



The Spa at the Windsor Arms Hotel

An aura of warm, discreet luxury in Toronto's upmarket district

by Mary Hughes



It is magic and mystery all rolled into one as I enter the Windsor Arms Hotel in the heart of Toronto's chic Yorkville. I am greeted by a doorman who assists me with my luggage and another who whisks away my car to park it for the duration of my stay... all in the style appreciated by the rich and famous who frequent this Gothic-style destination because of its privacy and discretion.

The Windsor Arms was built as an apartment hotel in Neo-Gothic style in 1927 and is an example of a finely-detailed, mid-sized, early 20th century hotel with a residential appearance. With its brown brick, cast stone trim, crenellated parapet and distinctive piers, porches and crests, the Windsor Arms blended harmoniously with the adjacent Gothic structures that dotted the expansive grounds of the University of Toronto. Over the years, the Windsor Arms blossomed into a true Toronto landmark – both for its architecture and design, as well as its status as 'the' place to be seen – and was designated an historical landmark by Heritage Toronto in 1991. The hotel became a favourite destination for local and international celebrities, and quickly gained a reputation as a private and discreet 'home-away-from-home' for such famous guests as Katharine Hepburn, Gloria Swanson, Richard Burton, Vincent Price and Christopher Plummer.

I check in and am given a brief, very helpful point of reference to my surroundings – a quiet street in the heart of Yorkville with its designer boutiques and restaurants just minutes from the city's financial and entertainment areas. I am then escorted to my room where I am given a tour to familiarize me with my accommodations. I am shown how the sound and light systems works; where the secret compartment for the daily paper is so I will not be disturbed by a knock on the door; the whirlpool tub, TV, CD and DVD players. Everything is state-of-the-art, including the décor: modern, yet warm, with fluffy, duvet-draped beds and a comfy sitting area. I step into



On site:

- Accommodations: two standard guest rooms, 24 suites, two Windsor suites, all featuring custom-designed 1920s-inspired French-style mahogany or birch furnishings, luxurious wall coverings, sumptuous Frette linens, generously-sized washrooms and 24 hour butler service.
- Courtyard Café: elegant and classical environment featuring limestone walls, soaring ceilings, skylights and balconies; an irresistible menu of dishes composed of light cuisine, flavoured with tastes of Canada, Asia, the Caribbean and Europe.
- Club 22: cozy sophistication featuring a dance floor, stand-up bar and seating area, as well as a ventilated cigar lounge. During the day it morphs from a casual brunch spot into a trendy cocktail hour destination and finally into a favourite late-night club scene for dancing and parties.
- Tea Room: presents afternoon teas in a serene, civilized ambiance and transforms into a Caviar and Champagne Lounge for evening celebrations.
- Lobby Table: casual communal dining spot for those looking for a quick breakfast or lunch.
- Five Conference/Meeting Rooms

Nearby:

The Windsor Arms is nestled on a quiet street in the heart of Yorkville, Toronto's most fashionable shopping area, brimming with designer boutiques, restaurants – both sophisticated and funky – and just minutes from the city's financial and entertainment areas.

Travel Planner

The Spa at the Windsor Arms Hotel
 18 St. Thomas Street
 Toronto, Ontario
 Canada M5S 3E7
 The Spa Tel: 416-934-6031
 Windsor Arms Tel: 416-971-9666
 Toll-free: 877-999-2767
 Fax: 416-921-9121
 E-mail: reserve@windsorarmshotel.com
 www.windsorarmshotel.com

The Windsor Arms was built as an apartment hotel in Neo-Gothic style in 1927 and is an example of a finely-detailed, mid-sized, early 20th Century hotel with a residential appearance. Everything is state-of-the-art, including the décor: high-tech modern, yet warm.

an amazing ensuite washroom with a deep tub, separate shower, and lights controlled with a dimmer switch. They have thought of everything! The high-tech atmosphere is almost too much to comprehend. I am only staying one night, so I hope there is not a test on all of this later.

The most striking new feature at the Windsor Arms is The Spa, a soothing refuge on the hotel's fourth and fifth floors. I'm on a mission! Rejuvenation of my body and soul is my goal. I plan to accomplish this with the assistance of The Spa's full range of massage, aquatherapy, aromatherapy and hydrotherapy services. The Spa has the latest in state-of-the-art exercise machines along with a swimming pool, stunningly designed with a poolside fireplace.

The next morning, after a very restful sleep, I'm off to The Spa. I emerge from my room into the softly lit corridor with gentle strains of jazz wafting in the background. The Spa features a complete line of Darphin products from France combining essential oils, plant extracts, and highly active complexes that together respond to the specific individual needs of both men and women.

I am greeted by Rhett who escorts me to the change area to prepare for my first treatment. I begin with the 30-minute Shirodhara treatment – an Ayurvedic treatment that involves pouring a steady stream of oil on my forehead to deeply relax the cranial muscles – a great stress reliever.

My day just keeps getting better when I experience a 30-minute body exfoliating treatment. Gommage is thoroughly and gently applied to my whole body to eliminate dead cells. My body feels silky smooth and is then moisturized with a gentle, essential oil massage.

I'm on a mission! Rejuvenation of my body and soul is my goal. I plan to accomplish this with the assistance of The Spa's full range of massage, aquatherapy, aromatherapy and hydrotherapy services.

The Windsor Arms quickly gained a reputation as a private and discreet 'home-away-from-home' for such famous guests as Katharine Hepburn, Gloria Swanson, Richard Burton, Vincent Price and Christopher Plummer.



The Spa provides a nutritious, balanced and healthy menu for light lunches or exquisite meals. For lunch I treat myself to an exotic fruit salad by the pool where I can relax, swim or sit quietly and read. Afterwards, I am escorted by a massage therapist to a quiet room to experience the Spa's signature haute couture, revitalizing, anti-wrinkle salon treatment. As I settle in, we discuss the unique history of the Windsor Arms. My host was the perfect model of discretion by refusing to divulge any names of the famous guests who seek refuge at the Windsor Arms. However, she did tell me that there is a secret elevator to the Windsor suite, the deluxe 1,500-square-foot apartment that enables celebrities to arrive at The Spa without being seen. This is just one of the many reasons they love it here: discreet, personal service.

It was now time for my own discreet, personal service to continue. My two-hour, deeply intense facial involved many stages of creams, lotions, steaming and a mask to die for. This treatment rejuvenates, tightens and gives life back to the skin by effectively targeting skin tone and fine lines.

I leave my facial room and float, with a glowing complexion, to my next appointment for hair and make-up. Hair designer, Mary Nigro, is one of Toronto's top stylists who regularly appeared on City TV's *Cityline* 'Make-over Day' program and has a host of credits in the beauty and fashion arena. Mary creates an amazing hairstyle for a woman with naturally curly hair who always envied straight and sleek hairstyles. Mary works her magic and 'voila'... I now have straight, shiny hair. The last step is make-up before heading home. She applies Darphin formulas – designed to give maximum benefit to the skin – and chooses deep, rich earth tones that suit my autumn colouring. Mary helps her clients determine the beauty routine that best meets their needs and offers advice on how to continue this at home. It was a wonderful finish to an amazing day!

I truly felt like one of the rich and famous, pampered and rejuvenated, as I awaited delivery of my car to depart from this exclusive and discreet 'home-away-from-home.'

