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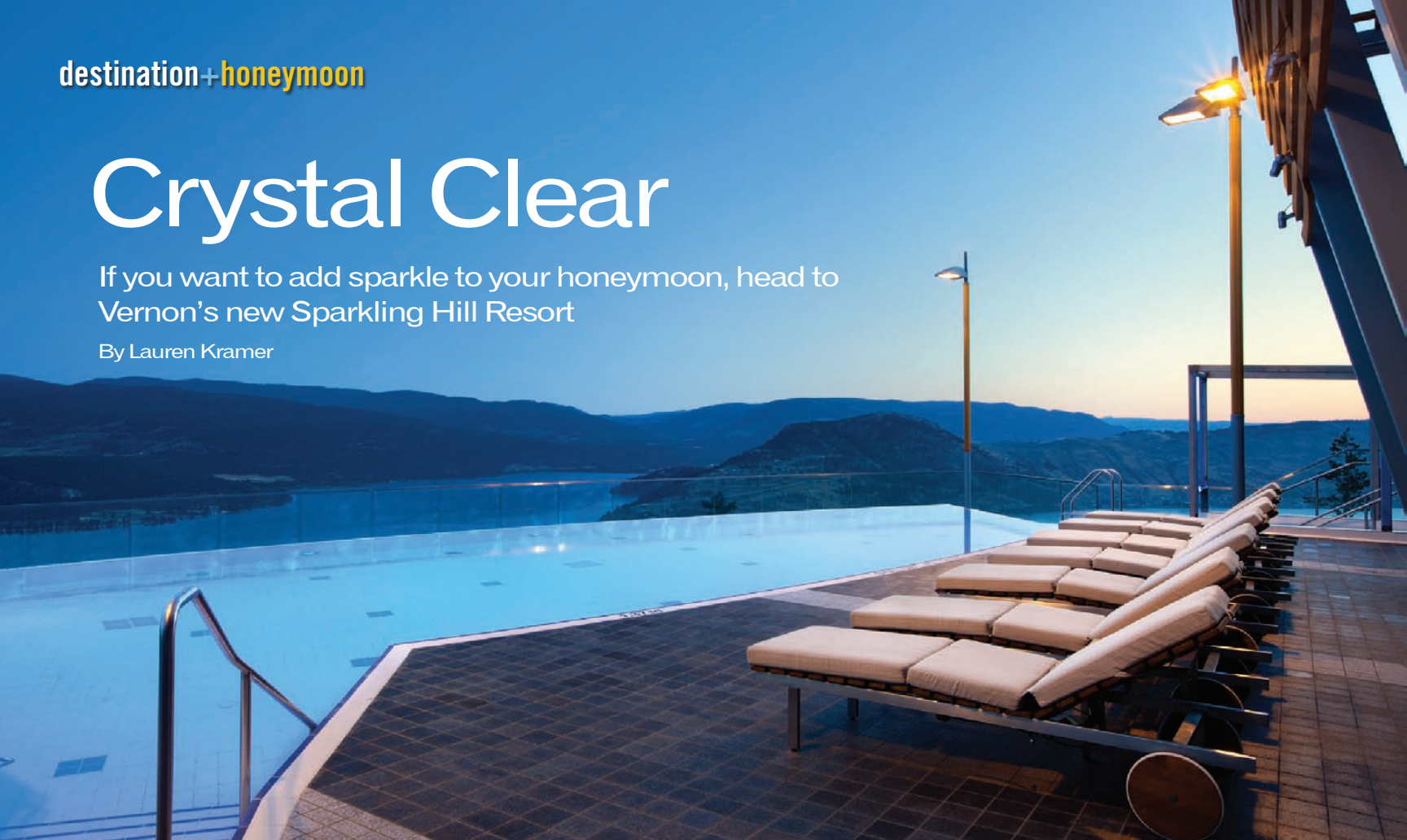
**ROMANTIC DESTINATIONS & HONEYMOONS • SAYULITA, MEXICO**

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# Crystal Clear

If you want to add sparkle to your honeymoon, head to Vernon's new Sparkling Hill Resort

By Lauren Kramer



**Above:** The resort boasts large, heated swimming pools indoors and out. **Left:** The PeakFine restaurant offers European-inspired cuisine emphasizing fresh and local seasonal ingredients.

