

BY SUZETTE LIPSCOMB

THE SHORE LODGE AND COVE SPA GETS A CITY-CENTRIC WRITER INTO PRISTINE IDAHO COUNTRY, WHERE A STUNNING LAKE IS TAILOR MADE FOR REFLECTION

A SHORE THING

My mother likes to wax poetic about her childhood summers with lots of cousins swinging on tires, skipping stones across the water and lounging along the shores of New Hampshire lakes. Having been born and raised near the beach in Southern California, I never had the chance to experience that kind of multi-generational lake fun that was part of her past. That is, until I recently made my way to the Shore Lodge and Cove Spa, located about 100 miles outside of Boise in McCall, Idaho. It's a place where dogs and kids, and pretty much everyone, is welcome at a true family resort. Grandparents and children can play alongside, or on, Payette Lake. There are tranquil views and easy flat walks for the elderly. Children can enjoy daily activities at Camp Sharlie (named after the often sighted twin dragon lake monster). Parents can swim, hike, golf, ski (water or snow) fish, snowshoe, play tennis, and spa (yes, that's a verb) at the newly opened Cove Spa nestled within the Shore Lodge.

My first trip to the resort was in the winter, when I spent a large portion of my time gazing at the quiet stillness of the lake. I had never been to McCall. In fact, I had never been to Idaho at all – not the glistening slopes of Sun Valley nor the quiet elegance of Hailey.

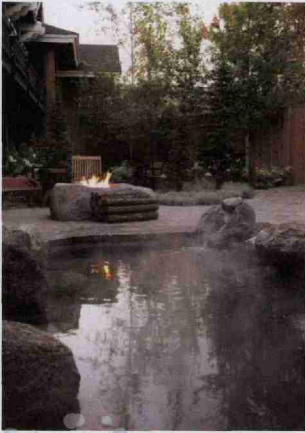
When I arrived at the resort, images of pillow fights on beds with the lake breeze sweeping through your room while John Denver's "Grandma's Feather Bed" playing in the background suddenly sprang to mind. It's all set up in an ideal way for group getaways: There are 77 rooms of varying sizes, along with a 5,000-square-foot Lake House with three suites that can be rented for family reunions, weddings, or corporate events. All rooms are scheduled for a remodel that will marry the style of the interiors with the recent updates to the lodge and spa beginning late in 2013. But even with the upgrade, the Scott family,

who owns the resort, want their property to be an affordable family vacation destination.

I wasn't adventurous enough to try the trout for breakfast, but I did go snowshoeing. Even though it was only about 15 degrees, I took the advice of Jocelyn, the director of Whitetail's Membership Program (Whitetail is a private club and second home enclave just up the road from the Lodge) and put on yoga pants and a light jacket. Outdoorsy women intimidate me, but I held my own out on the trails as we hiked a few miles in the morning dew. In winter you can snow shoe around or Nordic ski along the ten miles of trails. In summer there are sport courts and outdoor playgrounds for kids and adults, and Whitetail reserves a few tee times for guests at their world-class course designed by Andy North (a US Open Winner) and Roger Packard. Once we got back, we entered The Cove Spa with interiors designed by Colum McCartan, who worked closely with brand strategist Mark Natale to give the spa the authentic mountain feel.

WOOD, AIR, FIRE WATER

The spa itself was a work of art formed from 9,000 square feet of antique oak. The minute I stepped inside The Cove I was caressed in a cocoon of calm. Designed around one of the most comfortable lounging areas I have ever experienced, there were 104-degree saltwater pools lined with 30 tons of natural boulders from the surrounding mountains and an antique pump water feature. A floor-to-ceiling glass wall looked out to nature and flooded the area with natural light. Cozy indoor chaises cushioned and cuddled me. The Cove lends itself to the



feeling of being in a true mountain hot spring, but with all the comforts of home like showers and a steam room. The indoor/outdoor access to the coed lounge is a sun- or snow-filled courtyard depending on the time of year, and the spa is constructed with wood-paneled walls and Mother nature-themed art. The treatment rooms are named after seven local mountain ranges and staffed with highly skilled therapists. The staff keeps their sense of humor as the Keep Out sign reads, "Caution, Wild Bears, Do Not Enter Without a Cove Employee."

