



Old Mill Inn, Toronto, Canada

Want to set sail for your own private paradise and feel like Robinson Crusoe and his girl Friday? You may not have time for a full-fledged vacation in the South Seas, but what about a weekend getaway? No kids squabbling over the blue cup, no extra work crammed into an already full weekend, no realities to interrupt your fantasy. Just the two of you and a few days of blissful privacy.

Not sure where to go? We've found two resort-style inns that emphasize personal attention, excel in intimate touches and aren't restricted to what's offered in their brochures. Within minutes of arrival, you'll be greeted by name and feel attended to. Whether you hunger for dinner under the stars or rose petals strewn across your bed, you'll find it at these resorts. Your only decision is whether you'll head west to enjoy a dose of delicious ambience at California's Honor Mansion or north to luxurious elegance in Toronto's Old Mill Inn.

### Cozy Couples at the Honor Mansion

Built in 1833 in Healdsburg, CA, this small luxury resort is nestled amidst the extinct volcanoes and rolling green hills of California's Sonoma Valley. In the heart of wine country (just 80 miles north of San Francisco), the Honor Mansion offers guests a dreamy respite from their hectic lives. Victorian grace begins with emerald lawns dotted with lush rosebushes and comes face to face with romance once inside. But any thoughts of upper-crust ceremony disappear when you meet the innkeepers, Steve and Cathi Fowler.

One guest wrote that a stay here is a cross between a holiday at the Ritz and a visit to a dear friend's home. We think it's a little like waking up in the middle of a fairy tale. "When you drive up to the front of the house, you have no idea what's on this property," Cathi says. "We take guests across the pond and out to the pool area and they get the 'shock and awe tour.' You can hear them gasp — every single guest does it."

After a painstaking renovation in the early 1990s, original woodwork, molding and fixtures serve as a backdrop for period furniture, antique accessories, plush brocades and fine laces. Each guest room has a personality of its own, but they all include comfy robes, European linens layered over pillow-top beds, imported toiletries and everything else you expect from a four-diamond resort. And, of course, if you really must keep tabs on things back home, you'll have everything

Enjoy a romantic couple's massage at the Old Mill Inn.



# Come Away

# WITH ME

By Julia Rosien

*Relax, renew and rekindle the romance on a weekend getaway*



The luxurious vineyard suites at Honor Mansion.

you need to connect from the comfort of your room.

The 13-room inn sits on 4 acres of bucolic landscape punctuated with ancient sequoia, oak, ginkgo and magnolia trees. Vivid blooms and aromatic breezes from the vegetable and herb garden as well as the peach, fig, lemon and orange trees add to the charm. The Fowlers encourage guests to explore the grounds, lounge around the pool or simply find a rocking chair and soothe away the stress. Whether you're using the PGA putting green, playing bocce ball or tennis, or taking a Thoreau-like walk in the woods, it's

possible to spend hours here without bumping into another soul. We love the wildly romantic private garden spa pavilions where you and your partner can enjoy a side-by-side massage.

A guest once requested rose petals be strewn across the bed before she and her husband returned from dinner. "So we picked roses out of our garden, turned the bed back and sprinkled petals all over it," says Cathi. "We try to say yes to everything we possibly can."

For a truly secluded getaway, we recommend the Vineyard Suite IV, made especially for lovers. Situated farthest from the main buildings, this private refuge echoes the seductive beauty of Panama. A bamboo-framed fireplace casts a warm glow over both the bedroom and bathroom. A raised four-poster king bed, spa tub for two and bistro table on the private patio gently coax guests to relax, reconnect and do anything else that comes to mind.

### The Honor System

Breakfast at the Honor Mansion is a celebration of sweet and savory treats made with pickings from the gardens and served on antique china. Sitting on the redwood deck that overlooks the koi pond, you'll enjoy Mexican crepes, peach chardonnay bisque and award-winning (literally) scones. Throughout the day, feel free to indulge in cookies (they're constantly replenished), a 24-hour espresso/cappuccino machine, soft drinks and bottled water (chilled or room temperature).

