

Celebrate the human form; From corpses to exercise classes, it's all about bodies

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The outing: Start by treating your own body to minimal transportation hassle by flying directly into Toronto Island on Porter Air.

Next, head over to the Ontario Science Centre for an exhibit with the fairly chilling tagline "you'll never look at people the same way again." In case you've missed out on the at once terrifying and fascinating global phenomenon that is Body Worlds, here's the lowdown: in 1975, German scientist Dr. Gunther von Hagens invented a new method of preserving anatomical specimens called Plastination. The process allowed him to present real bodies, complete with exposed muscles and organs, contorted into lifelike poses (corpse doing archery, anyone?). This particular show is titled Body Worlds & The Story of the Heart, and features more than 200 specimens.

Slightly less morbid is Vanity Fair Portraits: Photographs 1913-2008 at the Royal Ontario Museum, the only Canadian stop for this collection of more than 140 portraits from the iconic magazine. Ogle works from world-reknowned photographers like Herb Ritts and Annie Leib-ovitz, and really appreciate the fact that this is likely the only time you'll ever see Albert Einstein and Matt Damon together in the same room.

After gazing at celebrity perfection, it's only natural to experience a fleeting stab of self-loathing. If you're a woman, send your man off to The Hockey Hall of Fame while you choose sexy back at Toronto's Flirty Girl Fitness, a fun group exercise studio that offers a huge menu of exciting one-hour drop-in classes like Coyote Ugly (dancing on a bar), MTV Choreography and XXX Power Strip.

Once your core feels dead enough to apply for a modelling job back at Body Worlds, mollycoddle your sore limbs at Body Blitz Spa, Canada's first water spa for women, where the main attraction is a 12-metre sea salt pool.

There's also a hot green tea pool, cold plunging pool, aromatherapy steam room, infrared sauna and 20 treatment rooms where you can indulge in scrubs and massages.

Why it will make your holiday sparkle: Because you might need something to reinvigorate your body after overdosing on shortbread and lounging on the couch watching It's a Wonderful Life, Home Alone, etc., for weeks on end.

Who it would be good for: Anyone who wants to "get physical." The best time to go: Any time before Jan. 3, the closing date for the Vanity Fair exhibition.

Where to stay: Centre yourself at The Cosmopolitan, a downtown boutique hotel where a key design element is "energy choreography" from Sylvia Noble (a.k.a. "energy consultant to the stars"). The focal point of each suite is a two-metre-tall gemstone fountain sprouting live bamboo, and turndown service includes a gemstone instead of a pillow mint, soft mood music and custom incense.

Extra treats: Dine out but rein in your waistline at **Four** Restaurant, where no meals exceeds 650 calories. And don't go thinking it's a bonanza of iceberg lettuce and celery -- dinner entrées include Smoked Sable Fish with Edamame Sweet Corn Succotash and Passion Fruit Mustard Glaze, Organic Squash Ravioli and Mini Bison Burgers.

The bottom line: \$450 for the entire experience for two, including dinner and one night at The Cosmopolitan. Airfare is

extra.

Reb Stevenson is a Toronto-based writer who says she probably won't spend eternity at Body Worlds.

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More info:

Porter Air: www.flyporter.com

Body Worlds: www.ontariosciencecentre.ca

Vanity Fair Portraits: www.rom.on.ca

Hockey Hall of Fame: www.hhof.com

Flirty Girl Fitness: www.flirtygirlfitness.com

Body Blitz Spa: www.bodyblitzspa.com

Cosmopolitan Hotel: www.cosmotoronto.com

Four Restaurant: www.fourtoronto.com

Illustration:

• Photo: Photo by Brian Willer / On the 12th day of Christmas: Toronto - You'll be fascinated (or perhaps frightened) by real bodies complete with exposed muscles and organs at the Ontario Science Centre.

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