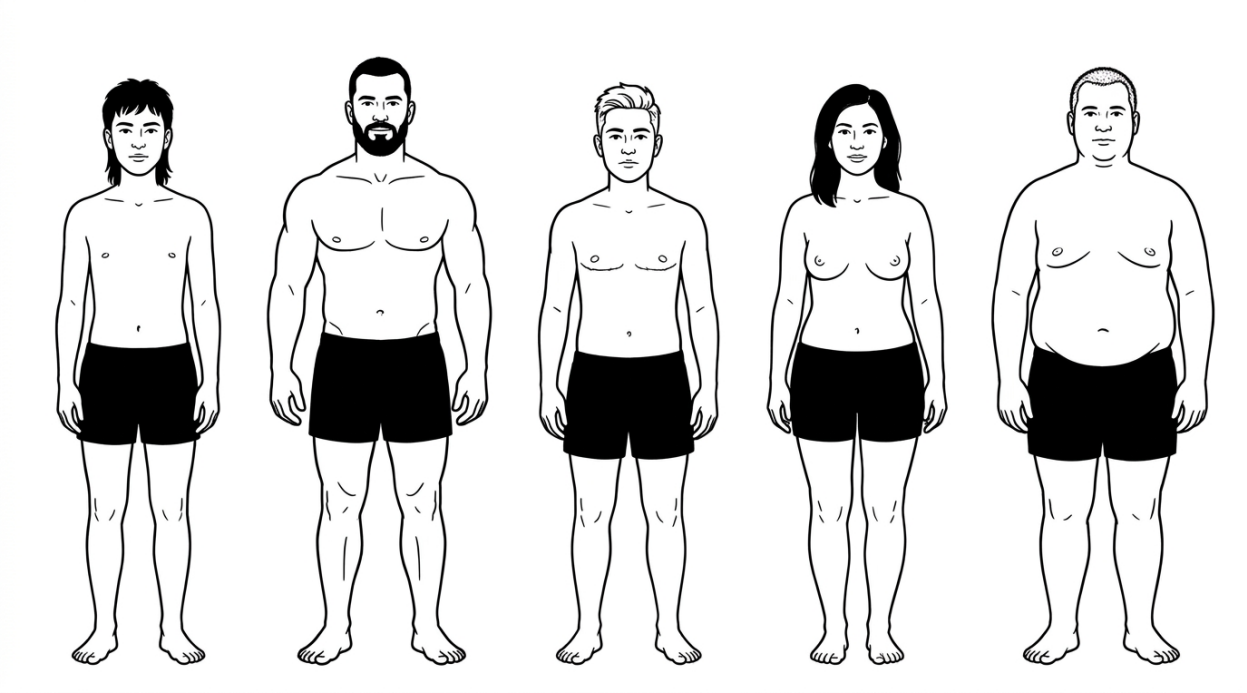


AI-generated illustration.

INVESTIGATION · MONTREAL AND SURROUNDING AREA (UP TO 1.5 HOURS AWAY)

Topless at the spa: a rule for whom?

Can trans people, non-binary people, or anyone whose body doesn't fit the "man" and "woman" categories enjoy a spa without covering their chest? What spas say, in writing.

INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION FILE · BY KIM MAURICE · AS OF NOVEMBER 19, 2026 · QUOTES TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH

KEY FINDINGS

18
spa websites checked: none specifies whether the chest must be covered

1
single spa confirms the top is optional for everyone

5
spas require women to cover their chest (confirmed in writing)

6
spas did not answer: summary based on their website

THE NUMBERS

Establishments contacted by email	**19**
— clarified their policy in writing	**11 (9 fully, 2 in part)**
— policy "under review", according to the spa (Förena)	**1**
— no answer (summary based on their website)	**6**
— not applicable: individual treatments only (Ovarium)	**1**
Websites checked on Nov. 16, 2026 (a separate source: what the spa posts publicly)	**18**

WHERE IT STARTED

Why I did this investigation

This winter, I'd like to go to the spa. But I feel insecure about showing up without knowing whether they'll ask me to cover my chest.

So I wrote to the spas to know what to expect, and to find a place where I'll feel safe.

The spas answered me, several with real openness. But each spa does things its own way, and these rules aren't written anywhere on their websites. So I wanted to go further: I asked every spa in and around Montreal the same questions, and gathered their answers in one place.

I'm doing this for queer people, trans people, non-binary people, and anyone whose body doesn't fit the boxes. So we know what to expect before paying and showing up. — Kim

METHOD

The questions. From November 1 to 16, 2026, 19 establishments received an email question on the same point: can you use the facilities topless, depending on whether you are a man, a woman, or someone whose body doesn't fit those categories (a woman without breasts, a man who has them)? So that each answer would be easy to summarize, a follow-up sometimes asked for a yes or no.

Who answered. Each spa profile gives the role of the person who wrote (front desk, reservations, customer service, management) and the date. Employees' names are not published.

Right of reply. On November 16, each spa quoted received the text concerning it, with the opportunity to correct it before publication. This was a fact-checking request: it does not mean the establishments endorse the conclusions of the investigation. To date, Spa William Gray, Balnea and L'Orangerie have confirmed in writing that their text is accurate; the others have requested no corrections. La Source asked that its emails not be quoted: its profile summarizes the rule without quoting them. Spa Bolton and AWU replied after this notice, on November 17 and 18.

