

TRAVEL

Treat Yourself to Quality Time at The Heartland Spa in Gilman

I've had spa treatments before, but not at a destination spa where all of your energy is devoted to you and bettering your life. After spending quality time at The Heartland



Mira Temkin

Spa, what I can tell you now is this: everyone should take the opportunity to go on a retreat like this. The essence of the Heartland experience is that you deserve to take time for yourself!

Nestled on 32 acres of secluded

farmland in Gilman, Ill., this destination spa is just 90 miles south of Chicago. Opened in 1983, Heartland combines nutritious cuisine, fitness activities, and luxurious spa treatments with enlightening classes. It's a combination that works to bring guests back time and time again. One woman I met had been back four times, and others make it a point to visit twice a year. Most guests come from the Chicago area, and a good many are from the north shore. I also met women from Wisconsin, Idaho, even California. Many of the guests come in groups of two or three. But even if you come by yourself, everyone is warm and welcoming.

The Heartland experience offers two-, three-, and five-night wellness packages and can host up to 37 guests. They also provide all the clothing you'll need – shorts, T-shirts, sweats, and a spa robe. Most people who try it overnight want to extend their stays. I felt the same way, even after two nights. It wasn't enough.

Executive Director Sherry Gossett told me that Heartland Spa has a return rate of 70 percent, with most guests coming back three to four times. "Many first timers come for two or three nights, then return for five. Often women meet at the spa and plan their return trips together," Gossett said. Summer and fall are their most popular seasons, but the spa is open year-round.

Get Pampered

The Spa offers a world of personal care services, from full-body therapeutic massages to salon treatments for hair and nails. It's all designed to detoxify, de-stress, and let restorative powers soothe you. I enjoyed a 40-minute full-body massage that had me floating back to my room on a cloud.

Hearty, Healthy Cuisine

The menu is designed around optimum nutrition as well as helping you manage your long-term weight goals. The breakfast buffet offered up such delicacies as an egg-white frittata, pumpkin cranberry muffins, oatmeal, and fresh fruits. Lunch was a big Heartland



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Visit Heartland Pond to relax or take a walk. Summer and fall are the most popular seasons, but the spa remains open year-round.

Salad or Italian Roasted Chicken Breast with roasted veggies. Grilled chili salmon with sweet pepper salsa, garlic mashed potatoes, and seasonal vegetables delighted us at dinner with a three-berry crepe for dessert. Hunger never gets the best of you because there are two snacks every day, such as a fruit frosty, strawberry shake, or a white chocolate, cranberry, and oatmeal cookie. At night, air-popped popcorn is set out in the dining room.

To continue your regimen at home, Chef Barb Peters offers a collection of easy-to-prepare recipes in *The Heartland Spa Cookbook* that's available for purchase.

It's All About YOU!

Exercise classes are designed to accommodate all fitness levels. Held in the Barn Studio, fitness classes include Bosu, Boot Camp, Gymnic Resistaball, Pilates Matwork, Aerobic Interval, Cardio Kickboxing, and training on the latest Keiser fitness equipment.

I greeted the day with a walk, took a body works class, learned about reflexology, tried Tai Chi, listened to lectures on "Finding a Personal Trainer," and relaxed at the lake with a good book.

The class about organic, natural, and sustainable foods was fascinating. The instructor recommended buying organic apples, celery, strawberries, and peaches because they traditionally had the highest amount of pesticides. Onions, sweet corn, and pineapple have the lowest in pesticides and thus the non-organic versions are safe to buy.

"It was very unpretentious and just what I was looking for," said Mindy Lake from L.A.,

Calif. "In this setting, it's all about living healthy." Her friend Nancy Portugal from Northbrook added, "I love the fact that it's so casual. The slow pace and homey atmosphere really takes you away from everything. My favorite class was the aqua-motion; it seemed effortless, but gives you a great workout."

Gossett continued, "My greatest pleasure is watching someone come in who's completely stressed out. A few days later, their smiles and relaxed expressions make them look like a different person. You can tell they've done something good and that we made a difference." When you stay at Heartland

between Oct.-Dec. 2011, you can pay the single rate and bring a companion for free to enjoy their all-inclusive packages.

For reservations, call 800-545-4853 or visit heartlandspa.com. Then, get ready to slow down and rejuvenate – mind, body, and soul!

Mira Temkin is a Highland-Park based freelance writer whose articles have appeared in Chicago Tribune, Family Time Magazine and six-00-three-five magazine. In addition, she's a high-energy copywriter working with advertising and marketing services clients. She can be reached by e-mail at miratemkin@gmail.com.




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The "No Junk Food" warning on this Heartland Spa sign makes for a popular photo op.

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