

BREEDERS' CUP WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS  
YOUR INSIDER'S GUIDE

# *pasadena*

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# TOP DOCS





# PLACE OF PEACE

Just across the border in Tecate, Mexico, lies a stunning retreat where you can leave the world behind.

by LIAN DOLAN  
images courtesy RANCHO LA PUERTA

**T**ransformative. Life-changing. Magical. Ask a Rancho La Puerta devotee why they return to the venerable health and wellness spa in Tecate, Mexico, year after year and those are the words they'll use to explain the draw. Spend a few days wandering the resort's lush 4,000 acres, hiking the trails of Mount Kuchumaa, working out in spacious studios, revitalizing in the spa, or replenishing with farm-to-table fare, and it's easy to see why "the Ranch" becomes a healthy addiction. But

there's more to the place than the exquisite trappings of a luxury resort.

My husband and I went to Rancho La Puerta seeking to disconnect from our work lives after a nonstop year for both of us and to reconnect with each other. Could a few deep-water workouts and a rosemary loofah scrub turn a couple of type As into relaxed Ranch regulars? After a week, we were hooked. Driving distance from Pasadena but a world away, Rancho La Puerta has an authenticity you can feel, a soul that shines through. And yes, there's even a little magic at the Ranch. ■





#### **The Vibe**

All are welcome. Newbies, returnees, millennials, boomers, Gen Xers, couples of all kinds, solo travelers, and endless combinations of mothers/daughters/sisters/friends—there's a spot for you. Fellow guests strike up conversation easily, inviting you to sit with them at lunch or sidling up next to you on a hike. The guest lecturers are available for informal conversations. The staff is warm, professional, and seasoned. As many guests told me, lifelong friendships are formed over a week. The sense of community is real.

#### **The Fitness**

Remember at summer camp when you packed up your backpack for a day of nonstop activities? It's like that, but for grown-ups. RLP backpack included! The heart of the fitness program is the morning hiking, ranging from a gentle meditation walk to a strenuous 7.7 miler. (Even I, a vocal non-hiker, enjoyed the 6 a.m. moderate hikes. More Ranch magic?) Once you're up and going, there's no end to the class options, from tennis and pickleball to cardio of all kinds to yoga, dance, and stretch taught by top fitness experts. Personal training is available. Relaxing by the pool or at the health center is always an option.





#### **The Food**

Rancho La Puerta boasts more than 75 years of culinary creativity, which is another way of saying that RLP was plant-based before plant-based was a thing. The communal meals are so tasty, you won't miss the fat, sodium, refined flours, and sugar. Along with cuisine high in energy, fiber, and complex carbohydrates boosted by eggs and seafood, the fruits and veggies are plentiful, most grown in the Ranch's own organic garden. (Don't miss the morning breakfast hike to the garden for a tour and killer chilaquiles.) Guest chefs like Deborah Madison, Patricia Wells, and L.A.'s own Valerie Gordon arrive every week to lead hands-on cooking classes that result in a shared meal at the beautiful cooking school, La Cocina Que Canta. Naturally, there's a juice bar for fueling up during the day. Once a dry resort, RLP now offers guests the opportunity to enjoy local wine or craft beer at the charming Bazar Del Sol. There's even a sangria and guacamole fiesta during the week.

#### **The Spa**

Many resort spas are fussy, trying too hard to achieve the level of Zen that comes naturally at the Ranch. The array of treatments is dizzying, but the expertise of the therapists is immediately calming. Wraps, facials, and massages feature aromatic and medicinal herbs grown in the garden, like rosemary and lavender. Craving chocolate, one of Mexico's star ingredients? Check out the Xocolatl skin replenishment treatment with chocolate, honey, and yogurt.

#### **The Extras**

More than food and fitness, a week at the Ranch provides a comprehensive calendar for seekers of all stripes. There are workshops led by experts on nutrition, relationships, writing, and "inner fitness." Lectures by fascinating professionals in business, medicine, and the creative arts. Activities such as concerts, guided meditation, even edgy bingo.

#### **The Details**

Rancho La Puerta is located in Tecate, Mexico, 4 miles across the U.S. border. Most stays are for seven nights (Saturday to Saturday), but three- and four-night stays are available. All packages include lodging, meals, all fitness classes, and most transportation. Special retreats throughout the year include the Art of Bonding, the Executive Wellness Program, and Family Week.

#### **How to Get There**

It's about a three-hour drive from Pasadena to the Tecate border via CA-94. Long-term parking is available on the U.S. side. An RLP rep walks you through an easy and safe border crossing, then shuttles you and other guests to the resort. You must carry a valid passport. For more information, visit [rancholapuerta.com](http://rancholapuerta.com).