Spas that did not answer. I did not press the spas that chose not to answer: after one follow-up and a notice before publication, I stopped writing to them. For them, this document summarizes what their website says. The data therefore comes from two sources only: what the spas wrote to me, and what they post on their websites. The goal is to inform, not to judge the answers.

Accessibility. On November 19, I also looked for what each spa says about access for people with reduced mobility, on its website and in the assessments of Kéroul, an organization that visits places to measure their accessibility (its rating is the only one recognized by Quebec's Ministry of Tourism). No website says its baths are wheelchair accessible. Eleven websites do not mention it at all. I did not ask the spas this question: call before your visit.

The websites. On November 16, the websites of 18 spas were also checked, then checked a second time. This is a separate source: what the spa posts publicly, before any question is asked.

Tools. The investigation, the emails, the follow-ups and the editorial choices are Kim Maurice's. Artificial intelligence tools were used to sort the replies, lay out the document, translate it into English and proofread the text. The cover illustration is AI-generated. All quotes were checked against the original emails, which are kept on file.

Caution. The spas wrote in French; their replies are translated as faithfully as possible, and the originals appear in the French version of this document. Each piece of information is marked "confirmed", "inferred" or "not specified". When a spa says nothing about trans or non-binary people, this document says so without guessing on its behalf. Policies may change: check with the spa before your visit.

AT A GLANCE

The short answer

Topless possible for everyone The same rule for everyone, regardless of sex, gender or body.	**Spa William Gray**
Free choice of swimsuit, topless not confirmed A swimsuit is mandatory, but the person chooses which one. Neither spa confirms that going topless is allowed.	**Rainspa, L'Orangerie, AWU**
Depends on the body or identity The rule depends on whether the person has breasts, or on gender identity.	**Bota Bota, Spa Bolton, Spa le Finlandais**
Women / men rule Top required for women, not for men. Nothing about trans or non-binary people.	**Balnea, La Source, Spa Carré St-Louis**
Rule to be clarified The spa says "swimsuit", without saying whether bottoms alone are enough.	**Spa Nordic Station**

WHAT NO WEBSITE SAYS

Having to wear a swimsuit is one thing; having to cover your chest is another.

None of the 18 websites checked specifies whether the chest must be covered, or whether the rule differs for men and for women. Several state that a swimsuit is mandatory; others simply ask you to bring one. Knowing you must wear a swimsuit doesn't tell you which part of the body must be covered. So someone who doesn't fit the boxes cannot know the rule before arriving at the spa. Details and links in each spa profile and in the appendix.

ALL SPAS THAT ANSWERED

The table

SPA	A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON	STATUS
Spa William Gray Old Montreal	Yes CONFIRMED	Yes CONFIRMED	Same rule for everyone CONFIRMED	No distinction	■ **OFFICIAL**
Bota Bota Old Port	Yes CONFIRMED	Yes once settled; top when moving around CONFIRMED	Depends on breasts; "we would trust you" CONFIRMED	Presence of breasts	■ **OFFICIAL**
Spa Bolton Bolton-Est	Yes CONFIRMED	No: top or one-piece required CONFIRMED	By identity; top if the chest "requires a top" CONFIRMED	Presence of a chest, "family setting"	■ **OFFICIAL**
Spa le Finlandais Rosemère	Probably yes INFERRED	No: chest covered at all times CONFIRMED	Nothing beyond "identifies as a woman" NOT SPECIFIED	Gender identity	■ **OFFICIAL**
Rainspa Old Montreal	Probably INFERRED	Top "recommended", then "choice of outfit" INFERRED	"We leave the choice of outfit to you" CONFIRMED	Identity, then the person's choice	■ **OFFICIAL**
L'Orangerie Old Montreal	Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Swimsuit "which best matches their identity" CONFIRMED	Comfort and identity	◧ **PROVISIONAL**
AWU Brossard	Probably INFERRED	Choice of swimsuit; topless not mentioned INFERRED	"No distinction" by gender or body CONFIRMED	The person's choice, "decency"	■ **OFFICIAL**
Balnea Bromont	Yes CONFIRMED	No: top required CONFIRMED	"Particular situation" to report to the spa CONFIRMED	Women / men	■ **OFFICIAL**
La Source Rawdon	Yes CONFIRMED	No: top required CONFIRMED	Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Women / men	■ **OFFICIAL**
Spa Carré St-Louis Plateau	Probably (shorts required) INFERRED	No: "going topless is not allowed" CONFIRMED	Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Women / men	■ **OFFICIAL**
Spa Nordic Station Magog	"Swimsuit" minimum NOT SPECIFIED	"Swimsuit" minimum NOT SPECIFIED	Same rules for all clients CONFIRMED	Same rule, details to be clarified	◧ **PROVISIONAL**

How to read: CONFIRMED = *written by the spa.* INFERRED = *follows from its reply, without explicit confirmation.* NOT SPECIFIED = *the spa did not answer this point.* ■ *OFFICIAL: clear rule, received in writing.* ◧ *PROVISIONAL: an important point remains unclear. The table summarizes; details and quotes are in the spa profiles, which alone are authoritative.*

THE PROFILES

Spa by spa

Each profile brings together the rule in brief, what the spa wrote (translated from French) and what its website says.

