

Spa journeys make for great getaways

BY ROCHELLE LASH, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE JANUARY 15, 2014



Auberge and Spa Beaux Rêves is an inn and Nordic spa that offers scenic views and wellness treatments.

Photograph by: Auberge and Spa Beaux Rêves

It's a snowy, chilly January, and we desperately need to reboot. You know — escape twerking, selfies, Bieber fever and Quebec charter chatter.

Our thoughts turn to spa life, particularly at accessible prices.

Here are two very different mountain getaways: Auberge and Spa Beaux Rêves is a comfortable, cosy spa-inn outside of Ste-Adèle in the heart of the Lower Laurentians. Across the continent, the Fairmont Chateau Whistler in British Columbia is a majestic mountain lodge with a cool new Breaking Bad Habits spa package.

Auberge and Spa Beaux Rêves started modestly 18 years ago, but has evolved with the boom in wellness and Nordic spas in Quebec.

Owner Hannes Lamothe, with the help of nine staffers taking care of reception, breakfast, lunch, housekeeping and outdoor maintenance, has built 11 guest rooms and ever-expanding spa facilities. What's special is that Beaux Rêves has attractive deals for both singles and couples, and a bliss-inducing connection with nature.

Lamothe recently opened the spa to day-trippers — a big step — so now Beaux Rêves also has men's and women's changing rooms and many more relaxation areas, such as a fireplace salon and, in summer, hammocks and lounge chairs. He limits the maximum number of spa-goers to about 50 so that the place stays intimate compared with some Laurentian Nordic spas that can accommodate up to 200 people in their pools.

Beaux Rêves's spa embraces four treatment rooms for body wraps, massages and esthetics, plus two saunas, outdoor fire pits, a heated pond and a terrasse with infrared heaters, where spa-goers can bake in the sun even in winter, provided it's not too far below 0 C. Always on the move, Lamothe recently added an outdoor waterfall

for Nordic dips and a hot tub, which he carved by hand out of the boulders on his land.

"My family comes from Estonia, a Baltic country where almost everyone has a sauna in their backyard," said Lamothe. "It's part of the culture and it's highly sociable, a little bit like Finland, so even early on, Beaux Rêves focused on spa life. Most of our guests come for a Swedish massage, which is great after skiing.

"Then Quebec went mad for the Scandinavian phenomenon of outdoor bathing, in both summer and winter, and I realized that we are perfectly situated for a beautiful Nordic spa, with forest walking and river dips into the natural eddies."

It's all about nature at Beaux Rêves. The inn overlooks the Rivière aux Mulets, and guests can always hear the sound of rushing water. The gurgling and swooshing is thoroughly soothing, whether you are laying your head down on your pillow at night or yielding to a rubdown.

The guest rooms are fresh, bright and steeped in country charm. Almost all face the river with private balconies or patios, and the suites add fireplaces and whirlpool tubs. Vintage pine furniture, patchwork quilts and soft pastel walls add up to a typically Quebec air.

Breakfast is a continental buffet with juice, charcuterie, cheeses, cereals, baked beans and breads from Boulangerie La Chapdelaine in Val-David. With Beaux Rêves now open to day-spa guests, lunch is better than ever: salads with homemade vinaigrette, mini-pizzas, bagels with smoked salmon, croque-monsieurs and tuna wraps, plus selections of local wine and beer. Dinner packages are available at two of Ste-Adèle's classic dining spots, Chez Milot and La Chitarra, as well as at the innovative Bistro-Lounge Aux Garçons.

At the other extreme in style and size, the grand, five-star Fairmont Chateau Whistler, at the foot of Canada's largest downhill ski and snowboard area, has 550 deluxe rooms and suites, plus gourmet

dining and a comprehensive spa. It is considered one of Canada's finest hotels for its splendid setting, impressive facilities and classic décor.

The Château's new wellness package, Breaking Bad Habits, is a great deal at \$569 per person for two nights lodging with morning smoothies and bagels, one body wrap and one spa activity, such as aqua-fitness, yoga or resistance stretching. Dinner features health-conscious dishes such as pan-seared cod, beet and goat-cheese salad, broiled steak, orange carpaccio, lentil dal, zucchini spaghetti and other delicacies for diets that are vegan, gluten free, low-fat and diabetes-sensitive.

So we're Breaking Bad Habits with gusto. Exercise? It's done. Calorie counting? Check. Now you can "break bad" at the Château's new Mallard Lounge Chocolate Bar. Here's a sweet idea: a flight of three chocolates, such as Venezuelan dark from South America, Ghana vanilla milk from Africa and chili-infused chocolate from the Caribbean, all perfectly paired with wine or port.

IF YOU GO:

Aubergeand Spa Beaux Rêves: 800-279-7679, 450-229-9226, beauxreves.com; 2310 Ste-Adèle Blvd./Route 117, Ste-Adèle. Not recommended for children because of the quiet ambience. Take Highway 15 north to Exit 67.

Price: \$109-\$229 Sun.-Thurs., \$129-\$249 Fri-Sat., per night, for two, including breakfast, Wi-Fi, snowshoes and use of Nordic spa and walking trail for two days. Singles rates available. Packages organized with spa treatments, dogsledding, snowmobiling and downhill skiing; in summer with ATV rides, horseback riding, theatre and golf.

Fairmont Chateau Whistler: 888-343-2626, 604-938-8000, fairmont.com/whistler; 4599 Chateau Blvd., Whistler, B.C.

Price: Rooms, \$399 per night for two; Fairmont Gold rooms with lounge access, \$579; Fairmont Gold suites, \$679, all-inclusive use of indoor and outdoor swimming pools, fitness club, hot tubs. Packages available with spa treatments, meals, snow sports and golf. Children five and younger eat for free. Breaking Bad Habits Package starts at \$569 p.p., double occ., includes two nights' accommodation, one "lifestyle" dinner for two, spa treatments, workout gear and fitness class. Add \$95 p.p., per day, for adult lift tickets at Whistler Blackcomb.

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