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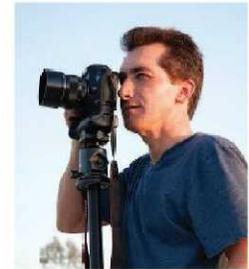
Contributors

► **Photographer** *LUIS GARCÍA* – San Diego/Tijuana
 "Made in Mexico," page 68

THE REPORT: "I've been to Mexico City many times for work, and I lived there when I was growing up, but it still surprises me every time I visit. There's always something new happening. It has a lot of talent, a lot of future, and is definitely one of the world's most exciting cities."

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVEN'T BEEN TO: "India. I can't wait to see the beautiful light and the people, and taste the food of that magical country."

ALSO SEEN IN: *The Wall Street Journal, Travel + Leisure, Departures* (UK)



▲ **Virtuoso Life senior editor** *MARIKA CAIN* – Seattle
 "Back at the Rancho," page 134

THE REPORT: "At Rancho Valencia they thought of everything; no detail was left undone. I just about jumped out of my skin when the lid of the toilet automatically lifted in our suite. It had a heated seat and a control panel with more buttons than my TV remote. I heard my 6-year-old in there talking to it more than once."

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVEN'T BEEN TO: "Stockholm. I'm dying to go!"



◀ **Writer** *AARON GULLEY* – Santa Fe
 "Just Deserts," page 98

THE REPORT: "Americans tend to view African big-game hunting as deplorable, but Namibia's laws, which allow for very limited and controlled hunting of rhinos, lions, and other trophy animals, generate revenue

that buoys its entire conservation program. It's refreshing to see such a forward-thinking and holistic approach. And with limited insight into economic and cultural conditions on the ground, I realized that we have no right to judge."

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVEN'T BEEN TO: "Egypt. Having grown up in Africa and traveled widely across the continent, it's silly to not have visited the pyramids yet."

ALSO SEEN IN: *Outside, Islands, the Guardian*

▲ **Photographer** *JEN JUDGE* – Santa Fe
 Cover and "Just Deserts," page 98

THE REPORT: "I love to fly, but with security hassles and delays these days, it's lost most of its appeal. When I heard how many flights we'd be taking on our safari in Namibia, I was a little worried. But soaring over the endless ribbons of desert in small aircraft and landing on swaths of barren rubble is 90 percent of the fun. The animals bring you there, but the flying will keep you coming back."

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVEN'T BEEN TO: "New Zealand. 'Nuff said."
ALSO SEEN IN: *Afar, Backpacker, GQ*

► **Photographer** *ALLISON V. SMITH* – Dallas
 In My Bag, page 78

THE REPORT: "When it came to photographing Todd Fiscus, his pug, Pippa, stole the show. She couldn't believe the shoot was about Todd and what he packed in his carry-on, rather than her."

I CAN'T BELIEVE I HAVEN'T BEEN TO: "Tokyo. I love all things cute, and I know that a trip there would be full of photo ops."

ALSO SEEN IN: *The Nasher Sculpture Center, Garden & Gun, the New York Times*



MARIKA CAIN/KCJIN, J. MIYAZAKI



BACK AT THE RANCHO

Southern California fit-spiration in a five-star package. BY MARIKA CAIN

IT BEGAN AS MANY SURPRISING journeys do, with a beverage. We had just finished breakfast at Rancho Valencia when a waiter dropped by with two glasses of bright-green elixir. “Our Wellness Juice,” he said. “Kale-celery-apple.” Is there a more SoCal greeting than the bringing of the green juice? We sipped politely, then with gusto. *Mmm, wellness*, I thought.

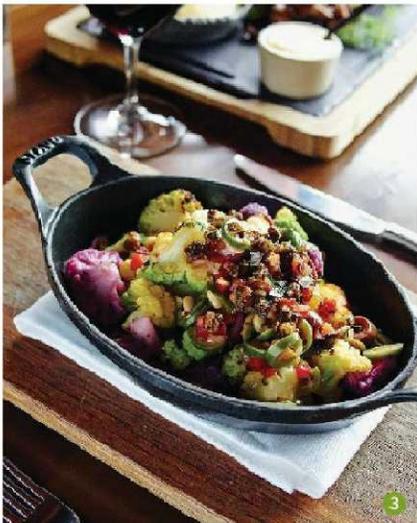
Tennis director Robin White and head pro Eduardo Sanchez, a pool, and the juice.

My husband, son, and I had arrived at Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa with no plan other than to swim and bask in the glorious Southern California balm. The guys mostly stuck to that plan. But when good health came wrapped in a lush, bougainvillea-draped package, the pull toward the virtuous path was strong. Here was an opportunity to return from a getaway feeling full of vigor rather than just ... full.

To get to Rancho Valencia, you drive about 30 minutes north of San Diego, turn inland, and wind past horse tracks, polo fields, and

PETER FRANK EDWARDS

Well Traveled



On vacation you're free to run, spin, and sun salute without restraint – or at least until you're too sore to do another downward dog.

tony housing developments with names like Churchill Downs. At the gate, a smiling attendant waves you into grounds bursting with palm and olive trees, succulents, banana plants, and honeysuckle and dotted with pink adobe buildings.

The 45-acre resort celebrated its 25th anniversary this year, but new owners recently completed a \$30 million overhaul, and in its burnished state it feels like a best-kept secret. The 49 suites in Spanish-style casitas are decked out with Frette linens, sunken living rooms, fireplaces, and giant bathrooms (our Valencia Suite, a few notches above a standard room, had an outdoor fireplace and hot tub). An original Damien Hirst the size of a barn door hangs in Veladora restaurant, which overlooks the 18 tennis courts – the resort's raison d'être.

