

VENTURA BLVD

WHERE WE LIVE



OURVENTURABLVD.COM



SIX DOLLARS SEPT/OCT 2018

The Women's Issue

Calabasas | Encino | Sherman Oaks | Studio City | Tarzana | Toluca Lake | Woodland Hills





Serenity Down South

Self-professed control freak, *VB* editor Linda Grasso, gives in to the uber-healthy experience of the idyllic Rancho La Puerta.

WRITTEN BY LINDA GRASSO

If you trace the history of the modern fitness retreat, all paths lead to Rancho La Puerta in Tecate, Mexico. Just an hour drive from San Diego, Rancho La Puerta opened 70 years ago. The family owned and operated resort, which began as a quaint wellness camp, has grown into 3,000 acres of breathtaking natural beauty, catering to guests' physical, mental and spiritual health. Most people check in Saturday and stay for a week.

Getting there is easy. The resort offers Saturday morning pickup from the San Diego airport. My sister, who accompanied me on my visit, and I were whisked through border control, hopped on another shuttle bus and arrived at Rancho La Puerta in less than an hour.

At check-in, they suggested we immediately take a complete tour of the grounds. I told them I much preferred to chill and go for a swim. It was again strongly suggested I take the tour. So in a rare move, I capitulated—and it's a darn good thing. The grounds are sprawling, and all the buildings are connected by maze-like pathways. My biggest challenge throughout our stay

was not keeping up with my early rising, super-fit sister (as I feared) but finding my way around.

My favorite thing about the resort, hands down, was the bucolic setting. Nestled in the lush foothills of Mount Kuchumaa, the natural beauty, native plants, authentic architecture and gorgeous bright colors of the traditional Mexican palette made me feel like I was far away in an exotic, remote place. We stayed in a spacious casita with a luxurious seating area on the patio.

One of the most impressive aspects of the ranch is the incredible array of classes offered each day. An average of five different classes are held every hour, and planning your agenda is a juggle. Yoga, spinning, meditation, TRX, tennis, aqua-aerobics and pilates are just a few of the activities. We particularly enjoyed the yoga classes, which are staffed with two instructors, both sharing ample corrections (had no idea I'd been doing several poses incorrectly). Lectures are held throughout the day. We listened in on one from a charismatic life coach and another from a nutritionist who talked about supplements. Neither said anything I hadn't heard or read about before, but I enjoyed the reminders and tips.

There are a variety of sunrise hikes that take you up the mountains, where you can view the incredible valley below. The ranch also has several pools, gyms and running trails as well as classic spa and new-age treatments.

The culinary team at Rancho La Puerta aims to please. Serving three meals a day—plus assorted light snacks—the chefs keep guests fueled with healthy, organic fare. The menu focuses largely on fresh produce, most of which is grown at the ranch's farm. Portions are modest; you can go back and get seconds, but we never did. Dairy, salt and processed sugar are infrequent, and no alcohol is served at mealtime. You can indulge at an on-campus wine bar, but there are limited hours. And you have to find it first.

One of the highlights of the week is the Organic Garden Breakfast Hike, which takes





you to the farm at sunrise to enjoy breakfast, before touring the property. Other not-to-miss experiences: the two weekly cooking classes, featuring well-known chefs and capped off by spectacular feasts.

The week of our visit, the crowd at Rancho La Puerta was mostly “post 40,” and rest seemed to be taken seriously. By 9 p.m., we didn’t see many people out on the pathways, and most casita lights were out. Also worth noting: Unless you stay in one of a handful of plush villas, there are only a couple of internet “hot spots” on campus. I thought I’d find this aggravating, but I actually enjoyed the break. As I was again reminded, when at Rancho La Puerta, the best thing to do is just give in. *Rooms from \$4200 per week; for more information go to rancholapuerta.com* ■

