



Indulging in a spa getaway for a day or two is even more enticing when these world-class destinations are just a short drive away

Day Trippin'



Left to right: the view from the terrace at Ste. Anne's Inn and Spa near Grafton; the Millcroft Inn in Alton; the classic drawing room where high tea is served at the Prince of Wales in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

that include Via Rail round-trip train transportation, four-diamond accommodation, breakfast, lunch, dinner and afternoon tea along with a \$100 spa allowance, a choice of two group fitness classes and use of all facilities for \$425 and up.

Other packages offer a day at Ste. Anne's that includes lunch, afternoon tea, \$100 spa and fitness allowance and one group fitness class starting at \$185. Other amenities include personal training, nutritional and wellness consultations, plunge pools,

hot tubs and a rural setting that looks like something out of a Monet painting. ●

Down by the stream

A host of special packages (golf, couples, cuisine, wine tasting, 55 and older) and unique spa treatments make the Millcroft Inn more than just a beautiful locale to getaway by J. DAVID COWAN

CONNECT

Ste. Anne's Inn and Spa

1-888-346-6772; www.spavillage.ca

Where else can you go for a table for two in a glass conservatory (the pod) overlooking a millpond, a bottle of fine wine, an exquisitely prepared appetizer of a tasting plate of oysters, a main course of organic Arctic char followed by a melt-on-your-tongue trio of crème brûlée and good conversation all followed by an evening Japanese ofuro spa treatment for two?

The answer is the Millcroft Inn and Spa in the Caledon Hills of Ontario. Originally, a knitting mill that supplied long underwear to troops during the First World War, the Millcroft is some 200 years old. Set just outside the artist colony of Alton, the Millcroft is a stately limestone building sitting on 100 acres of woodland and meadow that combines its rich history with the latest spa treatments in the new Centre for Well-Being, which opened in 2004.

While some guests choose to stay in the Manor House with its high ceilings and massive windows, we chose a loft-style croft suite with a wood-burning fireplace and an outdoor hot tub, the perfect body treatment before wrapping up in big robes and curling up in front of a roaring fire.

After a buffet breakfast the next morning and a round of golf at one of the courses nearby, we enjoyed a Classic Cleansing Kur – a body polish to remove dead skin cells followed by a powerful Swiss shower aimed at improving circulation, then a head and facial massage – and back out again for a rejuvenating hike along one of the trails on the property.

For spa neophytes, The Millcroft offers a "Gentleman's Selection" of treatments, making the getaway less intimidating for men new to spas.

Besides packages including Romantic, Culinary, Golf Getaways, there is a Special

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A castle of calm

At this renowned inn nestled in the hills of Grafton, Ont., visitors get spa treatments and cuisine fit for a queen (or king) *BY BONNIE BAKER COWAN*

The train rolls out from the frenetic rush of commuter life at Union Station in Toronto and, within minutes, we are gliding by lush pastures with grazing Holsteins on one side, the misty blue of Lake Ontario on the other. My eyes glaze over, and I can feel the grime and stress of city life slipping away. The train ride is such a perfect transition from a stressful day to a spa destination.

A driver from Ste. Anne's Inn and Spa picks me up at the station in Cobourg and soon, we're at the historic quartz and limestone "castle" in Grafton. Originally built in 1858 by Samuel Massey, it was later owned by the Blaffer family of Texas who added the castle elements and enjoyed it as their summer home. The Corcoran family bought Ste. Anne's in 1981 and renovated it, keeping the distinctive architecture intact. Today, their son, Jim, has expanded the inn into a unique spa experience infused with the spirit of nurturing and healing.

After checking in, I am treated to a one-hour Swedish massage that is refreshingly mind-numbing and extricates any remaining stress from my day.


Dinner is a beautifully presented veal chop in the serene dining room, and I retreat to my room with windows on three sides overlooking flower gardens, lush sweeping lawns and a long vista with Lake Ontario in the distance. Soft classical music plays from the stereo in my room as I crawl into the same bed actor Ted Danson slept in during last year's film festival. What a perfect ending to the day.

In the morning, I have a hand therapy treatment and instead of finishing with a coat of nail enamel, which eventually turns nails yellow, I have my nails buffed and polished naturally.

I follow up with a yoga class, a delicious lunch with too much of the wonderful bread they bake themselves at Ste. Anne's and back to the train station to return to my busy life.

Ste. Anne's offers overnight packages







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