

DECOR & STYLE

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M A G A Z I N E

A SURE BET
SAN DIEGO'S
PREMIER SPAS



“Over the years our bodies become walking autobiographies, telling friends and strangers alike of the minor and major stresses of our lives.”

—Marilyn Ferguson



Rancho Valencia's spa has exquisite detailing throughout. The personal amenities for guest's use after treatment are particularly luxurious.



Cal-a-Vie's ancient chapel brings an additional spiritual element to the spa.



La Costa's spa offers a beautiful setting, plus the Depak Chopra center for healing and relaxing.

Into each life some stress must fall. But given the inevitable, one of the best ways of dealing with tension is to unwind at a good spa. Whether you're looking for a 30-minute pedicure and foot massage or a week-long rest and recovery experience, there are spas in San Diego ready to accommodate your needs. There are magnificent, multi-million dollar spas where you can find exotic rituals that will pamper you for hours; and there are tiny day spas that offer more basic services. There are spas that specialize in performing clinical treatments, and there are those that work on a more spiritual approach.

No matter what you're looking for, you'll want to know what to expect in terms of amenities, service, facilities, cost and more. This is the first of a three-part article that will evaluate a number of the most alluring spas in the area, and aid you in finding a sanctuary that fulfills your personal requirements. Whatever you're seeking, you're sure to find.



THE FOUR SEASONS RESORT AVIARA SPA

The nearly 15,000 square-foot Spa & Fitness Center at the Four Seasons Resort Aviara was designed to create a utopian experience for exercise, rejuvenation and relaxation. The design combines natural light, water and warm, earthy colors and textures to create a peaceful oasis. Marble tile, rich woods and sophisticated California artwork are used throughout the facility. Soothing water features at the spa entrance and in the lounge act as extensions of the nearby Pacific Ocean and Batiquitos Lagoon. Further capitalizing on the beautiful surrounding environment, the architects strategically placed windows and skylight atriums to allow the warmth of the California sun to permeate the facility and create a soothing atmosphere.



A glass-roofed solarium lounge offers guests a variety of comfortable chairs, lounges and magazines to enjoy near a cozy fireplace. Tea and fruit are offered to further make the setting an ideal place to unwind before or after a treatment. Some may choose to enter a steam room or sauna, or recline in a lounge chair near the Jacuzzi tub prior to having a treatment, where iced towels and crisp cucumbers are provided for the face and eyes to encourage calm and renewal.

The resort's 20 indoor treatment rooms each feature individual temperature, lighting and music controls. Candles and rose petals increase the sensuous mood of many treatments. Specialty rooms include an intimate couple's suite with private outdoor whirlpool, a Vichy shower room that is tiled from floor to ceiling, and a junior suite with deep soaking tub and Swiss shower.

The spa prides itself in offering exceptional service and only the best treatments. Service is knowledgeable and professional. The menu of services features a selection of Aviara specialties, as well as a wide variety of traditional spa treatments. Spa clients can choose from an assortment of massages, scrubs, body wraps, customized facials, Ayurvedic treatments and bath rituals.

Left:
Guests in the Santaluz lounge enjoy the soothing sounds of a fountain, refreshing teas and tasty treats after they complete their massage.

Right:
A masseuse at La Costa spa delicately applies a salt scrub to exfoliate the skin.



I indulged in the Four Seasons signature offering, the Celebrate the Seasons Treatment. Each stage of the treatment was blissful, making me wish there were more seasons in the year. The pampering began with winter. Peppermint, it was explained to me, is the essence of winter. Thus, a cup of peppermint tea opened the session, progressing then to a hand, back and foot peppermint scrub.

For spring, I learned that a combination of floral and citrus aromas reflects the regeneration of life when winter's chill subsides. Verviene Shea Butter and Oil was applied to my hands, arms and legs. A warm herbal sheet was wrapped around my body and hands, which were then enfolded in moist, heated towels. My unwrapping segued into summer.

The summer stage provided an introduction to diverse massage techniques from around the globe. An application of Coco Vanilla Shea Butter and Oil was applied while Thai, Lomi Lomi (a Hawaiian technique) and reflexology massage followed.

As all good things must come to pass, fall, the final season, was ushered in with Ayurvedic herbs from India. An herbal scalp treatment incorporated warm water in a soothing massage that cleansed and nourished my scalp. With my head gently wrapped in a warm towel to enhance the herbal action, I was moved to the steam room for my last part of the treatment.

