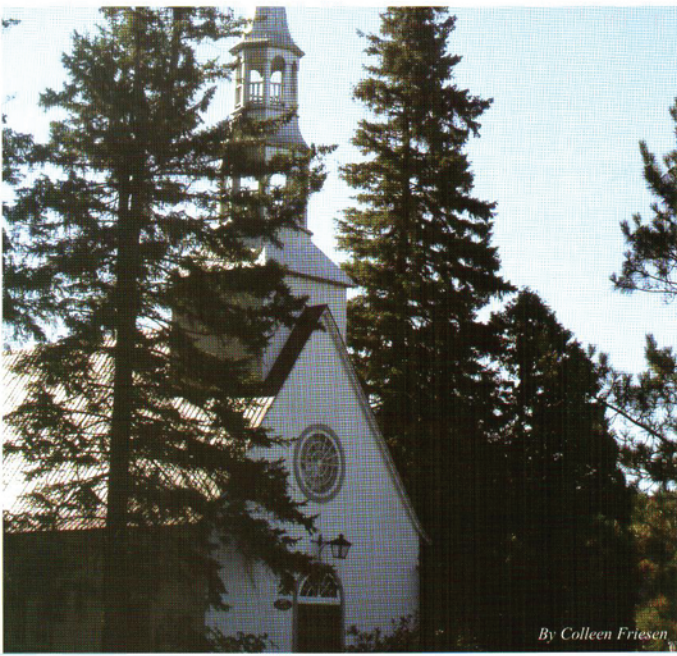


# La Belle Province



By Colleen Friesen

*"You can't always get what you want," Mick croons, "but you just might find... you get what you need."*

I found myself humming this line on a recent spa sojourn to the Laurentians in La Belle Province. I am a purist when it comes to massages. I prefer traditional muscle-seeking strong fingers to pretty much anything else.

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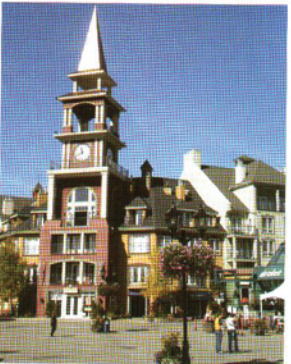
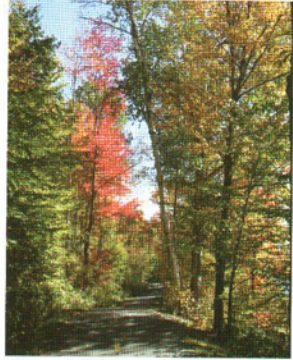
So, when the Amerispa people at Mont Tremblant's Fairmont Hotel recommended their signature apple scrub and wrap, I was not particularly keen.

But hey, the Laurentians were shimmering coppers and crimsons and the air had the sugar-sweet smell of summer's slow dying. Displays of crisp-skinned apples in big baskets were everywhere. It seemed to be one of those, "when in Rome" moments. Besides, Sandrine Isabelle had the air of a woman who knew her stuff, "The smell of apples is very relaxing, so don't be surprised if you fall asleep. In French we have a saying, *tomber dans les pommes...*"

then plunge into the river or into the cold plunge pool and then relax in the conservatory areas or in a hammock before repeating the cycle." Philippe adds, "It's very important to observe the third step so that your body can integrate these experiences."

I'm nodding, but I can't imagine how anything other than bathtub temperature water could be a good thing. "The average guest," he says, "spends at least three hours relaxing."

"That's great," I am trying to be polite (is he kidding? - three hours!), "but I really don't think I'll be here for that long."



Lying in the darkened room, I open one inquiring eye. She smiles her answer, "It means, falling into the apples. It's an expression that refers to losing consciousness - in the nicest possible way." She barely finishes her sentence before I'm doing my own fruity free fall into an apple-scented nirvana.

So, when I meet Philippe Noulard at the Scandinave Spa the next day, you would think I'd have started to clue in that sometimes, other people really do know best.


Phillipe is young and enthusiastic about the Nordic Spa experience. "First, you heat your body in the steam or dry sauna for about 10-15 minutes,

Over three hours later, I float out on the wooded path.




I can't wait to try Spa D'Howard the next day. It too, is a Nordic Spa and by now, I get the drill. Gorgeous rustic wood buildings set near strong rivers, whispering trees and outdoor fire pits. Everywhere, guests are in semi-catatonic states as they lounge in hammocks and lawn chairs and in wood and windowed solariums. Silence is strongly encouraged. Nature is the focus. By the time I have my Swedish massage in a tented room on the edge of the riverbank, I am barely able to think. This...is a good thing.



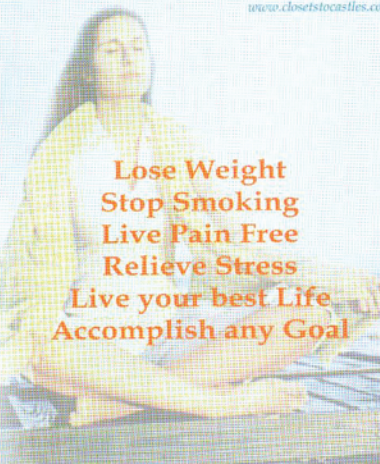


**When You Dare to Relax**

*"One of my passions as a Spa Consultant and Feng Shui Specialist is to research and recommend products and innovative services that will take the Spa/Salon industries to a deeper level for the client/consumer and the spa staff/team - to help create a richer spa experience for our clients, while adding increased revenue to the business bottom line."*




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In the lovely village of Saint - Saveur, I check into Le Spa du Manoir. I wait in the lounge sipping jasmine tea while serene Buddhas smile in the still air.

Christine Amhert suggests an aromatherapy massage. By now, I've given up all control. I let her pick the scents and decide the pressure. My neck and shoulders are kneaded and shook into submission with some very non-traditional manoeuvres.

And somehow all the experiences roll together into one singular thought: what if one approached everything in life like this? What if I quit assuming I always knew what was best and put a little more faith into what other people might know? If I had insisted on my own way, I would never have discovered the blissed out state I entered by following the specific hot-cold-relax-repeat instructions of the Nordic Spa experience. I would have stuck to classic massages and missed a softened neck brought about by unique moves, and most certainly, I would have never discovered the joys of falling into the apples.

Try going with the flow and doing your own mini-free fall. It's quite delicious.

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