Evening here officially begins at 5:00 with Steve and Cathi joining guests on the veranda for some mini quiches, crostini and fresh fruits and vegetables from the gardens, as well as a glass of local wine. Afterwards, drive into town for a formal dinner or bring back picnic goodies for a clandestine meal on the grounds or your secluded patio. Even after spending just

▼ Honor Mansion offers guests a heated pool, lush gardens and beautiful sunset views.



## Getting Away

**Use these tips to help you get the most for your getaway dollar:**

**Last minute:** Most airlines offer discounts on short notice. If you're traveling off-season, you'll likely have no trouble booking a room either.

**Mid-week break:** Consider traveling while others work. You'll likely save on airline tickets and the price of the room.

**Go any old weekend:** Everyone wants to escape on a holiday weekend, but traveling during down times often means reduced rates and more personalized service.

**Relax:** Instead of packing your weekend with too many activities, just be together. Whether that involves swapping massages or wandering through the park, get to know your partner all over again.



one night here, we're sure you'll agree that reality is highly overrated.

### Everything Sonoma

While you might be tempted to hide your car keys and pretend you're stranded on a luxurious deserted island, don't miss out on the dazzling beauty of Wine Country. And you don't have to be a wine aficionado to appreciate it — most wineries have orchards and gardens designed for strolling. You'll have a great time seeing the grounds, even if you're pregnant and can't drink.

You can also take a leisurely drive along the Pacific coast and follow your bliss. Here are some travel tips:

- The Honor Mansion is only a short walk from Healdsburg, where you'll find a wide variety of dining and shopping options. The concierge will be happy



Honor Mansion's patio garden is the perfect spot to enjoy a glass of local wine.

to help you narrow your choices.

- Hot air balloon rides where you can enjoy the air, take in the view... even renew your wedding vows. With a minister who's also licensed as a hot air balloon operator, the sky's the limit when you're sailing through the clouds.
- Quaint museums, mineral spas, antique shops and old Spanish missions dot the coastal route.
- For outdoor enthusiasts, enjoy cycling, golf, fishing, hiking and canoeing on the

Russian River.

- Don't forget to pick up at least one bottle of wine to enjoy on your next anniversary.

### Book It Now

The Honor Mansion in is the perfect place for romance. Rooms range in price from \$190 to \$550 per night. To learn more about the Honor Mansion Inn or to make reservations, call (800) 554-4667 or visit [www.honormansion.com](http://www.honormansion.com).

### A Country Retreat in the City

A cyclist nods to a jogger as they cross paths on the wooded trail snaking alongside the Humber River. Songbirds perched along the peaceful stream serenade a silent canoeist. Sound like a country retreat? Look again. This idyllic haven is a short 15-minute subway ride from the bustling downtown of Canada's most glamorous

mega city: Toronto.

Surrounded by 6 acres of parkland, The Old Mill Inn dates back more than 200 years, and the spirit here is definitely old-world charm. Cobblestone pathways, gurgling fountains and finely manicured English gardens all contribute to the pastoral charm. Though it's just minutes from the inner metropolis of Toronto, you'll be hard pressed to hear any sounds of traffic. "The Old Mill is a boutique inn that's nestled into a Central Park

environment," says owner, Michael Kalmar. "There's nothing comparable to the setting."

### Guests Only

The inn has 47 rooms and 13 suites designed to make you feel like royalty. Thanks to recent improvements you can enjoy comfort couture in the suites and rooms: overstuffed beds, whirlpool tubs the size of lap pools, romantic fireplaces. Need anything else? Then check out the bathrooms crammed with goodies from the spa, oversized plush robes perfect for lounging on the balcony and, of course, big screen televisions, CD sound systems and more connectivity than you could ask for. Need a closet? You won't find one here. Instead, steamer-sized upright wardrobes offer storage space for the lords and ladies that stay here.

