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Sky

The *Majestic* Mayflower

ON OCCASION, Spahound contemplates what heaven might be like, and—although she's in no particular hurry to get there—she does have some thoughts: In heaven, neither shopping nor packing is required, for everyone is given the same comfy yet chic clothes to wear. In heaven, beautiful paintings and sculptures delight the eye, and, snuggled into a perfect landscape of pond, stream, greensward and forest, formal gardens pay homage to Shakespeare and American poets. The food is superb, of course, and—best of all—in heaven everything is included.

The pitch-perfect Mayflower Inn & Spa in Washington, Connecticut, is the closest I've come to realizing my heavenly reverie. With 30 antiques and art-filled rooms overlooking 58 acres of breathtaking gardens, this historic inn has served the elegant set for two decades but has only recently built a spa . . . on its own terms. It was worth the wait, for Adriana Mnuchin—along with art collector/husband, Robert, and daughter Lisa Hedley—has broken the spa mold. What goes on in the 20,000-square-foot Spa House, just over the hill from the inn, is destined to be copied throughout SpaWorld. The décor alone—cool pastels, sculptures, an impressive collection of art books and a major de Kooning on the wall—is enough to banish stress.

I arrive not for a treatment but for a journey customized to meet my physical, emotional and spiritual goals—a five-day program structured (in this case) for women only. And I'm more than thrilled to discover that Spa Sticker Shock—the bill that we all dread at the end of one's stay—will not be forthcoming. My spacious hotel suite, unlimited spa

treatments/classes, gratuities, meals—not to luxe cotton workout pants, jacket, shorts and shirts that are replaced every evening—are all included in the basic price. Heaven, indeed.

Of course, I indulge in a cornucopia of massage: body wraps, yoga/stretching/posture classes, cures/pedicures, aerobics and constitutional walks through the woods. I try my hand at drumming, have lunch with a famous author who discusses the art of memoir writing. I also have plenty of time to reflect by the indoor swimming pool, to walk the grounds and to read poetry in the garden.

Yet it's the Mayflower's singular approach to spa treatments that impresses me most. Unlike mass spas where therapists work in lockstep, accomplished therapists here have free rein, with your consent, to do what is needed at the time. Case in point: I go for a facial, but my therapist senses lingering tension and gets the facial, but also some reiki energy balancing, reflexology and a guided meditation in the bath. Another day, I show up for a private dance class and feel blah. The wise Natasha begins with gentle Thai yoga stretches and breathing exercises, and my energy kicks in. Discovering we've both been figure skaters in the past, we then cardio-dance for 20 minutes using freeform skating moves, then wind down with duet yoga. Bliss.

Balanced, well-fed, relaxed and energetic, I leave Spahound has to go home, reluctantly. She does not exaggerate when she pronounces this all-inclusive approach the spa of the future. So put the Mayflower Inn on your to-luxuriate list, and you're lucky, inhabit heaven for five days. —
Alice Kellogg