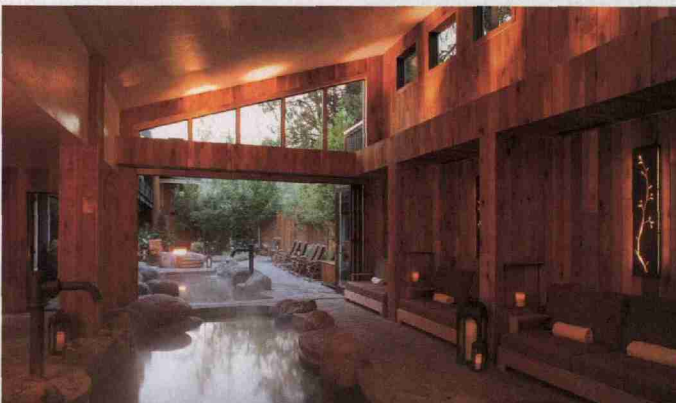
My facialist was an ice fisherwoman. You don't see that every day! She and her husband head out from 9-5 on the lake and drop 10 lines to catch perch and trout. On particularly cold days, they fire up a propane heater in an ice tent to protect from the rabid winds. "Aren't you worried that will crack the ice," I asked. "Some people bring wood and build fires directly on it," she said. I guess my knowledge of ice fishing is severely limited.

I'd like to tell you about my Mountain Mist Facial, but I can't because I slept through most of it. Cascades of decadent, organic Eminence products filled the air. Rebecca rubbed fresh garden scent after scent with expert twirls around my face. Cucumbers, acai berry, bamboo, naseberry, and apricot oil seeped into my very clean pores.

My friends warned me that my massage therapist, Judy, liked to talk during treatments and she might try to balance my chakras. I was fine with the chakra part, but I am not a big talker during massage. So I politely explained that I liked to have silence during my massage.

I had been having a problem with tennis elbow on my left side and she showed me where it originated and worked on it intensely. Judy stretched and pulled and explained what she was doing. She told me that my throat chakra was blocked and my heart chakra was out of alignment. Would I mind if she fixed that? And so she rubbed her magic stones over me and swung the pendulum in a variety of directions while she had me imagine certain colors colliding in a harmonious rainbow that fled my body. I rarely worked so hard during a massage, but the results were undeniable. She explained that it sometimes takes 24 hours for the full effect of her massages to be felt. I hadn't been able to lift a cup with that arm in months, but it immediately improved when she was finished with me. Truth be told, I would fly to Idaho again for the sole reason of having another massage with Judy.

Summers at the lodge are no less magical and make me wish for a big family. Colorful boats dock along the shore stuffed with families of all ages and sizes, and the highly popular restaurants and lounges are filled to capacity with crowds and cocktails. Local McCall huckleberries arrive to announce the start of the season. At night, you can find studs and spuds in the bar as well as live music and craft beer. Narrows, the fine dining restaurant in the resort, has a menu fat with bold wines that pair well with mountain food. And I can't help but imagine all the young lovers who have had their first kiss under the full moonlight reflected off the lake and held hands while sharing popcorn in the Shore Lodge's private theater.



■ CALL IT YOUR OWN ::

Want to call a piece of this bucolic landscape your own? There is a trio of homes in the area for sale in the \$650,000 to \$800,000 range, all built, or lots available to customize your dream getaway up to three acres. If you don't want to be bothered with all that, buy the completely turnkey spec home for \$2.5 million. For that price, you can dial up your steam shower, from your cell, to heat up while heading down the slopes.

:: shorelodge.com