

VISTA

Canada's Favourite Health Magazine

Retreat! Island Health Resorts By Carol Crenna

Take a deep breath. If you`re feeling like life is a 24 hour deadline, it's time to escape to an untouched island – away from crowds, traffic, buildings – to find balance.

When you long for a retreat but don't want to leave the country, Canada's West Coast offers several island health resorts that enable you to take time for what gives you joy: a breathtaking sunset, a tranquil day spent under a tree, strolling along the beach, or a satisfying meal prepared from scratch. By slowing down, you'll find that you sleep better, eat better, make love better, work better. These luxurious settings provide the personal attention that you simply no longer have time to give yourself. Relax and live in the moment. No passport required.

Galiano Oceanfront Inn and Spa

As you enter the Galiano Oceanfront Inn, the massive native whale carving in the centre of the grand lobby commands attention, surrounded by tile, wood, leather and wrought iron. It pays homage to Luna, the famous killer whale that lost its way and struck up a friendship with resort owner Mel Gibb, who also owns an island in Nootka Sound. This haven combines high end luxury with casual island ambiance, perched on Galiano Island's rocky waterfront and sandy beach. Steps from the ferry and the forest, it takes exactly five minutes to feel its restorative powers.

Room to breathe. Ten ocean-view rooms offer a wood-burning stone fireplace, king bed, jacuzzi soaker tub, built-in massage table, heated tile and cork floors, and beamed ceiling. The inn is the most romantic place in Canada according to Christopher Reeve, who decided to ask his wife to

marry him there, says co-owner and manager Conny Nordin. Formerly a 1920s guest house and then a fishing lodge, the inn was redesigned in modern West Coast architecture by Gibb, who is also responsible for the resplendent gardens and landscaped grounds reminiscent of a bygone era. Take a stroll or admire them from Atrevida, its gourmet Mediterranean restaurant, surrounded by windows.

The spa-ahhh. The inn's Madrona Del Mar Spa is the first in North America to make individual treatment preparations from scratch using fresh organic ingredients. Ingredients include shoreline seaweed, island blackberries, hemp and organic chocolate. Pampering pioneer Linda Epstein, spa director (who developed Canada's first skincare line), creates a Hemp Glacial Wrap blending hemp seeds, hemp oil (high in omega-3 and -6 to heal the skin) and organic sugar. They're worked into the skin with BC glacial clay to detoxify and exfoliate. Her Blueberry Smoothie Wrap combines fresh BC blueberries and milk. Blueberries are high in phytonutrients to deter aging and strengthen the immune system. Lactic acid in milk has been used for centuries to soothe and soften skin. Epstein states, "I've been vegetarian since I was 11 years old. I don't believe in putting any chemicals in the body, or on the body since the skin is highly absorbent."

Have your treatment in a cedar cabana surrounded by gardens, pond and waterfall, or oceanside. The spa's philosophy is based on the healing power of water and it shows, with a Vichy shower, steam rooms, and Sea Mineral Flotation Bath, an intimate pool-for-two that's totally enclosed in stone tile where you float privately in hot mineralized salt water to soothe arthritic joints and sore muscles.

The Galiano Inn

www.galianoinn.com

(1-877) 530-3939,

\$250 to \$350 (CAD) per night.