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## *Beyond Valentine's Tokens: The Mayflower Spa as Cupid*

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WASHINGTON—Any excuse to get to the Mayflower Inn & Spa is a good one, but rekindling the romance in your relationship might be the most important. A stay during one of the designated Destination



**The pool at the Mayflower Inn & Spa.**

Spa weeks for couples will exercise your physical and spiritual sides and prove that igniting old sparks is as much about fulfilling your own needs as it is spending time together. When the getaway is through, what you have learned lasts longer than the temporary suture Valentine's Day roses offer.

Watching your partner experience something new, charming couples you just met and indulging in relaxation will change your perspective on your relationship. As you unwind and take time for yourself, you'll begin to remember your romance as it was at the beginning, reconnecting with feelings that never changed, but might have gone ignored with the responsibilities that pile onto a relationship.

"On a plane you are told to put your own oxygen mask on first," said Lisa Hedley, referring to the emergency videos airlines play that instruct passengers to put on their own masks before helping others. The

same rule applies to relationships, she said.

Ms. Hedley and her parents, Robert and Adriana Mnuchin, opened the 20,000-square-foot Spa House in June 2006 and have established their commitment to spiritual and physical well being so well that the Mayflower was named the number one spa in America by Travel+Leisure magazine and Good Morning America. The inspiration for the spa came from the 58-acre property's history of having therapeutic benefits: the land was a ritual healing ground for the Wyanokes tribe whose Chief Waramaug frequented the pond there to benefit his health.

### **Getting Started**

When you book your stay a personal spa adviser will call each of you to conduct a "Blue Heron Insights" interview to determine what your goals and needs are during your stay. The name derives from the reverence local American Indians had for the bird's serene elegance and power, and their use of the blue heron as a symbol of self-realization. Our interviews showed that we needed stress relief, though programs can be tailored for everything from weight loss to sex therapy.

The rejuvenation began upon arrival when we were transported by the physical surroundings. The grounds are manicured perfectly for quiet evening strolls, and the nearby Steep Rock Reserve is wild enough for vigorous hikes. Luxurious rooms and suites inspired by classic New England style connect you to the history of the landscape and remind you that you are in Connecticut and not in a far-off corner of the world. The six rooms at the Allerton house (two of which are suites) are the ideal choice for a destination week because they are conveniently

located next to Spa House.

White marble, bleached wood and large windows make for a breezy spa setting with a décor that is classic without being an homage and modern without the threat of becoming dated. Handblown glass puddles and white orbs by Timothy Hochstetter, whose studio is in Washington, are tucked into lit alcoves and will make you pause to consider their inherent serenity.

Forgoing street clothes for the salmon-colored women's leisure wear and men's gray sweatsuit, and tucking away your wallet help you leave behind the grime of the material world. At the Mayflower, booking a destination week gives you passage to all of the treatments and classes you want, a simplification of process that helps transport you from the knots of urban and suburban chaos to a personal sanctuary.

#### **A New Perspective**

Sound Therapy with Alice Violet Richard introduced my husband, Tim, and I to the healing powers of antique Tibetan bowls, drumming and tuning forks. Without much timidity, Tim helped redirect my chakras—the seven energy sources aligned on the spine and through the top of the head—by changing the vibrations around me using his voice. His froglike bellow made me laugh, but I was floored by how willing he was to exploring something new and outside of our knowledge base. Taking the class with him reminded me of the qualities I liked most about him when we met—his ability to charm a room of strangers and have a fearless attitude about life.

#### **Work in Progress**

Only a few hours after our arrival we took a stretch-and-release class before dinner. In spite of an exercise routine that regularly gets sidelined by work, I found myself little prepared for the simplest of yoga exercises—breathing. When I entered the Downward Facing Dog pose, blood rushed through my limbs and I needed prompting to exhale. I had flashes of myself at my desk, holding my breath until my body forced it out, too

stressed to maintain a normal breathing pattern. I wondered how long I had been holding my breath.

During the Mayflower Yoga for Flexibility class with Natasha Raymond, I started to feel empowered.



**The Garden Room, where spa goers relax between treatments.**

Already more limber than when I arrived, Ms. Raymond made me feel comfortable, offering targeted tips. Focusing on my breathing, my stress level decreased, my head cleared and I was able to relax.

Some alone time in the Thermal Sanctuary helped me realize that for the first time in a while, my head was not racing. A Moor Mud

Wrap and a session of cranio-sacral therapy left me with clear sinuses and silky smooth skin. My new calm softened the lines on my face. I felt prettier, even taller.

#### **Service that Transports Guests**

The daily morning constitutional walk and our guided hike were cancelled due to rainstorms. When Tim and I descended on the gym and bumped into Ms. Raymond, she offered to hold a flexibility class so we could benefit from more instruction.

During Tim's Gentleman's Facial, he received hand and scalp massages while his masks settled. And at lunch, the nutritionist, Cheryl Zekala, offered us personal advice for maintaining good nutrition in spite of work schedules that have us coming home exhausted and at late hours. Everyone we encountered at the Mayflower made us feel like the spa was our own.

#### **Life After**

Experiencing each other's personal paths toward relaxation gave us an appreciation of our individual needs for managing stress, which diverge more often than not. To aid our relaxation, we have invested in the Red Flower products featured at the spa to cast the soothing scent in our home and are already planning our next trip to the Mayflower. The biggest lesson of all—we remember to breathe.

For more information, including on Valentine's Day packages, call 860-868-9466 or visit the Web site, [www.mayflowerinn.com](http://www.mayflowerinn.com).