

Hiking —

just for the health of it

BY COLLEEN FRIESEN

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." —John Muir

My idea of a spa getaway generally includes sleeping in and lounging about like a Harlequin heroine on a chaise lounge... while eating chocolates.

Waking from the 6:15 a.m. knock, it is clear to me that the good people at Courtenay's Coastal Trek Health & Fitness Resort failed to read that part of the spa handbook.

By 6:30 a.m., my husband Kevin and I are lying on our yoga mats. We stretch and breathe ourselves awake. By 7:30, Kevin has lost his yoga virginity and has seen the yogic light. He loves it. I sit on the warmed wood floors as I ponder Kevin's yogic epiphany. The panorama of the British Columbia coastline is endless from this mountain top vantage.

I'm having a few revelations of my own. It's apparent now that stretching is an ideal way to start the day. And thinking about last night's miso-basted wild salmon, I realize that though I eat well, I need to include more portion control. And as much as I love a glass (or two) of wine with most of my meals, scaling back on the vino might be a good idea, too.

Illuminations continue as we head out for a 15-kilometres hike that will last the better part of the day. And I do mean the better part. Hiking is a big part of Coastal Trek's program. These guys provide it all — healthy lunch, water bottles, hiking poles and Mike, the enthusiastic guide.

But it's more than that. They're helping us realize that hiking/walking is an activity that can be incorporated into any schedule, not to mention the healing benefits of all those mossy encounters with Mama Nature.

Without preaching they've shifted my thinking. It doesn't hurt that the thread count on the sheets is a luxurious 1000 or that it feels like we've come home to friends, not staff. And did I mention the mind-altering reflexology session?

Turns out, I prefer participating in my life. I don't want to be a passive paperback princess. I bet that vapid creature could barely do a push-up.

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