How to read: CONFIRMED = *written by the spa.* INFERRED = *follows from its reply, without explicit confirmation.* NOT SPECIFIED = *the spa did not answer this point.* ■ *OFFICIAL: clear rule, received in writing.* ◧ *PROVISIONAL: an important point remains unclear.*

Topless possible for everyone

The same rule for everyone, regardless of sex, gender or body.

Spa William Gray

■ OFFICIAL

Old Montreal

IN SHORT · Topless allowed for everyone, women and men. The same rule applies to all.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Yes CONFIRMED	Yes CONFIRMED	Same rule for everyone CONFIRMED	No distinction

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

"In our thermal facilities, wearing opaque swimwear bottoms covering the genitals and buttocks is mandatory. Wearing a swimsuit top, however, is each person's choice."

"This rule applies to all our clients, without distinction of sex, gender identity or expression, appearance or body type."

"Outside the thermal areas and changing rooms, we ask everyone to wear a robe or clothing covering the upper and lower body."

Marketing management, Gray Collection · email of Nov. 3, 2026 (corrects a first reply of Nov. 1). Text validated by the spa on Nov. 16, 2026.

ON ITS WEBSITE

FAQ: "Please bring your own sandals and bathing suit if accessing the thermal circuit." **Nothing about the chest.** · spawilliamgray.com/faq

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Nothing found on its website about accessibility. Kéroul (2024) rates Hôtel William Gray, where the spa is located, "not accessible"; the spa was not assessed separately.

Free choice of swimsuit, topless not confirmed

A swimsuit is mandatory, but the person chooses which one. Neither spa confirms that going topless is allowed.

Rainspa

■ OFFICIAL

Old Montreal

IN SHORT · Swimsuit required in the hammam. The spa first recommended a top for women, then wrote that it leaves "the choice of outfit" to each person.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Probably: briefs or shorts "recommended" INFERRED	Top "recommended" (Nov. 3), then "the choice of outfit" (Nov. 15); topless never mentioned INFERRED	"We leave the choice of outfit to you" CONFIRMED	Recommendations by identity, then the person's choice

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

"Wearing a swimsuit is required. For the comfort of all our clients, we recommend that people who identify as women wear a one-piece or a two-piece with a top, and that people who identify as men wear briefs or swim shorts. These recommendations apply regardless of each person's body type. (Nov. 3)"

"As stated in our recommendations, wearing a swimsuit is mandatory. We nevertheless leave the choice of outfit to you, according to what suits you best and what you feel comfortable in. (Nov. 15)"

"Towels and robes are also available so that you can cover up as needed throughout your experience. (Nov. 15)"

Rainspa front desk · emails of Nov. 3 and Nov. 15, 2026 (hammam guidelines).

Note: *The Nov. 15 reply leaves "the choice of outfit" to the person, without using the word "topless".*

ON ITS WEBSITE

"A swimsuit is required in the hammam." For treatments: "You may also wear your own underwear or a swimsuit." **Nothing about the chest.** · rainspa.ca/fr/page-daccueil/a-propos/votre-visite

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Nothing found on its website about accessibility.

L'Orangerie

◧ PROVISIONAL

Old Montreal

IN SHORT · Each person wears the swimsuit they are comfortable in and that matches their identity. The spa does not say whether topless is allowed.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Swimsuit “which best matches their identity” CONFIRMED	Comfort and identity

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

“In general, we invite each person to wear the type of swimsuit in which they feel comfortable and which best matches their identity, while respecting our goal of maintaining a welcoming and comfortable environment for all our clients.”

“Since our clients are admitted from the age of 16, we place particular importance on maintaining a respectful setting for everyone.”

Reservations team · email of Nov. 10, 2026. Text validated by the spa on Nov. 17, 2026.

Note: *The reply does not specify whether going topless is allowed. The spa validated this text on Nov. 17 without adding anything.*

ON ITS WEBSITE

FAQ: “What should I bring? A swimsuit.” **Nothing about the chest.** · lorangerie.ca

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Nothing found on its website about accessibility. The former FAQ of Scandinave Spa Vieux-Montréal, at the same address, said the facilities “are not designed for wheelchair users”.

AWU (ex-Skyspa DIX30)

■ OFFICIAL

Brossard

IN SHORT · Each person chooses their swimsuit, with no distinction by gender or body. A “suitable swimsuit” is required; topless is not mentioned.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Probably yes: “the choice of swimsuit is yours” INFERRED	Choice of swimsuit “with no distinction based on gender or body type”; topless not mentioned INFERRED	“Each person can choose the outfit in which they feel comfortable” CONFIRMED	The person’s choice; a “suitable swimsuit” for all

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

“At AWU, the choice of swimsuit is yours. We make no distinction based on gender or body type: each person can choose the outfit in which they feel comfortable.”

