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For investment information contact:

Glenn Fawcett
President,
e-mail: gawcett@vinequest.com
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The Crane Resort on world-famous Crane Beach — St. Philip Parish, Barbados, West Indies
Photographer: Connie Ekelund

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Editorial

Editor
Connie Ekelund | Connie@FusionPublishingInc.com

Editorial Assistant – Copy & Research
Cait Wills | Cait@FusionPublishingInc.com
Christie Smith | Christie@FusionPublishingInc.com

Editorial Assistant – Final Proofing
Anya Levykh | Anya@FusionPublishingInc.com

Contributing Editors
Gael Arthur | Gael@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Dave Chalk | Dave@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Catherine Dunwoody | Catherine@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Adrian Mastracci | Adrian@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Jonni O'Connor | Jonni@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Steven Threndyle | Steven@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Sandra Tonn | Sandra@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Debbie Travis | Debbie@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
Tony Whitney | Tony@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com

Art Director & Production

Layout Artist
Aitan Roubini | Aitan@FusionPublishingInc.com

Photography

Staff Photographer
Connie Ekelund | Connie@FusionPublishingInc.com

Circulation & Distribution

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Subscriptions

Subscribe to Good Life Connoisseur Magazine:
1 888 925-0313 Extension 1001

info@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com
www@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com

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Publishers

Publisher

Terry Tremaine | Terry@FusionPublishingInc.com

Associate Publisher

Connie Ekelund | Connie@FusionPublishingInc.com

Advertising

Advertising Inquiries

Terry Tremaine | Terry@FusionPublishingInc.com

Sales Representatives

Canada

Maureen O'Brien | Maureen@FusionPublishingInc.com

Alberta

Paul Ritchie | Paul@FusionPublishingInc.com

Golf & Tourism

Rick McMorran | Rick@FusionPublishingInc.com

Texas

Donald W. Moeller | DonM@GoodLifeConnoisseur.com

Marketing

National Marketing Group

Synergy CMC | info@Synergy-CMC.com

Published by Fusion Publishing Inc.

Canadian Office

Fusion Publishing Inc.
#317 - 1489 Marine Dr.
West Vancouver, BC
Canada V7T 1B8
1 888 925-0313 (Toll Free)

USA Office

Fusion Publishing Inc.
#1537 - 145 Tyee Dr.
Pt. Roberts, WA
USA 98281-9602
1 888 925-0313 (Toll Free)

info@FusionPublishingInc.com
www.FusionPublishingInc.com



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Operation Rainbow Canada is a private, all volunteer, non-profit medical services organization, which functions without paid staff and provides free reconstructive surgery and related health care for cleft lip and cleft palate deformities to needy children and young adults in developing countries.



This publication provides us with the opportunity to travel more than most. As a result, many times we're asked, what's your favourite destination? Often the question comes from an individual seeking an indication of how his home is going to be presented to our readers. Other times it's simply someone looking for a shortcut to Nirvana. The response is always the same — "the next one." Life is short and the world, though small due to technology, is large in the number of destinations. To be able to see them all is truly a challenge, so why would you repeat?

Why indeed. Until you get to Barbados. It is a destination we would list for a repeat visit. Whenever we go somewhere there is always enthusiasm due to novelty. We always ask ourselves, "Could we live here?" Then we start investigating the real estate market. Since we live in one of the most highly regarded cities in the world, it's not surprising that once back home again, we settle down. Planning the next trip soon pushes the last from our minds. But Barbados has managed to maintain a hold.

Next on our agenda is Hong Kong and Macau. Though we've spent some time in South East Asia, surprisingly, we've never stepped foot in Hong Kong. Taiwan has always been our connecting point for other centres. So I'm looking forward to being shown this very dynamic city. Additionally, Macau has become the gambling Mecca for both big spenders and big-spending casino operators.

Even getting there should be interesting, as we're going to be checking out the new airline, Oasis. At one time, air travel was fun and cabin staff made it a pleasure. We look forward to a cabin with one of the largest business classes. Don't be left out, fill in the reservation form opposite.

More often than not publishers use this space to draw attention to the other journalists on the team and the contribution they've made to the current issue. For the most part we've always felt that the words would speak for themselves. As we strive to publish the best magazine we can, we go to great lengths to seek out journalists with the experience and talent to make our publication a good read. We have some of the most prominent names in the industry, each a specialist in his field. Now we've added one more — Debbie Travis' byline will grace the House and Home column as a regular contributor.

We hope you enjoy. Comments are welcome.

Terry Tremaine
Publisher
terry@fusionpublishinginc.com

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The Authentic Caribbean - Barbados

By Terry Tremaine

Photos by Connie Ekelund



Bathsheba on the east coast in St Joseph Parish

One Bajan, as Barbadians call themselves, with a huge smile, described Barbados as a small piece of heaven which fell to earth. It's certainly hard to disagree with him. The island has all the natural elements required of a tropical paradise—lush vegetation, gorgeous sandy beaches, warm crystal-clear waters home to coral reefs chock full of marine life, and, most importantly, friendly, welcoming people.

Unlike most tropical islands, Barbados was not formed as the result of volcanic activity but rather, of a shift in Tectonic plates pushing land up above the water. The island is comprised of coral, which acts as a natural water filter, cleaning the drinking water of any contaminants. The most eastern of the Caribbean islands, Barbados actually sits in the Atlantic Ocean, happily outside of the principal hurricane belt.

Being far removed from the other islands claimed by the Spanish, French and Dutch, and thereby outside the fray of military excursions, Barbados was accidentally discovered by the British in the 1600's. Because of its remoteness, Barbados has a long history of stability. According to the UN Human Development Index, Barbados ranks third in the Americas, just behind Canada and the United States. Bajans have one of the highest literacy rates and are remarkably well-educated, resulting in relatively high incomes.

Barbados is 430 square kilometres with a population of approximately 270,000 people — every one of whom seems to own a car. Traffic congestion is common, but drivers tend to be patient and remain polite. Although the sound of car horns is always apparent, for the most part it's a way of saying 'hello' to passing friends. Since everyone seems to know everyone else, the sound of horns is ongoing.

For instance, Patrick, our driver, seemed to be known by every person we met. Each told a tale regarding some aspect of his life; all of it positive, mind you. So, of course, whenever we were on the road it seemed every second car was saying 'hello' with the horn. Add in all the other horn greetings going on and it becomes a regular serenade.

This relatively flat island is divided into 11 parishes with roads criss-crossing in all directions. The west coast, with calm warm waters, is home to the vast majority of the hotel and resort facilities; while the east coast is known for its waves. Each November, picturesque Bathsheba, located on the east coast in St. Joseph Parish, hosts an international surf competition with local Bajans taking on the best surfers from around the world.

The interior of the island tends to be agricultural, with sugarcane being the dominant crop. As a direct result rum distillers are prominent. The oldest rum distiller in the world is Mount Gay Rum, founded in 1703 in St. Michael Parish. Tours of the distillery are encouraged — with tastings of course. As a result, we've come to enjoy the Mount Gay Extra Old Rum. Straight or on the rocks, it competes admirably with some of the better cognacs.

Rum shops are part of the culture. They offer fast local food and rum. Locals regard them much as the British regard their pubs, places to while away time chatting with friends.

Maybe it's the rum, but one prominent architect, to the amazement and support of his family, has taken on the daunting task of restoring St. Nicholas Abbey, in St. Peter Parish. Built in 1650, this Jacobean mansion is one of only three existing in the Western hemisphere. The plantation and buildings have remained much as they were for the previous three centuries. The residence and some of the outbuildings are now open to the public. The plantation supports a cottage industry in sugar, including, of course, the hand bottling of unique blends of rum. We succumbed to the opportunity of owning a bottle of eight-year-old single blend St. Nicholas Abbey Rum, engraved with our name. The question arises: what event will warrant opening the bottle?

An excursion to St. John Parish reveals a surprise find — Orchid World. Opened in 1998, the garden sits on one of the higher points of the island and experiences a high rainfall with an annual rate of some 200 centimetres. The collection of orchid varieties is remarkable. Prior to our visit, we were unaware of the variety of conditions required by different species of orchids: some direct sunlight, others shade, some wet and others dry. Finding scented orchids was truly novel.

Continuing on to St. Michael Parish, we find the popular tourist attraction, Atlantis Submarines. Operating out of Bridgetown Harbour, this company offers the opportunity to descend some 150 feet past coral reefs teeming with fish, to a wreck sitting on the bottom of the ocean. As with all the tourist operations we experienced in Barbados, this was most professionally run.

Also operating out of Bridgetown Harbour is Tiami Catamaran Cruises. We sailed up the coast to an area where we could swim with sea turtles quite used to the experience. Some of the turtles were surprisingly large and had no qualms about being in very close proximity to, and even brushing up against, the swimmers. They are likely used to handouts. This was followed with a surprisingly good shipboard lunch, then it was on to snorkelling.



Orchid World



St. Nicholas Abbey



Swimming with the turtles



TRAVEL & RESORTS



Sandy Lane - Luxury Golf and Spa Resort at St James Parish in Barbados



For a truly luxurious experience, stop by the renowned Sandy Lane, where Tiger Woods and his bride got married. This luxury golf resort, located in St. James Parish, was first built in 1961. Sandy Lane has a history of pampering luminaries. The current owners purchased the property in 1996 and proceeded to level the original building. They completed a multi-million-dollar rebuild in 2001. According to the general manager, the expense will not be recouped, and guests should actually consider their stays subsidized by the owners.

The 112-room resort is set in a mahogany grove overlooking a gorgeous crescent of beach on Barbados' western coast. Rooms are spacious and very well-furnished, including all the latest electronics — even control panels on each side of the bed regulating nearly everything in the room including the drapes. Sandy Lane offers the best in comfort, luxury and service.

The resort boasts two Tom Fazio-designed 18-hole golf courses and the original Old Nine golf course. The Green Monkey course has very limited tee-off times, as the owners like to keep that course to themselves. Caddies are mandatory. Our caddy, Bryan, has been working the course for 27 years. As a result, he knows the course intimately and was able to provide remarkable guidance on how to approach each hole — even to the lie of each green. We ended up wishing we'd followed his directions a little better.

The new Spa at Sandy Lane is very large with 14 deluxe treatment suites (several with private gardens), hydrotherapy and jet blitz rooms, a crystal laconium steam room, an ice cave, hydrotherapy pool and John Frieda hair salon.

Once having spent some time at Sandy Lane, it's easy to understand its reputation as one of the finest resorts in the world. The occupancy rate runs 90%. If booking over the Christmas period a minimum stay of 14 days is required with a daily rate of about \$4,000.



For a taste of island history, visit The Crane in St. Philip Parish. It's the largest resort property on the island and the oldest operating hotel in the Caribbean. The property sits on a cliff overlooking the pink sand of the very beautiful Crane Beach. The name came from the crane which once raised cargo from ships below. Part of a private mansion built in 1790, it became established as a hotel in 1887 and has now been transformed from a very small property on the south-east coast of Barbados into a first-class luxury resort.

Visitors to the Crane can book two different types of accommodation: the 1887 Resort Apartments, housed in the original historic hotel, or the property's new suites. The new suites are offered in a fractional ownership plan and therefore are very large, with all the amenities one would expect in a luxury apartment.

A pleasant surprise was the Zen restaurant at the Crane. Offering classic Thai and Japanese cuisine, the centrepiece of the restaurant is a sushi bar overlooking the ocean 50 feet below.

The Crane Resort and Residence, St. Philip Parish



The Coral Reef Club, in St. James Parish, is on a decidedly different scale. For nearly 50 years the O’Hara family has offered the property’s hospitality. Budge O’Hara arrived with his wife of two days to manage the property in 1956. Every year they built a few more cottages until 1965, when they stopped at 75 rooms. Their children own the property today and in the late ’90s undertook a tremendous upgrade.

Set amongst acres of lush gardens, each room has been individually designed for comfort and privacy. The open-air restaurant overlooks the beach. It’s no surprise the warmth of the property encourages many repeat visits.

The 140-room Accra Beach Resort, in Christchurch Parish, has recently added a completely new wing offering large rooms with quality amenities. With its lovely sandy beach, the warm Caribbean waters are a very short walk from your room. Along with the new wing came a spa; the therapist who worked on us certainly knew his stuff.

The only Polynesian restaurant in Barbados is found at the Accra. When the general manager first arrived at the property some ten years ago, he discovered some empty storage space which he felt could be better used. Inspired by the Polynesian Trader Vicks during his time in Vancouver as a student, the empty space became a quality restaurant.



Accra Beach Resort, in Christchurch Parish



Above: An original power source for one of the island's distilleries.
Right: Oisten's Fish Market.
Below: The Fisherman's Pub.



“The island is comprised of coral, which acts as a natural water filter, cleaning the drinking water of any contaminants.”



Not far from the Accra, in Christchurch, is the place to be on Friday nights— Oisten’s Fish Market. The government provides cooking shacks for a modest rent and local entrepreneurs cook up a feast of fresh caught fish, competing amongst themselves to attract the greatest number of patrons. Flying fish is the national dish — accompanied with rum, of course.

With Caribbean music blaring, locals in their finest strut their stuff. Everyone comes to mingle with families in tow. Later in the evening it’s the dancing that takes over.

When we asked our driver, Patrick, why only Friday nights, he said that none of the regular restaurants would be able to compete otherwise. When we visited, Oisten’s was in temporary quarters while a new improved facility was under construction, a joint venture between the Chinese and Barbadian governments.

Barbados has been an independent state in the British Commonwealth since 1966. Bridgetown is home to the Parliament Buildings and the centre for duty-free shopping. It’s a bustling area, clean, with a prosperous feel and lots of shops and restaurants. Congestion is a bit of an issue during the morning rush hour and late afternoon when the schools get out. But the prices are right and the people very friendly.

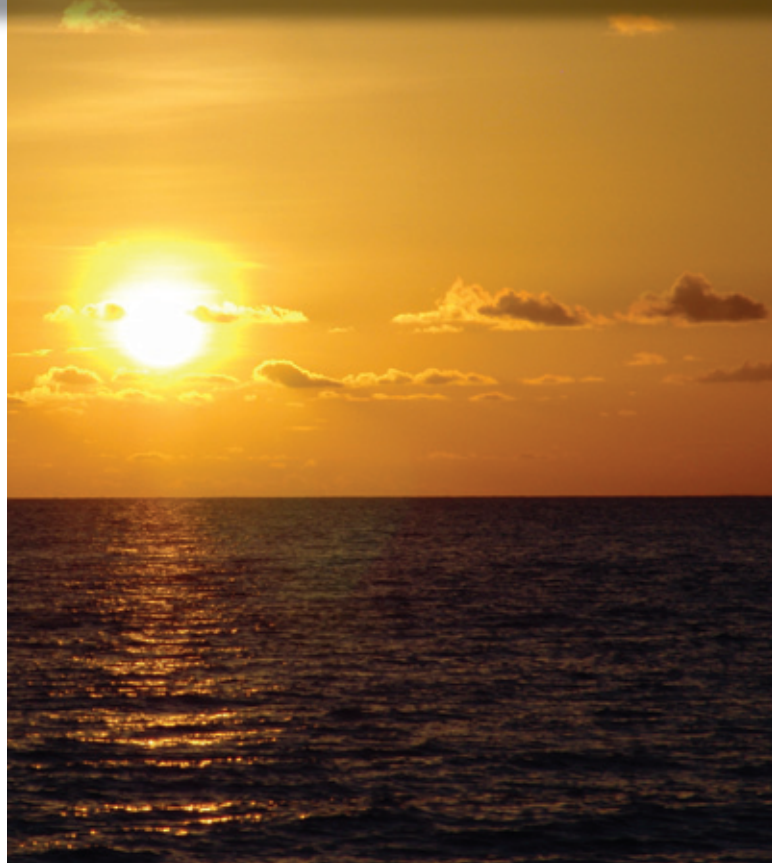
Barbados is included in the Zagat Survey. Restaurants are very plentiful generally with reasonable wine lists, which include selections from both the New and Old Worlds. St. Lawrence Gap in Christchurch appeared to be the area for those in the know, with a number of quality establishments, including long-established Pisces.

