

HER FAMILY / HIS

Reviewing Family Entertainment



Defying the Pump: Discovering Backyard Vacations

HERS

Worried about the traditional summer weekend “get-away” with the price of gas rising faster than a family budget can keep up? I think I found a way to have a real summer escape that is easy on the checkbook and wonderful on the nervous system.

It came to me as I was having a pedicure in our local mall. Waiting for my turn to sit on a naugahyde recliner with “magic fingers” massaging my back, I realized what a luxury thirty dollars actually bought me. Once a month, a trip to the spa to sculpture my toenails allows me to surrender the tensions accumulated over weeks of e-mail and telephone aggravation. It struck me that this was a “temporal journey” away from the everyday that women experience routinely but most men know nothing about. So during my pedicure, as warm oil was kneaded into my calves, I devised the perfect summer escape for my husband.

Our community is blessed with a Glenn Ivy Spa. Before this epiphany, this elegant spa in the middle of a suburban walker’s mall seemed like a strange addition to the traditional retail mix but as my husband and I discovered, it is ideally placed.

For our summer retreat, I arranged for my husband and me to spend three hours in the Glen Ivy Spa enjoying the luxury of a pedicure, the bliss of a private massage, and the world of whirlpools, herb teas, fragrant air and rainwater showerheads. I wanted the event to be a surprise so he had no warning, just the tease of knowing he was going on a weekend adventure and he didn’t have to pack.

We parked in front of the elegant entrance to the Glenn Ivy Spa. He flashed me a questioning look but decided to go along for the ride. I took three hours to have my pedicure, facial, sauna, and shower. I waited another hour for my husband to emerge. He was a new man. His toes had been polished, his back had been relaxed, and his skin had been toned. He was leisurely sipping a cup of herbal tea as he joined me. He was quiet, calm, mellow, and glowing, and we spent another two hours sharing conversation. It was the best summer escape we have shared for years.

So, don’t let the price of gas, hotels, airlines and restaurants cause you any stress this summer. Your own back yard may hold the answer to the perfect summer “get away”. I, for one, will never feel the same about my local shopping center and certainly not about Glenn Ivy Spa again. Actually, I think they have a place in every town center- if nothing else than to help us all celebrate being alive and offer an affordable way to rejuvenate during an economically stressful summer.

HIS

The Getty Villa Malibu – don’t let the grandeur of these words turn you off for a moment. Talk about finding the ultimate “out-of-LA” family experience without ever leaving town – look ahead and make your long-term plans for a visit there. You’ll need to. It’s booked months in advance, so work on your reservation as soon as you please. The website is www.getty.edu.

Upon entering The Getty Villa, your car climbs a superbly landscaped hillside that follows a babbling and meandering waterfall. The walk from the parking garage to the museum’s entrance is peaceful and private feeling. A docent personally greets you with a museum brochure to help guide you through your visit. You already feel as special as the place you’re in. This drum roll of an introduction may read a bit dramatic, but you’ll see for yourself.

The Getty Villa describes itself as “an educational center and museum dedicated to the study of the arts and cultures of ancient Greece, Rome and Etruria.” Modeled after the Villa dei Papiri, a wondrous country estate in Herculaneum, circa A.D. 79 (near Pompeii, and yes, covered by volcanic ash), you’ll need the entire day to wander about the property and take in all its exciting exhibits, splendors, galleries, instructional videos, fountains, sitting areas, paths, museum store, herb garden, and reading rooms. Its rare antiquities housed in its stately setting undeniably make it a world class destination. We allowed ourselves 4 short hours to “take it all in,” and it simply wasn’t enough time.

Closed for a massive rebuild in 1997, The Villa recently reopened and is an outstanding example of how combining natural building materials, such as granite, limestone and wood, with man-made materials, such as concrete, glass and sculpted metal, can work in harmonious concert with one another. The word “impressive” comes to mind.

Another simple but astounding architectural treat to discover is the Villa’s amphitheatre and adjoining Café. They both are open to the air, share exquisite taste, and offer fantastic sightlines of the sprawling sixty-four acre Getty property. A good quarter of our sightseeing time was spent dining at the Café. Although the museum is free (parking is \$7), the Café charges moderate prices for Mediterranean style food that is well presented and delicious. Our lunch for 3 (and our teenage son eats for two!), including sparkling waters, appetizers, a main course, desserts and coffee cost approx. \$45, including tip – a real bargain for what you get. It’s a wonderful deviation from your sightseeing sojourn.

It’s fair to effuse about this Getty Villa experience. The museum presents the Greek, Roman and Etruscan cultures and their people as contemporary and relevant. One learns how they lived, labored, won, lost, and loved. This museum is infinitely well thought out and very appropriate for the entire family. Our teenager marveled at the spectacle of it all. We saw several families with strollers. Waiting to attend the Villa is worth the wait – you won’t be disappointed.