

A Spa Sampler

By Doris Larson

Three great destinations for a romantic getaway, a little alone time or a weekend for just the girls.

Is the February weather in Northeast Ohio getting you down? Break free from the winter blues with a stay at a destination spa. Check out three inns that invite a winter escape. Make it a girls' getaway, come with the love of your life or on your own in a quest for pampering, indulgent treatments and time away from your everyday life.

Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa

Sharon, Pennsylvania
buhlmanion.com

Think luxury and royal treatment when you plan a getaway at the Buhl Mansion Guesthouse & Spa. Upon arrival, take the Grand Oak staircase to find one of 10 elegantly appointed guest rooms with a welcoming tray of fruit, cheese and champagne, luxurious Egyptian linens, down comforters, gas fireplaces and a Jacuzzi for two. If you decide on a room service gourmet breakfast or have a question at 2 a.m., the inn staff is at your beck and call 24 hours. "We take care of guests so they can reconnect with each other," says General Manager Laura Ackley.

Listed as one of the "Top 10 Most Romantic Inns" in the United States (iloveinns.com 2008), this castle-like mansion was built by steel magnate Frank Buhl in 1896 as a wedding present for his wife Julia. Today, Buhl Mansion is often the setting for engagements, elopements and weddings. In the castle spa, a favorite among couples, the Buhl Mansion Romance Package includes side-by-side Swedish massages, facials, manicures,

champagne and a spa cuisine lunch. Steam room, sauna and monsoon showers with 13 shower heads are complimentary. During my stay, women guests raved about the Water Therapy Massage and the Pevonia Anti-Aging Facial.

I opted for lunch by the fireplace in the cheery sun room with a view of the gardens, pond and a Victorian greenhouse. Guests take the inn limousine to Tara, a nearby sister property for dinner at Ashley's Gourmet Restaurant or opt for a more casual meal at Stonewall's Tavern.

Love to shop? There's world-class shopping at The Winner (an off-price women's fashion store), Reyer's Shoe Store and Prime Outlet Mall.



The Inn & Spa at Cedar Falls

Logan, Ohio
innatcedarfalls.com

Escape to The Inn & Spa at Cedar Falls deep in Ohio's Hocking Hills and stay in the barn-like inn furnished with antiques, a secluded 19th century log cabin or a romantic cottage for two. Our cottage in a peaceful wooded setting had a gas log stove, a whirlpool tub for two, separate shower and a king size bed.

The spa, nestled in pine trees, offers a range of services including the new 75-minute Polarity Therapy, a personalized approach to health-



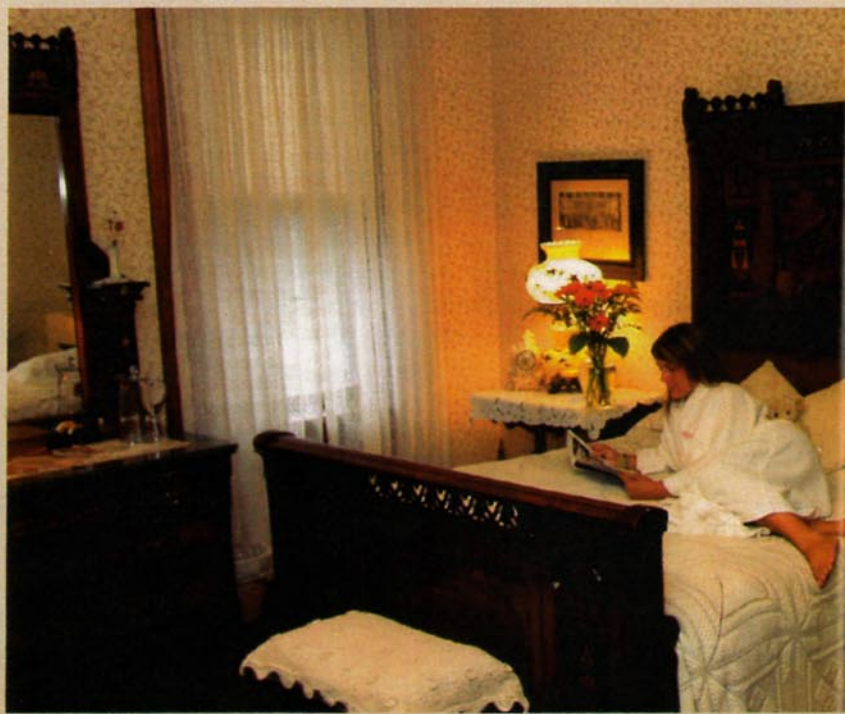


care based on the traditional system of Ayurvedic Medicine. Two often requested treatments are the Couples Massage and Detox for Dummies. I experienced a memorable reflexology treatment utilizing Asian massage technique in the spa's four-season room that looks out to nature.