The Cliff, near Sandy Lane, is one of the most highly rated, and is considered to be one of the best in the world. A little further south is the Calabaza — again highly rated in the Zagat Survey. We suggest that if you were to set a goal of eating in a different restaurant for each lunch and dinner with the criteria to include a gorgeous beachfront view, home would likely beckon before a repeat would occur.

Real estate offerings cater to those with second or third homes in mind — with pricing competitive. One project that struck our fancy, because of its beautiful setting and marina, was Port St. Charles. With its own customs office, yacht owners are able to head directly to moorage in front of their vacation villa. But there would appear to be numerous developers catering to those seeking that idyllic island retreat. Eugene Melnyk, owner of the Ottawa Senators, is one of the more prominent Canadian residents, and Tiger Woods has property in the new development at Sandy Lane.



Clockwise from above: View from St. Philip Parish; Beach on the North Coast.



Arrival through Grantley Adams International Airport was relatively trouble-free. The line-ups were modest and the customs officers friendly and accommodating. There was a general feel of 'welcome to the island.' Efficiency was the watchword both coming and going, with the need for security measures not overcoming good sense.

Considering the distance, it's surprising that visitors from Britain and the rest of Europe come in greater numbers than the near-by Americans. Canadians are in third place. However, the Canadian presence is apparent, and a number of the big five banks have numerous branches around the island. Apparently, many Bajans attend Canadian universities. The Canadian government provides support, and when the island was looking for livestock, it was Canadian cattle that were imported. Numerous times we heard of the special relationship Barbados and Canada have, exemplified by the long-standing reciprocal tax treaty.

During dinner with the manager of the Accra, who is heavily involved with the tourist industry in addition to his own property, his view of Barbados pretty much summed up our impression. To quote: "Barbados is safe. You can go anywhere and be welcome." Things work — the phones, the internet...whatever. The standard of living is good. People are generally happy. Like himself, they come back home after school abroad. And it's beautiful! ■

Connoisseur's Choice in Barbados

Sandy Lane

St. James, Barbados, West Indies
1 246 444-2000
www.sandylane.com

The Crane Resort & Residences

St. Phillip, Barbados, West Indies
1 246 423-6220
www.thecrane.com

Coral Reef Club

St. James, Barbados, West Indies
1 246 422-2372
www.coralreefbarbados.com

Accra Beach Hotel & Resort

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Under the Aurora Borealis

By Terry Tremaine

Photos by Connie Ekelund & James Gill



“We took a dog sled ride to a luxury tent set up on the opposite shore of the lake...furnished with a comfortable bed, Persian rugs, potpourri, and its own stove to keep us warm.”

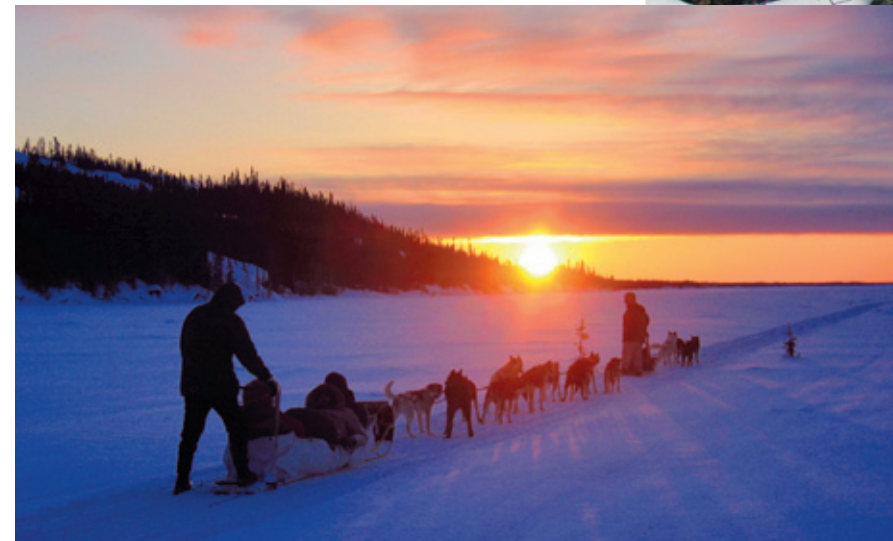
Yellowknife, located in the Northwest Territories, has a population base of some 20,000 seemingly eclectic residents. During the months of November through February this is matched by 20,000 Japanese tourists, principally couples, looking to conceive under the light of the Aurora Borealis. Apparently, a child conceived under these rays will be superior.

This belief contrasts sharply with that of the first residents of this land, whose feelings about the light show could best be described as trepidatious. No matter. A trip to Yellowknife at this time of year is a truly unique experience. My first reaction as we approached the airport was surprise. I had the mistaken perception that we would be above the tree line.

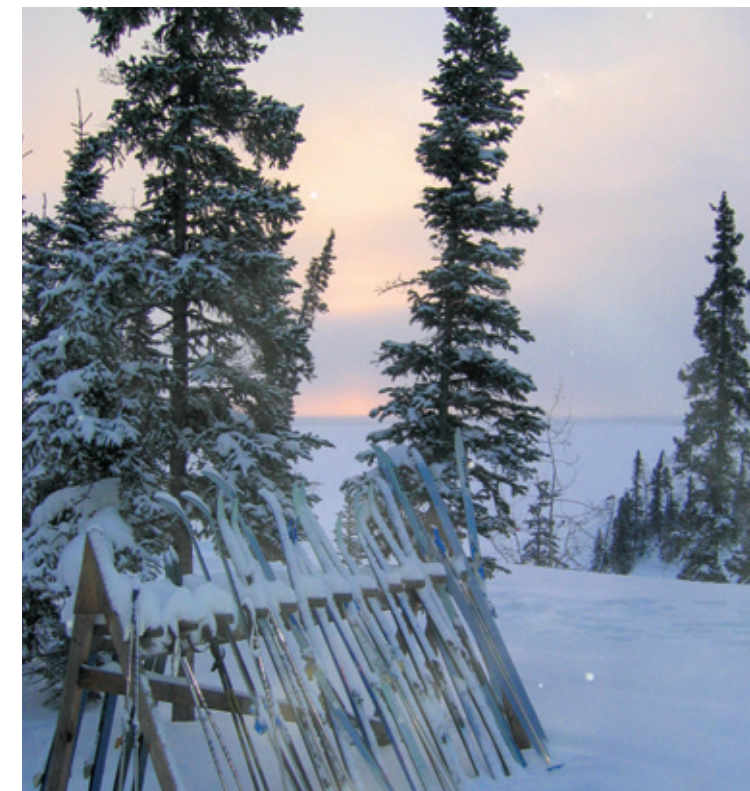
The reality is very different. Instead of barren wasteland we saw endless forest surrounding numerous lakes. Of course the lakes were frozen and snow covered everything. But upon landing, we found the snow wasn't that deep. The climate is actually rather dry, with limited snowfall in winter and similarly modest rainfall in summer.

Our first stop prior to exploring the city was The Explorer Hotel. Experiencing the wonders of northern Canada doesn't mean roughing it when you stay at this premier full-service hotel. With 127 rooms, The Explorer Hotel is also the largest in the Northwest Territories, located at the entrance to the City of Yellowknife. The hotel has been a prominent landmark for over 30 years. A phased \$3.5 million upgrade and renovation of the hotel was completed in December 2005.

Founded during the Gold Rush, Yellowknife retains remnants of that period with streets such as “Ragged Ass.” Modest one-room houses line the old streets. Now the town is growing based on the diamond mines, and the new homes are certainly not modest, though most sit above ground due to the frost and rock. There are a number of surprisingly good restaurants, as well as an abundance of fast food franchises. The latter are some of the most prosperous in the country as a result of northern residents visiting the city to try a Big Mac, and maybe bring some home to the family. The town borders Great Slave Lake, where a float home community is located.



Blachford Lake Lodge



Float home residents have to be prepared for unusual conditions as the lake freezes and the homes rise above the ice — not always producing level floors. One enterprising resident builds an imposing ice castle each year on the ice near his float home. His reputation was made when in the summer months he built an underwater footpath to his home from the shore enabling him to walk home in hip-waders.

The frozen lake is also the highway for cargo trucks hauling freight. It was interesting to note that the ice road has a right angle turn near the shore line. This is in place to reduce the under-ice wave produced by the heavy trucks — an ice wave which might cause a breakup. There is similar potential when two trucks meet. Drivers actually keep their door ajar to ensure their ability to jump should their truck go through the ice.

From Yellowknife, we took a float plane (equipped with skis) to Blachford Lake Lodge. Blachford began as a single cabin over twenty years ago. The cabin still remains and is a piece of ‘living history’ at Blachford. There is a spacious new, environmentally friendly, post-and-beam log main lodge with accommodations for 38, and five rustic, but comfortable, log cabins. Guests can enjoy the sauna and outdoor Jacuzzi. Blachford brings you back to a simpler time, and the gourmet-cooked meals boast a northern flavour. Blachford Lake Lodge sits at the west end of remote 17-kilometer long Blachford Lake, just north of the east arm of Great Slave Lake.



Tee Pee at Blachford Lodge

Walking along the natural trail behind the lodge, the only sound being the crunching of the snow beneath our boots, the isolation felt almost overpowering. That feeling was even more prominent after we took a dog sled ride to a luxury tent set up on the opposite shore of the lake. Even though the tent was a pleasure to be in, furnished with a comfortable bed, Persian rugs, potpourri, and its own stove to keep us warm, we certainly looked for reassurance that our dog team would be there to take us back the next morning. There was absolutely nothing here other than Mother Nature.

The dog sled ride was an experience in itself. First off, the dogs don't necessarily look like Huskies. They actually look more like mutts, but they certainly enjoy the work and the run. The musher has his work cut out for him as each dog has to be reminded to follow the lead dog every minute or so. They seem easily distracted by the different scents that cross their path. The same goes for the lead dog. For us, wrapped up together on the sled, the sounds were of the runners on snow, and the individual commands by name shouted to the dogs. In front we saw the dogs looking around, pulling hard — all seemingly with smiles on their face. This beats a ski-doo any day.

As capital cities go, few can compare with Yellowknife, an amazing metropolis in the middle of Canada's Far North. The people who make up the community are a diverse lot and definitely have a different view of the world. This is a necessity in the middle of the winter when there is no daylight, or in the middle of the summer when there is no night. Living here would not be everyone's choice. But the opportunity to be able to experience the true outdoors for just a little while is a very humble feeling. ■





Lifestyle Collecting

Design a wine cellar to match your personal style

THE THEME CELLAR

The theme cellar is the expression of a collector who has developed a refined sense of personal taste in wine – a cellar designed to deliver time-tested favorites again and again. Think of the wines you most enjoy: Your cellar could be organized around a particular appellation, such as Napa Valley; or by country, with an exciting representation of Australian wines such as those featured here; or perhaps simply by varietal. The result is usually a collection that is deeper than it is broad. A theme cellar may also cater to your taste in food, which is why the wine lists of many fine restaurants fall in to this category.

OUR BALANCED CELLAR RECOMMENDATIONS

PENFOLDS BIN 407 CABERNET SAUVIGNON 2003
A blend of Barossa and McLaren Vale Cabernet provides both structure and robust flavors. The debut Bin 407, from the superb 1990 vintage, was released in 1993.
www.penfolds.com *Drink now → 2012*

MORE THEME CELLAR SUGGESTIONS

<p>ROSEMOUNT SHOW RESERVE CABERNET SAUVIGNON</p> <p>Medium bodied with blackberry & bramble fruit flavours that develop notes of chocolate & subtle nutty oak with a swirl of the glass. Savoury & grainy, mouthfilling tannins & a long, balanced finish. <i>Drink now → 2020</i></p> 	<p>LINDEMAN'S RESERVE PADTHAWAY SHIRAZ</p> <p>A medium bodied wine, showing generous, sweet mulberry fruit and vanillin oak. The finish has fine tannins and a great length of fruit flavour. <i>Drink now → 2010</i></p> 	<p>PENFOLDS BIN 389 CABERNET SHIRAZ</p> <p>Complete, rich and mouth-filling, easily handling the prominent tannins and new oak. This is a solid BIN 389 offering from the 2003 vintage, with medium term cellaring recommended. <i>Drink now → 2015</i></p> 	<p>WOLF BLASS PREMIUM SELECTION SHIRAZ</p> <p>Intense aromas of spiced fruit, chocolate oak characters with a hint of pepper. These characters are again evident on the palate with sweet fruit & excellent structure. A long & lingering finish from fine-grained tannins. <i>Drink now → 2010</i></p> 	<p>WYNNS COONAWARRA ESTATE CABERNET SAUVIGNON</p> <p>A medium bodied, succulent wine, well balanced with moderate alcohol & a lingering finish; complemented by well integrated, lightly toasted oak & pleasant, firm, tannin backbone. <i>Drink now → 2015</i></p> 
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www.rosemount.com

www.lindemans.com

www.penfolds.com

www.wolfblass.com

www.wynnswiners.com



Holiday-Worthy Premium Brands

The Best in Premium Gift Giving

by Gael Arthur

As the days shorten, the number of invitations to social and work events seem to increase exponentially, right along with the number of personal tasks that have to be accomplished. For some strange reason, the work projects requiring a concerted push also seem to peak at this time of year. While it may feel as though there is a carefully planned conspiracy to keep you from getting enough sleep, don't take it personally: look around and you will realize we are all in the same boat. It is as though we are all at a gourmet buffet, plates overloaded with foie gras and chocolate truffles. Balance? What's that?

It's a time to embrace the silliness, recognize that all the work won't get done, and simply accept that third invitation for the same evening. What better way to get into the holiday spirit than with some premium spirits? It's easy to update some of the old standards with cocktails that are showy and tasty.

For me, Grand Marnier used to conjure up thoughts of the after-dinner drink, swirled around in a brandy snifter with a coffee on the side. But while we were off exploring more obscure drinks from less-established countries, Grand Marnier quietly broadened its product line, exhibiting the famous French flair for taking a good idea, building on it and then marketing it in a new way. It's a great example of how you can take a classic and expand its appeal to different ages and consumer profiles.