As I reclined in a luxuriant heap in the solarium afterwards, I learned that the products used in the Celebrate the Seasons treatment are by La Natura and may be purchased if guests wish to try to recreate the experience at home. This treatment lasted 80 minutes. Price: \$200.

Reservations are required and guests must be at least 18 years old. The Four Seasons Resort Aviara Spa is located at 100 Four Seasons Point, Carlsbad, CA 92009. (800)332-3442.

LA COSTA

The La Costa Resort and Spa is a Spanish Colonial vision. The new spa opened in 2003, and offers a world of luxury with its facilities and treatments. The resort spent 140 million dollars on its recent renovation and it's evident. Featuring 18,000 square-feet of indoor space and a 15,000 square-foot outdoor courtyard, its design allows guests to feel connected to the outdoors, even when indoors. The spa boasts 42 treatment rooms, including two VIP suites for couples, and many interactive wet amenities both indoors and out. Furthermore, the Chopra Center adds a whole new dimension to wellness programs.

I particularly love the Spa under the Stars program that runs from 5-9pm on Thursday evenings during the summer. The event includes live music, (usually a Latin, jazz or Flamenco-style guitarist) as well as champagne, beer, wine and spa cuisine from the spa cafe. Spa guests lounge around the outdoor spa courtyard both before and after treatments, making it an ideal place to have "bonding parties" with your friends. All of spa La

Top: A glass ceiling over the lounge creates an especially relaxing sanctuary at the spa in the Four Seasons Aviara Resort.

Center: photograph courtesy of Las Ventanas al Paraiso, A Rosewood Resort

Bottom: The Rancho Valencia spa offers a luxuriously appointed setting that is next to none.



Costa's \$145 50-minute spa services are offered for just \$110. Any 25-minute service (usually \$75) is offered for \$60.

Offerings from the spa include a complete range of services. The Agua de la Vida service is completely complimentary and recommended before all spa treatments. This signature service consists of a series of invigorating water elements, an exfoliating body scrub and a visit to La Costa's cedar sauna.

My signature treatment was the Spanish Herbal Body Rub. Native Spanish herbs: fragrant sage, lavender, rosemary, combined with moisturizing olive oils, anointed my body while my therapist exfoliated and polished my skin. Following that, my hair received a deep conditioning that was lovely.

My treatment was the last one of the evening on a Spa Under the Stars night, and I must admit that I felt that my technician "wasn't into it." I will go back again though and hope to have a technician who isn't racing for the barn. The treatment was 80 minutes and cost \$205.

La Costa Resort and Spa is located at 2100 Costa Del Mar Road, Carlsbad, CA 92009. (800) 854-5000

RANCHO VALENCIA SPA

The brand-new opened spa at the Rancho Valencia Resort could certainly be touted as the "belle of the ball." Spanish Colonial in design, the grounds and facilities are mind-bogglingly beautiful, and nothing has been omitted in this sanctuary. The spa is 16,000 square-feet in total, with 10,000 square-feet outside and 6,000 inside. It's worth the trip to the spa merely to see the luscious landscaping, tile work, and a separate watsu pool that's a little gem where private parties can be given.

There's an exercise studio for yoga, Pilates and spinning. All treadmills in the gym have a DVD. The beautiful pool has two hot Jacuzzis and an ice plunge adjacent to it. And every treatment room has a private garden with a tub or outdoor shower. All in all, it's a genuine paradise.

My Zest for Life treatment was extraordinary. It began with a steam exfoliation in the beautifully tiled Vichy rain room that has a movable seven-head Vichy shower overhead. Rosemary and lemon steam perfumed the room while my initial exfoliation was conducted by my technician. Following that, we moved to a private garden room where a bergamot and fresh lemon zest sea salt exfoliation ensued. My heaven-sent treatment finished with a delightful bergamot and citrus massage. The treatment was 120 minutes and cost \$260.

Rancho Valencia Resort is located at 5921 Valencia Circle, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067. (800) 548-3664

CAL-A-VIE

As you enter through the private gates of Cal-a-Vie, you leave the world as you know it behind. Rushing, stress and gridlock are problems for

Top: Treatment rooms at Cal-a-Vie are decorated with elegant antiques and luxurious draperies. The doors open to verdant gardens and lovely breezes.

Center: photograph courtesy of Rosewood Resorts

Bottom: A large Jacuzzi, saunas, steam rooms and other means of detoxifying the body await spa goers at the Four Seasons Aviara spa.