**S**parkling Hill Resort is about two things: water and crystal. Swarovski crystal, to be exact. There are more than 3.5 million crystals in this property, with an estimated value of \$10 million. And they truly are everywhere. Reflected onto the ceiling of our suite. Embedded in the glass doors. Draped like a curtain above the entrance hall and displayed for purchase in the gift shop.

There's a simple reason for the conspicuous abundance of crystals at Sparkling Hill. Its owner is the patriarch of the Swarovski empire, Gurnot Langes-Swarovski himself. The idea for the resort began with Hans-Peter Mayr, an Austrian who had spent his career in the European spa industry and wanted to bring the concept to Canada. He needed an investor, and found it in fellow Austrian Langes-Swarovski. After inspecting the 70 hectare package of land atop the Commonage Mountain Range, nine kilometres south of Vernon, BC, Langes-Swarovski exclaimed, "Let's do it!" And \$122 million later, the resort opened in May 2010.

Honeymoons are all about intimacy, vacations of the most special kind. And if you're looking for something out-of-the ordinary, it's safe to say there is nothing else like Sparkling Hill Resort—in BC, anyway. Even its architecture is distinctly different. From outside you see an impressive mass of glass adorned with what looks like a giant spider's orb. "It's constructed in the shape of a crystal and at night it twinkles brilliantly," confides Holly Wood, public relations manager.

With its focus on health and wellness, this is the perfect place to de-stress after a wedding. Walk inside and the first thing you notice is the number of people wearing white robes and dreamy expressions on their faces. No one is tapping their fingers on laptop computers or iPhones. Couples walk arm in arm around the property in a state of utopian relaxation. Most of them are either going to or coming from KurSpa.

Nope, it's no ordinary spa, either. Sure, you can get your skin and beauty treatments here—massages, mud, waxing and facials. But the real experience at KurSpa is in the saunas and steam rooms. There are eight of them in total, ranging from a salt steam at 40 degrees to

## Couples walk arm in arm around the property in a state of utopian relaxation.

a 60-degree herbal sauna and a Finnish classic sauna at 90 degrees. My personal favourite quickly became the rose steam, a room with petals embedded in the walls, and a thick mist mingling with the scent of roses in the air.

As in Europe, men and women experience the saunas and steam rooms together, with no segregation except for the changing rooms. Each night between 9:00pm and 10:00pm guests have the option to use the facilities “European style,” or devoid of swimsuits, though word on the street is that North Americans have been reluctant to go au naturel.

The 40,000-square-foot spa is the heart of the hotel, a massive, airy space located on the ground floor. As you walk down its central passage, healing and wellness treatment rooms are on your right, while pampering sessions are on the left. Midway lies the indoor and outdoor swimming pools, the hot tub and the Kneipp water therapy walkway, four pools that alternate hot and cold water. The idea is that by moving from hot rooms to cold rooms and back to hot again, it improves your blood circulation and boosts your energy.


The spa also offers an ice lab, the resort’s coldest environment. In this cold sauna, guests enter three consecutive chambers wearing a special mask on their faces. The first chamber is minus 10 degrees Celsius and the second, minus 60. By the time you reach chamber three, the temperature has plummeted to minus 110 degrees Celsius. Fortunately, the entire experience is just three minutes long. “The cold is really helpful if you’re experiencing pain,” says Mayr.

We gather with other guests for the daily 4:30pm ritual: the sauna infusion, where we get to lather our bodies with an exfoliating peppermint and salt mixture, then sit like salted french fries in the steam room. Five minutes later we emerge hot and sweaty, but smelling deliciously like after-dinner mints.

With soft bathrobes against our skin—everyday clothes are rendered obsolete at Sparkling Hill—we retreat to the Tea Room to lose ourselves in what’s arguably the best possible view of Lake Okanagan. From the massive floor-to-ceiling windows on each level, we gaze at the Monashee Mountains towering over Lake Okanagan, while below us is a sharp vertical descent of forested mountainside. The vista is stark and mesmerizing. It slows the tempo of our lives and commands our attention with its sheer loveliness.

