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## Warm to the occasion

Curl up with a robe, fire and fantastic food at Langdon Hall (loved one optional)

BY JESSICA LEIGH JOHNSTON

My significant other and I arrived at Langdon Hall late last year with a simple objective. Well, technically two: Get warm and stay warm.

Living in Toronto, Steve and I are fortunate to be just down the road from an ideal winter getaway spot, the historic Langdon Hall Country House Hotel and Spa, about an hour's drive away in Cambridge, Ont.

I'd visited the Relais & Chateaux hotel once years ago, and had been looking for an occasion to go back. This year I decided the single-digit temperatures would serve as rationale.

Langdon Hall is a romantic destination — cozy, warm and wooded — but I'm not going to lie — this was a trip about putting a spark in our room's wood-burning fireplace, one of 57 within the hotel. Bring on the bathrobes!

Approaching the main house feels like being transported to another time. Built in the late 1800s as a summer home for New York-born Eugene Langdon Wilks, the front is lined with four classic columns, and the grand entry makes me feel suitably special as we approach via the circular driveway.

This is the effect that Mary Beaton, who owns the property with her husband, William Bennett, is going for. "My hope is [visitors] can expect a warm welcome, and be received as very important guests on our property," Beaton says, explaining how the couple purchased the vacant estate 23 years ago from developers, at a time when there was concern in the community that the historic structure would not find a modern use. "It has been renovated, and it's come to life again for another go," she says with a laugh.

The hotel, which was recently voted No. 1 in Canada (No. 42 in the world) by readers of *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine, now offers 52 guest suites, including rooms in converted stables and cloisters, outfitted in a style that is both comfortable and luxurious. In warmer months, visitors may use the 30-acre property's outdoor pool and tennis courts — and meandering walking trails beckon year-round — but for our purposes, the real charms are to be found inside.

Once settled, I beeline to the spa for a hot stone massage. The therapist tells me that in addition to significantly increasing your core body temperature, this treatment will relax you, no matter what — apparently the heat's deep reach triggers a physical response that circumvents whatever non-restful thoughts may float through your head. Take that, stress.

I float out of my massage, into a new array of warm-

ing options. The small, fresh change room contains a whirlpool, steam room and sauna — the latter shared with the men's change room, just a head's up there.

Relaxed, I am ready for afternoon tea, a.k.a. eating experience Part I.

I meet up with Steve, who had napped, then made the mistake of "snacking" on a giant poutine portion while I'd spa'd. He's not super hungry for tea, which is served in front of yet another fireplace, awesomely. However, he manages to finish nearly every bite of truffled hen's egg salad sandwiches; prawn toast with avocado, and *alfajores* cookies.

Food is a major part of any stay at Langdon Hall. The hotel has the only five-diamond designated restaurant in Ontario, and thanks to chef Jonathan Gushue, each meal is a real experience.

Affable and passionate, Gushue tells me his kitchen is about making the best food with the finest ingredients, and bringing care and attention to their preparation.

In Southern Ontario, he says, this means starting not with protein, but with vegetables in planning menus. And Langdon is serious about its produce — the hotel grows approximately 30% of its food on-site, with the bulk of the rest sourced from discriminating and innovative local producers.

"Each dish has a piece of the grounds," Gushue says. It's true even in winter, when options are more limited. And this is a man who can work a miracle with a root veggie, as I learn during dinner, an epic eight-course tasting menu.

As someone who doesn't eat meat, I am thrilled with the vegetarian version of the meal, a divine parade of flavours, some of which I am still thinking about. (If I could have packed home some parsley root purée in my purse, I would have.)

Gushue's approach is ambitious as well as inventive — Langdon cycles through about 40 menus a year. And while veggies may steal the show, they are by no means the sole performers. Where Steve had Lake Huron silver bass, I had pumpkin agnolotti; his braised goat was met by my wild mushroom fricassee, and so on.

With the last of the frozen mousse and Calvados consumed a little before midnight, we waddled giddily back to our room, where Steve lit a fire while I dozed on the couch, full and content.

