



# Spring

# Style

# Edit

Rita Liefhebber is always the chicest person in any room. Now the renowned stylist has a new business dedicated to helping women discover love-forever pieces. Here, she reveals how to build an investment wardrobe for work and life

*Photography by Kayla Rocca*



# WATIER

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## Eat, pray, ski

After an injury, I conquered my fears and came  
schussing back to life in the French Alps

By Laura Antonik



I was sweating, exhausted—and having  
the most fun I'd had in a very long time.

The morning sun mirrored off the snowy white peaks, as I faced down the mountain. My instructor—a charming, extremely tanned Frenchman in his 50s, who went by Tintin and wore a full-length red snowsuit—demonstrated the right way to squat over the skis to maintain balance. “You are a frog!” he shouted, extending his poles. “You are an umbrella!” I got into position and started slowly weaving down into the powder. “Perpendicular!” Tintin yelled encouragingly behind me. I was sweating, exhausted—and having the most fun I’d had in a very long time.

I was at Club Med Tignes, in the French Alps, for a long overdue journey of healing and self-care. About a year earlier, I’d broken my foot on a hiking trip and lost my mobility for months. I had loved my active life: My husband and I took our dogs for daily nature walks; I hosted cozy dinner parties; I swam in the lake under the stars. I wasn’t accustomed to sitting on the couch, endlessly scrolling while the world rolled on without me. My feeling of isolation was compounded by the fact that I’d moved to a small town during the pandemic. After months of delayed healing, my world had contracted again. Not only did I have the challenge of a physical recovery, but the added emotional anxiety left me feeling fragile and disconnected.

I needed a jolt, a challenge—a hero story to help with the extreme vulnerability I just couldn’t shake. I had been a skier but I’d dropped the hobby somewhere along the path to middle age. Relearning to ski, if successful, could cancel out my acquired fear of re-injury, allowing me to get out of my own way so that my body could complete the process. The trip to Tignes arrived like a beacon of light in my dark world. In December, I traded in my faded crutches for ski poles and set out on my own journey of Eat, Pray, Ski.

Located in the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, the region is famous for its interconnected ski-in/out runs and a long, reliable winter season. Club Med Tignes, which opened in 2022, sits at the base of the Grande Motte glacier, at an elevation of almost 3,500 metres. In combination with neighbouring Val d’Isère, this ski area offers 300 kilometres of runs. I had been to France before, and holidayed in the Austrian Tyrolean Alps, but this would be first my first sleepover on a glacier.

The adventure began in Lyon, with a breathtaking three-hour drive along the Isère River of the Tarentaise Valley. The late autumn route through the heart of the French Alps gradually transformed into winter as I soaked in views of churches, vineyards and medieval ruins. Then we left the valley and plateaued out onto the massive dale of ice that cradles the modern town of Tignes.

As we entered Club Med Tignes, a colossal contemporary structure of stone, wood and glass, I felt like I was entering a fortified castle. Architect Jean-Philippe Nuel, known for his luxury interiors, paid homage to the traditional chalet with natural, neutral materials, contrasted with modern hyper-colourful decor. The main auditorium was full of music, dancing and live entertainment at night. During the day, the movable chairs, footstools and tables created cozy nooks for reading, mingling or resting by the fire.

The only task I had on my arrival was to ensure I had the right-sized boots. After registering at the Ski Shop, I stepped onto The Feet Zone for a high-tech scan. The moment I saw my results, the reality of my osteopenia situation hit me: I could clearly see the consequences of my injury in the mismatched images of my two feet.