But, Grand Marnier with lunch? It's an invitation that is too unusual to miss. Grand Marnier's director, Patrick Raguenaud, is moderately surprised to be tasting and extolling the virtues of the range of Grand Marnier products with a savoury meal. He is the kind of guy who spends much of his time travelling around the world, showing up where his agents send him, spreading the word about his products. This time, the venue was Glowbal, a Vancouver restaurant known for taking risks with unusual combinations, and the chef was in his element.

We start with the Paris Martini – a cocktail Patrick immediately latches on to, asking for the recipe to pass along to his friend who happens to be one of the brains behind Hpnotiq, another brilliant marketing success. This cocktail is a keeper.

Paris Martini

- One ounce Hpnotiq
- One ounce Navan
- Two ounces pineapple juice

Navan? It is Grand Marnier's cognac infused with vanilla from Madagascar. It's a drink that will work in a myriad of cocktails, but also works all on its own.

We encounter Navan again at the end of the meal, but before that, the chef lays on an intriguing set of main courses. Three distinctly flavoured dishes, each designed to go with a different Grand Marnier. For the Cuvée du Cent-cinquantenaire (the 150th anniversary cuvée, including special reserves of cognac, aged up to 50 years), the chef has chosen a jumbo tiger prawn with lemon thyme mascarpone risotto. The richness of the dish pairs beautifully with the intense fruit of the Grand Marnier.

Patrick Raguenaud is at least as intrigued as the rest of us, and we quickly move to the second pairing, that of a lightly seared tuna on a bed of couscous à la grecque. The spiciness of the coating on the tuna cuts the sweetness of the aromatic Cuvée du Centenaire, and the acidity of the liqueur lingers on the palate, along with an overwhelming confusion. These liqueurs taste great with savoury foods! The sommelier instructor at our table nails it — it is the salt along with the spice that brings these seemingly disparate concepts together so brilliantly. Bring on the short ribs with the Cuvée Louis Alexandre!

It's a given that these marvellous liqueurs will pair well with dessert, and we almost take for granted the offerings. That is, until we take a bite of the chocolate hazelnut gelato, perfectly paired with the old familiar red-ribboned wax-sealed bottle. And, then, closing the perfect circle, we are back to Navan, this time teaming up with a crème brûlée shot.

Suddenly, a holiday gift presents itself. How easy is this: a bottle each of Navan, Hpnotiq and Grand Marnier, along with a box of dark chocolate hazelnut truffles? For those on a more Spartan budget, a half bottle of Grand Marnier (or even the adorable 200ml bottle) and tin of Illy coffee would be the perfect gift for just about anyone. It is also practical, if you remember that Grand Marnier is an integral ingredient not only of the summer margarita, but also the B52, the cosmopolitan and so many of the so-called martinis that grace the modern cocktail list.

The perfect gift for just about anyone? Well, no, let's be honest. Lots of people don't drink liqueurs at all, finding them too sweet or thinking they are just too far off the decadence scale. For the more conservative in the crowd, it's hard to go wrong with a bottle of whisky. While it sounds boring, there is nothing to say you have to be boring in your selection or your presentation of the water of life.

“Suddenly, a holiday gift presents itself.”

First off, to make the gift special, forego the attractively priced but all too commonplace premium whiskies that have become household names. While Glenlivet, Glenfiddich, Macallan, and Bowmore have brand recognition and are fine whiskies, it is much more interesting to find something a trifle obscure. Reputable retailers will rush to your assistance if they sense that you are serious about your whisky and are looking for something just a little unusual. Along with wine, whisky has achieved almost a cult status in certain circles. Here, peatiness is balanced against the subtle flavours imparted by the barrel (was it aged in a sherry hogshead or a bourbon cask?) and the hues of this liquid gold are expressed in words like straw, honey and amber, each imparting a sense of flavour or aroma along with colour.

Make your gift stand out with a pair of Riedel whisky glasses to go with your bottle. These glasses are bell-shaped, with stubby stems to grasp when “nosing” the whisky. They are small glasses, but big enough to comfortably hold an ounce of whisky, with or without an ice cube, still leaving room for the aromas to drift up into your nose. While purists balk at an ice cube, a little purified water, at whatever temperature you prefer, will bring out an entirely new set of aromas and flavours in the whisky.

Local liquor stores will often have a broad selection of Irish and Scottish labels of varying ages and price ranges.





For the true whisky lover who happens to maintain an American or British mailing address, perhaps the best gift would be a membership in the Scotch Malt Whisky Society (www.smws.com). Membership includes a bottle of rare whisky and access to an amazing selection of small bottlings from distilleries all over Scotland. The Society's Tasting Panel samples casks of whisky and will buy a single cask, aging it at their property in Edinburgh ("The Vaults") until it is ready for bottling.

While the big distilleries work hard to ensure that every glass of whisky sold around the world tastes the same, the true whisky aficionado will revel in the fact that every cask has its own distinctive flavours. With a bottle from the Society, you are assured that there are never more than about 500 bottles of the whisky you choose. How to choose? Well, best to go to Edinburgh and spend a few days at the Vaults, also home to three well-priced flats for visiting members upstairs — probably best to secure the flat before booking the flights. While this may be sounding like a rather extravagant holiday gift, you can get extra value by booking the trip for May or June and combining it with a few rounds of golf at Carnoustie or Gleneagles.

"The best part of this forward planning is what you enjoy at the end of the season."

And finally, there are gifts for the people who don't rate a trip to Scotland or even a gift basket full of liqueurs. Wine is probably the safest, most affordable gift on the market. Since the wines that get top marks from Parker are all sold out as soon as they are reviewed, opt instead for something that shows off your individuality without breaking your budget. Perhaps the most practical approach is to purchase a couple of cases of your favourite special occasion wines, one white and one red. You can wrap them in colour-coded gift bags, and keep them handy both at home and at the office.



When someone arrives with a gift in hand, you are ready. Rather than suffering through the awkward moment of embarrassment that is followed by the guilt of not having thought to buy that person a gift, hand over one of your pre-wrapped bottles without shame or hesitation. If you are quick off the mark, you can embellish your presentation with a casual comment about the wine that links the recipient to the gift ("I know you are always looking for something to complement your Chicken Marbella, so I thought this might do the trick").

The best part of this forward planning is what you enjoy at the end of the season. Chances are there will be a few bottles left over, so when the Visa bill comes in January, grab a bottle and pour yourself a glass of wine before you open the envelope. Congratulate yourself on having made it through another holiday season more or less unscathed. ■

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EVERY GREAT WINE SHOULD LOOK THIS GOOD.

Tackling the Steeps

The Top Steep Ski Mountains in the World

by Steven Threndyle

Whether on skis or a snowboard, when you first started to slide on snow you probably paid a lot of attention to the colour of the trail signs. Like a nervous teenager using a learner's permit, you shied away from freeway-like congestion and gave bumpy off-trail runs a miss, lest you become clumsy cartoon fodder for the next Warren Miller movie.

As a beginner, green dot runs were your friend. No problems there — lots of space to make those shaky first turns. You could even pick up some speed and nothing awful would happen if you caught an edge and crashed.

Feeling more confident and moving to the upper lifts, (beginner runs always seem to be at the bottom, near the ski patrol hut and parked ambulance) blue trails opened up a whole new world. Grooming machines tilled the snow into immaculate swales of corduroy, making it easy to turn on the soft, forgiving surface. Hey, this skiing is pretty easy!

However, as your skills improved, boredom set in. "Sticking to the groomers," as it's called, didn't seem terribly adventurous. On powder days, when the snow fell light and soft, you felt ready for your next challenge — the black diamond runs — the world of so-called advanced skiers. Up in open bowls festooned by downy pillows of softness, the first few turns on a black diamond run certainly seemed challenging — your burning legs told you that — but the adrenaline rush that followed a first-tracks descent left a smile on your face for days afterwards.

By this time, you were on your way to becoming an expert skier — seeking out the 'steep and deep' — and patronizing ski resorts that offered both challenge and plenty of snow. Whether it's narrow, rock-studded couloirs, monstrous white mountain faces, or narrow white lines through dense old-growth forest, the following resorts are legendary. Start your own chairlift discussion (or bar brawl) by debating the merits and minuses of each of the ski destinations mentioned below.

Whistler-Blackcomb, Whistler, British Columbia, Canada

When expert skiers and snowboarders are polled on their favourite place, North America's largest resort almost always comes out on top. Sheer size isn't the only reason; it's the type of terrain Whistler offers up that is the attraction. Starting at the top, there's glacier skiing on the vast expanse of the Blackcomb Glacier, and the almost infinite number of bowls and chutes above the permanent snowfield that funnel into it.

The beauty of Whistler-Blackcomb's alpine (above treeline) terrain is that it is not just death-defying double blacks; few resorts offer a similar opportunity to build up your confidence level by providing a variety of off-piste runs, suitable even for eager intermediates. Last year's opening of the Symphony Amphitheatre — with its very own high-speed express lift — provides access to powder-filled bowls and glades that don't necessarily require quads of steel in order to enjoy.

If stormy weather has socked in the upper lifts and closed them due to lack of visibility or high wind, Whistler-Blackcomb also offers unbelievable tree (glade) skiing on the front side of the mountain. Here, windblown snow piles soft and deep because the storm is stilled by the old-growth cedars and fir trees. The most accessible glades on Blackcomb Mountain can be found on Arthur's Choice, while over on Whistler, the Garbonzo chair services an entire forest of tree-skiing delights.

Whistler is the home base for Extremely Canadian — one of the most highly regarded ski camps for adventurous skiers who want to explore the very best of this vast resort's in-bound and out-of-bounds terrain. Led by long-time Whistler resident Peter Smart, Extremely Canadian tests your limits without exceeding them.

www.whistlerblackcomb.com

www.extremelycanadian.com

Red Mountain Resort, Rossland, British Columbia, Canada

Discovering a hidden gem of a resort that offers great snow, awesome terrain, friendly locals, and doesn't cost an arm and a leg is almost the Holy Grail of skiing. Money doesn't always buy the best experience. Red Mountain is located pretty much in the middle of nowhere — it's a two-hour drive from Spokane, WA (the closest major city) and three hours from Kelowna (where many Canadians fly into).

When they talk about "Old School" skiing, or the way things were in the 'good old days,' they mean a joint like Red. The lifts aren't the fastest — they still use fixed-grip, as opposed to express (high speed) quads. And only a few select trails are groomed; most of 'em over on the Paradise backside.

But what amazing off-piste terrain! Years ago, before new ownership took over and rewrote the lift map, Red was unique in Western Canada as the home to the only triple black diamond trails in Canada. They're still there — "Roots" and "Cambodia" have been downgraded to double blacks, but don't be fooled. This is skiing that's literally on the edge of a cliff. Even the website warns against the 'waterfall' that runs parallel to these two vertiginous chutes.

Most of Red's best runs are over on Granite Mountain. Ask a local to point you in the direction of the 'coolers' (Sample local dialogue: "Like, the coolers are way steep, eh, man??"). Don't be fooled by innocuous names like Beer Belly, either. Each January, Red hosts the Canadian Extreme Freeskiing Championship, a contest that's held just outside of the area. Feel free to sign up; there's a recreational division as well!
www.ski-red.com

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA

There's a cowboy riding a bucking bronco on the Wyoming state license plate, and that's exactly how you'll feel when you arrive at rompin', stompin' Jackson Hole, located in a remote (well, pretty much all of Wyoming is remote) part of the state. For decades, the most challenging run at Jackson has been Corbet's Couloir, a steep, rock studded chute which requires — depending on the snow year — a 20-foot freefall drop before you hit snow. (Locals frequently launch 360s from the lip, stomp the landing, then ski away. Consider yourself lucky to not 'yard sale' down the slope upon touch-down).

Over half of Jackson's 2,700 acres of skiable terrain (in-bounds) is black or double-black territory — one of the highest percentages of any resort in the world. And it gets even better if you hire a guide to ski out-of-bounds. Jackson is one of the very few American resorts with an 'open boundary' policy — the lifts at Jackson can be used to access literally thousands of acres of backcountry skiing including Cody Peak and Cody Bowl. Some of the best action videos have been shot here, since Jackson serves as the headquarters to Teton Gravity Research; a local film company. This film crew can go anywhere they want, yet still come home to Jackson to get mind-boggling powder and 'big air' footage.

The greatest challenge in this area is to attempt 'double stage' landings — essentially, launching over one cliff band onto a small landing area, then keeping up your speed, launching a second cliff and finally landing with all of your bones and ego intact.

Like Whistler, however, there is plenty of acreage for intermediate skiers to enjoy the copious amounts of snow that fall here annually. The Apres Vous portion of the resort offers an entire network of wide open, comfortable trails.

www.jacksonhole.com

Crested Butte Mountain Resort, Crested Butte, Colorado, USA

A case could be made that Crested Butte is the birthplace of extreme skiing in North America, since it's been hosting the United States Extreme Skiing Championships for the past two decades. What makes it truly remarkable is that virtually all of the terrain that is used for the competition is skiable by the weekend warrior who steps up to the lift and pays his \$65 for a lift ticket.

Crested Butte does indeed look like a massive butte that has been geologically sculpted to an arrowhead-like point. From the valley floor, it's an imposing chunk of rock, but not an overly huge one — indeed, only a few of the expert runs start from the top of its craggy summit — most of the on-piste trails are located around the corner and out of sight from the main peak. That said, myriad lines snake through rock-studded chutes on the Headwall, the North Face Wall, and Teocalli Bowl. Either hook up with a local, or pop a few bucks for the Extreme Limits Ski Guide— a fold-out photo map (on water-resistant paper) that details literally dozens of lines not found on the normal map. Actually, buy the map and ski with a local — this is no place to ski alone.

