ABUNDANT INDULGENCE
SAVORING SAN DIEGO SPAS
BY ELIZABETH HANSEN

What a memorable summer we had! Not too hot. Not too cold. Just perfect for enjoying our great outdoors. And, now that school has started, it’s time for parents, grandparents, and other good sports to treat themselves to some hands-on pampering. San Diego has more than a few great spa and wellness destinations, and while we were beaching, hiking, prepping s’mores, and shuttling offspring from one camp to another, local retreats were tweaking their menus and enhancing their appeal.  »
I realized this when I walked into the lobby of the Catamaran Resort Hotel and Spa in Pacific Beach and eyed the breathtaking floor-to-ceiling Polynesian decor. I’ve always loved this sight, but it seems they’ve added more gorgeous orchids and tropical plants around the tall waterfalls that pour into a large koi pond. The Catamaran is just steps from Mission Bay, and the one-property Action Sport Rentals offers kayaks, paddleboards, sail boats, and electric-powered floating lounge chairs called FuroCats. My perfect day here starts with an early morning walk around the bay followed by a paddle, then into the spa for some serious indulgence. Spa guests are welcome to enjoy comfy lawn chairs, the hotel’s swimming pool, Yoga on the Bay (8:30am daily through October), and a large whirlpool with an enticing bay view.

Of course, exceptional San Diego spas aren’t limited to Pacific Beach. In La Jolla, the stunning Lodge at Torrey Pines sits on more than six acres and overlooks the renowned Torrey Pines Golf Course and the Pacific Ocean. The Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, home to about 3,000 of our nation’s rarest trees — Pinus torreyana — is steps away. The AAA Five-Diamond hotel has won numerous awards for outstanding cuisine and authentic California Craftsman architecture and design. While I enjoy the très elegant A.R. Valentien restaurant, my true happy place at The Lodge is the wonderful Spa at Torrey Pines. Here, a wide range of treatments are delivered by experienced therapists in a peaceful, wellness-focused environment. In addition to traditional massage, the Spa offers water therapies, body masks and wraps, skin care therapies, and body exfoliation treatments. I entered my post-treatment bliss here by sitting in front of the fireplace in the relaxation lounge where meditative music fills the air. Spa guests at The Lodge are welcome to use the fitness center, take yoga classes (Friday to Sunday), enjoy the swimming pool, and go on daily guided nature hikes. An added perk: Hotel guests qualify for preferred golf tee times.

The Miraval Life in Balance Spa at Park Hyatt Aviara, open since early last month, is the newest addition to the San Diego spa scene. In new globally inspired services include a Niramaya (Sanadit for tranquility) facial that features a sweet cherry enzyme peel. The Pohobii Facial incorporates a Manuka honey and aloe cleanse. Body renewal rituals include the Lemongrass Escape, which features a finely ground bamboo and walnut exfoliation. A dozen massage offerings range from a traditional hot stone to a meditative service that combines aromatherapy, breath work, and vibrational sound therapy from a thoughtfully placed Himalayan sound bowl. Energy and Eastern treatments include craniosacral therapy, Thai Massage, reiki, and reflexology. Other activities include healthy cooking classes, meditation, Pilates, and yoga. Spa guests are welcome to enjoy the hotel’s pool and whirlpool, which offer a panoramic view of the Batiquitos Lagoon to the ocean.

We had a glorious summer with our families and now it’s time for some self-care. Aren’t we lucky to be surrounded by so many wonderful options?

The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe is set to reopen in November following a multi-million-dollar property-wide renovation. A new signature restaurant will offer memorable cuisine, and restorative wellness experiences will be available in the spa.

In addition to great spas on this side of the border, I’m happy to share that Rancho La Puerta has reintroduced its “Saturdays at The Ranch” program. The beloved resort in Tecate, Baja California has long been a popular destination for seekers of health and wellbeing. The one-day getaway package includes roundtrip transportation from San Diego to Tecate (roughly a one-hour drive), a light breakfast, fitness classes, time to lounge by the pool or leisurely explore the 4,000 acres of gardens, mountains, and meadows, a farm-fresh Mediterranean lunch, a tour of the six-acre organic farm, a cooking demonstration, and a tapas tasting at the culinary center, La Cocina Que Canta (“The Kitchen That Sings”). Spa treatments are available for an additional fee. Upcoming dates include September 9, October 14, November 11, and December 9.

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