“We do, however, ask all our clients to respect a principle of decency. AWU is not a naturist establishment and we welcome people under 18; wearing a suitable swimsuit is therefore required for everyone, at all times.”

“This rule applies in the same way to every person, regardless of their identity or their body.”

Operations lead, customer service · email of Nov. 18, 2026, in reply to the publication notice.

Note: *The reply does not say whether a “suitable swimsuit” can be bottoms only, for a woman as for a man.*

ON ITS WEBSITE

“To plan for: A swimsuit and sandals.” **Nothing about the chest.** · awu.com/pages/preparer-ma-visite

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Website: reception, changing rooms and massage rooms are accessible, but “the thermal cycle is not adapted”.

Depends on the body or identity

The rule depends on whether the person has breasts, or on gender identity.

Bota Bota

■ OFFICIAL

Old Port of Montreal

IN SHORT · Men may go topless. So may women once settled, but with a top when moving around. For other bodies, the spa trusts the person.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Yes CONFIRMED	Yes once settled; top when moving around CONFIRMED	Depends on whether the person has breasts; “we would trust you” CONFIRMED	Presence of breasts

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

“[...] we allow people who wish to do so to uncover their upper body when they are settled in the relaxation areas or in the facilities. We do ask, however, that water-appropriate clothing covering the upper body be worn when moving between the different areas. (Nov. 3)”

“To answer simply, no, this guideline does not apply to all clients in the same way. In practice, it generally concerns women more, since men generally do not have breasts and can therefore move around topless in the areas concerned. (Nov. 6)”

“When a person has questions about their particular situation, whether related to their gender expression, a condition such as gynecomastia or any other personal reality, we invite them to contact us. (Nov. 6)”

Reservations department (Nov. 1) and client experience supervision (Nov. 3 and 6, 2026).

ON ITS WEBSITE

“We accept any swimsuit, including high-coverage styles, made of a material suitable for water.” **Nothing about the chest.** · botabota.ca/questions

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Nothing found on its website about accessibility. Kéroul (2024): “not accessible”. The changing rooms can only be reached by stairs, and there are no adapted toilets.

Spa Bolton

■ OFFICIAL

Bolton-Est

IN SHORT · Topless allowed for men; a top or one-piece required for women. Trans and non-binary people choose by their identity, but a top is required if the chest "requires" one.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Yes CONFIRMED	No: top or one-piece required CONFIRMED	Swimwear matching one's identity and comfort, but a top is required for "people with a chest requiring a swimsuit top" CONFIRMED	Presence of a chest, "family setting"

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

"As a mainstream spa welcoming a varied clientele, including families and young children on certain mornings reserved for that purpose, our dress code is in line with the usual standards in Quebec."

"[Can a man use the facilities topless, with only swim bottoms?] Yes."

"[Can a woman do the same?] No, wearing a swimsuit top (or a one-piece swimsuit) is required."

"In practice, each person is invited to wear swimwear (one-piece, two-piece or swim bottoms only) that matches their gender identity and their comfort, while respecting the family setting of the establishment (the upper body must be covered for people with a chest requiring a swimsuit top according to the usual standards in public places)."

"Our team also remains available, in complete discretion, at the front desk or by phone if a client wishes to get clarification before their visit."

Spa Bolton · email of Nov. 17, 2026, in reply to the publication notice.

Note: *The reply does not say who decides whether a chest "requires" a top, or whether a woman without breasts may wear bottoms only.*

ON ITS WEBSITE

"You must bring (mandatory): Sandals, Water bottle, Swimsuit." **Nothing about the chest.** · spabolton.com/reservation

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Website: facilities "available to people with reduced mobility, but unfortunately not currently available to wheelchair users".

Spa le Finlandais

■ OFFICIAL

Rosemère

IN SHORT · Women must cover their chest at all times. The spa does not specify the rule for men or for other bodies.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Probably yes (asked on Nov. 10, no answer) INFERRED	No: chest covered at all times CONFIRMED	Nothing beyond "any person who identifies as a woman" NOT SPECIFIED	Gender identity

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

"To ensure compliance with our dress code, any person who identifies as a woman must keep her chest covered at all times throughout our facilities, whether she is wearing a one-piece or a two-piece swimsuit."

Customer relations department · email of Nov. 2, 2026.

Note: *The reply does not specify the rule for men.*

ON ITS WEBSITE

"Swimsuits are mandatory in the thermal experience areas." **Nothing about the chest.** · spalefinlandais.com/termes-et-conditions

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Nothing found on its website about accessibility.

Women / men rule

Top required for women, not for men. Nothing about trans or non-binary people.

