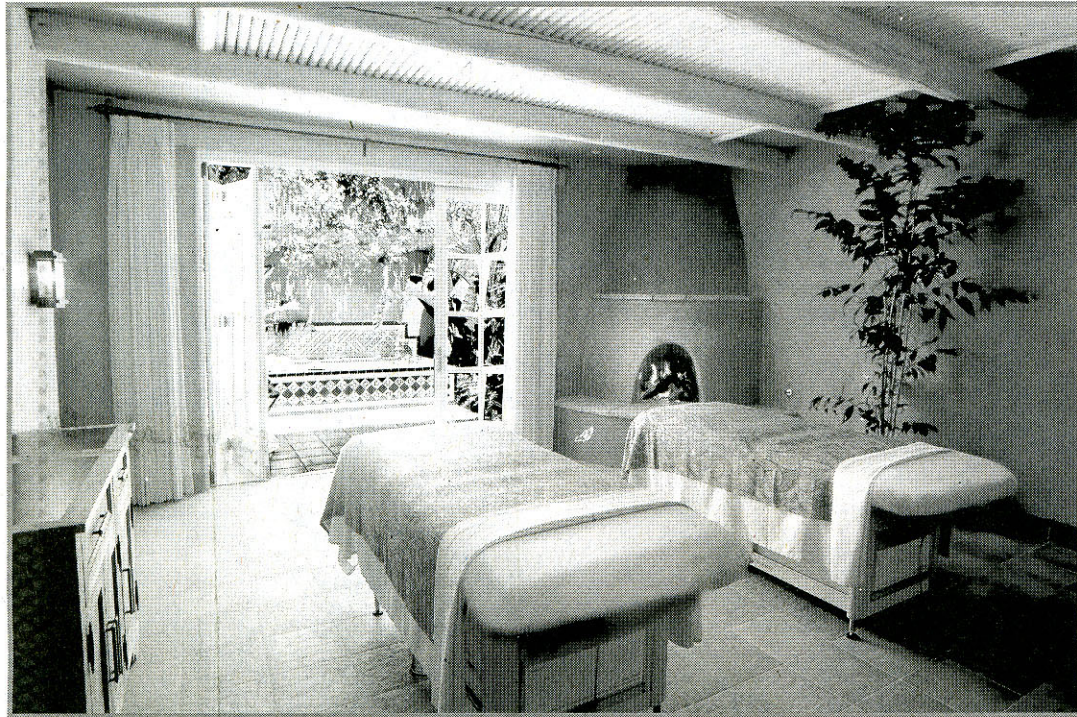


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TRAVEL

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Photographs by Janis Foley Photography LLC

SOAK IT IN: The Spa at Rancho Valencia, which has multiple pools and soaking tubs for water therapy, takes advantage of the San Diego County climate: All treatment rooms have private patios.

SPA WATCH
Ripples of relaxation

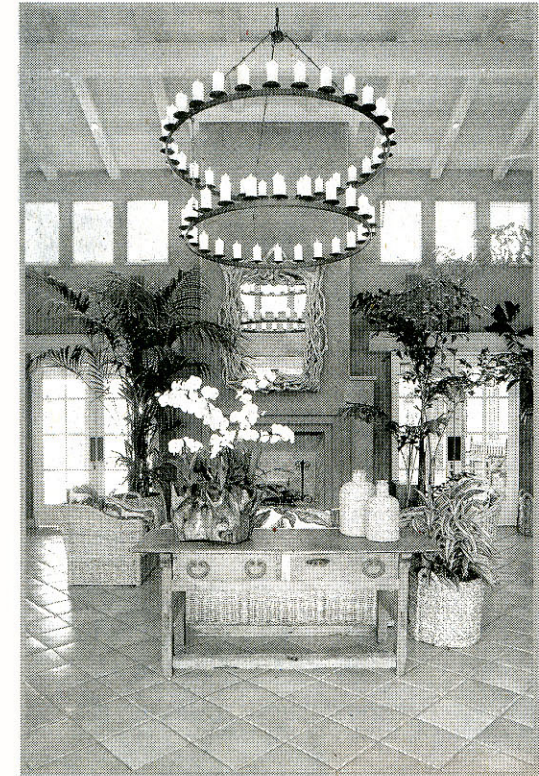
Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.

THE new Spa at Rancho Valencia sprawls over 16,000 square feet of indoor-outdoor space. But it would be great to be able to measure it in gallons. Beyond scrub-and-rub treatments, the spa has a whole “Water Wellness” menu — and the pools to prove it.

The Aqua Float is the spa’s version of Watsu, a form of floating shiatsu massage done in a pool that’s kept precisely at a womb-like 98.6 degrees. “The water makes you gravity-free, so the service provider can work some pressure points and stretch the body at the same time,” said spa director Mechelle Hill. “To get the most out of it, guests have to totally relax and surrender themselves.”

The spa, which opened in July, is part of the 49-suite Rancho Valencia Resort in Rancho Santa Fe, in northern San Diego County. Taking advantage of the temperate climate, all treatment rooms have private patios. Four have deep soaking tubs to serve up a selection of therapeutic baths, where essential oils and salts are mixed to relieve stress and sore muscles or tone the skin. Baths are recommended as a warmup before a massage.

The three plunge pools complement any treatment. Start with five minutes in a sauna or one of the hot (98- or 103-degree) pools, then plunge into the 60-degree pool for a minute. Regain



WELCOME: The entrance of the Rancho Valencia Resort in Rancho Santa Fe.

your composure. Then repeat. “It’s quite an experience if you’re capable of doing it,” Hill said.

Spa at Ranch Valencia, 5921 Valencia Circle, Rancho Santa Fe; (858) 759-6490, www.ranchovalencia.com. Baths \$70. Aqua Float \$150.

— ROBIN RAUZI