## Worldwide wellness

Luxe retreats  
that soothe the body  
and soul



Amangiri, a celebrity-favourite resort in Utah’s Canyon Point, has ascended to the rank of modern wellness royalty. Picture yourself in the plunge pool surrounded by 900 acres of serene desert landscape. Ahhh...  
AMAN.COM/RESORTS/AMANGIRI



About an hour south of Rome, Palazzo Fuggi bills itself as a wellness medical spa: There’s an on-site clinic, a Roman theme and a gym (or “movement lab”) in a former ballroom. The menu is by a 3-star Michelin chef, naturally.  
PALAZZOFIGGI.COM



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PALAZZOFIGGI.COM

I was terrified during my first lesson, of course, but Tintin, with his excitable, encouraging manner, made me feel calmer. “You just need to do it over and over,” he said, stressing the importance of lessons. My body had to relearn its rhythms. Somehow, that seemed to be happening. By the second morning, I had been “graduated” to a more skilled group. That occurred twice more during the week, as I skied down bigger and bigger hills. Was I good at this? Hundreds of metres in the sky, my shattered confidence slowly started to rebuild.

Skiing was the cornerstone of my trip—what I dreamed about at night and how I started every morning—but the afternoons and evenings rounded out the wellness experience. The food was a standout. In the à la carte lounge, Le Solstice Gourmet, I indulged in a traditional raclette dinner, paired with crusty bread, cured meats, pickles and rich regional wines. In the resort’s airy dining hall, I had the best week of healthy eating of my life. I sampled every fresh soup and loaded up on herbed vinaigrette salads of lentils, cabbage and green beans. I savoured the extensive seafood selection of tuna, swordfish, prawns and mussels. I became obsessed with the perfect whole pears and the “pomme d’amour” juice. Every morning, I helped myself to the buffet, and then took my breakfast solo next to the frozen window watching the pinks and corals of the rising sun dance across the massive rock.

Après ski, I took advantage of the on-site sauna, swimming and yoga classes. I joined a meditation class where we practiced Pranayama breathwork to offset the effects of the high altitude on the body. Mindful exercises instructed us to surrender to the power of the glacier by transforming into mist, the cold clouds that cling to the rocks each night.

I also made time for a massage and facial, which included access to the hammam steam bath at the Spa by Sothys (I wore my Speedo, but bathing suits are not required). This French beauty brand, known for its clean, organic ingredients, reflects the resort’s commitment to sustainable tourism. In recent years, Club Med has implemented solar panels, an innovative heat recovery system and a Bye-Bye Plastic program.

One day, I took a trip to the nearby 5 Trident Club Med Val d’Isère. The village has the most expensive real estate in the French Alps, with lavish chalets that wrap the valley like a fur stole. While browsing in a boutique, I fell in love with a toque from a collaboration between Rossignol and Jean-Charles de Castelbajac. De Castelbajac’s recent work was currently having a moment 700 kilometres away at the formal reopening of Notre Dame cathedral, where clerics in procession donned his designer robes. I thought of the beauty of that, the sense of coming back to life, a kind of resurrection. In a much humbler way, I was experiencing the same thing.

On the way back to our resort, we took a gondola up to check out the après-ski at La Folie Douce, which is known as having the best party on the mountain. I rode back down to the valley, watching the sun set. I took a deep breath and realized I felt connected to the world again. I was finally healing.

Laura Antonik travelled as a guest of Club Med, which did not review or approve this article.

## THE KIT

Editor-in-Chief  
Laura deCarufel  
Creative Director  
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Features Director  
Rani Sheen  
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Eden Boileau  
Shopping Editor  
Renée Tse

Direct advertising  
inquiries to:  
General Manager  
Evie Begy,  
eb@thekit.ca  
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BARÉNIA



SKIN IS A SCENT



REFILLABLE OBJECT





SUIT, STYLIST'S OWN. **T.LINE** SHIRT, \$325, SHOPTLINE.COM. **MAGUIRE** SHOES, \$230, MAGUIRESHOES.COM. **JENNY BIRD** EARRINGS, \$158, JENNY-BIRD.CA

# Suit yourself



**START WITH AN INVESTMENT SUIT** Liefhebber suggests finding a designer suit on consignment and styling it as needed for your life and work. "Try to buy the best-quality fabric," she says. "It will cost a bit more than Zara, but you know it will last you much longer." As for silhouette? A relaxed suit looks modern, as does a button-down in a roomier men's cut, versus a fitted shirt that has darting. Add a touch of femininity with footwear: "Mary Janes add an unexpected twist to a classic suit."