Balnea

■ OFFICIAL

Bromont

IN SHORT · Topless allowed for men; a top is required for women. The spa invites people to tell it about any “particular situation”.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Yes CONFIRMED	No: top required CONFIRMED	“Particular situation” to report to the spa CONFIRMED	Women / men

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

“Wearing a swimsuit is mandatory at all times in our thermal facilities, including the baths, saunas, relaxation areas and when moving between the different areas. (Nov. 4)”

“To answer your question, a man may use the facilities wearing only swim bottoms. (Nov. 10)”

“As for women, our policy provides for wearing a swimsuit top in our facilities. (Nov. 10)”

“We understand, however, that each person has their own reality. If you would like to tell us about a particular situation, please do not hesitate to let us know. (Nov. 10)”

“We are aware, however, that the needs and realities of our clients are evolving. We therefore wish to keep listening to our clients and continue to reflect on ways to evolve our practices in order to offer an ever more inclusive and pleasant experience for all. (Nov. 16)”

Reservations team · emails of Nov. 4, 10 and 16, 2026. Text validated by the spa on Nov. 16, 2026.
Note: *On Nov. 4, the spa wrote that its policy “applies in the same way to all our clients”.*

ON ITS WEBSITE

“Wearing a swimsuit is mandatory in the facilities.” **Nothing about the chest.** · balnea.ca/politiques

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Website: “our site presents accessibility challenges for people with reduced mobility”. The spa asks guests to contact it before visiting to discuss possible accommodations.

La Source Bains Nordiques

■ OFFICIAL

Rawdon

IN SHORT · Topless allowed for men; a full swimsuit, top and bottoms, required for women. Nothing specified for other bodies.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Yes CONFIRMED	No: top required CONFIRMED	Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Women / men

Rule confirmed by email by the spa's team on Nov. 3 and 4, 2026. At the spa's request, its emails are not quoted.

ON ITS WEBSITE

"Wearing a swimsuit is mandatory; sandals and one piece of ID per person." **Nothing about the chest.** · lasourcespa.com/fr/services/1/bains-nordiques

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Website: "Site difficult to access for people with reduced mobility; please contact La Source for details."

Spa Carré St-Louis

■ OFFICIAL

Plateau-Mont-Royal

IN SHORT · Women must wear a one- or two-piece swimsuit: they may not go topless. For men, a top is not mentioned.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
Probably: shorts required, top not mentioned INFERRED	No: "going topless is not allowed" CONFIRMED	Not specified NOT SPECIFIED	Women / men

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

"Men: Swim shorts are mandatory. Brief- or thong-style swimsuits are not accepted."

"Women: A one- or two-piece swimsuit is mandatory throughout the experience. Going topless is not allowed."

"For everyone: Underwear is not accepted in place of a swimsuit."

Spa Carré Saint-Louis · email of Nov. 11, 2026.

ON ITS WEBSITE

"Swimsuits and sandals are mandatory on site." **Nothing about the chest.** · spacarrestlouis.com/reservation

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Nothing found on its website about accessibility.

Rule to be clarified
The spa says “swimsuit”, without saying whether bottoms alone are enough.

Spa Nordic Station

◧ PROVISIONAL

Magog

IN SHORT · A swimsuit is required, with the same rule for all clients. The spa does not say whether bottoms alone are enough.

A MAN TOPLESS?	A WOMAN TOPLESS?	BODIES OUTSIDE THE CATEGORIES, TRANS, NON-BINARY	THE RULE IS BASED ON
“Swimsuit” at a minimum; bottoms alone not specified NOT SPECIFIED	“Swimsuit” at a minimum; bottoms alone not specified NOT SPECIFIED	“These rules apply to all our clients” CONFIRMED	Same rule for all, details to be clarified

WHAT THE SPA WROTE (TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH)

“We ask all our clients to wear at least a swimsuit in our relaxation areas, our baths and our saunas. Sandals are also mandatory for moving around the site [...].”

“These rules apply to all our clients.”

Front desk team · email of Nov. 3, 2026.

Note: *The reply does not specify whether swim bottoms alone are accepted.*

ON ITS WEBSITE

“Swimsuits and sandals are mandatory on site.” **Nothing about the chest.** · spanordicstation.com/fr/termes-conditions

ACCESSIBILITY (REDUCED MOBILITY)

Nothing found on its website about accessibility.

BASED ON THEIR WEBSITES

Spas that did not answer

These spas received my questions, a follow-up, then a notice before publication. They did not answer, and I did not press them further. Here is what each website says (checked on November 16, 2026):

SPA	IN SHORT, FROM ITS WEBSITE	PAGE
Strøm spa nordique (3 spas) Île-des-Sœurs, Saint-Sauveur, Mont-Saint-Hilaire	**Swimsuit and sandals required "for reasons of hygiene and safety". Nothing about the chest.** "Wear sandals and a swimsuit for hygiene and safety reasons." *Accessibility: Website: Nuns' Island and Saint-Sauveur have "no access ramp for wheelchairs". In Mont-Saint-Hilaire, a ramp leads to reception, the restaurant and treatments, but "the thermal experience and the changing rooms are not accessible".*	stromspa.com/pages/preparer-votre-visite
Scandinave Spa Mont-Tremblant Mont-Tremblant	**Swimsuit required, sandals suggested. Nothing about the chest.** "Wearing a swimsuit is mandatory and sandals are suggested." *Accessibility: Website: facilities "not designed for wheelchair users", with "several staircases throughout the experience".*	scandinave.com/fr/termes-et-conditions
Spa Eastman Eastman	**The website suggests bringing a swimsuit. No written dress rule.** List of things to bring: "Your swimsuit (or two, to avoid putting a wet one back on!)". No written rule found. *Accessibility: Website: treatments, restaurant and common areas reachable by elevator, adapted rooms, but "the thermotherapy facilities are not accessible".*	spa-eastman.com/planifier-mon-premier-sejour
Amerispa Spa Nordique Morin-Heights	**The website invites guests to bring a swimsuit. No written dress code.** "Bring your swimsuit and enjoy the hotels' pools or our Nordic spas before or after a treatment." No dress code. *Accessibility: Nothing found on its website about accessibility.*	amerispa.ca/faq
Spa Ofuro Morin-Heights	**Swimsuit and sandals required. Nothing about the chest.** "Swimsuits and sandals are mandatory." *Accessibility: Nothing found on its website about accessibility.*	spaofuro.com/faq-reglements
JOY Wellness Club Downtown (rue de la Montagne)	**Swimsuit required in the sauna, cold plunge and warm baths. Nothing about the chest.** Terms and conditions: "[...] bathing suits for sauna cold plunge and warm baths." *Accessibility: Nothing found on its website about accessibility.*	joywellnessclub.ca/en/pages/termes-et-conditions