■ Langdon Hall (1 Langdon Dr., Cambridge, Ont.) offers numerous packages, including ones for Valentine's Day. Call 1-800-268-1898 or visit [langdonhall.ca](http://langdonhall.ca) for more information. Jessica Leigh Johnston was a guest of Langdon Hall.

*Weekend Post*



CURT WOODHALL / POSTMEDIA NEWS

If you're looking for ways to make your nuptials extra-memorable, palm trees are always a good bet.

## WEDDING VIEWS

Tip: when getting hitched in Hawaii, book the photographer first

BY MHAIRRI WOODHALL

My fiancé and I struggled for months choosing a location for our destination wedding. We both wanted an intimate beach ceremony with our families and close friends, but the complicated legal requirements in Mexico, and a vision of the Griswolds sunburnt and slurping Pina Coladas while watching us exchange vows had me panic-struck. After three exhausting months of debate, which included a possible elopement and my husband-to-be begging for a decision to be made, the clouds parted and we joyfully decided on Wailea in South Maui, a place that has perfected the art of marriage and simplified the process for Canadian couples.

Researching and securing a wedding co-ordinator online was daunting, so we focused on finding a photographer who captured our personal style. We then asked our fabulous photographer to suggest a planner, florist and other wedding specialists, as we were confident her recommendations would align with our tastes. The result was a stress-free, picture-perfect sunset ceremony on the beach followed by an intimate dinner for 25 guests at the Wailea Golf Club.

Here are some activity ideas to get you started:

### Sunrise renewal:

#### Champagne breakfast

Celebrate with a Champagne breakfast poolside at the Westin Maui Resort in Ka'anapali on Maui's west shore. From the seclusion of a private cabana you can toast to the future while watching the sunrise and enjoying the Westin pool area. [westinmaui.com](http://westinmaui.com)

#### Spa Grande's romantic interlude for two

Often touted as one of the world's finest, Spa Grande at the Wailea Grand is a palatial retreat where the art of relaxation and wellness has been perfected. Treatments and therapies at this lavish 50,000-square-foot spa blend the traditions of Ancient Hawaii with the Eastern and Western worlds. The 3½-hour Romantic Interlude package starts with an hour in the Terme Wailea Hydrotherapy circuit, which has five aromatic specialty baths with Moor mud, tropical enzymes and Hawaiian botanicals, Roman hot tub, Japanese furo bath, cascading waterfall massages, eucalyptus steam room and redwood sauna. A side-by-side Sandalwood Serenity Wrap followed by Hawaiian Specialty Bath for two and 50-minute Duo

Message completes this well-deserved package of indulgence. [grandwailea.com](http://grandwailea.com)

#### Cabana dinner at twilight

The Fairmont Kea Lani in Wailea offers a romantic four-course dinner in a private cabana on the pool deck outside of Ko restaurant. The twinkling lights from hanging lanterns and soft glow of candlelight dancing on the table sets the perfect atmosphere for an intimate dinner. The chef's incredible menu is inspired by the Hawaiian, Filipino, Portuguese, Korean and Japanese cultures from

Hawaii's sugarcane plantation era. [fairmont.com/kealani](http://fairmont.com/kealani)

