

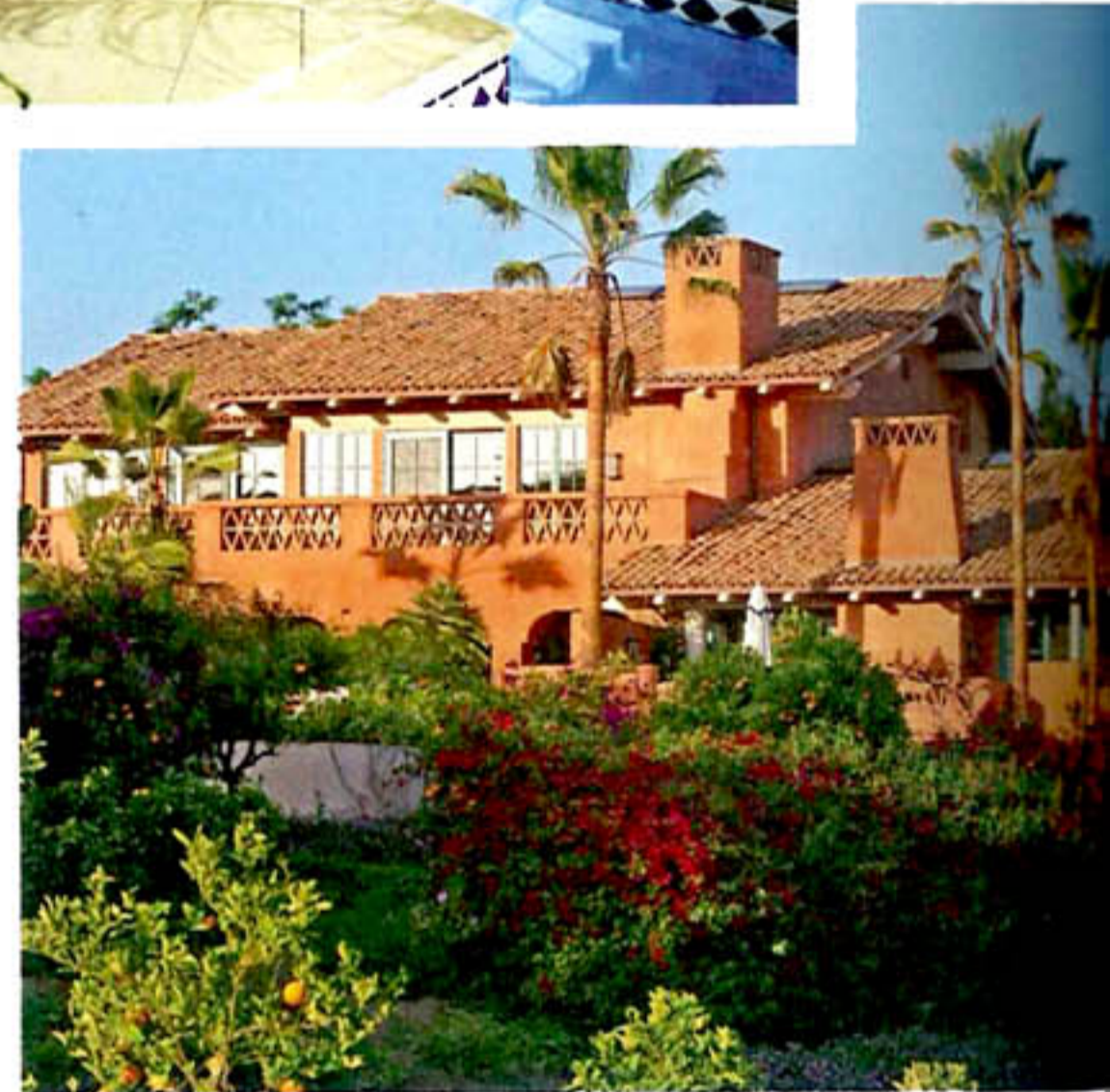
COAST

ORANGE
COUNTY

CATCH THE WAVE ■ GET AWAY ■ PACE THE SUN ■ RENOVATE



AUGUST 2010



RANCHO VALENCIA RESORT

Eighty minutes south of Orange County, Rancho Valencia, a 40-acre resort in the rolling hills of San Diego's exclusive Rancho Santa Fe community, lies concealed behind a veil of citrus groves and off a path of scenic winding roads. But for all the mystery and understated access, get behind the gates of Rancho Valencia, and the property, once anonymous, speaks volumes.

Dotted with California haciendas, sprawling and lushly landscaped walkways and state-of-the-art tennis courts, Rancho Valencia has the feel of an exclusive residential community but with all the amenities of the world's finest resorts. We practically ran to the onsite spa with 10 treatment rooms (all with private patios), couples suites and outdoor showers. It blends into the landscape, which invites visitors in with cool saltillo tiles and the resort's trademark Spanish architecture. Offering treatments inspired by indigenous plants and herbs, many of the spa's signature massages and facials are replete with ingredients like rosemary, lavender and citrus, and more extensive treatments like collagen facials and non-invasive firming techniques make it not just a relaxing afternoon, but one that

pampers and beautifies as well.

The Restaurant at Rancho Valencia offers no less a locally-influenced experience than the rest of the property. Exuding sophisticated French country charm with its white-washed, open-beamed ceilings, and California breeziness, The Restaurant's kitchen bustles with veteran and internationally schooled chefs who artfully prepare locally grown produce and meats for an exquisite dining experience. Expansive windows line the restaurant allowing for magnificent sunsets to serve as backdrops for early evening dining in a scenic and elegant setting. An innovative menu of coastal ranch-style cuisine made from seasonal ingredients helps form the basis for delicious starters like La Quercia prosciutto with a soft-poached hen's egg and crispy goat cheese gnocchi and entrées like confit of suckling pork with fiddle head ferns, cipollini onions and stinging nettle. For lighter summer fare, try the Dungeness crab and watercress salad with passion fruit, mango, jicama, hazelnuts, and wasabi crisps.

Stuffed but content, we somehow managed to leave the comfort of the dining room for our Villa. Truly homes away from

home, Rancho Valencia's extremely private Villas provide 3,500 square feet of indoor and outdoor living space, complete with three bedrooms, three-and-a-half baths, and a jetted Jacuzzi (which we took advantage of with an aged Scotch and endless panoramic views) and grill on the patio. Available for fractional ownership, the Villas, with exposed white-washed beams, cathedral ceilings, stucco walls, clay tile roofs, and plantation shuttered windows have the feeling of an authentic coastal ranch house and have access to all of the resort's amenities. There's also the expansive, 5,000-square-foot Hacienda, which consists of three suites, three wood-burning fireplaces, its own spa, and private garden patio.

For those who want to stay active, Rancho Valencia's proximity to world-class golf courses, hiking, polo, croquet, and an award-winning tennis program offer an array of heart-pumping sports. Take advantage of personalized tennis lessons from one of the best tennis resorts in the nation on the resort's Deco-Turf hard courts staffed with eight tennis pros.

It's like home – only better.

—JESSICA FORSYTH

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