



Relaxing at the Ritz-Carlton Spa in Rancho Mirage.

Greater Palm Springs A haven for health and healing

By Beverly Mann | Epoch Times Contributor

Atop a hillside enveloped within the Santa Rosa Mountain range overlooking California's Coachella Valley, I entered a blissful 100 minutes of pampering. My "Spirit of the Mountains" massage, the signature spa treatment at the Ritz-Carlton Spa in Rancho Mirage, began with my entire body being polished with a natural salt scrub followed by a refreshing outdoor shower in an adjacent sculpted rock garden.

Back indoors, my masseuse, Lili, artfully proceeded with a hot, rejuvenating stone massage of coconut and soy oil, followed by an application of shea butter. I was then cocooned in a warm blanket, while given a relaxing head massage. Upon leaving, I was handed a stone to toss into the restorative outdoor fountain to rid myself of any negative energy.

This was quite the beginning to my three-day health and healing escape into the serene, desert environs of Greater Palm Springs—an area rich in natural minerals and herbs framed by a massive mountain range with modern, linear-designed homes artfully blended into the landscape.

With 300 days of sunshine, eased by the shade of lush palm trees, Greater Palm Springs offers visitors a mecca of mindfulness and renewal. The area is peppered with scenic spas and retreats offering massage, yoga, meditation, and healing treatments to suit any age and need. For more active individuals who savour the outdoors, there are more than 140 hiking trails.

Greater Palm Springs consists of nine small cities. I stayed midway in Palm Desert's Courtyard Marriott, in close proximity to spa resorts, restaurants, and hiking trails.

From Palm Desert to Rancho Mirage and Palm Springs proper are restaurants galore serving health-conscious menus to support the road to wellness—which I experienced firsthand.

Feeding the body is as important as feeding the soul, so after my memorable massage I ventured to Las Casuelas Nuevas, without having to leave Rancho Mirage. The freshly made guacamole and shrimp

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Treatment room with outdoor rock shower at the Ritz-Carlton in Rancho Mirage

and beef fajita, with local veggies and homemade flan, was a satisfying cap to my first day in the California desert. The tortilla chips literally melted in my mouth.

On day two, my pampering continued with an uplifting morning facial at Omni Rancho Las Palmas Resort and Spa. A relaxing oasis with a backdrop of mountains and palm trees, this 20,000-square-foot spa offers treatments that use pure essences of desert botanicals.

A light, healthful breakfast at the resort's bluEmber cafe consisted of smashed avocado on nine-grain toast, poached egg, and side of fruit, along with a tasteful cup of java. Before my treatment, I waited in the relaxation room soothed by sounds of mellow music and the soft flow of the outdoor fountain.

My "Eminence Facial" consisted of organic cleansers and creams and was accompanied by a light lotion massage of my arms and hands, which were placed in warm gloves.

All aglow, I headed to Palm Springs to check out the ultra-modern Art Museum and its new Persimmon Bistro where I had a light salad, followed by a walk along the adjacent hiking trail for a magnificent view of the area.

Gold facial, floatation therapy, sonic healing

On my way back to Palm Desert, I visited the new 3,000-square-foot Spa La Lé at Hotel Paseo. The site blends the natural beauty of the desert oasis with mid-century design. A perk for guests is the daily yoga classes.

The spa's signature treatment is the 110-minute, 24-karat gold facial which brightens, firms, and smooths the skin while eliminating toxins. Their manicures and pedicures feature 100-percent-vegan nail polish.

Also available are massages for two, where you and a significant other can lie side by side in a private suite. In addition, three adjacent "Oasis Guestrooms," each with a freestanding tub, are available for an overnight.

Nearby is Mot'us Flotation and Wellness Center, which offers state-of-



Coed relaxation lounge at the Ritz-Carlton in Rancho Mirage.



(L) Sound baths are offered at the Integratron in the Mojave Desert. (R) Interior of the Integratron.

the-art floatation therapy. The sensory-controlled float pods, which contain 1200 lbs. of Epsom salts in 200 gallons of water, places the body in a state of weightlessness, almost like floating in the Dead Sea. The body's joints and muscles are relieved of stress, resulting in restorative and relaxing benefits.

Besides my memorable spa stays, on day three I took an hour-plus drive through pure desert to the Integratron to experience a 60-minute sonic healing bath.

This resonant tabernacle, once used for sighting UFOs, sits on a powerful geomagnetic vortex in the middle of the Mojave Desert, just 20 miles north of Joshua Tree National Park. The building's healing sound chamber and dome heighten one's awareness and instill a sense of mind and body relaxation. Built in 1954 entirely on donations—one benefactor being Howard Hughes—the Integratron is a revolutionary design of all-wood construction.

In the dome's meditation room, glass bowls were chimed continuously for 25 minutes as I lay in stillness, allowing the sound to reverberate through my head. Many of us stayed for an extra 20 minutes to reap the benefits of releasing thoughts and clearing the mind.

On the long drive back to Palm Springs, I realized that beyond this desolate, lifeless desert lies a world of colourful resorts, including remote enclaves, to help soothe and heal both the body and the mind.

For more information, visit www.visitgreaterpalmsprings.com, or call 1-800-967-3767.

Beverly Mann has been a feature, arts, and travel writer in the San Francisco Bay Area for the past 30-plus years. She has received numerous accolades in various fields, including a Bay Area Travel Writers Award of Excellence in Newspaper Travel Writing.

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