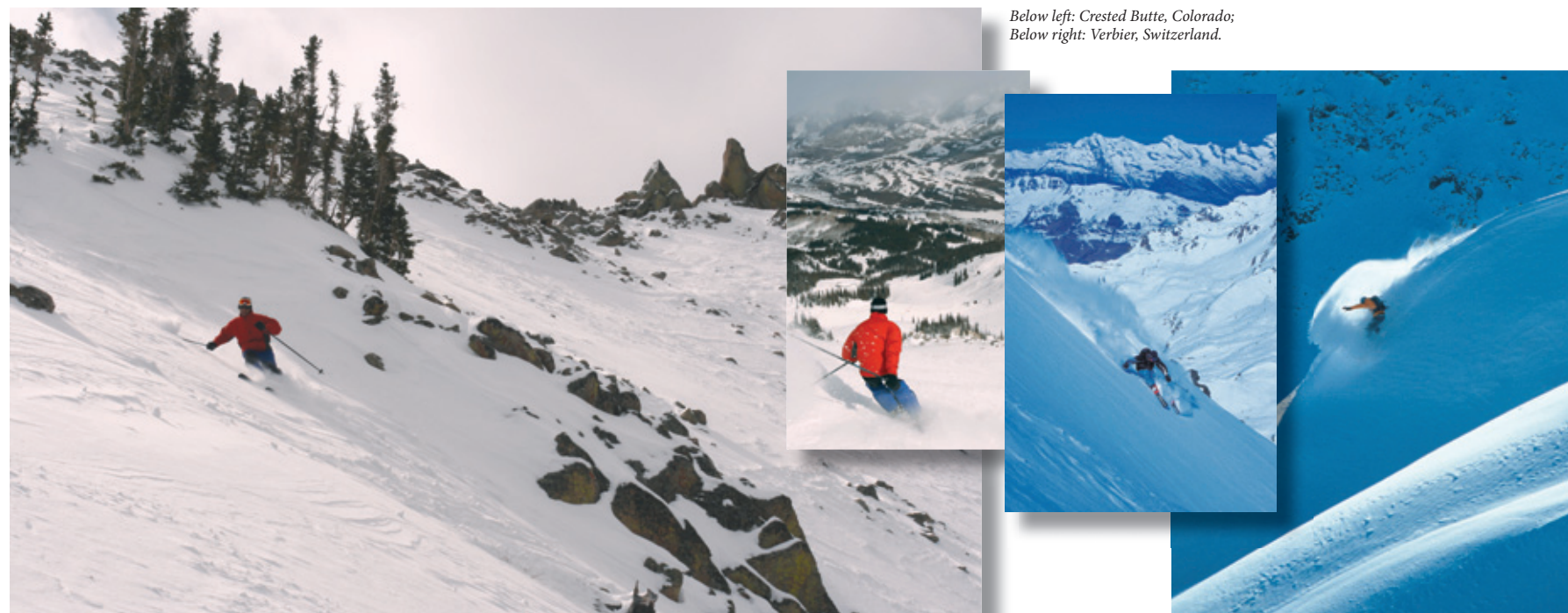
Unlike mellower 'loser cruiser' Colorado resorts, Crested Butte truly draws the daredevils. Note, for instance, the amazing number of free-heeled 'telemark' skiers who are also out there challenging the steeps. Both women and men take their skiing seriously at Crested Butte; locals like Mindy Sturm, Wendy Fisher, and Alison Gannett will go toe-to-toe with the big boys on some of the Butte's gnarliest terrain.

www.skicb.com

Verbier, Switzerland

Nothing less than "The Greatest Skiing in the World" was the boast of this ultra-modern Swiss resort during its heyday in the mid-1980s. Ski bums flocked from all over the globe — Sweden, Norway, Canada, and as far away as Australia and New Zealand — attracted by reliable snowfall, vertical couloirs, and an out-of-bounds environment that lets skiers go wherever they please. Verbier's lift system has taken some knocks in recent years as not being the most modern and swift, but skiers looking for huge challenges know that fast lifts only empty more people onto the slopes, anyway. Splurge the extra money and hire a guide — they'll take you to the steepest terrain for your ability level and won't get you in over your head.

Verbier, Switzerland.



Below left: Crested Butte, Colorado;
Below right: Verbier, Switzerland.

Luckily for intermediate skiers, there is the ‘Four Valleys’ tour that takes most of a day to complete and circumnavigates the main trail system in the Verbier region. (There are 410 kilometres of on-piste trails to explore!) You’ll never ski the same run twice on this superb circuit, nor do you require any mountaineering skills. If you can make heads and tails out of the lift map (not always the easiest thing to do in a place this huge) you can even do it on your own!
www.verbier.ch

Chamonix Valley, France

By the very root prefix, the word “alpine” refers to the Alps, the mountain range where skiing was first popularized in the early part of the 20th century. The Alps reach their crowning moment of beauty and grandeur in Chamonix, which hosted the very first Winter Olympics in 1924.

Though “Mecca” is an overused term in travel writing to describe various places of pilgrimage, Chamonix is truly the top testing ground for steep skiing anywhere in the world. The peaks are so jagged, so mind-boggling in their vertical relief (height above flat ground) and so chock-full of chutes, glaciers, and couloirs, that the first time visitor simply cannot believe his or her eyes. And, given the fact that this is the Alps, all of the terrain you see before your eyes is in play.

The cable car that rises from the centre of town up to the spire-shaped Aiguille du Midi (the ‘middle needle’) is a trip in itself, and takes you to the most famous glacier descent in the world — the Vallée Blanche.

For neophytes to off-piste skiing, the Vallée Blanche is a ‘must do’ — and you must hire a guide to get down the glacier safely. However, stepping it up a notch, the Pas de Chevre over in the adjoining valley of Argentiere offers more challenge and is less crowded. If you’re really on your game and are looking for a shot at immortality, by all means climb up and ski back down the Gervasutti Couloir facing Mont Blanc. But be aware that people have died on this descent (it’s steep enough to be a popular mountaineering route) and guide your behaviour accordingly.

In a more sober moment, check out the climber’s graveyard right in the center of town. The town, with its narrow winding streets, is crammed with hotels, brasseries, and charcuteries. Dreadlocked youth and high-fashion Eurotrash posers mingle with mountain climbers with climbing ropes slung over their shoulders — Chamonix is where devotees of Lonely Planet truly meet the White Planet.

www.chamonix.com ■



Above & left: Verbier, Switzerland.
Below: Chamonix Valley, France.



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Bring the Luxury Hotel Home

Elements of sumptuous holiday living to enjoy year round

by Debbie Travis

I love to travel, and I take every opportunity to see the world. Whether it is a trip planned around work, or a family holiday, or a quiet solo sojourn, visiting cities and countries near and far is a continual source of pleasure and inspiration. The diverse landscapes, a shift in climate, delectable cuisine to explore, all combine to heighten the senses. Letting go of responsibility and taking the time to enjoy another culture is an integral part of the journey. Choosing lodgings that heighten the unique feeling of a place, with staff that treat their guests as special friends, makes the stay most memorable.

Holidays are always too short, and we all would like to bring the intoxicating feeling home with us. Although the scenery and weather are not transportable, there are other elements of your trip that you can replicate. That luxurious, pampered lifestyle is more than simply room service and a chocolate on your pillow. The design of your room, the style of furnishings and linens, the overall ambiance from the moment you pull up with your bags in tow, to sharing a meal al fresco and relaxing in privacy after a day of exploring, is carefully planned to please.

I visited three locales this past summer, and was impressed by how each hotel took full advantage of its surroundings and history. These hotels are luxurious without being ostentatious, and you will discover how you can reinterpret the cosseted look and feeling in your own home.

Note the careful selection of building materials, the hand-hewn furnishings and decorative touches. Pride of craftsmanship inevitably leads to a winning outcome.

Tuscan Light

La Bandita sits high up, amid a 2,000-acre nature reserve that affords magnificent views of Val d'Orcia, its ancient clay hills, rolling pastures and medieval towns. Here, in the breathtaking light and countryside of Italy's beloved Tuscany, the owner, John Voigtmann, transformed a derelict centuries-old farmhouse into a comfortable, contemporary inn using traditional materials in a light-handed manner. Voigtmann eschewed the popular Tuscan interior design aesthetic comprised of brick floors, dark wood, overstuffed furniture and weighty fabrics. Over the centuries, this style, still very visible throughout the area, was meant to combat the hot summers and cold winters. A fresh approach fills the ancient building with glorious light, updating the rooms with luxurious elements that are very much at home.



La Bandita, Italy



White plaster walls, and white travertine marble floors throughout, create a glistening canvas that might read as cold were it not for the brilliant splashes of colour that accent each room. The plummy red wall in the living room creates a dramatic effect. The plaster is tinted before it's applied to the wall so that the colour is rich and lasting. The washed plaster technique creates a feeling of age and history in the newly decorated rooms.

The bathroom shower is clad in a resonant blue tinted plaster that looks, and feels, smooth and clean. An added surprise is the overhead rain shower engineered around a light cube. It creates an ethereal pool of light that's quite magical.

The bedrooms feel spacious and airy, positioned under a high-pitched roof. The four poster bed is a clever design that uses the ingenuity and skills of local craftsmen. Instead of the customary heavy wood pillars, the bed posts are hollow square tubes of terra cotta that wrap around aluminium tubes for strength and stability.

Furniture in La Bandita is built from local wood, mostly chestnut and oak. The design of the chairs and tables is simple and lightweight, painted or stained white. In the main dining area, the terra cotta tubes appear again as table legs. The long back wall that stretches along the dining room into the kitchen is a warm sunny yellow, once again tinted plaster. Diffuse lighting spills down the walls creating a cheerful, comforting glow.

"Indulge yourself with a bathroom renovation that lives up to your dream of the perfect spa space."

Bring it home.

You will always feel pampered by the luxurious look and feel of marble underfoot. Traditionally seen in bathrooms and kitchens, stone floors are appearing in all areas of the home. They can be warmed by carpets in the cool months. You can also have heated floors installed – and that absolutely feels decadent!

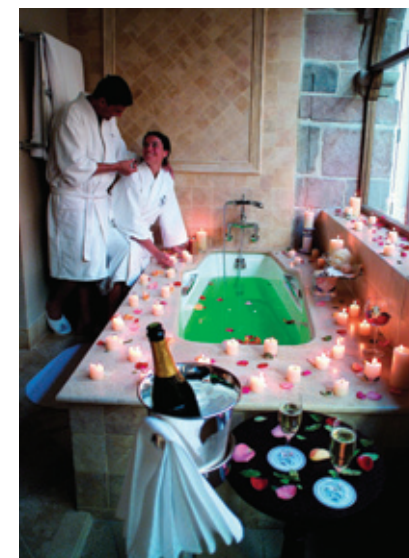
Plaster wall finishes are seldom found in new home builds, and yet nothing can match the special sheen and finish. Plaster can be painted, or as seen in La Bandita, you can tint the plaster. By applying several skim coats in varying shades, a frescoed look is produced that is as elegant or rustic as you choose.

Four poster beds create a regal mood in the bedroom. Choose the fabric to set the style. Pristine white sheers are airy and peaceful, while heavier velvets and brocades are more sensual and dramatic.

Check out the wide range of shower nozzles and finely styled, nickel-plated bathroom hardware. A soaker tub or well-designed shower space offers instant gratification. This private space is a natural for smooth, tactile surfaces.

High Living

For the exhilarating combination of exercise and adventure, my favourite pastime is trekking. When it can be beneficial to a charitable cause, all the better. In August a group of us headed to Peru to scale the heights of Machu Picchu in aid of juvenile arthritis. The guide books tell you this three and a half day hike is moderate. Let me tell you, it's not. It was gruelling and relentless and even overwhelming at times — and I would not have missed it for the world.



Hotel Monasterio, Peru

Whether you choose to take the train, or trek up the mountain, the journey begins in the city of Cusco, situated 11,000 feet above sea level. The highlight of the city was the Hotel Monasterio. At this altitude the air contains about 30% less oxygen, which is likely to affect most travellers in some form. The hotel offers oxygen enrichment in most of its rooms. But by taking it slow, we were all able to enjoy the unique views and ancient culture.

The hotel was originally a monastery, built in 1592. The architecture of the building is steeped in Incan and Spanish tradition. Multiple stone archways encircle the courtyard, forming a majestic series of porticos that shade the interior from the summer heat. When the building was transformed into a hotel, attention was paid to historical detail and use of materials that were close at hand. The ceramic tile floors and gessoed walls are timeless. Handpainted frescoes and ancient motifs adorn the walls, particularly around window and door frames. The interior walls are one to two feet deep, and the huge wooden doors are magnificent.

Living for a few days in a suite that includes a majestically carved wooden headboard, soaring arched ceilings and sumptuous linens is a heady experience. The intrusion of a television is cleverly hidden inside a large, ornate box at the foot of the bed, ready to pop up at the push of a button. The design is reminiscent of an old trunk or crate that may have accompanied travelers on the Orient Express – an interesting link to the company that has designed and built luxury hotels such as the Monasterio around the world.

The popularity of the spa bathroom experience is championed at Monasterio. You can request a bath be prepared for you, complete with intoxicating salts, rose petals and flickering candle light.

In all the spas I have visited, I have never felt quite the sense of peace that enveloped us as we walked through the majestic cloisters. Perhaps it was the spirits of the monks who once walked the same path, or the gentle recorded notes of monks’ singing.

Bring it home.

A grand entranceway is guaranteed to make you and your friends and family feel special. The Hotel Monasterio is distinguished by its ancient stone and brick façade, thick walls and huge panelled wood doors. Give your entranceway a feeling of permanence and grandeur. It can be as easy as a few coats of paint and some antique hardware for the front door. Lay down a heated stone floor in the foyer, display a fabulous piece of art or sculpture and hang a sparkling chandelier.

An original headboard for your bed becomes the dramatic focal point of the room. There are so many ways to make it unique. Turn an old door onto its side and paint it, upholster a board with some fabulous fabric, you can even paint a scene directly onto the wall.

Indulge yourself with a bathroom renovation that lives up to your dream of the perfect spa space. Then load up on exotic bath products, lots of candles and some mood music so that you can escape daily to your favourite holiday destination.

Pampered in Panama

Villa Camilla is a boutique hotel that is part of a sustainable luxury community situated on a tranquil stretch of the Azuero Peninsula overlooking the Pacific Ocean. This magnificent project is designed by Parisian architect Gilles Saint-Gilles whose emphasis is on craftsmanship, incorporating his elegant taste and technical expertise to build structures that grow naturally out of the landscape.

Doors and shutters are crafted from plantation teak, and plaster walls are hand-rubbed with natural pigments. The exquisite parquet floor in the hotel’s Roble Room is made from reclaimed purpleheart wood and oak. Smooth river stones gathered from the ocean and river are laid in pathways and set into walls as a distinctive and colourful trim around blocks of stone and tiles. Terra cotta floors and bricks are produced from local red clay.

Furnishings have clean, contemporary lines, yet there is much imagination evident in each piece. Master European craftsmen mentor local artisans to create handmade chairs and tables from local materials. In the Salon, the architect’s connection with the earth is evident throughout; the pale terra cotta tile floor and soaring sculpted plaster walls, finely crafted wood furniture and ancient pottery.

Bring it Home

Indulge yourself in the lasting pleasure of elements that are perfectly crafted. At the Villa Camilla, the ambiance inside and out is a visual feast. The walls, floors and ceilings, and every object is designed and built with equal parts practicality and beauty.

Be aware of the materials that are native to your home. Capitalize on local talent and be inspired by your unique environment. The silky texture of a plastered wall, the rich sheen of a wood floor, a beloved collection of artifacts, or a distinctive carpet enhances a room with your special taste, your history and the luxury of fine living. ■



Villa Camilla Azueros, Panama



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The Oasis at Home

A Stress-Free Sanctuary

Everyone is familiar with the purpose of the living room, the bedroom, the bathroom and the kitchen. Each of these spaces has an obvious function in relation to your daily routine. For example, the kitchen is associated with preparing meals, the living room is a common place for entertainment and the office is dedicated to work. Collectively, the spaces in your home help to shape your lifestyle. Imagine how your lifestyle would change if you had an oasis at home.

Over the past decade, the benefits of health and wellness have steadily become a significant aspect of all our lives. Nearly everyone has heard or read the phrase “health for the body, mind and soul.” A growing awareness in healthy living has changed the way people eat, exercise and think. It is widely agreed that a key element to overall wellness is decreasing stress in one’s daily life. Stress is linked to numerous common health problems including heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, cirrhosis of the liver, memory loss and obesity. More and more people are realizing that it is extremely valuable to make time for activities that relieve stress.

