

CHECKING IN

# WESTIN OTTAWA IS A WINNER FOR LEISURE OR BUSINESS



ROCHELLE LASH

The Westin Ottawa has two personalities, business and leisure, and lots of features for both.

This nearly 500-room hotel is strategically located between Parliament Hill and the Byward Market, about one block either way, and overlooking the Rideau Canal. It is also connected via indoor passageways to the Rideau Centre mall and the Shaw Centre convention hub. So, shopping, meetings, cycling and classic Canadiana are all at hand.

Among the hotel's strong points are: its excellent concierge and front desk service; the charming #WestinWags doggie adoption program; and the independent restaurant, The Shore Club, which is a classy hangout for Ottawa's power brokers.

Here is a look at Westin Ottawa, two ways — business and leisure:

**Leisure:** The hotel is strong on fitness and offers the brand's RUNWestin program (seasonal), the 24-hour Westin WORKOUT studio and New Balance gear on loan. The indoor salt water pool and whirlpool are great bets for après-sightseeing.

Although the hotel does not have a full-fledged spa, you can create your own wellness weekend with private training, a health assessment and various massages, including hot stone, Thai or Ayurvedic.

Your day starts with an inspirational SuperFoodsRx menu. Breakfast features the customary made-to-order omelettes, but the Westin goes that extra length with SuperFoods like dark chocolate, freshly squeezed juices, cranberries, almonds, oatmeal topped with honey and walnuts, or smoothies blended with kale, banana, mango or berries.

For lunch — served Saturdays and Sundays only — there are salads with tomatoes and basil from the chef's rooftop garden.

The Sleep Well menu explains the benefits of melatonin magne-



The Westin Ottawa is conveniently linked to the convention hub, the Shaw Centre, right, as well as the Rideau Centre mall and is just steps from both Parliament Hill and the Byward Market. *WESTIN OTTAWA*

sium and potassium and tryptophan, and offers rest-inducing snacks like avocado, muesli with bananas, camomile tea or turkey wrap. If sleep is an issue, the Westin Heavenly signature pillow-top bed provides comfort with 10 layers of sheets, down pillows, a duvet and accessories.

Shopping is a big part of leisure travel and the Rideau Centre is 40 steps from the Westin lobby, down a carpeted hallway. The mall is winding up a \$360-million expansion and it now includes Nordstrom, Tiffany & Co., Lululemon, Kate Spade New York, Stuart Weitzman and Simons.

**The Shore Club:** This handsome, wood-panelled restaurant is both one of Ottawa's hottest social scenes and a top draw for business schmoozing. The elite meet

here for lunch over Cobb salads, steak salads, lobster rolls and prawn cocktails.

Happy Hour attractions include giant shrimp at \$2 each or oysters at \$1, plus cocktails such as the femme fatale, made with gin and crème de cassis.

The scene hits full stride in the evening. Manager Craig Stevenson works the room, and executive chef Jason Groulx appears in his chef's whites to see if his team's creations are well received.

The Shore Club's dinner menu blends classic grill fare with contemporary dishes, starting with spicy popcorn shrimp and steak tartare, plus steaks, chicken, short ribs, sea bass and the popular seafood tower, along with comfort sides such as

creamed corn, scalloped potatoes and shoestring fries.

Born in Ottawa, Groulx has worked in France and Montreal. His favourites include the bone-in rib steak, salmon Wellington, lamb chops or tuna with ginger and coriander. For dessert, the big deals are baked alaska flambé and key lime pie.

**Fostering Fido:** In the #WestinWags program, the hotel partners with Ottawa Dog Rescue to shelter one cute canine at time. The dog's job is to look adorable, take guests for walks and put a smile on everyone's face. Easily done. About seven lucky dogs have been adopted since the program started nine months ago, some by guests and many by employees who cannot resist the lonely puppy-dog eyes.

IF YOU GO

**The Westin Ottawa:** 866-716-8101, 613-560-7000, thewestinottawa.com; 11 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa.

**Price:** Rates fluctuate. In October, rooms start at about \$209, and include indoor pool and whirlpool, in-room coffee, mini-fridge, newspapers, 24-hour fitness centre, the Heavenly Crib, RUNWestin outings with a concierge, evening turndown for VIP rooms or on request. Pet-friendly, no fee and Westin Heavenly Dog Bed is included.

**Extra:** Wi-Fi, \$25 self-parking, \$42 for valet, 24-hour business services, limo service. Massages and training: 613-560-7337, westinhealthclub.com. SPG Starwood members have free Wi-Fi and other benefits.

**Daly's Restaurant:** open for breakfast daily, Saturday lunch and Sunday brunch.

**The Shore Club:** 613-569-5050, theshoreclub.ca; lunch Mon.-Fri., dinner and bar, Mon.-Sun. Happy hour: Mon.-Fri. 4 p.m.-7 p.m.

**Ottawa Tourism:** 800-363-4465, ottawatourism.ca; National Capital Commission, 800-465-1867, ncc-ccn.gc.ca.

The current canine-in-residence is a furry little mutt named Marley, and he greets guests in front of his doghouse in the lobby — a mini-replica of the Parliament buildings.

I travelled with my pal Rae Turley, who is a former board member of the SPCA, and knows her way around rescue dogs. She checked Marley's accommodations, food and water, and pronounced everything "paw-some!"

**Business:** The Westin Ottawa sports all the bells and whistles that business people need — mainly tech-centric meeting rooms with video conferencing, Wi-Fi, high-definition screens and sound systems. New for me is the technology of Mediascape by Steelcase, which is ultra-modern furniture that incorporates monitors so small groups can share information.

The program called Tangent at Westin adds an element. Tangent provides work equipment that can be rented by the hour for up to four people, so travellers can hold short-notice meetings or small, private confabs.

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