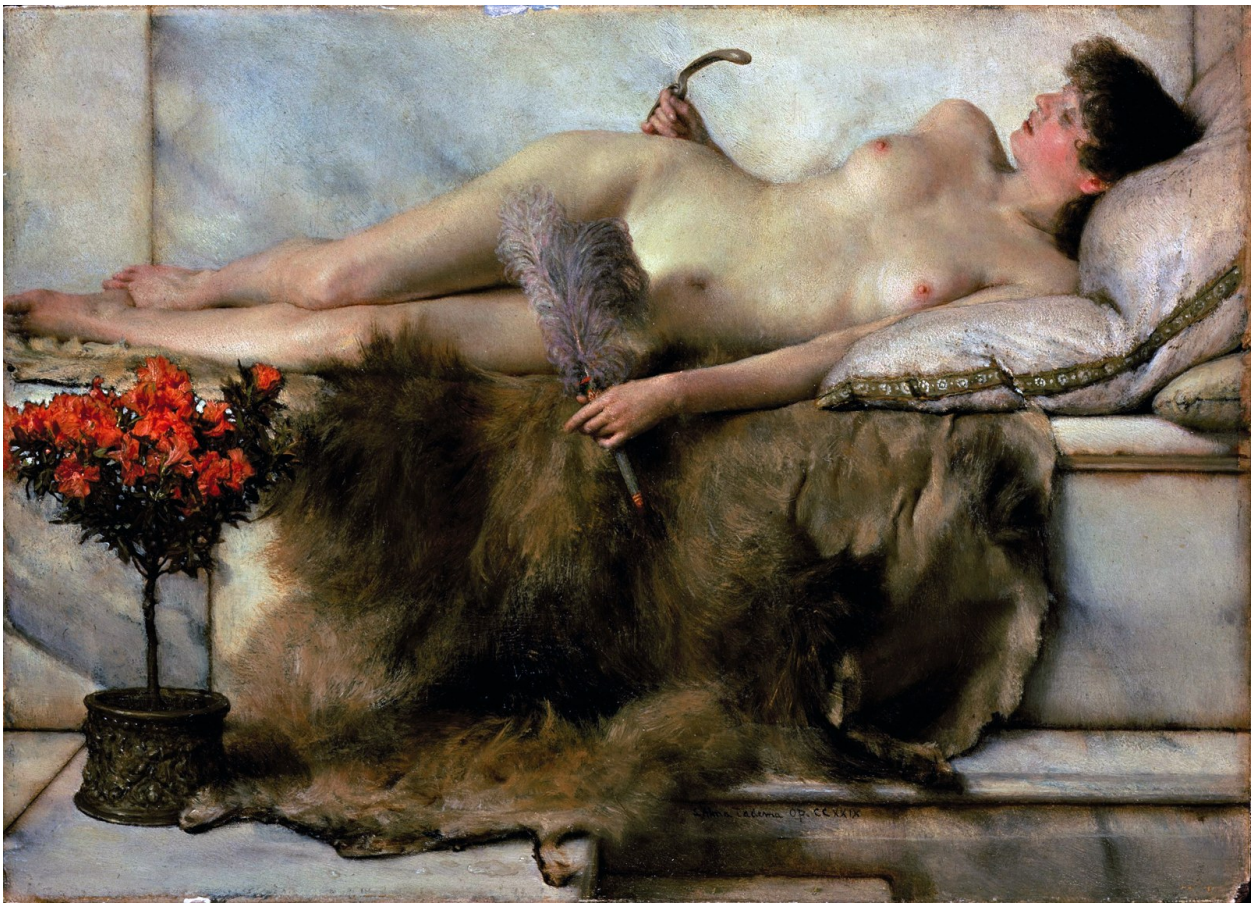
Förena (policy under review) *replied by email: "In our thermal areas, wearing a swimsuit is required." Customer service · email of Nov. 2, 2026. Policy under review, according to the spa. According to the spa, its policy is under review. Its website asks guests to bring a swimsuit for the thermal experience. Accessibility: Nothing found on its website about accessibility. Kéroul (2025): "partially accessible". Elevator, adapted*

toilets and shower, step-free sauna and steam bath; the pools are reached by steps with a handrail.

