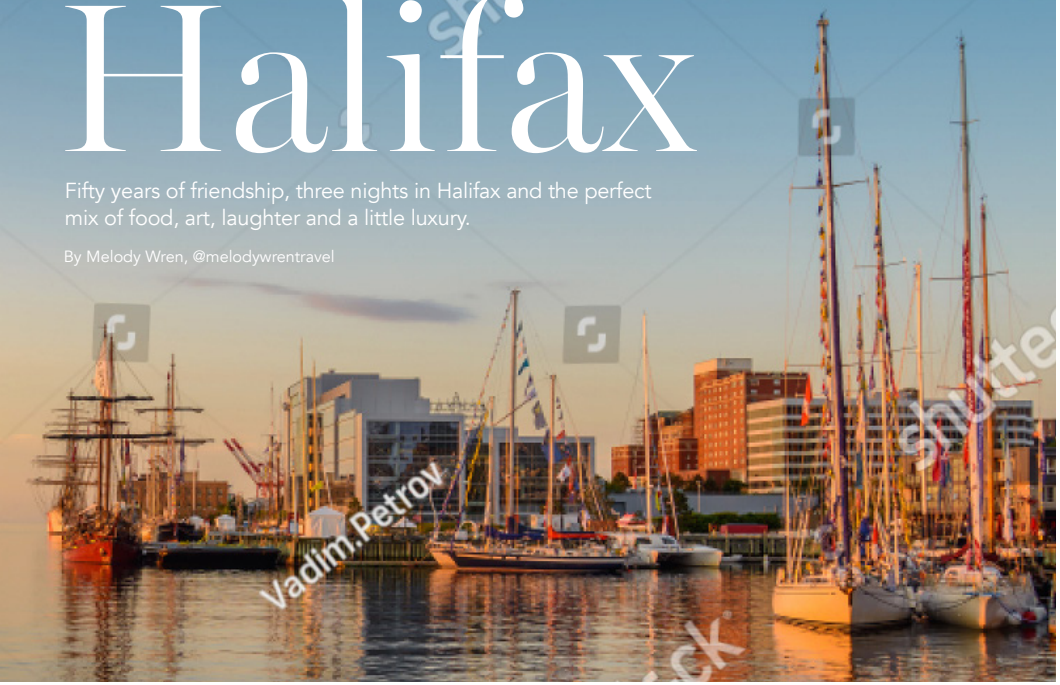
Girlfriend Getaway *in* Halifax

Fifty years of friendship, three nights in Halifax and the perfect mix of food, art, laughter and a little luxury.

By Melody Wren, @melodywrentravel



Mid-week escapes are ideal in so many ways. Rates are lower, there are fewer tourists, and it feels sneaky, like you're getting away with something.

Travelling with an old friend is one of the best ways to catch up. Texts, emails and quick phone calls just aren't enough. There's a friend I've had for over fifty years, someone who understands me in the quiet, effortless way only time can teach.

We brainstormed where to go, and it was my son who said, "Halifax is my favourite city in the world." We took him at his word and headed there for a three-night getaway.

Direct flights from Toronto are just over two hours and, to my surprise, modestly priced.

Since we were sharing a room, we decided to lean into a little luxury, and it turned out to be the best decision we could have made.

The Muir is a waterfront hotel whispering elegance as soon as you arrive. Valet parking, uniformed doormen, yes please, and a concierge who cannot do enough for guests. Our room had coffee, snacks, dishes, cutlery and a fridge stocked with drinks. The onsite Drift restaurant offers full cooked breakfasts that make you want to linger.

The location is perfect for exploring on foot, with museums, galleries, restaurants and the waterfront nearby. One day, while waiting for the complimentary town car, a cocktail cart rolled into the lobby for the daily "Boom at Noon." Mocktails made with smoked Sobrii gin were served just as the Royal Artillery fired from Citadel Hill. What a fabulous way to mark midday.

Our first evening began next door with Halifax Harbour Tours aboard the Violet Mac, a silent electric tour boat with a 100-year-old hull rescued from the Thames. Captain Colin Smith rebuilt her using recycled pieces, including church pews for passengers. Cara, our guide and storyteller, shared the history and lore of the harbour, including the Halifax Explosion. It was a wonderful introduction to the city.

Dinner that night was at Water Polo, a vibrant "sea-to-table" restaurant. To accommodate my lengthy list of allergies, the chef prepared a curated three-course menu beginning with freshly baked gluten-free focaccia, swoon! Charred eggplant followed, then miso cod with fingerling potatoes and local vegetables. I was spoiled for any other restaurant experience.

The next day we walked to The Bicycle Thief for lunch. My friend ordered the lobster rolls and declared them the best she had ever tasted.

Afterwards we tackled the hill to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia for the Maud Lewis exhibit. Her smile, colours, tiny painted home, photographs and story are a testament to joy despite hardship. Her entire little house has been moved into the gallery, every surface bursting with colour.

On our last day, Via Condotti felt like a celebratory escape, with a bold Italian menu and vibrant Art Deco decor. The gluten-free pasta and focaccia were such a treat.

Our grand finale was Steele Wheels Motor Museum, just outside the city. This massive space is packed with vintage cars, trucks and motorcycles. There's Terry Fox's van, Barbie's giant pink Corvette, Scooby-Doo's van and a restored Airstream turned retro café.

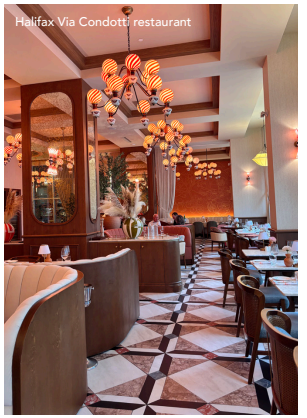
If you're a vintage car aficionado like me, it's basically heaven.

Talking nonstop, laughing our way through the days and catching up on fifty years of friendship went by far too quickly. Halifax gave us exactly what we came for, and perhaps a little more.

Before we'd even said goodbye, we were already planning the next escape. Same time next year!



Halifax Harbour Tours, Violet Mac with Captain Colin Smith at the helm



Halifax Via Condotti restaurant



Halifax Steele Wheels Motor Museum