

## Wellness retreat named Canada's Best



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By Nate Smelle

Travellers seeking a transformational experience of self-care within a pristine natural environment don't need to wander too far off the beaten path to find what they are searching for when visiting the Bancroft area.

Attracting health conscious, spiritually-oriented eco-tourists to North Hastings from around the globe for the past 25 years, Grail Springs Spa and Wellness Retreat has earned its reputation as a world class tourist destination.

Being in business for more than a quarter of a century is just one milestone worth celebrating in 2019, said the Grail's CEO/founder Madeleine Marentette. Another reason she and her team of more than 40 staff are excited for the year ahead, she said, is the recent news from the World Spa Awards that they had been recognized as Canada's Best Wellness Retreat in 2018.

Now the third year in a row that Grail Springs has been awarded this honour, Marentette attributes much of their success to the fact they are continuously evolving along with the ever-changing spa and wellness sector. She said the evolution Grail Springs has experienced during the last two decades is quite remarkable.

Looking back on their origins, Marentette remembers how the first guests they accommodated showed up before they were officially open.

?Our first guests were a bunch of guys from a hydro crew that were working in the area because of an ice storm,? she said.

?They couldn't find a place to stay, but one of the guys had heard about us, so they just showed up. All we had were a bunch of mattresses on the floor, but they were very happy we took them in.?

Since then Grail Springs has transformed into a multi-award-winning wellness retreat. Some of the awards they have received over the years include: Canadian Spa and Wellness Award, Tripadvisor Travelers Choice Award, Tripadvisor Winner of Certificate of Excellence, and the SpaFinder Best Body, Mind and Spirit Spa.

Grail Springs did not become an award-winning destination by simply keeping up with the trends, explained Marentette. Instead, she said these honours have come from setting the trends.

?We are very conscientious about buying everything in Canada, as much as we possibly can,? said Marentette.

?Last year in July we decided to go completely plant-based. That decision was made because we were listening to our guests, and because we wanted to raise the bar as well.?

Located at 2004 Bay Lake Road on a 100-acre parcel of land on the Canadian Shield, Marentette considers the natural beauty of the area as a defining element of the unique healing experience one has while visiting Grail Springs.

According to Marentette's own observations and those of many of their guests, she said the peaceful feeling of interconnectedness people have when they first walk the property is palpable. Through the Grail's various meditation classes and their extensive trail system ? some of which leading to a spring-fed lake and crystal and granite meditative area ? she said they strive to highlight the

spiritually enlightening qualities of the natural environment.

?Nature is already providing us with that connection to self if you can find the quietness to appreciate it,? Marentette said.

?People want that quietness and that connection in their lives ? they yearn for it. When I go out into the woods I see it as one big church. When I am in the woods I commune with that spiritual aspect of myself, and the forest helps me get there.?

To express their gratitude to their patrons and the community, Marentette said they are offering a series of specials as part of Winter Spa Fest held from Feb. 9 until March 9.

For more information on these specials as well as the services and packages offered by Grail Springs visit their website at [www.grailsprings.com](http://www.grailsprings.com).