

## Spa escape

BY DR. LILI NASSERI

The view from my room is ethereal, with the water and sky melding into one...

**W**e've come to Harrison Hot Springs Resort & Spa to revel in their famed mineral hot springs. Surrounded by the coastal mountains and set across Harrison Lake, the setting is idyllic. Just an hour and a half outside of Vancouver, its proximity allows both city dwellers and visitors alike to experience an oasis of relaxation, in a quick and easy day trip. Lucky for me, there are no tour buses here today, and I almost have the hot springs all to myself. It's a refreshing change from the chaos of daily life, and I breathe deeply, trying to take it all in.

Within a few steps from the hotel, there are three glimmering pools. Each, I discover, is a slightly different temperature. The furthest is rectangular and I only dip my feet in as the water is cold. I am embarrassed to discover it is the hotel's regular swimming pool! The middle pool curves across the grounds and has a small, cascading waterfall. The temperature is tepid, around 32°C. It allows swimming without overheating and sitting still without growing cold. The pool closest to the hotel is another simple rectangle, but this one feels hot at 35°C. The water doesn't smell of sulphur as it is treated before being transferred to the pools. Inside the Healing Springs Spa there are two other pools, the smallest of which is a heady 38°C and feels heavenly.

The two original hot springs are found at the south of Harrison Lake. The Potash has a temperature of 40°C while the Sulphur's temperature is a steamy 65°C. These were used by the Salish Coast Natives who arrived by canoe in throngs long before a fancy hotel was built. They believed the waters held healing powers that could cure arthritis and rheumatism.

I personally prefer to let a registered massage therapist deal with my aches and pains. After being slathered and pummelled during an intense yet satisfying deep tissue massage at the Healing Springs Spa, it's time to get dolled up for a romantic dinner at the Copper Room.

The youngest couple on the dance floor appears to be in their early 70s. Silver-haired duos grace the floor, gliding from one end to the other, some deftly, others less so. I can't remember the last time I've been to a restaurant where so many people were actually dancing.

A friend from our table approaches a nearby elderly couple who have been lovingly holding hands at their table and dancing in perfect rhythm all night long.

"You're truly an inspiration," she tells them. "How long have you been married?"

"Five years, we got married when I turned 87," the woman replies brightly.

I make a mental note to share the story with all my friends who in their 30s have given up on finding true love.

It's nearly midnight but I decide to indulge myself with a blissful soak. I sneak out and quietly slip into the still waters of the mineral hot tub. I find that I am suddenly overwhelmed with a sense of inner tranquility, here in this magical place. And though I can't say I'm convinced that the waters are healing of any physical ailments, I can attest that a day at a spa resort like Harrison Hot Springs is definitely healing for the soul. ●

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