HIGH ON KALE JUICE AND EGG WHITES after breakfast, I reported to court nine for a lesson with the resort's tennis director, two-time U.S. Open doubles champ Robin White. The property doubles as a private tennis club (not to mention a spa and fitness club) where members work out with pros and guests can sign up for retreats and lessons. White, now in her early 50s, has an easy grin and the gait of someone whose knees have known many a match. She spent an hour giving me, an abject novice, enough pointers and encouragement that I walked off the court feeling not like Maria Sharapova, exactly, but at least like a person with some business behind a racket. And a person who should take advantage of every available wellness option.

1. The private Wine Room houses the resort's own blends in oak barrels. 2. The signature wake-up treat. 3. Fire-roasted vegetables at Veladora restaurant. 4. Cozy up here and order a flute of something bubbly. 5. The main event.

PETER FRANK EDWARDS

one moment away

est. 1923

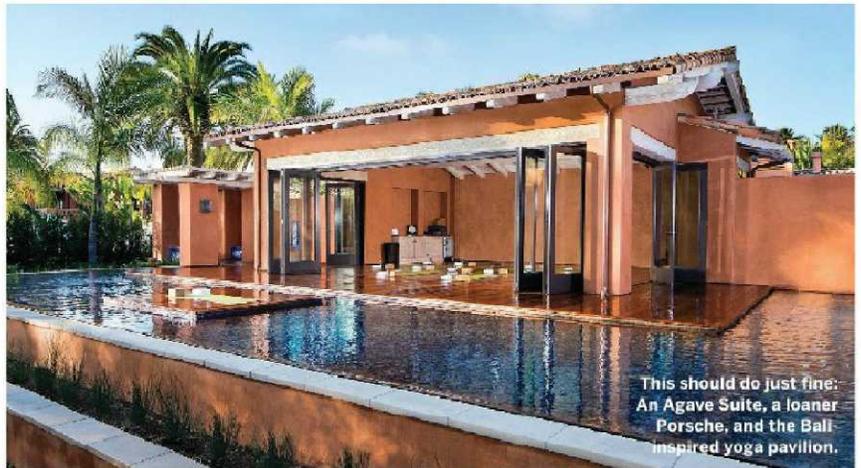
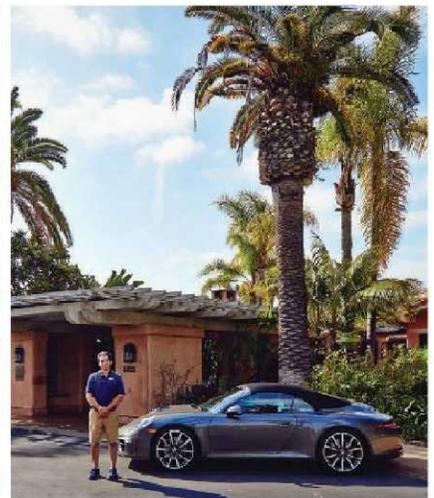
Some places inspire the best in each of us. They have the power to bring focus, to draw people together, to change our perspectives, and to launch great ideas. Find out what you can do with a quiet moment away.

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Well Traveled



This was an opportunity to return home feeling full of vigor rather than just ... full.

For instance: Attend a yoga class in the platonic ideal of a yoga studio, a lily pad-like pavilion surrounded by a serene pool and a profusion of palms, eucalyptus, and citrus trees. Work out in the airy fitness center overlooking the adults-only pool (one of two pools on the property) with its crisp blue-and-white cabanas. Report at dawn for spin class and, as the only hotel guest in a crowd of regular members, struggle up imaginary hills while the toned and tawny peloton joke with each other. At the end of class, one man started to wipe down his bike. “Oh, don’t

do that,” the instructor waved him away. “We’ll take care of it.” When I emerged from a facial, the spa therapist was waiting – with a shot of Wellness Juice on a small tray, of course.

Because the resort encompasses a tennis, spa, and gym membership, there’s a clubby feeling that goes with staying there. Members come and go in their Teslas and Lamborghinis and mix with the guests. (“You’re staying at the resort?” a woman in head-to-toe Lululemon with a Chiclet-size diamond asked me at the gym. “Lucky you!”) Rounding out the good-life

(ROOM AND PORSCHE) PETER FRANK EDWARDS

tip

"Don't miss hiking in nearby Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve – it's gorgeous. You can hike up, come down the other side, and walk the beach."

– *Tim Burke, travel advisor, Kansas City, Missouri*

ambience: loaner Porsches; a complimentary minibar, stocked not only with M&M's and jelly beans, but also trail mix and coconut water; a bottle of fresh-squeezed orange juice sweating picturesquely outside our door every morning; and a room service order of chicken Caesar and snapping cold sauvignon blanc (for me) and a plain hot dog (for my son) served in front of our outdoor fireplace.

The final ingredient Rancho Valencia tosses in to encourage a healthy-living experience, of course, is time. At home, workouts are wedged into nooks and crannies between the larger furniture of regular life. On vacation, those tight spots are wide meadows where you're free to run, spin, and sun salute without restraint – or at least until you're too sore to do another downward dog. As I sauntered back to my room on the last morning of our stay, complimentary Wellness Juice in hand, it felt like maybe I could move a little furniture around back home to make room for a tennis lesson or two.

STAY Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa offers up a slice of the California good life with **18 tennis courts** overseen by a two-time U.S. Open champ, 49 suites and four villas, a spa and fitness center with an adults-only pool, spin and Pilates studios, and a loaner Porsche program. The 45-acre property is a 30-minute drive northeast of San Diego (we rented a car) and a true escape. *Doubles from \$419, including wine and fruit on arrival, breakfast daily, and a \$100 resort credit. VI*



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