Although languishing in the luxury of your room is perfection, trust us when we tell you to visit the full-feast spa. Spa director Christina McDougall asks guests to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to treatment to start the de-stressing process in the quiet room. Snuggle up with your partner in your robe and sit quietly, sip tea and watch the fire. You're even welcome to return to your room still in your robe — it's okay to put off getting dressed. Stay. Linger. Relax.

The Spa Date for Two includes a couple's massage followed by a facial, easily their most requested item on the menu. If you can't bear the thought of leaving your room, enjoy in-room treatments instead. Christina says she understands how difficult it is for couples to find time together. "Most of us work 50+ hours a week and rarely take time away. Reconnecting at a spa is the next best thing. It's a time for couples to relax and be together without necessarily talking."

### Everything Old Mill Inn

Enjoy your gymnasium-sized bathroom and float in your private whirlpool as much as you like, but when you need to come up for air (or at least nourishment) give these culinary treats a try:

- **Home Smith Bar:** On Friday nights you can listen to world-class jazz musicians for a cool \$10 cover charge.

- **Terrace Restaurant:** A romanticized replica of an English manor banquet hall, enjoy cosmopolitan cuisine with a side dish of multiculturalism. Executive chef Daniel Lammy, trained in Denmark, boasts signature specialties like Maryland crab cake on sweet potatoes and broiled lamb chops with a fondant potato and aubergine puree.
- **Afternoon tea:** Since 1914, afternoon tea has been a tradition here. Enjoy elegant delicacies overlooking lush gardens and the historic Old Mill Ruins.
- **Exploring the grounds:** If walks through the woodlands and gardens aren't enough to fill your time, discover the nearby neighborhood. Filled with century-old homes and winding pathways, it's the perfect way to spend the afternoon. Don't be surprised if you bump into a few "stars" while you're out — The Old Mill Inn is a favorite spot of Hollywood producers.

### Everything Toronto

If you decide to slip into town, you'll find historic hotels nestled amidst skyscrapers. From the panoramic view at the 54th floor Canoe Restaurant to the Courthouse Restaurant (a converted 1850s courthouse complete with jail cells as bathrooms), Toronto has something for everyone. Name your pleasure: ballet or baseball, gourmet dining or unrivaled shopping, outdoor adventures or gallery hopping. We've listed a few ideas to get you started, but don't overdo it... after all, the spa beckons.

- **Harbourfront Centre:** Here you'll find jazz festivals, fine dining, antique fairs and new and upcoming artists.

- **Plays:** Toronto is well known for its ballet, live theatre and musicals. Chances are, if it's on Broadway, it's playing here, too.

- **Tourism Toronto:** Because there's so much to do in Toronto, let your concierge help you create an excursion tailored to your tastes.

### Book It Now

The Old Mill Spa Getaway Package gives you a weekend of bliss with a luxury room (fireplace and whirlpool tub), side-by-side massage and buffet breakfast, starting at \$450 (per night per couple) CDN. To book your trip, call the Old Mill Inn & Spa at (866) 653-6455 or visit [www.oldmilltoronto.com](http://www.oldmilltoronto.com).

*About the author: Julia Rosien is eP's Senior "Steps" Editor. She lives in Ontario, Canada with her husband and four children.*



### Packing for Passion

**Not sure what you'll need for your weekend love fest? Here's our list of things to bring. Notice that we haven't included clothes, makeup or your hair dryer...**

- Slinky lingerie
- A CD of your favorite kiss-me-now songs
- Chocolate body paint
- Massage oil
- Sumptuous bubble bath
- Scented stationary to leave notes on each other's pillows

**Once you arrive at your destination, try these room service favorites to spice things up a bit:**

- Champagne
- Strawberries in chocolate sauce
- Hot chocolate with amaretto, topped with frothy cream
- After dinner, enjoy dessert in your room — with only one spoon

Revel in the comforts of the Old Mill Inn's deluxe guest rooms.



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