Not applicable: Spa Ovarium (Rosemont) offers only individual treatments, with no shared swimsuit area.

CONTEXT

A bit of history



The Tepidarium, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1881. Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight (UK). Public domain. The tepidarium was the warm room of Roman baths, between the cold bath (frigidarium) and the hot bath (caldarium). This is a 19th-century vision, painted by a man, of Antiquity and of the female body, not a document from the period.

Bathing together, hot then cold, is very old. How people cover their bodies, on the other hand, has changed a lot.

Ancient Rome. The baths moved from the cold bath to the warm room to the hot bath. Depending on the period, women and men bathed at different times, in separate sections, or together. Emperor Hadrian banned mixed bathing in the 2nd century, but the ban did not last.

Finland. The sauna has been practised for centuries, and people usually go naked, women and men separately in public saunas. A swimsuit or towel is accepted.

North America, 1890-1930. Men also had to cover their chests. In Ocean Grove, New Jersey, a man was fined as early as 1891 for an "improper" bathing suit, and tops were still mandatory in 1910. In the 1930s, Atlantic City was still resisting topless men; by 1939, 67% of the public approved of shirtless bathing. In Toronto, a bylaw required a "neck-to-knees" suit until 1930.

What to remember from this period: less than a hundred years ago, men's chests had to be hidden too. The rule changed for them. Not for women.

Elsewhere today. In Germany, saunas are normally mixed and textile-free. In Japan and Korea, people bathe naked, in baths separated by sex. Where baths are separated, other questions arise for trans and non-binary people.

Quebec. Quebec's first Nordic spa was born in the 1960s in Saint-Sauveur, on the banks of the Rivière à Simon: first a sauna in a private home, it became the Polar Bear's Club, now Strøm Saint-Sauveur. Nordik in Chelsea, opened in 2005, was inspired by it. Quebec now has more than 100 Nordic spas, the largest concentration in North America according to Tourisme Montréal. It adopted the hot-cold-rest cycle from Scandinavia, but with a mandatory swimsuit.

Sources: History.com; Visit Finland; Lonely Planet; Historical Society of Ocean Grove; Xtra Magazine; IamExpat Germany; Japan National Tourism Organization; CTV News; Strøm spa nordique; Tourisme Outaouais; Vallée Saint-Sauveur; Tourisme Montréal. Links in the appendix.

QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN OPEN

This document does not settle any legal question. It recalls two facts. Since 2016, section 10 of Quebec's Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms has prohibited discrimination based on "gender identity or expression", in addition to sex. And section 15 prohibits preventing anyone, through discrimination, from accessing public places such as commercial establishments.

A difference in treatment is not automatically prohibited discrimination. That remains to be assessed. These questions deserve to be put to lawyers and to the Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (CDPDJ): can a spa require a top for women but not for men? On what basis? And how does such a rule apply to a trans or non-binary person?

Sources: Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (LégisQuébec); Gazette officielle du Québec, 2016. Links in the appendix.

CONCLUSION

What I take away from this

First, thank you. Several spas took the time to answer me, and some were really open. Bota Bota wrote to me: “In the situation you describe, we would trust you to assess what applies to you.” Balnea invited me to tell them about my “particular situation”, and wrote that it wants to “continue to reflect on ways to evolve our practices”. Spa Bolton thanked me for “the initiative of this directory”. Spa William Gray corrected its first answer, and its rule is the same for everyone. Rainspa thanked me for giving them “the opportunity to clarify” their guidelines.

But the finding is the same. Only one spa, Spa William Gray, clearly says the top is optional for everyone, regardless of sex, gender or body. Elsewhere, it depends: on being a man or a woman, or on having breasts or not. And most replies say nothing about trans or non-binary people. Above all, none of this is written on the websites. To find out, you have to write to the spa.

Me, I don’t want to cover my chest. Having fabric on it makes me uncomfortable. And politically, I’m for body equality: the same rule for everyone.

In Germany, people go to the sauna naked, men and women together. Here, we took the hot-cold tradition, but we added the swimsuit. And with the swimsuit came the question of who has to hide what.

What I’m asking spas is simple: write your rule on your website, and make it the same for everyone.

And if you see yourself in this: write to the spa before you go, and keep the answer. — Kim

BEFORE YOU GO TO THE SPA

1. Write to the spa before your visit and ask clearly: can a man go topless? a woman? a non-binary person?
2. Keep its answer in writing, and have it on your phone when you arrive.
3. If the answer isn’t clear to you, ask what the rule is based on: sex, gender identity, or having breasts.
4. Share the answer: write to sansetiquette.enquete@gmail.com to add to this document.

APPENDIX

All websites checked

On November 16, 2026, we checked the FAQ, terms and "plan your visit" pages of 18 spas. **None of the 18 websites specifies whether the chest must be covered, or whether the rule differs for men and for women.** Several state that a swimsuit is mandatory; others simply ask you to bring one.

Knowing you must wear a swimsuit doesn't tell you which part of the body must be covered. Public guidelines do not tell you whether you can use the facilities in swim bottoms only, or whether the rule varies by sex, gender identity or body type.