#### Honeymoon on Lana'i

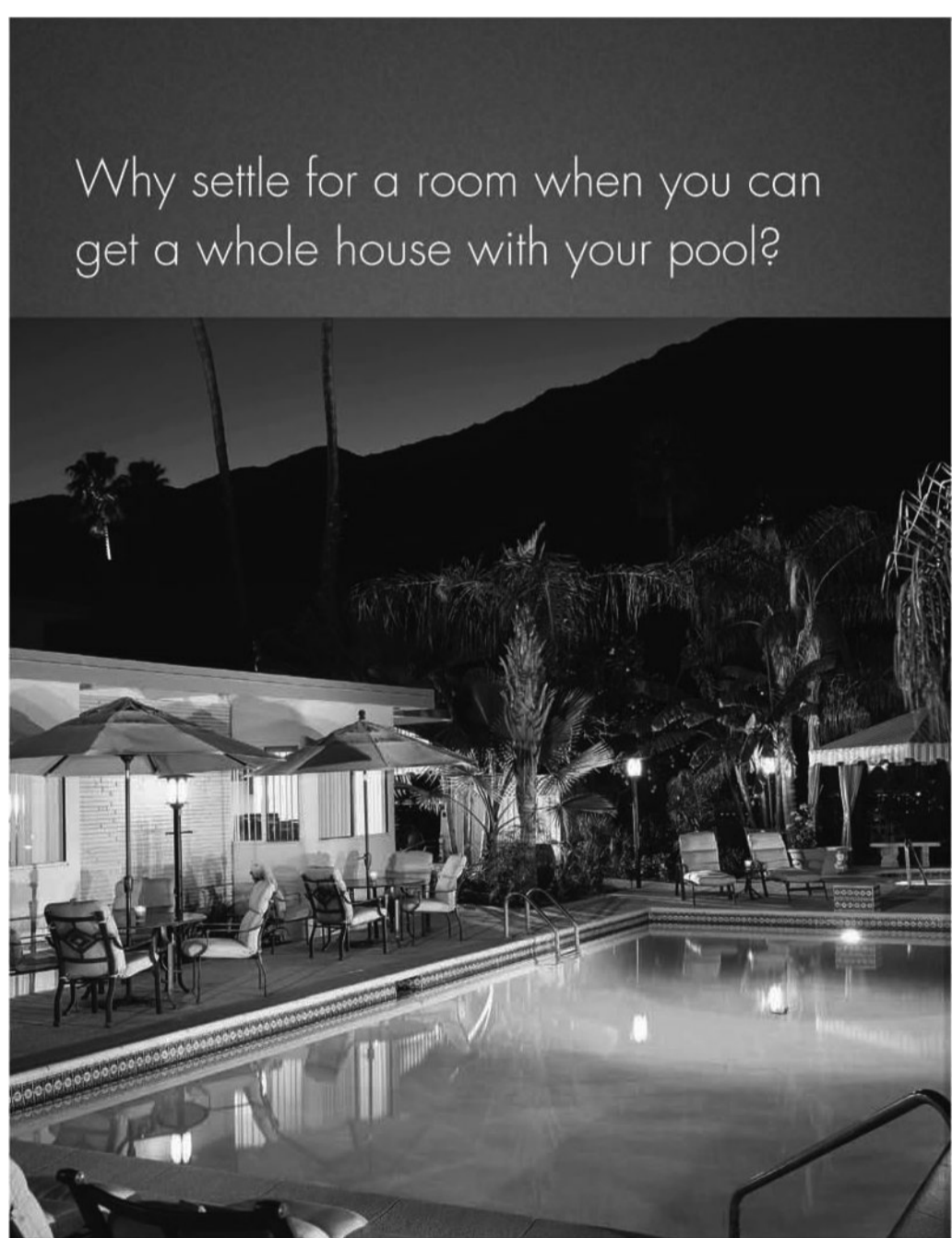
Celebrating with friends and family on Maui's sunny shores was the perfect way to start our married life, but after five days of barbecues and mai tais we needed an escape to Lana'i for some one-on-one time. A short one-hour ferry ride from Lahaina in West Maui, Lana'i is an exclusive romantic and tranquil paradise. Two of Lana'i's three hotels are spectacular Four Seasons Resort properties with world-class

golf courses; the oceanfront Manele Bay resort in South Lana'i and The Lodge at Koele in Central Lana'i. Overlooking Hulopoe Bay, the Manele Bay resort is the only beachfront hotel on Lana'i. [fourseasons.com/koele](http://fourseasons.com/koele); [fourseasons.com/manelebay](http://fourseasons.com/manelebay)

*Postmedia News*



For more information on planning a Maui wedding, visit [nationalpost.com/travel](http://nationalpost.com/travel)



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COURTESY OF LANGDON HALL

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