Some of the more common, not to mention unhealthy, choices for stress reduction may include: smoking, sweet treats, alcohol or perhaps zoning out in front of the television for hours with a big bag of chips. The calming effect of these activities is short-lived, unhelpful, and most are a direct result of chemicals briefly released into the brain. However, taking a brisk walk or exercising for at least 20 minutes can also trigger the release of those feel-good endorphins. Immersing yourself in meditation, prayer, yoga, deep breathing or soaking in a warm bath can help you achieve calmness. Your activities at home influence a large portion of your daily routine. Having a personal oasis enables you to include healthy stress reduction into your schedule each day.

Imagine a space in your home totally dedicated to inner peace. This space is your private sanctuary and becomes part of your lifestyle. It can encompass many forms and should be inspired by your interests and passions. The space could be a room in the home that is dedicated to meditation or yoga. It might be a water feature in the backyard with a bench to sit by or a Zen garden to groom and perfect. The importance is that the space is devoted to the practice of tranquility. The intention for keeping this space committed to a single use is that the space takes on an energy of its own and therefore becomes a sacred place.

Trent Hutton is the artist/owner of Wavestone Sculpture. His company creates sculpted environments and specializes in building personal sanctuaries and spas. Hutton explains, “The first step in designing a sanctuary is to meet with clients and discuss their interests and the proposed function of their sanctuary. We determine what the client requires of the space. For example, it may be a yoga room, a waterfall, a hot tub, or a rock garden. Then we personalize the space with elements that connect to their passion in life.”

After designs are completed and the initial stages of basic construction have prepared the site, Hutton begins creating the space. Concrete is the main building material Trent uses to create his sculpted environments. However, this is no ordinary concrete — in fact, the cement mixture he uses is specially designed for sculptors to carve while the cement is still wet. Before he begins carving he must first build the armature. An armature is the framework that supports a sculpture while it’s being modeled. The armatures built by Wavestone Sculpture are made of rebar and steel mesh, and they not only support the concrete but also become part of its integral strength once the concrete is cured.



After the armature has been built close to the shape of the final sculpture, the concrete is applied. High pressured rubber hose lines shoot the concrete onto the armature; this process is appropriately named “shotcrete.” After the sculpture has been carved it must cure for about two weeks before it can be coloured.

“Concrete is an amazing material,” Hutton describes, “It can be used indoors or outdoors, above and below water levels and in any climate zone. The technology of the mix designs have evolved far beyond your typical concrete mixtures of thirty years ago. Concrete is now stronger, more adaptable to design and is considered one of the better materials for green building. As a result, we have an amazing sculpting material that can be used to create just about any environment imaginable and it will last the test of time. I find that very inspiring.”

It is certainly inspiring and at this point you might already have some ideas. We asked Trent to describe a few concepts and design ideas that his clients use when creating their dream oasis.

“Rock formations are one of the most popular directions for the base of most clients’ oases,” says Trent. “We use rock formations to design hot tubs, waterfalls, planters, retaining walls, privacy walls, steam caves and much more. Concrete is, of course, made of stone and therefore lends itself quite well to replicating rock. The benefit of using sculpted stone to construct a waterfall, hot spring, or rock cliff is that you can create an environment that looks like it would in nature. You can not achieve this when you stack large granite blocks on top of each other, it just doesn’t look natural.

“For those who admire the beauty of different materials and are attracted to the simplicity of concrete itself, we recommend simple flowing organic forms. This direction works well for creating outdoor rooms, abstract forms to enhance garden areas or finishing an indoor space.

“Other very popular requests are designs that incorporate a specific subject matter. This type of approach is used when a client wishes to create an identifiable environment such as castle ruins in an outdoor living area, a meditation room that resembles a Mayan temple, or a specific yantra pattern within the design of a yoga room. Since the process of creating these environments is sculptural, there are endless design possibilities you can choose from.”

Wavestone Sculpture



In addition to environments sculpted in concrete, Wavestone Sculpture also offers lighter materials for situations where weight is a concern. “Locations that require light-weight materials or high detail are constructed from a polymer sculpting system. With this extremely versatile system, we can create any kind of rock, any type of metal and just about anything you could imagine. Last year we produced a faux bronze bear for the top of a waterfall that was flowing into a hot tub. The client was concerned about the weight of a cast bronze bear being just above the bathing area. This sculpting system was also used on the 36th floor of a downtown corporate office. The client required a 25’ by 16’ cliff face for their front entry. In this situation, weight was definitely a factor.”

Reducing stress in your life is not achieved by living from holiday to holiday; it is obtained through a daily practice of self-awareness and inner calm. Reaching this can be as simple as soaking in a hot tub, practicing yoga or even 20 minutes of meditation a day. The convenience of having an oasis at home has proven to be a healthy and reliable method of maintaining overall wellness for the body, mind and soul. ■



Wavestone Sculpture
Vancouver, BC,
Canada V5P 2K5
Phone: 604-612-2467
www.wavestonesculpture.ca



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604.612.2467
www.wavestonesculpture.ca

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Holiday Gifts for the Entire Family

by Dave Chalk

They call it the most wonderful time of the year, and it's easy to see why: the holiday season is a time to reconnect with family and reminisce, while creating new memories. And in the spirit of showing your family how much you really care, consider giving some of the hottest gifts going; just don't expect to fit all of them under the tree.



For the teen female

You've probably learned by now that most teenage girls spend most of their free time on the phone. If you have one like that on your holiday list, make her day with the latest in talk technology, the revolutionary Apple iPhone. This incredible phone has touch-screen technology that lets her tap, scroll, type and call, directly on the screen. The iPhone also boasts visual voicemail (so she can listen to her BFF's voicemail first), email, photo slideshows, and touch-screen type that makes texting a breeze. At press time, the iPhone is only available in the US and Europe, but with the Canadian dollar at par, you won't overpay for this smart little device.

And although iPhones aren't supported by Canadian mobile service providers (yet), you can find unlocked versions for sale online that will run in Canada. You do run the risk of a future firmware update disabling the unlocked phone capabilities, but with a built-in iPod, video, and camera features, this phone is for more than just talking. Prices can vary online, but the 8GB model is available from official outlets for \$399, down from \$599 at its June 29 launch.

www.apple.com



With the newly reduced Apple iPhone price, why not splurge on customizing her new phone with Swarovski crystals by Crystal Icing. For \$295, get her phone "iced" with 1,500 regular-sized crystals, or 3,000 petite ones. Icing patterns range from butterflies to flowers to flames. Or, if she'd rather be her own personal designer, you can let her customize her phone so she can choose her own design, colours and style. Did you know that iced cell phones are a celebrity must-have? You can bet she does!

www.crystalicing.com



For the teen male

If she gets an iPhone, you'd be wise to get him the brand-new iPod touch. This revamped iPod uses the same touch-screen technology as the iPhone and features onboard Wi-Fi. This allows you to buy music from the iTunes store when near a wireless hotspot, like those found at libraries and coffee shops. And as the flagship iPod, it's also the thinnest of the series currently on the market and boasts a new 3.5-inch widescreen display, perfect for watching YouTube videos. In fact, the iPod touch lets you surf the Internet just as you would on a laptop. Maybe he'll use that feature to catch up on his homework research, no matter where he is. A parent can dream, right? The new iPod touch starts at \$329.

www.apple.ca

If he's not rocking out to music he's probably playing video games. But why play from the couch? He can put those gaming skills to better use with the very latest in virtual flight simulators, the HotSeat FLIGHT SIM. Incredibly, the HotSeat FLIGHT SIM allows you to fly as if you were right in the cockpit. It's a simulator so real that the system is used for pilot training. The HotSeat FLIGHT SIM comes complete with six speaker Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound that allows the sound to move with the screen view and totally immerse the player in the game. You've got the option of supplying the flight controls, monitor and PC, or you can order the full package for \$4,474.

www.hotseatinc.com



www.GoodLifeConnoisseur.com

For the woman of the house

Men know women love to pamper themselves and, more importantly, that they love being pampered. Perfect then, that the Ideal Standard Tris lets her enjoy the bliss of a tropical rain shower, steam, or sauna in your very own home, and all in the space of a standard-sized bathtub. She can forget those trips to the spa and instead take a muscle-soothing steam or an aromatherapy session. The Tris features a built-in stove with two kilograms of volcanic stones, as well as a bucket and spoon made from Iroko wood. When there's no time for a steam, she can enjoy a refreshing shower with three different water effects to choose from, including normal rain, tropical rain and hydro-massage. Soothing and aesthetically pleasing all in one, the Tris is the perfect gift, mainly because it's something you both can enjoy. Bliss out together for \$20,000.

www.idealstandard.com



While we're on the topic of bliss, consider a drier option called the Cleopatra, a heated chaise lounge that's cut from a single piece of high-density limestone. The Cleopatra is ergonomically designed to fit the body, so as well as being incredibly comfortable, this a-typical lounge chair also ensures that every muscle gets the attention it deserves. Warmed by a radiant heat source, she can sit back and relax for a true hot stone massage without ever having to leave the house. And if you aren't sure if a limestone chaise will complement the look of your bathroom, don't worry. The Cleopatra also comes in white or back marble, and bases are available in wood or fibreglass. Ultimate relaxation is hers, starting at \$15,000.

www.spaequip.com

www.GoodLifeConnoisseur.com



For the man of the house

Does he consider himself to be an aspiring photographer? Leave those mainstream cameras in the dust with the new Hasselblad H3D II digital SLR camera. It captures a whopping 39 megapixels, which far exceeds most professional cameras. The unit boasts a GPS system that records location data, which can then be automatically updated to Google Earth via special software. And don't forget the three-inch LCD screen and improved heat dissipation on the sensors for high-quality signal-to-noise response. If 39 megapixels seems excessive, the H3D is also available in 31- and 22-megapixel resolutions. Whichever model you choose, the LaCie Golden Disk makes a perfect stocking stuffer to go along with it. With its luxurious and distinct golden wave design, this storage system boasts 500GB with easy exchange and transfer of files. The storage system will set you back a mere \$189 USD, but the Hasselblad? \$36,739. He'd better take a lot of photos!

www.hasselblad.com

www.lacie.com



Of course, what's Christmas without a little turkey, stuffing, pie and hot chocolate? So when it comes to New Year's resolutions, he'll want to work off those winter pounds with the ultimate home gym equipment from the legendary Ferrari. The Ferrari Unica comes in classic racing red, with leather trim padding in beige and the company's icon prancing horse emblem, just like their cars. This chic gymnasium is pre-programmed with 25 different exercises, all guided via an onboard Wellness Mate computer. Other details recall the company's GT cars, including F50-like wheels to assist with shifting the gym around in your home. Just like the vehicles, the Ferrari Unica was designed with the ultimate in precision in mind by a team of training experts at the Technologym Research Centre. A key card, which comes standard with each model, holds all your physical data and training regime, while a Net Trainer allows you to update your individual program online. Kiss the flab goodbye and put him in the ultimate fitness driver's seat for \$20,290.

www.ferraristore.com



“The holiday season is a time to reconnect with family and reminisce, while creating new memories. And in the spirit of showing your family how much you really care, consider giving some of the hottest gifts going; just don’t expect to fit all of them under the tree.”

For the Pets

These days, cats and dogs are just as much a part of your family as anyone else. In a way, a gift for your pet means a gift for yourself, too. The Kattbank, for example, is a great gift for the entire family. Not only is it a stylish addition to your home, but it’s also a private place for kitty to take care of business. Handcrafted in Portland, Oregon, the Kattbank hides a litter box inside what most would think to be a stylish coffee table or window bench. Or if you prefer, you can have a Kattbank built to suit your home environment. Best of all, its design ensures that your cat has privacy, and you don’t have to contend with litter box odors. Feline discretion can be had for \$1,750.

www.kattbank.com

Whether you’ve got a cat, a dog or both, one thing is true of all of them: they love you because you feed them. Let’s be honest, though, there are times when you end up missing Rover’s appointed mealtime. Thanks to the Perfect Pet Feeder you now leave home without worrying about your best friend waiting by the door with a grumbling stomach. The Perfect Pet Feeder’s patented design allows it to dispense as much or as little food as you like at pre-designated times, with varying or regulated meal sizes at different times. Made of stainless steel, it’s a stylish piece of equipment that’s dishwasher-safe and comes with battery back-up power to keep things running smoothly in the event of a power outage. Programmable for up to six meals for one or two pets, the Perfect Pet Feeder will keep your conscience clear and your pets perfectly happy, for just \$499.

www.perfectpetfeeder.com



Ignoring global warming won’t make it go away.

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Luxury Holiday Must-Haves

By Catherine Dunwoody

You deserve to shine like a star this holiday season. Here are some elegant essentials just for you, as well as some fabulous gift ideas for everyone on your list.

FASHION

It's all about subtle shimmer, glam and luxurious metallics when it comes to style this winter. With party season approaching, try these on for size...

- Cocktail dressing—now. Cynthia Rowley's sterling layers are sexy and subdued, \$615.
www.cynthiarowley.com



- Did you know that eyes require protection from UV rays in the winter too? Since the sun is lower in the sky, there is more direct glare, making driving and outdoor sports a real cause of eyestrain. TAG Heuer—maker of high-end sports watches and chronographs since 1860—offers up these sleek and sporty shades to help protect the eyes while keeping your cool.

www.tagheuer.com/eyewear



- Let your footwear take centre-stage — then keep the rest of your look simple. Boots, shoes and bags—in modern metal shades of copper, bronze, and gunmetal—are a hit no matter what your function. Prices vary.
Aldo • www.aldoshoes.com



- What a girl wants this holiday is Marcello de Cartier's new signature bag, shown here in crocodile, \$12,200. Available in numerous colours and three sizes at Cartier boutiques in North America.
1-800-CARTIER or visit www.cartier.com



- Tiffany & Co.'s Somerset mesh bracelet collection combines shimmering diamonds with sterling silver and 18K gold, and the results are modern and understated. Starting at \$475.
www.tiffany.ca



- Philip Stein Teslar watches have interchangeable watchbands, a double face that allows for two time settings, and “feel good” technology. Each watch contains two chips that naturally strengthen the body's own electromagnetic field by protecting it against the negative electronic pollution emitted from cell phones, blackberries, and PDAs. And Oprah calls the Teslar watch “one of her favourite things.” \$5,535.
www.phillipsteintesar.com

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Joseph Ribkoff

BEAUTY

Makeup goes glam for the holidays, in rich, opulent shades, and sophisticated textures.



- Smoky, sexy eyes are easy with these stormy shades of violet, plum and gold from NARS. Cheyenne duo eye shadow, in metallic sienna and gothic plum, \$38. www.narscosmetics.com



- Looking for the perfect gift to enjoy under the mistletoe? Benefit's 24k Sexy Gold lipstick and lip gloss, each \$24. www.benefitcosmetics.com



- Clarins Paris new Precious Colours collection has all you need for party touch-ups, and is small enough for your evening bag. Or try The Makeup Palette, a mini kit that has it all—powder, blush, four shades of eye shadow, mascara, and two colours of lip gloss, \$39. www.clarins.ca
- Estee Lauder's Into the Night collection consists of sheer, luminous metallic hints of gold, copper and bronze. Limited Edition Signature Shimmer Powder, \$37, and Pure Color Lipstick, \$30. www.estelauder.com

SKINCARE

The perfect holiday evening starts with glowing healthy skin. Unveil what lies beneath with these lovely new products, sure to leave your face aglow.

