



## Bliss at Brentwood Bay

### An ideal evening follows an ideal day of bliss

There are two ways to reach the **Brentwood Bay Lodge & Spa**: the conventional 20-minute drive along streets and highway from downtown Victoria or the more romantic approach, a half-hour ferry ride from Mill Bay, a small town northwest of Victoria in the Cowichan Valley.

My husband, Pete, and I chose the romantic route.

From the water, the Brentwood Bay Lodge was partially hidden by trees, but you could still see its contemporary cedar building with soaring picture windows and individual decks off each suite, basking in the sun.

...Although I knew that the 33-room lodge, which opened in June 2004, is one of Vancouver Islands finest boutique resorts, it still felt comfortable in this far-from-chic neighborhood. My mother would have said that this place had good bones, and looking back on the location's history, she would be right. It was once a rustic, beloved fisherman's retreat.

After being greeted with a choice of sparkling water or wine, we made our way to Suite 102 on the ground level. I knew the moment I stepped in the room that I didn't want to leave. No day trips or sightseeing for me.

The room was uncluttered and serene. Yet, there were so many details that pleased the eye. In the entry hall, the frame of a large mirror held a conical flower vase and simple bouquet. The king-size bed was simply dressed in elegant Italian sheets, inviting a blissful

mid-day nap or a good read. The spacious bathroom was light and airy with heated slate floor bordered in stone and a whirlpool tub; that was the best feature.

The tub was large and deep and placed against a partial wall separating the bathroom from the bedroom. The wall ended at tub level so once you slid into your fragrant bath-salt soak, you could enjoy the view of the marina and inlet through the window across the room.

A row of tea lights atop the low wall further engendered romance, and the ample supply of perfectly folded towels felt indulgent.

Before walking out the back door to relax on our patio and try out the pool, I couldn't help but fix a cup of coffee using the room's sleek French-press coffeemaker. Classy. Easy too....The next morning, after a great night's sleep, we enjoyed watching other people getting ready for their ferry rides and marina excursions...A leisurely walk along a public shoreline path was all I cared to accomplish before slipping into my cozy bathrobe and heading for the lodge's **Essence of Life Spa** with Pete.

This was a first. I had persuaded Pete, who had never had a massage, to sign up for one. We chose the Two Hearts Massage (60 minutes, \$217).

The spa is small and intimate, and the friendly staff is knowledgeable. We were ushered into a dimly lit, handsomely designed treatment room that held two massage tables and a shower area with two side-by-side showerheads.

Our massages were quiet, soothing, very relaxing, and the hour went by far too quickly. After we showered, we made our way to the relaxation room, where we were served wine and chocolate truffles. I was not surprised when Pete told me he enjoyed every moment of it.

Dinner that night with friends from Victoria was an ideal way to end our ideal day. No driving; just a stairway walk to a fine-dining experience at the lodge's **Arbutus Grille & Wine Bar**. I chose the chef's tasting menu, which included seared sea scallops on a bed of spiced summer squash puree as well as a salad, a choice of poached sole or a bison prime rib medallion with risotto and a lemon sabayon tartlet for dessert, about \$70.

Our friends ordered a selection of local seafood presented on a hand-carved cedar platter that consisted of British Columbian spot prawns, Quadra Island mussels, whole Dungeness crab, oysters, clams, smoked albacore tuna and other locally sourced seafood. About \$86 for two.

The evening -- as well as our two-day stay -- was over too quickly, but our sense of being pampered and refreshed would linger for weeks.

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