Yet several spas confirmed by email that women must wear a top, while men may go topless. This rule is not written on any of the websites checked.

SPA	WHAT THE WEBSITE SAYS	CHEST / TOPLESS	PAGE CHECKED
Bota Bota	"We accept any swimsuit, including high-coverage styles, made of a material suitable for water."	**Nothing**	botabota.ca/questions
Spa William Gray	FAQ: "Please bring your own sandals and bathing suit if accessing the thermal circuit."	**Nothing**	spawilliamgray.com/faq
Rainspa	"A swimsuit is required in the hammam." For treatments: "You may also wear your own underwear or a swimsuit."	**Nothing**	rainspa.ca/fr/page-daccueil/a-propos/votre-visite
L'Orangerie	FAQ: "What should I bring? A swimsuit."	**Nothing**	lorangerie.ca
Spa Carré St-Louis	"Swimsuits and sandals are mandatory on site."	**Nothing**	spacarrestlouis.com/reservation
Spa le Finlandais	"Swimsuits are mandatory in the thermal experience areas."	**Nothing**	spalefinlandais.com/termes-et-conditions
Förena	List of things to bring: "a swimsuit for the thermal experience".	**Nothing**	forena.ca/fr/faq
Balnea	"Wearing a swimsuit is mandatory in the facilities."	**Nothing**	balnea.ca/politiques
La Source	"Wearing a swimsuit is mandatory; sandals and one piece of ID per person."	**Nothing**	lasourcespa.com/fr/services/1/bains-nordiques
Spa Nordic Station	"Swimsuits and sandals are mandatory on site."	**Nothing**	spanordicstation.com/fr/termes-conditions
Strøm	"Wear sandals and a swimsuit for hygiene and safety reasons."	**Nothing**	stromspa.com/pages/preparer-votre-visite
AWU	"To plan for: A swimsuit and sandals."	**Nothing**	awu.com/pages/preparer-ma-visite
Scandinave Mont-Tremblant	"Wearing a swimsuit is mandatory and sandals are suggested."	**Nothing**	scandinave.com/fr/termes-et-conditions
Spa Eastman	List of things to bring: "Your swimsuit (or two, to avoid putting a wet one back on!)". No written rule found.	**Nothing**	spa-eastman.com/planifier-mon-premier-sejour
Amerispa Morin-Heights	"Bring your swimsuit and enjoy the hotels' pools or our Nordic spas before or after a treatment." No dress code.	**Nothing**	amerispa.ca/faq
Spa Ofuro	"Swimsuits and sandals are mandatory."	**Nothing**	spaofuro.com/faq-reglements

SPA	WHAT THE WEBSITE SAYS	CHEST / TOPLESS	PAGE CHECKED
JOY Wellness Club	Terms and conditions: “[…] bathing suits for sauna cold plunge and warm baths.”	**Nothing**	joywellnessclub.ca/en/pages/termes-et-conditions
Spa Bolton	“You must bring (mandatory): Sandals, Water bottle, Swimsuit.”	**Nothing**	spabolton.com/reservation

Excerpts translated from French, except for sites that publish in English. Pages checked on November 16, 2026, then checked a second time the same day: three addresses had changed (Spa William Gray, Förena, Balnea) and were replaced with the current official page. This check covers public pages; a spa may also post its rules on site, in its booking process or in its confirmation emails.

APPENDIX

Sources for the context and the law

Links:

Visit Finland: visitfinland.com/en/things-to-do/sauna
Lonely Planet (Finland): lonelyplanet.com/articles/guide-to-finlands-sauna-culture
IamExpat Germany: iamexpat.de/lifestyle/lifestyle-news/everything-you-need-know-visiting-german-sauna
The Local Germany: thelocal.de/20191018/the-truth-laid-bare-what-you-need-to-know-about-germanys-sauna-culture
Japan National Tourism Organization: japan.travel/en/guide/bathing-manners-and-tips
CTV News (Korea): ctvnews.ca/lifestyle/article/getting-naked-in-the-worlds-largest-department-store
Vallée Saint-Sauveur: valleesaintsauveur.com/en/?p=942
Tourisme Montréal: mtl.org/en/experience/winter-wellness
History.com (Rome): history.com/articles/ancient-roman-baths
Historical Society of Ocean Grove: historicalsocietyofoceangrove.org/exhibits/sun-sand-modesty
Xtra Magazine (Toronto): xtramagazine.com/power/the-wiles-of-the-sea-vamp-48083
Strøm spa nordique (history of the Polar Bear’s Club): stromspa.com/en/blogs/strom-news/strom-nordic-spa-saint-sauveur-from-a-private-home-to-a-large-scale-spa
Tourisme Outaouais (Nordik): tourismeoutaouais.com/en/blogue/ambassador-nordik-spa-nature
The Tepidarium, Alma-Tadema (notice): en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tepidarium
Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms (LégisQuébec): legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/document/cs/C-12
2016 Act adding gender identity or expression (Gazette officielle, in French): publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/gazette/pdf_encrypte/lois_reglements/2016F/65147.pdf

This document will be updated as spas reply. A correction or an answer to add? Write to sansetiquette.enquete@gmail.com. A French version is available.