Chef Anthony Schulz holds forth in the 1840 double log house where an open kitchen allows tempting aromas to waft through the dining area Schulz uses fresh local products in preparing healthy cuisine. Start the day with the full country breakfast and come back for the evening's four-course dinner. It's sophisticated cuisine in a casual setting where you can come as you are after a day exploring the area.

We found Chef Schulz's Winter Couples Cooking Class great fun. Check out the Winter Wine Tasting (Feb. 26). Fans of yoga might want to sign up for the February Thai Yoga Massage Course. Hikers and birders head to the Hocking Hills State Park, which surrounds the inn on three sides.

Returning guests say they come back to the inn for the quiet they find in this tranquil setting and the genuine hospitality of innkeeper Ellen Grinsfelder and her dedicated staff.



The Kerr House

Grand Rapids, Ohio
thekerrhouse.com

I found The Kerr House, a beautifully restored Queen Anne, tucked away on a side street in the village of Grand Rapids. A health retreat, this spa cum inn was featured in the 2009 edition of "Destination Spa Vacations." The Kerr House accepts no more than six to eight guests at a time. Individualized attention is key with a ratio of more than three staff members per guest.

High walnut and cherry headboards, marble vanities, collectible quilts and art from the Victorian era fill guest rooms where mornings start with breakfast in bed. A wicker tray with a satisfying meal of oatmeal, a smoothie, blueberries, walnuts and whole grain toast arrived in my room at 8:30 a.m., along with my schedule for





the day. After breakfast, it was off to the loft for yoga class with Director Laurie Hostetler. An herbal tea break and two body treatments completed the morning program. Specialized treatments include the Holistic Microdermabrasion Facial and the Citrus Exfoliation Massage. A returning guest says: "I've had massages all over the world and this was the best ever." At this teaching spa, there's an emphasis on learning to make simple changes in your life to reduce stress, improve nutrition and regain energy.

I found generous personal time in the afternoon schedule to nap, read or take a walk along the Maumee River. A late afternoon exercise class preceded a candlelight dinner served in the dining room with a different antique table setting each evening of our stay. For final relaxation, guests head downstairs to the sauna and whirlpool. Five-day, three-day and weekend programs are offered.

Peter Lehmann *Clancy's Red* 2006 Peter Lehmann *Layers White* 2009

Col. William Light, South Australia's first surveyor-general and Adelaide's farsighted planner discovered the Barossa Valley in 1837. He named it Barossa because it reminded him of the country in Spain where he had fought the Battle of Barossa during the Peninsula Wars against Napoleon.

In 1979, a young, ambitious winemaker named Peter Lehmann found some investment partners, established a consortium and built Peter Lehmann Wines in the heart of Barossa. Initially, the winery facility was built to process fruit purchased from the local growers. Carefully and strategically, the Peter Lehmann Wines operation moved on from the bulk wine market to become a producer of premium bottled wines with a well-deserved international reputation, including the two Lehmann classics featured here.

Peter Lehmann Clancy's blend has become a true superstar with lovers of red wine around the world, and Wine Spectator has selected Clancy's in its prestigious Top 100 Wines of the Year list on no fewer than four occasions since 1997. He follows the pioneering Australian tradition of blending Shiraz with Cabernet Sauvignon, but gives it his own touch with the incorporation of Merlot to give a soft approachable and richly enjoyable red wine. Robust and full-bodied, it shows delicious, dark velvet fruit on the palate, lending itself to pairings such as T-bone steaks, lamb kabobs and classic spaghetti with meatballs.

Layers White is a true gem that hits on all levels—great aromatics, mouth-feel, flavors, acidity and balance. Crafted to illustrate Peter's belief that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, this wine is a blend of five grape varieties picked from different vineyards throughout the Adelaide Hills. So crisp and vibrant, with flavors of peach, citrus, candy, banana, marshmallows and honeydew coating your palate. A great complement to the diverse textures and elements of modern fusion cuisine, such as ceviche and sushi, plus a fantastic alternative white for your Easter feast.

Both wines retail for around \$16 and can be found at West Point Market, Mustard Seed, Riverside Wine and Imports, Papa Joe's, Wine Reserve of Medina, Buhler's, Acme and other fine wine retailers throughout the area.

—Rick Rodger,
Heidelberg Distributing Co.

