

# Relax, Reboot

Rather than hitting the spa during your next vacation, make it your primary destination BY AMANDA ROSS

➔ FIRST THE PURVIEW OF NEW-AGE HIPPIES, then of flip-flopped *Real Housewives* in velour tracksuits, spas are now as commonplace as gyms. Even if you don't consider yourself a spa-goer, statistics suggest you'll become one: by 2017, wellness and spa tourism will grow from \$439 billion to a crazy \$679 billion a year. That's a lot of massages to navigate. But ubiquitous doesn't always mean good, and finding a spa that gets everything right will always be tricky. Don't worry—we've got you covered... with terry-towel robes and fair-trade botanicals at three of our fave wellness getaways.

## RANCHO VALENCIA

San Diego, California

From San Diego, zip 40 kilometres up the coast through the swanky hilltop homes of Rancho Santa Fe (this zip code lays claim to America's highest percentage of million-dollar homes) straight to **Rancho Valencia Resort & Spa** (from \$420; 800-548-3664, [Ranchovalencia.com](http://Ranchovalencia.com)). There's all the luxe you'd expect from SoCal's only Relais & Châteaux property but none of the pomp, thanks to its original 1989 iteration as a John Gardiner tennis ranch. Fresh off a \$30 million face-lift, the sprawling Mediterranean-inspired property set on 45 lush acres is still a dynamite tennis destination 25 years later (in 2010, *Tennis Magazine* ranked it No. 1 in the country), but brand-new and revamped out-

### FIELD NOTES

#### GETTING THERE

United Airlines flies to San Diego through San Francisco (or drive to Bellingham for Allegiant's nonstop), then it's a half-hour drive to Rancho V.

#### FROM SOIL TO SKIN

Sourced from plants like hyssop, blue lotus, myrtle, and juniper, the spa's Amala line comes to life through a global network of fair-trade organic farmers.

AVG. TEMP, APRIL  
20°/ 13° C



buildings include 49 plush casitas and a palm-shaded Serenity Yoga Pavilion set on a pond-like water feature. If *Architectural Digest* and the Dalai Lama got married and incarnated a baby, this is what it would look like.

After fresh O.J. (delivered to your room) head to the new **Veladora** restaurant, where Damien Hirst's *Imploration* butterfly painting lords over the rustic elegance of the room. A kind of coastal ranch cuisine prevails here that, come breakfast, looks like the San Danielle prosciutto/egg flatbread (\$18) and the trifecta of goodness that is a Valencia protein smoothie (chocolate, banana, and peanut butter, \$10). When dinner rolls around, the menu leans heavily on fare like braised Texas wild

hoar ragout (\$28) and chilled wild octopus carpaccio (\$11).

One cannot live by (gluten-free) bread alone. After thoughtful contemplation with the **Gentle Fig Facial** (organic desert-fig-seed oil, argan oil, and Moroccan chamomile) and **Double Deuce Delight Match** (bath soak, jade-and-ginseng sugar scrub, and couple's massage), it's easy to forget that Rancho Valencia is just as much tennis mecca as spa retreat. You've got excellent options: three-hour morning **tennis clinics** with either two-time U.S. Open champion Robin White or head pro Eduardo Sanchez, a fixture on the resort's 18 courts since they opened—or you and the mean ball machine.

As tempting as it is to avoid leaving these sweet confines, your 911 Carrera calls. The resort's new

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■ **ON GOLDEN POND**  
 The yoga pavilion at Rancho Valencia, complete with instructor's floating dock

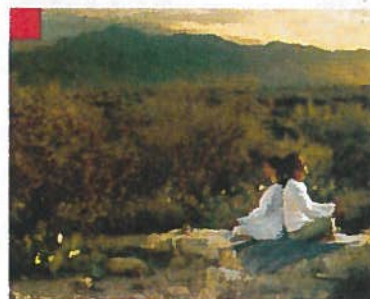
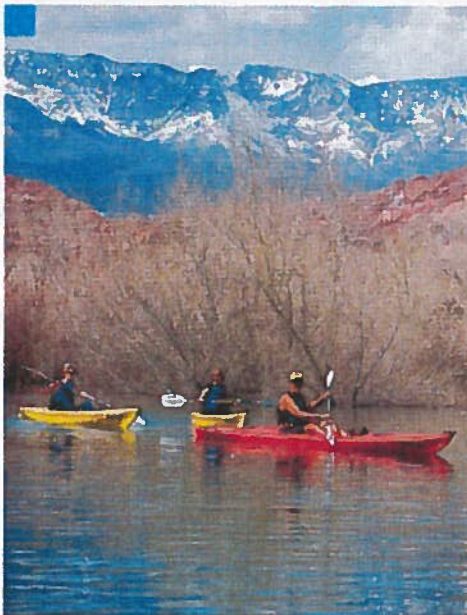
■ **DOUBLES MATCH**  
 Ace it in the couple's spa treatment room at Rancho Valencia

■ **PICTURE PERFECT**  
 Art in the time of eating: Damien Hirst's butterflies lift diners at Rancho Valencia's Veladora

■ **STRIKE A POSE**  
 Morning yoga in the desert at Tucson's Canyon Ranch

■ **WATER WORLD**  
 Kayak adventure at Red Mountain Resort in St. George, Utah

■ **ROCK IT**  
 Red rock cliffs give good backdrop while mountain biking at Red Mountain



Porsche test-drive program means a key and a John Hancock are all that stand between you and the open road (all in the name of guest service). Park that sweet ride before **hiking** at Torrey Pines State Reserve, one of Southern California's wildest stretches of land, with 13 kilometres of trails, then cap it with a meandering barefoot **beach walk** back to your wheels.

There's just one more stop. It's true that racing has lost a little glam since Bing Crosby, Gary Cooper, and friends opened the Del Mar racetrack in 1937, but as the sun sets over the Pacific it's pretty easy to imagine yourself back in a time of guys and dolls, when pushing the envelope meant dropping 20 on the ponies. Who knows? You might just get lucky.