- Tända skincare system's portable device uses light therapy to bring out the best in your complexion. Health Canada approved, with two interchangeable heads—one for killing acne-causing bacteria and the other to stimulate collagen production—this is an at-home tool that's rechargeable and super easy to use. \$295, available at Holt Renfrew. www.tandaskincare.com



- For a prettier pucker during the drier months, try the original lip exfoliator, The Lip Scrub by Sara Happ. The lip scrub is sugar-based and this is a favourite of celebrities Charlize Theron and Kate Moss. The scrub comes with natural extracts and is available in six flavours, each \$20. www.thelipscrub.com

- How about this for your favourite fella? Braun Pulsonic's newest shaver is powered by an innovative sonic technology, which promises to be the most comfortable shave ever. 10,000 micro-vibrations per minute help capture more hairs in fewer strokes while providing a flexing head, Gillette-blade technology, and one-touch auto cleaning, making smooth skin simple. Available in two models at department/specialty and mass merchandisers, ranging from \$279.99 - \$339.99.



FRAGRANCE

Every woman loves to try a new scent when the seasons change. Here, to give or to receive, are some of the latest.



- Kate by Kate Moss. The supermodel's first fragrance; a floral musk. Available in eau de toilette, at department/specialty and mass merchandisers, 100 ml, \$79.
- Missoni's limited-edition charm necklace, designed by Margherita Missoni, contains a large gold orb filled with either the original or Acqua solid parfum, \$58. www.missoni.com



FOR THE HOME OR HOSTESS

Forget the flowers or bottle of wine—bring your favourite party-giver something special:



- Jo Malone's Pine & Eucalyptus Collection has a winter-fresh, holiday scent. From \$50 – \$500. www.jomalone.com



- Translucent Chocolates make any other candy in the dish pale by comparison. These holiday treats look fabulous and taste even better. Chocolate-covered sunflower seeds, almonds and more are also available, from \$8.50 - \$16. www.translucentchocolates.com www.chocolate.com
- Janet Helm Presents offers up stylish gift ideas, including the Coffee Cuff, made from reclaimed wood from the Pacific West Coast that's been hand-shaped and can be used in two ways: As a protective sleeve for your hot coffee go-cup, or to wear on your wrist as a cuff. This item can also be engraved with names, symbols or sayings. www.janethelm.com



- Unna Soaps are handmade in Thailand with exotic ingredients like Mangosteen and Thai Payayor. This box of 12 is packaged beautifully, shown in "True Love Scent", \$92. www.unnaco.com



Estee Lauder's Into the Night collection

Pacific Dermaesthetics

On An Important Mission



The goal of Pacific Dermaesthetics is not only to improve the way you look; they also want to change the way you feel.

Pacific Dermaesthetics wants to change the first thought that comes to mind when you look in the mirror.

They want to change the way you feel when someone brushes up against you, when they caress you. Smooth, silky, sensual.

They want you to walk into a room, or a business meeting, feeling radiant and confident, with every eye in the room following your every move. Self-assured, vibrant, beautiful.

Pacific Dermaesthetics, located in downtown Vancouver, offers a variety of treatments for issues such as sun damage, vascular concerns, acne scarring, sagging skin and a lack of volume in the face. The idea of Pacific Dermaesthetics was conceived when long-time friends and doctors, Dr. Bill McGillivray and Dr. Jason Rivers began discussing the need for a medical centre dedicated to providing people with state of the art, evidence-based medicine.

Sure, there are other skin care clinics out there, but what makes Pacific Dermaesthetics unique is their understanding that every person that comes through their doors is an individual with unique perspectives and concerns. No two patients are the same...so why should their treatments be?

This is why every treatment begins with a personal consultation with one of the doctors for a down-to-earth conversation. During this important first step, the doctors analyze your needs and concerns and take this information to the next step, which is devising a plan. This often consists of a combination of treatments that are best suited to achieving your goals. This blending of the highest quality of technologies and in-depth expertise ensures that your treatment is the perfect one for you.

Pacific Dermaesthetics is proud to be the largest and most technologically advanced skin treatment centre in Canada. They were one of the very first clinics in North America to offer the revolutionary Ultra-Shape technology to their patients, and the first in Canada to have a system for total body mole mapping. Always on the cutting edge of the latest treatments and procedures, Pacific Dermaesthetics has positioned themselves firmly at the forefront of both medical and aesthetic medicine.

This dedication to excellence extends to the design of their beautiful, modern clinic. Every detail has been carefully thought out. From the private elevator entrance (for those wanting the ultimate in privacy), to the separate departure area, positioned away from the next patients, Pacific Dermaesthetics is all about discretion and professionalism.

The front desk staff never take phone calls. Their job is to take care of patients visiting the clinic and ensure they are as comfortable as possible. You'll notice that where you come in is not where you leave after your appointment. When you have completed your treatment, you'll be escorted by a staff member to a room where the next patients cannot see you, ensuring your total privacy. If necessary, you'll be taken to a recovery room (also known as the cozy room).

“Pacific Dermaesthetics is proud to be the largest and most technologically advanced skin treatment centre in Canada.”

Another feature that separates Pacific Dermaesthetics from the rest is the fact that they are led by certified doctors who are pioneers in their field. Dr. McGillivray is regarded as one of the most accomplished cosmetic physicians in Canada. He has extensive experience with injectables and was one of the first doctors in Canada to use the Fraxel. Dr. McGillivray can often be found consulting and teaching other doctors on the techniques of Fraxel. He was also a clinical preceptor for the maker of Botox Cosmetic, instructing physicians on advanced Botox and filler techniques — a true leader in his field.

Dr. Rivers is one of Canada's most well-known and respected dermatologists. Recognized internationally for his work with skin cancer and sun awareness issues, he has been a leader in laser and cosmetic dermatology for the past 15 years. Dr. Rivers left his position as clinical professor in the Department of Dermatology at the University of British Columbia to join Pacific Dermaesthetics and now dedicates his energy to his patients. He is also personally responsible for the development of the advanced and unique Riversol skin care line.

After practicing medicine for more than 20 years, Dr. Rivers saw the need for a skin care product that would moisturize effectively without having any adverse affect on sensitive skin. After much research he discovered an ingredient derived from the Pacific Red Cedar tree, thujaplicin (pronounced thoo-ya-ply-sin), which is a powerful antioxidant with other therapeutic properties, perfect for reducing the look of wear and tear on the skin. Pacific Dermaesthetics is very proud of their RIVERSOL line of products, developed with the patient in mind, using all natural ingredients and without testing on animals.

For an exclusive experience of treatments customized to meet your needs, turn to the professionals at Pacific Dermaesthetics. ■



Injectables:

- **Artesense** — Enhances the shape of the lips, reduces wrinkles and smile lines, and fills in acne scars.
- **Botox** — Reduces the appearance of dynamic facial lines and wrinkles including frown lines, forehead and eye wrinkles.
- **Dermal Fillers** — A variety of fillers, designed to restore volume to lips and sagging skin and unwanted lines.
- **Juvéderm** — Used to smooth and restore volume to sagging skin.
- **Restylane** — A similar procedure to Juvederm, this crystal clear gel is injected into the skin, resulting in increased volume, softening of wrinkles, and the improvement of facial symmetry.
- **Sculptra** — This is a synthetic injectable material known as Poly-L-Lactic acid, which is injected into the dermis of the skin, in areas of fat and volume loss.
- **Sclerotherapy** — Used to treat small veins, this treatment involves injecting a solution directly into the problematic veins.

Ultrasound Treatments:

- **Ultrashape** — This safe, non-invasive fat reduction body contouring treatment delivers measurable results.

Intense Pulsed Light Treatments:

- **IPL Photorejuvenation** — Intense Pulsed Light Technology is a non-invasive solution for a variety of benign skin conditions, such as facial skin imperfections, the signs of skin aging, brown sun spots, unsightly small facial veins and other blemishes.





Pacific
Dermaesthetics

Laser Treatments:

- **Thermage** — Thermage is used for non-surgical brow lifts and tightening of facial wrinkles on the forehead, around the eyes, the mid- and lower face, neck, abdominal area and hands.
- **Fraxel** — This is one of our most popular treatments for wrinkles, acne scarring, pigment issues, scarring, sun damage and other aging skin problems.
- **Gemini** — This is used primarily to treat lesions as with a number of conditions such as rosacea, freckles, sunspots, as well as vascular lesions.
- **Light Sheer** — This is the Ferrari of laser hair removal. It targets and neutralizes hair follicles with minimum discomfort.
- **Medlite C6** — An effective laser treatment for pigment lesions including benign moles, age spots and tattoos.
- **Sciton** — This is a breakthrough treatment for hyper pigmentation, acne, photo damage, and fine lines.
- **Pacific Peel** — A laser skin peel that treats wrinkles, acne scars, sun spots, and other lesions.
- **V-Beam** — Used to treat rosacea, facial veins and scarring, this laser offers a relatively pain-free treatment, which can accurately target problematic blood vessels located in the affected area.
- **Epitouch Alexandrite** — This is the fastest hair-removal laser of its kind. Large areas such as the arms, legs, chest and back can be effectively treated in less than 20 minutes!

Special Procedures:

- **Blu U Photodynamic Therapy And Lavulan** — A non-invasive treatment for pre-cancerous skin lesions and mild acne.
- **Full Body Mole Mapping** — We have the first system in Canada for total body mole mapping. This procedure involves the documentation of moles. An exact mole catalog is stored on electronic media, and facilitates an accurate comparison of earlier images to the most recent ones taken at regular intervals.
- **Smooth Beam** — Used for the treatment of active acne, acne scarring, sagging skin, enlarged pores and fine lines.
- **Surgical Excision** — Sometimes it is necessary to remove lesions with an excision made with a scalpel. Closing excisions can be done by stitching depending on the size of tissue removed.



Pacific Dermaesthetics
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HEALTH & WELLBEING

Antioxidants for Anti-Aging

By Sandra Tonn, RHN



Can nutritional supplements stop the aging process? While nothing can stop time, according to a growing amount of scientific research, nutrients known as antioxidants can prolong the quality and length of life by slowing the signs of aging and helping prevent degenerative diseases that become prevalent as we age.

Antioxidants are powerful compounds that help protect the body from free-radical damage. Free radicals are highly reactive, unpaired oxygen molecules in the body that cause damage as they course through the body—including ripping into and damaging other cells—in search of other molecules to pair up with.

Free-radical Aging

One of the most popular theories of aging is the free-radical theory, introduced in 1956 by Denham Harman, MD, PhD, of the University of Nebraska. Harman believed that it wasn't the passage of time that causes disease, but rather the breakdown of body structures caused by the presence of free radicals. Since then, hundreds of studies have implicated free radicals as major players in many diseases, including heart disease and cancer, and are thought to accelerate the aging process. In fact, a 2007 study published in the journal *Cellular and Molecular Biology* states, "Antioxidants are intimately involved in the prevention of cellular damage—the common pathway for cancer, aging, and a variety of diseases." These powerful nutrients, whether in the form of food or supplements, help to slow age-related conditions, such as wrinkling of the skin and deteriorating vision, and have been shown to be very important in the prevention of heart disease, cancer, arthritis, and other chronic degenerative diseases.

The need for antioxidants is an ongoing one, since free radicals are continually formed in the body. These free radicals are produced and increased in a number of ways, such as stress, injury, pollution, radiation, chemicals, pesticides and other toxins, overexposure to the sun, the consumption of processed foods, and by consuming fats damaged from frying, hydrogenating, and processing.

Antioxidant Action

So, how do we get the benefits of these anti-aging nutrients? You may want to choose one, two, or a combination formula of antioxidant supplements. In addition, a diet that regularly incorporates colourful fruits and vegetables will also increase your antioxidant intake. Recent research from Belgium has shown that a diet high in vegetables provides a broad range of antioxidants and appears to be an important defense against the free-radical damage associated with aging.

Some of the most researched antioxidant supplements include alpha-lipoic acid, beta-carotene, coenzyme Q10 (Ubiquinone), garlic, grape-seed extract, green tea, melatonin, selenium, and vitamins C and E.

Studies have shown that alpha-lipoic acid positively affects a variety of biological processes that are associated with free-radical damage including cancer, and also improves renal function in diabetes. A study from France suggests that carotenoids, such as beta-carotene, are an effective part of a prostate cancer prevention diet and offer protection from ovarian cancer. Additionally, when taken as part of an antioxidant formula, beta-carotene may help to prevent and treat macular degeneration.

Coenzyme Q10 (or Ubiquinone) has been studied for its role as a potent antioxidant, both alone and in combination with other antioxidants, to help prevent and treat age-related conditions such as heart disease, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, and cancer.

The phytochemical and sulfur compounds in garlic make it a truly natural medicine and disease-fighting food. A substantial amount of evidence shows that aged garlic may be helpful in the prevention of free-radical damage and may help fight the effects of aging, radiation and chemical exposure, long-term toxicity, and the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke and Alzheimer's disease.

Grape seed extract has been shown to have preventive actions on diseases such as atherosclerosis, gastric ulcer, large bowel cancer, cataracts and diabetes.

A favourite way for many to obtain daily antioxidant protection is by drinking green tea. The antioxidant properties in green tea have been associated with the prevention of cancer. Green tea is not only an antioxidant itself, but also boosts antioxidant activity within the body.

Melatonin, known for its ability to prevent jet lag, is also a powerful antioxidant. A number of experiments have found that melatonin's antioxidant activity is able to offer protection against free-radical damage to the brain. It is also widely recommended as a means to slow the aging process because of its ability to counteract free-radical damage.

The trace mineral selenium, a potent antioxidant, is used by the body to produce natural antioxidants. When combined with other antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E and the mineral zinc, selenium is extra powerful due to a synergistic effect. Vitamins C and E also work synergistically, which means they are more potent in combination than when taken on their own.

Nature, and our increasing knowledge of its power, provides effective ways to prevent and treat the physical effects of aging and the use of antioxidants is one of the most powerful ways to do that. ■



Copeman Healthcare Centre

Creating healthier companies - at little or no cost

Achieving a healthy business through a healthy staff is the direction of more and more Canadian companies. Comprehensive health programs are not only the new way of attracting and retaining top talent; they also optimize the performance of employees through physical and mental wellness, while creating new feelings of loyalty and motivation. This is particularly true when health programs extend to an employee's family, and medical problems are either dealt with quickly — or avoided altogether.

While it may not be surprising that health and wellness programs contribute to a company's performance, what may be surprising is that *they can be implemented at little or no cost to the organization.*

According to Copeman Healthcare's General Manager Susan Rafter, a certified Human Resources professional, "Any company that currently pays taxes to the federal government can reduce those taxes and invest the same funds directly into programs of health that ensure the long-term performance of their organization. This is one of the easiest decisions a business owner or executive will ever make."

The Copeman Healthcare Centre in downtown Vancouver, fast becoming one of the most respected names in healthcare delivery, has now developed new products and programs for health benefits administration that can quickly turn previous tax expense into competitive advantage.

"As excited as we are about helping organizations get stronger at little or no cost, our pride really stems from the excellence in healthcare we deliver," says the Centre's founder Don Copeman. "Our primary goal is still to prevent illness, avoiding costly hospital interventions and medications."

