



# MAGICAL WINTER GETAWAY

The 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa is a winter wonderland destination in picture-perfect Niagara-on-the-Lake.

By Stephanie Whittaker

Pack your bags. Now would be a great time for a relaxing sojourn in a place deemed one of Canada's prettiest towns: Niagara-on-the-Lake. When you arrive in that beautiful corner of southern Ontario, head for the 124 on Queen Hotel & Spa, where Eric Quesnel's team will be waiting to welcome you. "We would love to receive more visitors throughout the winter," says Quesnel, the general manager at 124 on Queen. "And it's a great time to be here. The vineyards are open all winter and there are wine tastings, but they're less busy." Another attraction, he adds, is the Shaw Festival, which will present two productions—Brigadoon and A Christmas Carol—until December 23. ▶



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The hotel, which opened in 2011, began with the purchase of two early-19th-century buildings on Queen Street that had hosted a series of businesses, including a dry cleaner in the recent past and, historically, a customs house. When Nick Capasso and David Jones bought the buildings in 2010, they housed a small hotel, Quesnel says. However, in the decade that followed, the owners bought more nearby buildings, and recently constructed a 40,000-square-foot extension behind the historic structures on Queen Street, adding 39 new rooms to their establishment. Another recent addition includes a \$1 million garden above an underground parking lot. “There’s a sitting area with a water feature and firepit,” says Quesnel. The hotel complex now comprises eight buildings that include 75 rooms, in addition to four suites and six villas.



And while most of the buildings are historic, the amenities and interior design belong to today. The recently renovated rooms—with the hotel’s signature blue, white and gold palette—have a serene, contemporary vibe. Absent is the ubiquitous broadloom so typical of most hotel rooms; instead, area rugs and hardwood floors bestow an understated elegance.

Then there’s the nearby Gatehouse, which the owners bought in 2018. The elegant 300-year-old structure once housed the first Law Society of Upper Canada, and although the original building was destroyed by fire in 1849, it boasts restored original stonework. “We do weddings in the Gatehouse, about 50 a year,” Quesnel says. “It’s also used for business conferences and meetings, executive retreats and product launches.”



The hotel has two eateries. The NOTL Bar and Restaurant is casual, serving pub dishes. For more formal dining, the Treadwell, which is based on the farm-to-table concept, sources local ingredients from the Niagara region and, of course, local wines. WineMaker magazine named Treadwell one of the top 10 wine restaurants in the country, and OpenTable named it one of the top 100 restaurants in Canada. Holiday meals at Treadwell will include a New Year’s Eve dinner in the countdown to midnight, Quesnel says, adding that the holiday period in Niagara-on-the-Lake is magical. “The decorations with all the Christmas trees make it like a Hallmark card,” he says.

One of the hotel’s main attractions is its 12,000-square-foot spa. In addition to offering traditional spa services—facials, massages, body treatments and wellness therapies—Spa Q features a hydrotherapy circuit, a snow room, hot and cold pools, sensory showers, a cedar sauna, and a eucalyptus steam room. “Many people stay several nights at the hotel just to use the spa,” Quesnel says, adding that it also attracts locals. “There was a spa here when the owners bought the property but it was small. Now, there are 10 treatment rooms.”

The 124 on Queen hosts some 30,000 visitors a year, which is why the staff currently numbers 175. Quesnel, whose work history includes several decades with Fairmont Hotels and Resorts in Quebec and elsewhere, says, “We love the relationships we create with our guests.” It’s why he and his staff eagerly await your arrival and will greet you with a warm welcome. 