

# Rogue rubs

Too cool for Thai? **We tested seven alternative massages** that offer relief to your Berlined-out body and soul.

## GOOD RUSSIAN VIBRATIONS

“Normal massages” weren’t doing it for Juri Ritter, so he turned to a technique first devised in ancient Russia to prepare warriors for battle. The Siberian-born massage therapist uses vibrations to root

the muscle pain out of today’s Berliners. This traditional method improves heart health and de-stresses joints. You can go for a percussion or a vibration massage, but if you want the chef’s special, buckle up: you’ll be tied up by your hands and feet in a square metal cage – a contraption called *Pravilo*, also in vogue in Russian gyms – while your muscles are drummed upon with bamboo sticks, metal brooms and a deep tissue massage pistol. Forget small talk. Ritter will lay you on a mattress and rope

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you up à la KitKat, even though you’re at a Russian-German cultural centre in a homely Ostberliner flat. When you finally accept that you’ve been tied up by a stranger, your body unwinds. It worked on ancient warriors and does just as much for battered Berliners. – **JPA**  
**Pravilo / Shock vibration massage**  
Grevesmühlener Str. 24, Hohenschönhausen. Book on [gleichgewicht@wirgemeinsam.de](mailto:gleichgewicht@wirgemeinsam.de). €50 for 60 min.

## BREAKING BACK

The pandemic may be over, but ‘home office’ is here to stay. With medical journals cautioning against a wave of text necks and bad backs, Berlin-born massage therapist Daniel Paschky took matters into his own hands and reinvented his back massage, tailoring it to anyone suffering from desk-related aches. In his cosy, dimly lit studio in Wilmersdorf, Paschky receives you with a cup of tea and a short chat. Then, game on: he opens up knots, kneads deep and channels his warmth and energy into your stress-ridden muscles. If you’re looking to regain some of the mental wellbeing you lost at your nine-to-five, Paschky’s massage is the one. – **JPA**  
**Heilende Massagen Pfalzburger Str. 13, Wilmersdorf.** Book on [heilende-massagen.de](http://heilende-massagen.de). €50 for 50 min.

## HARTONO’S HANDS

Ardian Hartono developed his own massage technique based heavily on his passions for dance and martial arts. During the full-body massage, Hartono performs; his hands the artists, your body the stage. “It basically starts with reading the person and listening,” he says in the rustic massage room at the back of his tranquil Kreuzberg apartment. While he moves around you, the dancer-turned-masseur pushes, kneads and shakes your muscles — sometimes hard, other times light as a feather. Here, his knowledge of the body becomes evident. His skilled touch moves across your body like a ship in calm waters, reaching even the deepest sores

while your mind is temporarily freed of all its weight. From head to toe, Hartono’s hands mould you into a new person that’s ready to face even the greyest Berlin days. And if that is not enough, he offers his own massage workshops where you, too, can learn some magic for muscles. – **JPA**  
**Hartono Massage Ohlauer Str. 4, Kreuzberg.** Book on [hartonomassage.com](http://hartonomassage.com). €70 for 60 min.

## NO HANDS ON DECK

If stripping down and getting felt up by a stranger isn’t your thing, a certified sound massage could be a viable alternative. In her studio, Anja Kelch uses the trademarked method of sound therapist Peter Hess to tickle your brain and gently release tension. After a short chat and a swig of Indian tea, you’ll lie down fully clothed and the session begins with a hit of the gong. Kelch continues by placing pre-warmed bowls of different sizes on your body that she plays using a soft mallet, alternating feet, back, stomach, chest and neck. At changing frequencies, the resulting vibrations travel softly through the body and are supposed to release stress and even muscular tension. Don’t expect too much of a ‘massaging’ sensation, though: the relaxing effect is primarily thanks to the sound landscape Kelch cre-



ates by playing her eight singing bowls at short intervals, both on and off the body. The massage aims at women and couples and is suitable for pregnancy. – **WS**  
**Klangschalen Massage Eichenstr. 40, Niederschönhausen.** Book on [klangschalenkraft.de](http://klangschalenkraft.de). €60 for 60 min.

## A MASSAGE TO DIVE FOR

Always wanted to feel weightless, but never had the funds for a commercial space flight? The Watsu massage at the renowned Liquidrom Spa might be the next best thing. Floating in a dark pool filled with 37°C salt water, you are guided by Kirill Matveev, massage therapist extraordinaire and water lover. His massage relaxes joints, blood vessels and the mind that bears witness to it all. On top of that, the massage can be directly followed up with a sauna or ice bath, whichever solidifies your newfound mental equilibrium and health benefits. The experience balances on the fine line between pure relaxation and waterboarding; Matveev starts by ever so gently moving you across the surface, then cradles you like a

toddler and, towards the end, submerges you several times. Don’t worry: before going in the deep-end, Matveev explains his techniques, and only if you agree to it will he fully dunk you. As unique things tend to be, Mateev’s Watsu massage is expensive, but it’s still cheaper than space tourism. – **JPA**  
**Liquidrom Möckern Str. 10, Kreuzberg.** Book at [info@abcmassage.de](mailto:info@abcmassage.de). €85 for 65 min. Admission not included.

## FEEL THE RHYTHM

Less is more when it comes to eurythmic massage. As part of Waldorf-founder Rudolph Steiner and physician Ita Wegman’s philosophy of Anthroposophy, it’s based on the theory that, because humans are made up largely of water, the best kind of motion to emulate when touching the body is flowing H<sub>2</sub>O. Before the massage starts, experienced massage therapist, osteopath and physiotherapist Rainer Köck analyses where his patient may be carrying the most strain. Using only the slightest pressure, Köck starts by working on your back, his hands mirroring the ripples of a stream in shallow, concentric movements. In gentle waves, he works up from the lower back as you sink into the massage table. Any remaining tension is gently freed from the shoulders and neck

before Köck leaves you for an optional yoga-style *savasana*. Sure, you could check into a public anthroposophic hospital like the Havelhöhe, as Waldorf devotees in Germany do. But if you’re on the fence with Steiner’s ways and still want to feel the rhythm, a massage with Köck will hit the spot. – **SP**

**Rainer Köck Wundtstr. 19, Charlottenburg.** Book at [rainerkoeck.com](http://rainerkoeck.com). €75 for 50 min.

## MORE THAN A GUT FEELING

The Chi Nei Tsang massage is a traditional Chinese belly massage that incorporates elements of chi and detoxification, treating stomach problems and the negative emotions supposedly held by vital organs. Hidden away in the basement of a historical Prenzlauer Berg building, you’ll find Ainhoa Serrano’s massage studio, a snug flat that smells of floral essence. After swapping your shoes for cosy loafers, she warns you that the massage might evoke visible signs of sexual arousal. Then she begins; with a barrage of fingers, Serrano assaults your stomach, ‘scarring’ your belly with deep finger strokes to open it up to various energies. While it’s not that kind of massage, things will steadily get more intimate. Serrano applies warm essential oils to your lower abdominal area and starts detoxifying your organs from the associated emotions. Using long strokes, she works the whole body before returning to the stomach for a final, and very satisfying, release of that pent-up negative chi. If you can stomach the intense intestinal work, aren’t too prudish and can afford this pleasurable treatment, you’ll leave with lighter energy. It’s recommended to not eat two hours prior to the massage and to avoid coming when menstruating. – **JPA**

**Ainhoa Massage Diedenhofer Straße 6, Prenzlauer Berg.** Book on [ainhoamassage.de](http://ainhoamassage.de). €120 for 90 min.