**STYLING TIP:** For instant cool girl, tuck your hair inside your jacket.

"I'm not a big supporter of buying a new wardrobe every season," says Rita Liefhebber. Instead, the super stylist believes in creating a capsule wardrobe of pieces that can be reworked in countless ways. With that in mind, here's everything you need for spring

By Jennifer Berry



BLAZER, STYLIST'S OWN. **THE ROW** T-SHIRT, \$912, NET-A-PORTER.COM. **THE ROW** SKIRT, \$895, VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM. **STAUD** BOOTS, \$650, STAUD.CLOTHING. **JUDE** NECKLACE (LAUNCHING SOON), SHOPJUDE.COM



"Think of your suit as a blank canvas, and then change it with your footwear, your under layer and your accessories—often the easiest way to make an outfit feel fresh."

**KEEP THE JACKET, SWITCH OUT EVERYTHING ELSE** The humble white T-shirt is a styling MVP, says Liefhebber: "You can wear it on its own, under a blazer, layered under a sweater..." Here, the tee grounds the look, keeping it from getting too precious, while offering a showcase for an on-trend pendant necklace. And remember: Rich, versatile brown is a modern alternative to traditional black.

**STYLING TIP:** Tuck a low-heeled boot under a pencil skirt to bolster the casual-cool look.



SUIT, SHOES, JEWELLERY, STYLIST'S OWN. **KHAITE** BELT, \$570, KHAITE.COM. **HERMÈS** BAG, BY REQUEST, HERMES.COM



Wearing a blazer solo for evening creates the perfect balance of effortless and chic.

## DITCH THE SHIRT AND ADD A BELT FOR A FANCIER LOOK

If you don't have a belt you love, now's the time to get one. "Belting blazers and coats was all over New York Fashion Week—I think it will be big for fall," says Liefhebber. A bold cuff and unfussy strappy sandals complete the outfit.

**STYLING TIP:** Create a surprising silhouette by carrying a structured handbag in the crook of your arm, instead of slinging it, pell-mell, over your shoulder.



**TOTEME** SHIRT, \$495, VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM. BLAZER, STYLIST'S OWN. **SMYTHE** PANTS, \$525, SHOPSMYTHE.COM. **ADIDAS** SHOES, \$120, FOOTLOCKER.COM

Pair a bare face and eyes with a red lip for a night out.

## ADD A SATIN BLOUSE FOR A MASCULIN-FÉMININ VIBE

Liefhebber encourages playing with proportions, textures and sensibilities: "I love a more masculine piece paired with a bold red lip for evening." The blouse—buttoned to the top with sleeves pushed up—is the star, but the understated sneakers and voluminous trousers are important supporting players. "These Smythe pants are so comfortable that I feel like I'm wearing loungewear."

**STYLING TIP:** The right understated sneaker can pull a look together: "I'm really into black and navy tonal Adidas Gazelles now."

ymous clothing line, which was sold at Holt Renfrew; she later added home goods. At 24, she began a stint as a fashion editor at *Flare* magazine, followed by an assistant job to legendary stylist Lori Goldstein in N.Y.C. That exposed her to a whole new level of fashion, shooting big campaigns and working with supermodels like Christy Turlington, photographers such as Mario Testino and designers like Hedi Slimane. "It was like nothing I'd seen here in Canada," she tells me with a laugh. "Very stressful, very *Devil Wears Prada*. On steroids."

Liefhebber bopped between Toronto and New York for the better part for two decades before settling in Toronto in 2019, where she had her son and began focusing on styling clients and creative direction for female-founded Canadian brands like Smythe and T.Line.

