



**WELL
CHECK**
REBECCA WADEY

TAKE THE PLUNGE

Ensemble co-founder and our resident wellbeing enthusiast, **Rebecca Wadey**, on the wellbeing products and practices she's recently enjoyed. This week, it's contrast therapy.

One of the highlights of a recent visit to Pōneke was visiting Tory Urban Retreat and enjoying their contrast therapy treatment, which involves moving between their Finnish sauna (set between 80-90 degrees) and their cold plunge pool (a brisk 5 degrees).

I've previously done contrast therapy in several places around Aotearoa and overseas, but most of these are in private spaces like Tāmaki's Hana spa where you move between an infrared sauna (which heats from your core out, and is set at 70 degrees) and their 6 degree ice bath. Both practices are something I really enjoy, challenging my mental endurance and enforcing the necessary breath and meditation practices for 'survival', but there was a community vibe about the Tory Urban Retreat experience that really interested me.

Here, you can book for a mixed or specific gender day; on both you will see people coming together with the shared goal of relaxation and health, not unlike a Korean spa, Turkish bath or other culturally important institution.

Wim Hof of course has popularised ice baths, with disciples like Gwyneth Paltrow and more recently Rita Ora making them increasingly mainstream. They are said to increase circulation and promote overall wellbeing, which makes sense.



Tory Urban Retreat
in Pōneke.

They're also said to aid in muscle recovery.

I've experienced this at the wonderful Aro Ha retreat in Glenorchy, where mornings are spent with yoga and hiking and afternoons are spent recovering in the saunas (they offer both Swedish and infrared) and the cold plunge pool that overlooks snow-capped mountains.

If it's all starting to sound a bit Gwyneth Paltrow/Goopy, the oceans surrounding Aotearoa tend to be balmy in comparison to an ice bath (8-14 degrees),

but the effect is the same, and nature is better for you than almost anything.

One of my favourite winter wellbeing practices is a sweaty hike near a crystal clear ocean (the Coromandel is a favourite haunt), then throwing myself in the water. The slow deep breath work I force myself to engage in soon gives way to a wonder at the peace and beauty of the world, and you emerge with the same awesome tingly feeling that brims with life and a rush of endorphins.