

# LOCAL FOCUS

## Diving Into the Spa at Pelican Hill Resort

BY RICHARD SIMON | NB INDY

There are an estimated 715,000 hotels on the planet. However, according to



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the travel industry-leading Forbes Travel Guide, just 175 of those exist elegantly in a different resort universe—those that have been awarded Forbes' "out-of-this-world" Five Star rating.

Of those 175, only one is found in Newport Beach: The Resort at Pelican Hill.

If a total is the sum of its parts, then logically, the parts must be among the very best. And so it is with Pelican Hill's 23,000-square-foot Spa, which for the eighth consecutive year is a recipient of a Five Star Award by Forbes Travel Guide, one of only 56 resort spas worldwide so crowned.

According to the resort's marketing material, "The Five Star Award for spas recognizes an exceptional experience with no detail overlooked, uncompromising service, and extraordinary design and facilities."

No marketing claim shall go unchallenged! I volunteered to become a guinea pig to verify that brochure description.

My investigative report began with an early morning, 50-minute escorted walk along a paved path atop the cliffs of Crystal Cove State Park, then down a dirt trail to the beach itself.

The day was what can be best described as a Newport Beach brochure type of day: crisp and clear.

Had it not been for that incredible view and bracing stroll, I might have chosen to stay indoors to experience any of a broad variety of lifestyle classes, ranging from a challenging "boot camp" workout to a restorative yoga and meditation session.

From the earliest years of Hollywood cinema, Roman, Greek or Renaissance themes have highlighted the aristocracy, whose celluloid lifestyles are to be both envied and emulated.

Trite as it might seem, much of the drippy dialog between leaders and/or lovers occurred in sumptuous spas. I wondered if scribes (early journalists) wrote their reports from such splendid surroundings. If so, I was going to carry on their tradition.

After my walk and before my massage, I segued to the superbly equipped gym for a brief workout.

After a quick shower, I shuffled into the herbal steam room, past the sauna and into the pool-sized saltwater soaking tub, where the tenseness in my muscles melted into the whirlpool waters in preparation for my 50-minute, aroma-therapeutic massage.

Montenegro-born Anna, my masseuse, greeted and guided me into one



Mens Aqua Colonnade

of the Spa's 22 pastel dawn-illuminated massage rooms, where the ambient peacefulness seamlessly lulled me the moment I lay prone (au naturel) under a heated blanket on the comfortable massage table.

And as I was soon to discover, Anna's strong fingers penetrated deeply into my muscles' core to chase away whatever residual tensions were left.

I learned that Montenegro exports three valuable natural resources: bauxite, hydroelectricity, and Anna.

The Spa offers such a broad selection of therapeutic and beauty options that Robin Dunivin, Director of Spa, prepared a 20-page menu of treatments—not only informative, but a fun read.

As Spa director, Dunivin has designed the totality of offerings; and, of course, has personally tested all massage or therapy choices in the collection.

But then, someone has to make sure guests at Pelican Hill receive – and continue to receive – the always evolving treatments that have elevated The Spa at Pelican Hill to its global eminence.

A sampling of the Massage Therapy Collection includes the "Amber Gold Signature Massage," "Tramonto (Sunset) Massage," "Aroma Intentions Massage" and "Global Traditions Massage."

The Body Therapy Collection features "California Sugar Glow," "Marine Wrapsody" and "Coconut Neroli Body Polish."

Then there are the Specialty Bath Collection, Skincare Collection and Advanced Aesthetics Collection, as well as "Facial Companion Treatments," "Nail Care Collection," "Hair Care Collections" and Wedding Packages.

No wonder Dunivin, with her flawless skin, looks so relaxed and beams that ready smile.



Spa Treatment Room

Every enervation requires refueling. In that realm, I certainly wasn't disappointed.

Waiting for me was my choice of savory Spa cuisine, flawlessly presented. I chose the Burrata salad – baby arugula, heirloom baby tomatoes and pesto. The sauce materialized straight from Merlin's magical kitchen. But I could have chosen from 10 other special plates designed to healthily satisfy depleted guests, from Resort-made Hummus with Pita to Seared Ahi Tuna Salad, all to be accompanied by various beverages or all-natural smoothies.

As would be expected, the female-to-male client ratio is 80:20, Dunivin shared. Guys, it would behoove you to change that ratio.

Although the Spa is renowned internationally, it is well visited by Newport locals, who appreciate what Dunivin boasts as a "higher level of service and attention, personalized, gracious and thoughtful."

Although most locals can probably well afford the Spa's rates, they are not reserved about taking advantage of Monday through Thursday reduced prices, or less crowded facilities.

"We are a draw for our local residents," Dunivin said, adding, "They can stay all day, use the fitness center, attend fitness classes and enjoy our treatments. Plus, they can eat fantastic breakfasts and lunches."

The Spa offers frequent special promotions especially for locals, who can learn about each new opportunity on the Resort's Facebook page.

Famed Mass Communications theorist Marshall McLuhan is best remembered for saying: The medium is the message.

Thanks to the memorable day at The Spa at Pelican Hill, I think I need to rewrite that line: The medium is the Massage.

For more information, visit PelicanHill.com.