There have been two constants in Liefhebber's career: Styling work (her "bread and butter") and entre-



**ACNE STUDIOS** BLAZER, \$695, VSPCONSIGNMENT.COM. **COS** SHIRT, \$142, COS.COM. **REFORMATION** JEANS, \$248, THEREFORMATION.COM. **G.H.BASS** SHOES, \$252, GHBASS.COM



**BUILD AROUND DENIM** This all-blue outfit looks easy, but every detail is considered: the oversized blazer, the untucked button-down (with cuffs rolled outside the jacket sleeves), and what Liefhebber calls a "no-brainer": perfectly tailored denim. "When in doubt, try a tonal look."

**STYLING TIP:** Add boyish flair with a pair of classic loafers, like these from Weejuns: "They're the best and they last forever."



**TOTEME** COAT, \$1,724, TOTEME.COM. **COS** SHIRT, \$142, COS.COM. **REFORMATION** JEANS, \$248, THEREFORMATION.COM. **THE ROW** BOOTS, \$1,866, CETTIRE.COM. **HERMÈS** SCARF, \$600, HERMES.COM. BY REQUEST, HERMES.COM

A long coat elongates the leg and looks so elegant.



**BID ADIEU TO THE JACKET AND SLIP ON A TRENCH** An impeccable trench is a spring style building block: It can be dressed down but often has the most power in a polished look. Here, tonality rules again: In addition to blue hues, the different shades of brown in the coat, bag and boot ensure sartorial cohesion.

**STYLING TIP:** Take a page from fashion writer Leandra Medine Cohen and belt your trench with a silk scarf.

## Extra, extra

Necessary accessories: this season's MVPs



### THE SKINNY BLACK BELT

For when you want to cinch your relaxed silhouette into something a little more hourglass.

**THE ROW** BELT, \$830, SSENSE.COM



### THE STRUCTURED BAG

Embrace the evolution of sculptural handbag hardware—all the better if it adorns a stunning cerise carryall.

**CUYANA** QLA BAG, \$658, CUYANA.COM



### THE WEAR EVERYWHERE EARRINGS

Though small in stature, these Scandi-inspired two-for-one hoops hug the ear and pack a punch in high-polished gold.

**JENNY BIRD** FLORENCE EARRINGS, \$158, JENNY-BIRD.CA



### THE LUXURIOUS LIPSTICK

Bold, bolder, boldest: This limited-edition formula was inspired by the pearl necklaces favoured by Coco Chanel for their radiance-boosting glow.

**CHANEL** ROUGE ALLURE VELVET LES PERLES LIPSTICK IN SENSUELLE, \$62, CHANEL.COM

style is not about the clothes. It's about how they make my clients feel," says Toronto wardrobe stylist Rita Liefhebber. "How they step out into the world and the confidence that comes with it."

With more than 20 years of fashion experience under her Khaite belt, Liefhebber has had plenty of practice channelling this clothing-specific je ne sais quoi that can make you stand a little taller and speak a little louder.

It's a skill I observed on the set of Liefhebber's *Kit* cover shoot, where she was busy both styling and modelling a range of modern workwear looks. Her mission? Create a variety of outfits that transition from work to life using a single grey suit as the starting point.

She moves expertly through the racks, concocting combinations that balance tailoring with fluidity, feminine influences with masculine ones, high street pieces with luxury.

Even though she's laser-focused, Liefhebber can't resist dropping bits of fashion wisdom along the way. When buying a coat, go for as long a length as possible. "It looks so elegant and makes it easy to hide your sweats for school drop-off!" The same goes for pant length, to elongate the leg. "I'm in favour of a pant that is as long as you can handle," she advises. "It always looks sophisticated."

Liefhebber credits her architect parents with instilling in her an early love of good design. She started collecting fashion intel when she moved to New York City at 15 to model, travelling to Paris, London, Milan and Tokyo for work. "It really opened up the world. You see so much, and what all the girls are wearing is so exciting," she says. "And then what you're wearing as part of your shoot or the show you're walking in—my mind exploded."

Liefhebber has never been content to sit still. She started styling at 21 and a year later launched an epon-





# CHANEL

THE CHANEL 25 HANDBAG