According to Copeman, over 50% of the people that came into the Centre in its first year had an undiagnosed medical condition and an even greater number had risks that they did not understand — and they are all now on the road to optimal health. Copeman adds that their new mental health centre has now completely rounded out their corporate health offering and eliminated costly and often ineffective employee assistance programs for people facing stress-related health issues.

The Copeman Healthcare Centre model delivers an integrated team of doctors and healthcare professionals specializing in advanced health assessments, disease prevention and management.

"We're dedicated to ensuring that our clients live the longest, healthiest and most pain-free lives possible," says Copeman. "The heart of our program is a comprehensive health plan based on advanced screening for early signs of disease, and on detailed analysis of medical and family history. However, the soul of the program is the health education, counseling, and coaching that we provide our clients as they follow their health plan."

Copeman says the Centre's approach to healthcare represents the type of innovation that is desperately needed in Canada right now.

"It all boils down to the two things that define quality primary healthcare: access to professional expertise and the proper amount of time spent with your doctor and other professionals."

"This is one of the easiest decisions a business owner or executive will ever make."

Each client receives lifelong care from a team of people whose skills and expertise are matched with the client's disease risks. At a minimum, everyone is assigned an expert physician, a registered dietician, a kinesiologist or exercise specialist, a care coordinator, and a nurse that provides ongoing coaching and support.

"Our goal is to put patients at ease by reducing the burden of health risks. We carefully monitor their health — giving them all of the time and expert attention they deserve."

Services at the Copeman Healthcare Centre are available to both individuals and organizations. To register for a free consultation, call 604.707.CARE (2273). Or take a facility tour online and hear what clients are saying about the Centre at: www.copemanhealthcare.com. ■

Services at a Glance

- Unhurried healthcare.
- Expert, personally assigned medical team matched to your medical profile.
- Annual comprehensive health assessments including advanced disease screening.
- Personal dietician, exercise physiologist and nurse coach.
- Personalized health plan supported by education and consulting.
- Exhaustive effort for fastest possible specialist treatment, including presentation of all options (public and private).
- Personal reminders for tests and examinations.
- Flexible, convenient appointments.

Fees

- \$2,900 per year per adult (fees can be defrayed by private health plans), \$3,900 in the first year of service.
- Free for children of members under the age of 22.

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Luxury Vehicles

The Ultimate Wish List

By Tony Whitney

At a time of year when national newspapers suddenly sprout multiple display ads for expensive watches and jewelry items, it's worth noting that according to financial analysts, sales of luxury products have reached an almost undreamed-of level.

Mega-brands like Prada, Dolce & Gabbana, Versace, Rolex and Louis Vuitton are reaping considerable benefits. And when those opulent and storied brands experience sales booms, it follows that luxury automobiles are almost certainly following suit — if not leading the trend.

Almost without exception, major luxury vehicle nameplates in North America have been posting record quarter-by-quarter sales and there's no sign of any let-up just yet. As far as buyers are concerned, the selection of upscale vehicles in every category has simply never been better. If you have the cash, automakers are ready to fulfill your every whim.

It won't be a surprise to anyone who's a fan, or a fortunate owner, of the much-admired Lamborghini to learn that the company has been toiling away on its ultimate supercar, designed to match or exceed any rival sports car in this lofty class on the planet.

The wraps came off at the recent Frankfurt auto show and even though the news had been "leaked," the car still created a sensation. The folks at Lamborghini will build just 20 F-22 Raptor jet fighter-inspired (really!) Reventón sportsters with their 650-horsepower engines — at a staggering price believed to be over \$1.5 million. According to some reports, they're all spoken for (with just one scheduled for Canadian delivery), but if Lamborghini is in the business of making money as well as sports cars, another run must surely be possible if demand is high.

Like Bugatti (which offers a competing ultra-supercar in the Veyron), Lamborghini is part of the huge Volkswagen Audi Group and there are a lot of parts swapping among the various models. Place a Gallardo on a lift and you'll see more than the odd component stamped with a "VW Audi" logo. Few buyers of the Lambo supercars will complain about this relationship — especially when it involves the use of Quattro all-wheel drive, one of the best systems of its type in the business.

Modern automobiles are so complex and sophisticated, there's no way a small company like Lamborghini could produce this type of equipment if it remained independent. In fact, most of the supercar makers that are flourishing today wouldn't even be in business if they hadn't been acquired by a large automaker.

Alfa Romeo is headed back to North America (2010 is the promised date for a full range) after an all-too-long absence. First car to reach these shores is the magnificent 8C Competizione, though Canadian distribution is still up in the air. Even so, non-availability in this country doesn't seem to have stopped those with the means of getting their Gucci-clad right foot to the gas pedal of whatever car takes their fancy.



Lamborghini Reventón



Left: Alfa 8C Competizione; Below: Mercedes CL600.



Close to the very pinnacle of the Mercedes-Benz range (the McLaren SLR tops them all in price and performance) is the handsome CL600 — a twelve-cylinder coupe that's the latest in a long line of superb two-doors from the legendary Stuttgart automaker.

Elegant, understated, but nonetheless aggressive styling marks this Mercedes as a classic of the future and the CL, as always, is a technological showcase for future products from this manufacturer. Power comes from a 36-valve V-12 putting out 510 horses and features almost uncanny flexibility and refinement. Spend a little more than the \$185,000 your CL600 will set you back and you can opt for an AMG-tuned version with twin turbochargers and a whopping 603-horsepower. As far as supercars go, the CL600 isn't a bad buy at all with its impressive build quality and proven reliability.

This is a large car for a coupe, but a wide array of electronic stability aids and a very efficient suspension make it as agile as a Porsche 911 if driven with a little skill. As with even the least expensive Mercedes-Benz automobile, the interior trim is beautifully done and the controls have a solid, reassuring feel to them.



2007 Bentley Arnage

British automaker Bentley has been giving its Arnage range a good workover lately and the results are impressive. This is just about as big a car as you can buy these days, but like the Mercedes CL, it doesn't feel that bulky when driven hard on a twisty road. Like the Bentleys of old — famously described as “racing trucks” by pre-WWII LeMans 24-hour race rivals — the Arnage T can fool a first-time Bentley driver who possibly expected a more ponderous motoring experience from this 6,757-lb car. Far from it, the car holds the road with surprising tenacity. Arnage T power comes from a twin-turbo 6.75-litre V-8 with a very usable 500-horsepower. Over 100 km/h in less than 5.5 seconds is a serious achievement for a big rig like this handbuilt flyer.

Coming soon to a Porsche dealer near you is the new GT2, the most powerful non-racer Porsche ever produced for street-legal use. Two big turbochargers help create a solid 530-horsepower (the Turbo model has “only” 480-horsepower). Remember that this is a fairly light car. As is so often the case with a Porsche 911-series car, a 3.6-litre flat six is the basic power source. There's no all-wheel drive with this model, as there is with the Turbo variant, but it does add up to substantial weight-saving and thus, exhilarating, yet still controllable, levels of power.

A 3.6 second zero to 100 km/h time makes this car even quicker than its stablemate Turbo, but not by much. Carbon fibre and ceramic brakes help keep all those horses in check and the pricetag for one of these will certainly run beyond \$200,000. The cockpit is familiar Porsche territory, which means you “wear” the car rather than get into it. This is an awesome car aimed at well-heeled buyers who really like to drive their exotics, rather than just show them off. Even the most basic of 911-Series Porsches is a serious performance machine and not, by any stretch of the imagination, a boulevard cruiser.

Not to be outdone, Chrysler still holds North American auto enthusiasts' heads high (as does the Corvette) with its Viper SRT10, top of a range that has become exceptionally respected all over the world.

Looking for all the world like a LeMans race car from the 1960s with its broad racing stripes, the Dodge Viper SRT10 is aimed at besting the Chevrolet Corvette in the “tops in North America” sports car performance stakes. You can buy a “Vette” with 505-horsepower, but the Dodge takes the whole thing one stage further by offering a car pumping out a full 600-horsepower.

The mighty 8.4-litre V-10 mounted up front seems like something from the Edwardian age of race cars when engines often boasted vast airplane-like displacements. A scant 3.8 seconds will bring 100 km/h up on the clock and the power is transmitted with the aid of a 6-speed gearbox. The amazing thing about the Dodge Viper is that it's priced at under \$100,000 in basic form — a commendable achievement for the automaker and a great temptation to buyers who were planning to shell out twice as much for an exotic sports car from overseas. The interior isn't quite as satisfying as most European competitors, but economies had to be made somewhere.

As the 2008 model year dawns, the market is awash with exciting new top-of-the-line automobiles, but will sales continue to gain strength and spur even more new models in the mega-buck segment?

On a worldwide basis, automakers targeting the wealthy would seem to have nothing to fear and Canadian buyers will continue to enjoy the widest variety of luxury cars the market has ever seen. There's no doubt that the newly rich in Russia and China have been fuelling this boom, but buyers in the Middle East and the more prosperous European nations are following close behind. And according to most automakers in the segment we spoke to, there are plenty of Canadians only too willing to lay out anything from \$150,000 to \$350,000 for a very special set of wheels. ■

Dodge Viper SRT10



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Wealth
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Sustainable Spending

Managing your money for the long run

By Adrian Mastracci

Over time, investors encounter bulls, bears, market tops, bottoms and everything in between. Not to mention plenty of unpredictability. So, what can they do to maintain their wits while managing the choppy seas of investment portfolios?

Accumulating and preserving wealth works best on logic, not on emotion. A few key principles to rely on keep investors sane most times. The goal for managing wealth is to be right more often than wrong.

Investors can relate to this insight during their investing lives. It's a good practice to periodically question one's wealth management strategies, i.e. what's working and what's not. For me, they keep perspective along the winding road, during the best and worst of times.

Outlined are seven time-tested, core principles to manage your wealth. They create personal investment philosophies for the long run. They are beliefs to keep trouble at bay during market downturns and upturns. Think of them as fundamentals to shape a well-designed game plan. Perhaps, even sprinkle some fun into investing.

You build a home on strong foundations. You build a portfolio on strong foundations. The ultimate goal is to depend on the portfolio during the retirement years. So, we'll put some figures together to demonstrate the size of retirement portfolios.

Along the way, we make many decisions as to where to accumulate the nest egg. For many, the RRSP/RRIF and personal account is a prominent combination. For others, it may be a corporate vehicle or small business. Perhaps, an Individual Pension Plan, Retirement Compensation Plan, Supplemental Employer Plan or family trust is part of the nest egg.

We also have to ponder the many ways of withdrawing the income stream from the portfolio. We know that minimum withdrawal rates for RRIFs jump to levels above 7% after age 70 — a rate that is likely not sustainable across the entire portfolio. Typically, withdrawal rates in excess of 4% could be problematic in delivering the income stream during the marathon of retirement.

Now for the underpinnings of the approach to manage wealth:

1) Long-term patience: There is a right way and a wrong way to invest. The right way allows time to work its magic for each investor. Get in the habit of asking where you want the portfolio to be in five to 10 years, not in three to 12 months. Short-term investing is speculation.

2) Determine expectations: Focus on what you want the nest egg to provide in the long run. Confirm that your goals are reasonable and you're on the right track. Estimate the portfolio size required and the rate of return to get you there. This is your portfolio yardstick — not what the markets do.

Asset mix has the biggest impact on portfolios. Choose a sensible mix so that the holdings don't all move in the same direction. Focus on both capital preservation and long-term growth needs. Keep trading in check and don't go overboard on rebalancing.

As an example, here are three financial independence situations. Each nest egg is for a couple where the female spouse is two years younger than the male. The desired goal is a before-tax retirement income, in today's dollars, for the couple's lifetime, commencing at age 65.

Inflation is assumed at 2.5% per year for their lifetimes. Return on investment is 6% per year starting at retirement. Arbitrarily, five years have been added to each normal life expectancy for more conservative planning. The figures are ballparks for the particular retirement criteria. This is not an exact science.

Accordingly, the estimated sizes of retirement nest eggs are as follows:

<i>COUPLE'S CURRENT AGES (M/F)</i>	<i>LIFE EXPECTANCY (M/F)</i>	<i>DESIRED RETIREMENT INCOME</i>	<i>RETIREMENT CAPITAL REQUIRED*</i>
40/38	44/51	\$100,000 @65	\$2,850,000
		\$150,000 @65	\$4,570,000
		\$200,000 @65	\$6,290,000
50/48	35/41	\$100,000 @65	\$2,130,000
		\$150,000 @65	\$3,450,000
		\$200,000 @65	\$4,770,000
60/58	26/32	\$100,000 @65	\$1,570,000
		\$150,000 @65	\$2,620,000
		\$200,000 @65	\$3,670,000

* Capital figures rounded.

3) Identify the investment profile: One pillar of investing is to identify your correct investment risk profile, then stay invested within it. Your profile determines the amount of investment risk you are willing to shoulder. It allows you to seek reasonable returns while still sleeping comfortably.

Wise investors care about risk. Novice investors shop for returns. Portfolio prudence considers risks first, returns second. Returns will eventually reward investors who focus on investment risks. Risks will eventually catch up to investors who focus on returns.

Here is an overview of six profiles suitable for today's investment environment:

<i>INVESTMENT PROFILE</i>	<i>TYPICAL ASSET MIX TARGETS</i>		<i>LIKELY TARGET AGE GROUP</i>	<i>INVESTMENT RETURN TARGETS</i>
	<i>EQUITY</i>	<i>FIXED INCOME</i>		
Preservation	15%	85%	65 Plus	Up to 5%
Income	35%	65%	60 Plus	5% to 7%
Balanced	50%	50%	50 to 85	6% to 8%
Growth	60%	40%	35 to 75	7% to 10%
Aggressive	80%	20%	Up to 55	Over 10%
Speculative	95%	5%	Up to 45	Over 20%

A range of targets exists within each profile. For example, a "preservation" investor may not be comfortable with any equity. Conversely, a "speculative" investor may not want any fixed income.

4) Diversify, diversify, diversify: Make it your best friend. A well-balanced portfolio is spread among major asset classes, such as equities, fixed income, cash and real estate. It should be a mix of large and small companies, domestic and global choices. Some will disappoint.

Years of portfolio growth can be wiped away by one bad year. It is best to own a piece of the rock all around the world, in tax-friendly, quality investments. Every portfolio has leaders and laggards. Don't make single bets that can bite hard. Diversification is the best medicine to manage nasty surprises.

5) Buy value and growth, sell the sizzle: Value investing can be the cornerstone of long-term growth. However, it requires a holding period of at least five to 10 years. Dividend growth adds value over time. Another strategy is that neglected sectors may offer good growth prospects.

Investing in popular stuff can be exciting, but has a low percentage of making you a profit. As the saying goes, buying an investment is best when it has few friends. Consistent return is more important than racking up the occasional investment home run. If your portfolio has sizzle, sell it when it's hot.

6) Try to avoid large losses: This is the hardest task for investors. Never confuse the price paid with what ought to be done with a sour investment. Every loss begins small, but many investors seem to have the pressing need to be right. When hope is all that's left in the investment, it's time to exit.