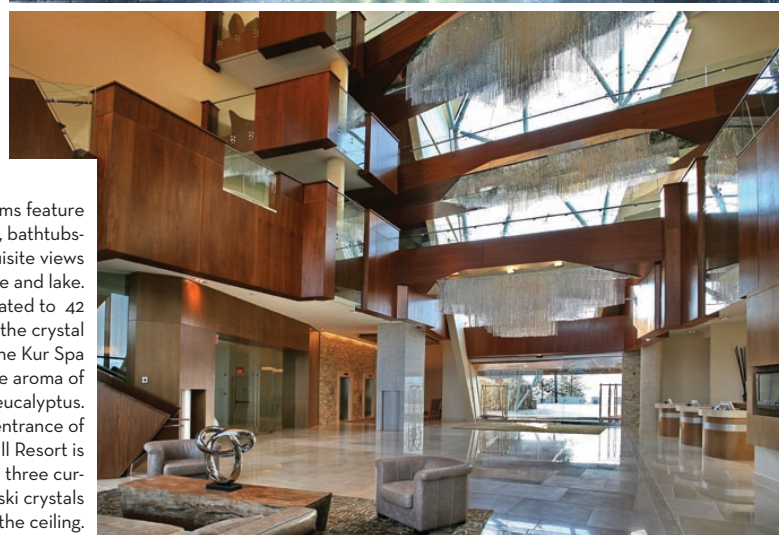
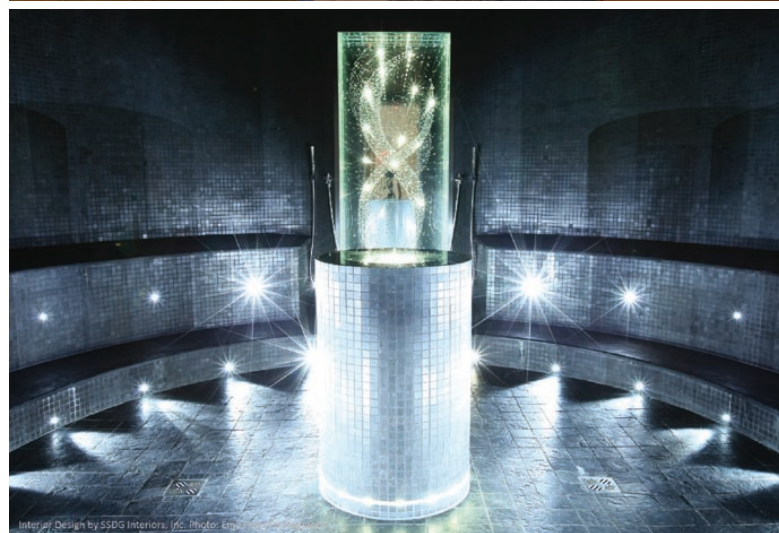
Our compact, well laid-out bedroom offers the same exquisite view. From a bathtub that easily fits two, our eyes skim over the treetops and down the hillside to the lake some 3,000 feet below us. The décor is minimalist—with the exception of an in-room crystal display, and the crystal’s reflection on our ceiling with the flick of a light switch.

A king bed with comfy white linens is the room’s centerpiece, while the bathroom is sleek and modern, with a walk-in shower and double basins embedded in granite counters. Everything is modern and new—from the flat-screen television to the texture of the bathrobes on our skin. On our second day, we can’t bear to remove our bathrobes until dinner time.

We book a chocolate bath in the spa and spend 20 minutes bathing lazily in a hot cocoa mixture. By the time we leave the resort we’re wearing the same relaxed, dreamy expressions on our faces as those we witnessed on others’ when we first arrived. The real world couldn’t feel further away. 



\* Video  
<http://goo.gl/QKYj4>



**Top:** Bedrooms feature minimalist décor, bathtubs-for-two and exquisite views of the hillside and lake.

**Middle:** Heated to 42 degrees Celsius, the crystal steam room in the Kur Spa is filled with the aroma of eucalyptus.

**Right:** The entrance of Sparkling Hill Resort is adorned with three curtains of Swarovski crystals hanging from the ceiling.

### IF YOU GO:

- Getting There: Vernon is a five-hour drive from Vancouver, or an hour-long flight on WestJet or Air Canada.
- For rates and reservations at Sparkling Hill Resort, call 877 275-1556 or visit [www.sparklinghill.com](http://www.sparklinghill.com). The resort is offering a Couples Escape package for two that includes two nights with breakfast, two three-course dinners for two and two \$150 vouchers to KurSpa. Rates range between \$885 and \$1050 for the package, depending on the time of year.