

I just returned from a restful and needed weekend with three friends from high school. We go away together once or twice a year for a few days. Each trip we select a different destination, pack yummy food, purchase a few bottles of wine, and enjoy each other's company. Bernadette, Linda, Sherrie, and I are all moms. Our time together is spent reconnecting, reminiscing about the past, talking about our current lives, and giggling like we did as young girls, but the *piece de resistance* is that we are not responsible for anyone but ourselves on these trips.

The theme this time was "pampering in Portland," which is also a wonderful getaway idea for Mother's Day. Before the "girls" arrived, I made a quick trip to pick up some necessary supplies. We always do at least one dinner together at our weekend residence, and this meal typically consists of Italian meats, savory cheeses, fresh veggies, delectable fruits, artisan bread, and delicious wines. After hugs and hellos at the airport, armed and ready for the weekend, we headed to our first stop, Sole 2 Sole Reflexology and Massage.

Relaxation Treatment One

Yoon Kim (shown preparing for reflexology treatments in top photo at right) opened Sole 2 Sole Reflexology and Massage about four years ago. The spa can host six people at a time for reflexology, and the environment is uncluttered and serene. Reflexology is an art founded on the methodical application of pressure primarily on the feet but also on the hands and ears. Reflexology relieves tension, improves circulation, and helps stimulate the body's natural functions.

The session begins with a hot pack placed behind your neck. The warmth radiates down your back, causing an immediate sense of calm. Next, you immerse your feet into a tub of warm water infused with herbs, which freshens your feet and increases circulation. The masseuse massages your hands and arms using appropriate pressure and reflexology techniques. Once finished with your hands, the practitioner moves on to your feet. The staff is talented at their craft, and you may find yourself drifting off into a peaceful slumber during the treatment.



Bernadette and Sherrie, ready and relaxed at Sole 2 Sole Reflexology..

Pampered in Portland

Story and photos by Tracy Beard

Weekend getaway for four moms

Relaxed and refreshed, we headed to the house rented for the weekend. The three-bedroom home, complete with a fireplace, was a welcoming place to stay. We each had our own bed and there was a kitchen and a comfortable and attractive living space. We found this house through Airbnb, an online marketplace that allows people to list or rent short-term lodging. Renting a house is affordable when you split the cost between four people. I have found Airbnb to be accurate in its descriptions, and it proposes unique and interesting places to stay, offering a break from traditional hotels.

The Firehouse restaurant, around the corner from the house, is a firehouse converted to an Italian-style restaurant specializing in tasty, wood-fire pizzas. After indulging, we walked back home admiring how Portland seems to produce creative individuals who transform buildings from their original use into curious and attention-grabbing dining establishments.

Treatment Two

After a restful night's sleep, we ate fruit and drank coffee by the fire, and then drove over to the Dragontree spa. Mitchell, Dragontree's director, told me that the Dragontree is committed to peace. "We provide a sanctuary from the stress that degrades the quality of our lives," he said. We were eager to find this sanctuary, so we quickly began disrobing and donning our spa gowns in the changing room. We felt our cares begin to melt away while we relaxed for a few moments together in the sauna. Called out by name, we followed our therapists to our private treatment rooms. Three of us chose massages, but Linda tried out a scrub treatment. My thoughts became tranquil as the masseuse worked her magic, removing the stress and knots from my body with a sumptuous deep-tissue massage.

When we finished our individual treatments, we met up in the Sangha room for a foot soak. Our conversation confirmed that, clearly, everyone was pleased with their treatments. Sherrie entered the room last, pulling her therapist behind her and announcing, "We are taking her home with us!"



Top: Linda, Bernadette and Sherrie ready for their treatments, including the Sangha room foot soak, bottom photo.



A cool cocktail hits the spot after a massage.

Feeling limp as noodles, we proceeded down the street for lunch at The Matador, an upscale Mexican restaurant. The potent and limey Cadillac margaritas set the stage and paired well with the spicy Mexican shrimp, perfectly cooked and served with a jalapeno-spiked sweet corn cake. Herbaceous cilantro and crunchy pickled onions accompanied the dish and it all arrived topped with my favorite sauce for this dish, the mild chili-flavored poblano crema. We shared the crispy grilled asparagus sprinkled with serrano vinaigrette and cotijo cheese.

After a filling lunch we retreated back to our weekend home (center photos, above left) and put on our jammies. We spent the afternoon updating each other, sorting through life's stresses, and finished by talking about our hopes and dreams. We reminisced about past trips together and silly stories from our youth. At dinnertime we pulled out the meats, cheeses, veggie platter, and wine, for an evening filled with good food, good wine, and lots of laughter.

The following day we shopped, explored Portland boutiques, checked out Powell's Bookstore, and brunchd at La Petite Provence.

Mother's Day is a time to honor and cherish moms. Moms are "on call" 24/7, so one of the best gifts to give is time off with no responsibilities. Give your mom, wife, or sister a spa getaway weekend with her girlfriends for some well-deserved respite and pampering. Portland has an ample supply of outstanding restaurants, luxurious and interesting spas, and cozy, quiet places to stay.

~Tracy Beard



The four friends each ordered different brunch entrées, including the Colette Omelet (below).



- SUGGESTIONS FOR MOM'S GETAWAY WEEKEND**
- Charming Woodlawn Craftsman**
827 NE Rosa Parks Way
Portland, OR 97211
Airbnb.com
 - Firehouse Restaurant**
711 NE Dekum St.
Portland, OR 97211
503-954-1702
 - The Matador Restaurant**
1438 NW 23rd Ave
Portland, OR 97210
503-228-2855
 - Petite Provence**
1824 NE Alberta St.
Portland, OR 97211
503-284-6564
 - Tasty & Sons**
3808 N. Williams
Portland, OR 97227
503-621-1400
 - Sole 2 Sole**
Foot Reflexology & Massage
1901 N. Killingsworth St.
Portland, OR 97217
503-283-7688
 - The Dragontree**
2768 NW Thurman St.
Portland, OR 97210
503-221-4123

Editor's note: If you can't send Mom away for a weekend, you can still pamper her with a Gift Certificate for a facial, pedicure or massage at a local salon.

Brunch began with coffee, tea, and mimosas or champagne cocktails. We each chose something different for our entrées: Banana French Toast; the Alsace Omelet with bacon, balsamic caramelized onions, and Parmesan cream; a Meurette Ham Benedict served on a croissant with a side of provencal potatoes and butternut squash; and the Colette Omelet stuffed with artichoke hearts, tomato, basil and mozzarella cheese melted over the top.

Goodbyes

Sunday morning came peppered with sadness. After dropping everyone off, I headed home. It was a special weekend filled with reconnecting, relaxation, silly talk, and some indulgence. We felt

refreshed and renewed, supported by friends, and physically pampered. It was time to get back to the reality of families, jobs, and life's routines, but the escape from responsibilities was rejuvenating.

Give the gift of pampering by sending your mom, wife, or sister on a girl's spa weekend with her friends. It could be the best Mother's Day gift she receives.



Former Longview resident Tracy Beard, now of Vancouver, Wash., enjoys travel, cooking, dining out, wine tasting, hiking and skiing. She writes travel, food and adventure stories for several publications. Read more about her at www.tracybeardwrites.com.



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