Falling in love with your investments impairs judgement. As they say, rising tides raise all ships. So, analyze the tides, not the ships. Don't sit idly by hoping to be right. Instead, do the right thing and snip the losers. Take the awful medicine early and swiftly. Halt the bleeding and move on.

7) No "would've, should've, could've." Looking back and dwelling in the rear view mirror is emotionally draining. Wise investors don't second guess, especially right after buying or selling. Always expect the unexpected. A positive mindset is best for making long-term portfolio decisions.

Astute investors make their decisions with available information. Linger on the "would've, should've, could've" is counter-productive. Don't get distracted with the outcome of single picks. No obsessing over the daily roller-coaster rides. Stop dwelling on the past; start focusing on the future.

Presented is a concise set of principles to guide your wealth management needs for the long run. Know the ones that work for you and when you're straying from them. Their wisdom is always in fashion.

Investment principles are wonderful tools. Just monitor your holdings periodically. Examine why you still hold them. Assess their future prospects. Take swift action as necessary.

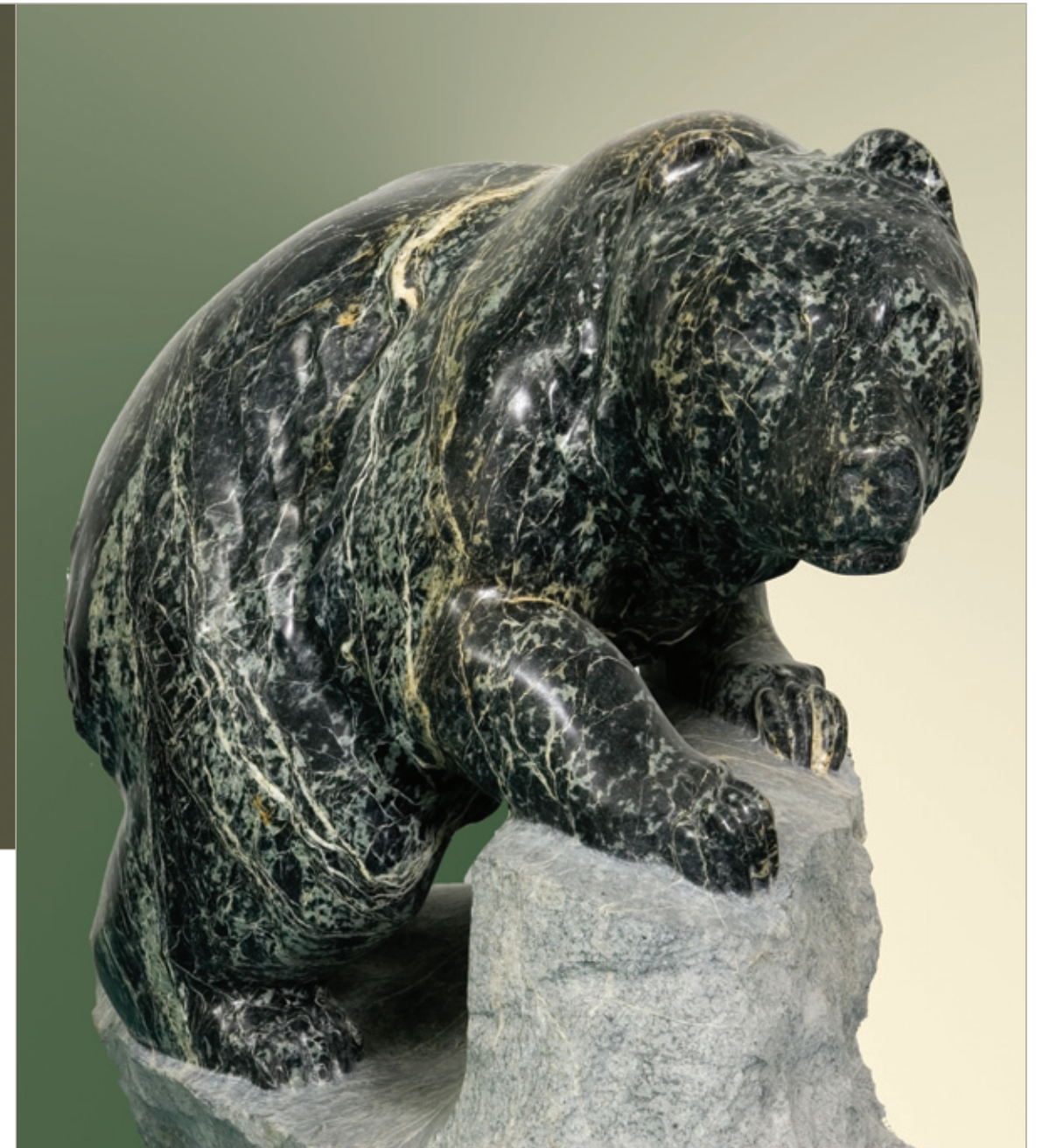
Investing can span from ages 30 to 90, maybe longer. So, remove the pressure of the decision as to when to buy. There is no need to be fully invested all of the time. If you don't like what you see, take a break from the fray. Sit it out for a while. Perhaps, move some funds to short-term cash instruments.

Bear markets begin in good times. Bull markets begin in bad times. If you don't understand what you're buying, don't buy. It's difficult to grasp everything so, for comfort, stay mainly with what you know until you're ready. Occasional portfolio tweaks can be made to better fit the economic environment of the day. However, don't abandon the core principles. You'll pay the price.

It's getting close to that time of year when resolutions take the spotlight. Many resolutions are about investing. Resolve to find a sensible balance that reflects your values. They will keep you safe and sane along the winding road of investing. The ones you adopt should become part of your investment policy statement — better known as your game plan. You can rely on them during both good and bad times. ■



“Wisdom is the quality that keeps you from getting into situations where you need it.”
— Doug Larson, English racer (1902 – 1981).



Carved in Stone

On a cool winter morning, Cathryn Jenkins and I make our way across her property. We’re headed to her home studio. Before we arrive, we come across a large sculpted grizzly standing against a sky-blue backdrop. We squint into the sun at the bear towering over us. We’re silent, its presence too much to take in at once. A few minutes later, we enter her showroom where the polished coats of several smaller bears glisten under the spotlights, their grizzly-like features unmistakable.

“I’m focused on grizzlies,” she says. She reaches out and strokes the neck of a small bear. About the size of a cub, its lustrous finish is sanded and polished to perfection.

Cathryn Jenkins is an award-winning stone sculptor. She grew up in Revelstoke, BC, where, at the young age of 14, she picked up a hammer and chisel for the first time, aspiring to sculpt as her mother did. It didn’t take long before she understood that she too possessed a unique talent to realize stone into art. At 19, she sold her first sculpture, an owl that earned her \$60. That was thirty years ago.

Today, Jenkins’ work — which includes the biggest serpentine grizzlies ever seen — has earned her national recognition. Known for the fluidity and presence of her pieces, she has received many awards, including the American Women Artists Competition in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Three Dimensional Competition at the Lewis-Clark Center for Arts and History in Lewiston, Idaho.

While her art has captured the attention of the elite stone-sculpting world, private and corporate art collectors have also taken notice. Jenkins believes art should move the minds of many, and her impressive list of clientele proves her creations have done just that.

Her ability to distill and transport vision into her medium is a formidable task of both skill and experience. After years of studying the qualities of different stone, and perfecting her sculpting techniques, she’s hit the big time. There’s no looking back for Jenkins.

“The excitement for me is in the creation of every piece,” she says. “That feeling of powerful grizzly compels me. I never tire of them — it’s a challenge every day.”

The challenge of capturing the essence of the grizzly is one she embraces, and she is fearless in her approach. Her mastery of tools and stone, married with vision, has allowed her to create the appearance of depth, movement, expression, and feeling in each piece. Collectors have been known to express a personal connection with their bears.

“I don’t want them all detailed. At a glance, you should be able to feel the elements, like fur, muscle, and bone within the sculpture,” Jenkins says.

But even with skill, experience and vision, she finds her artistic journey is often re-routed. From fault lines to flaws, it is the stone in the end that dictates how a piece evolves; a lesson Jenkins learned early on.

“The stone tells you where to go, and if you listen, it will take you on an amazing journey.”

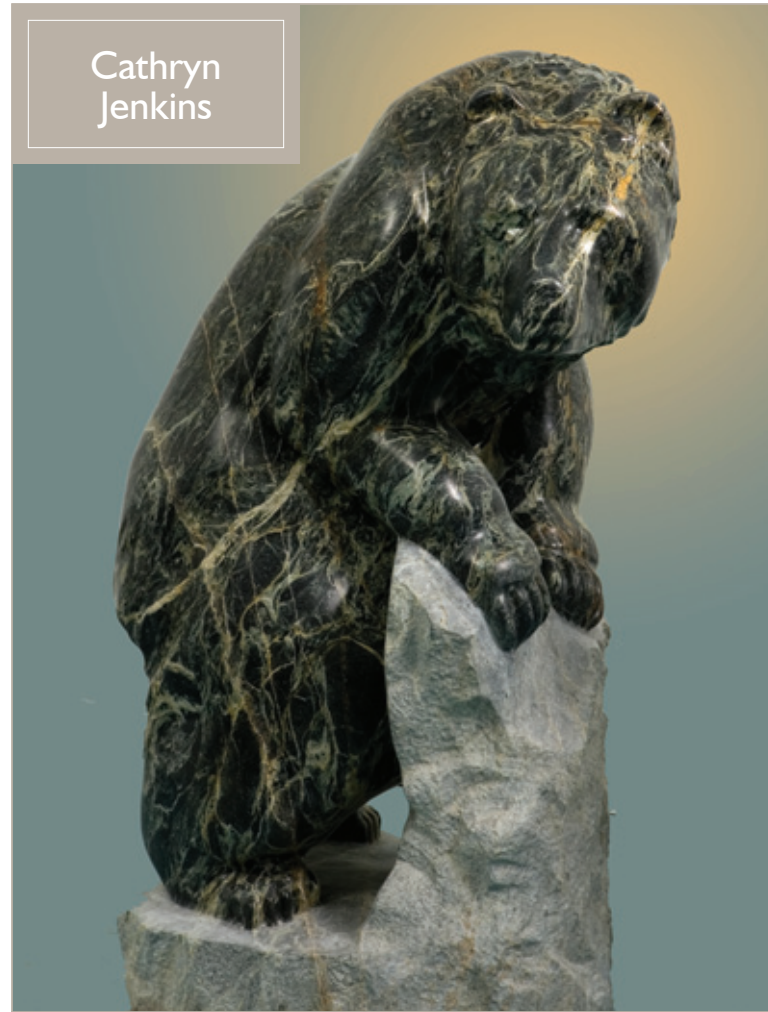


“The stone tells you where to go, and if you listen, it will take you on an amazing journey,” she says.

Her bears range from a size similar to a cub to her most challenging to date — an eight thousand pound, 7’ tall grizzly. All her sculptures are carved from a single solid mass of hand-quarried serpentine stone from central BC. Due to the scarcity and expense of the stone, not to mention the time required to complete each sculpture (a large bear can take up to two years), Jenkins is one of the few stone sculptors in the world who produces works of this scale. Depending on their size, her bears can fetch over a quarter of a million dollars.

Because of their enormity, Jenkins has also worked hard on perfecting a packing and transportation system. Her method allows the bears to be moved efficiently, without damage, whether their final destination is a resort, gallery, a corporation’s lobby, or a private residence. She has also developed a waterproofing technique that allows her art to be enjoyed outdoors.

Cathryn
Jenkins



*“That feeling of
powerful grizzly
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tire of them — it’s a
challenge every day.”*



If the past is any indication of her future, it’s looking bright for Jenkins. In addition to her private home studio in Langley, BC, where clientele have the option of choosing a completed bear or a work in progress, her sculptures can also be seen in several North American galleries, including those at the Masters Gallery in Calgary, Alberta, the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge, the Fairmont Banff Springs and the Willock & Sax Gallery in Waterton National Park in Alberta, and the Fairmont Chateau Whistler and the Whistler Art Galleries in Whistler, BC.

Over the years she has sculpted a myriad of wildlife, but it is the power and mystery of the North American grizzly that holds a special place in her heart.

“I’m not finished with grizzlies. If I can move the minds of many, I’m happy...I think art should do that.” ■

Cathryn Jenkins
Showroom appointments:
(604) 533-0465
cathy@jenkinssculptor.com

CATHRYN JENKINS

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Creating a Masterpiece

By Jonni O'Connor

Let's put it this way: Sex is art and you are the artist. You can either be a great artist or a mediocre one and it's completely your choice. You have the power, as the compelling artist, to create whatever you want; you have the ability and the potency to create a masterpiece.

But what if you aren't bringing much energy to your creation? What if you aren't in touch with your creative ability? That's going to be a problem because, if you didn't start off with anything to create with, chances are slim you'll be able to create what you desire: something sensational, with depth and brilliance. Your art piece may fall flat, be boring, monotonous, perhaps even lifeless. To make art great, it—and its creator—needs an inspired infusion of energy.

I'm not talking about your partner, here. I'm talking about you. Your partner isn't your original source of inspiration. You are. Remember, you are the artist. It's all up to you, and your creative inner muse, to begin the process. Think of your partner as the canvas. A blank canvas, which suggests an interesting possibility.

To create one's vision, the artist can choose an abundance of vibrant colours and a multitude of dimensional textures. Variances of mood, shadows and light all come into play when creating a unique vision. You can make it dramatic, subtle, intense, lighthearted, comical or ingenious. It can be as passionate as you really feel. To find that passion, reach beyond your current mood, your lousy day, the expectations you have about your lover; there is something more that you feel.

But don't be fooled: that something more is your creative muse and it is in your spirit, your energy and your heart. It's the dream you want your lovemaking to take on. It's the beautiful sensation you want to be engaged in. It's the most intimate, personal expression of who you really are, fully acknowledged, given, and received.

You feel it as unguarded, unbridled and unleashed; it is the most magical kind of soulful experience.

Once you tap into this creative energy, the art of making love becomes a living, breathing skin-to-skin meditation. The energy is there because you are feeding it; you are giving to it and the act recharges you because it is reconnecting you to the vital source of your energy. And that interchange is reciprocal and begets more energy than you originally generated.

It can feel like magnetic waves, hypnotically pushing and pulling you into something much bigger than just you. Revel in it. You are bringing out a creative energy which has blossomed and if you stay with it—stay engaged with it, rather than retreating into your analytical, doubting, expectation-riddled mind—that treasure will continue yielding more jewels, more gold, more diamonds. You've multiplied your gifts and feel the accomplishment, both about the creation and the aftermath of your masterpiece.

The outcome can warm you up every time you choose to remember the experience and, when you return your thoughts to the present, your mood will be altered. Your mind can replay the experience often and savour it all over again, which will feed your artistic creativity. That creativity will continually build up the desire to paint another masterpiece, to add more varied elements and layers to your lovemaking. Perhaps more earthiness next time, or more elegant grace; perhaps slowing down, speeding up, or being even more present in the moment.

Regardless, the memory of this recent sexual creation offers you more chances to delve into passionate experiments. It brings out the very best in you because you have given it the very best of yourself. You have the ability to approach every lovemaking opportunity as a masterpiece just waiting to be created. And that is great art. ■

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