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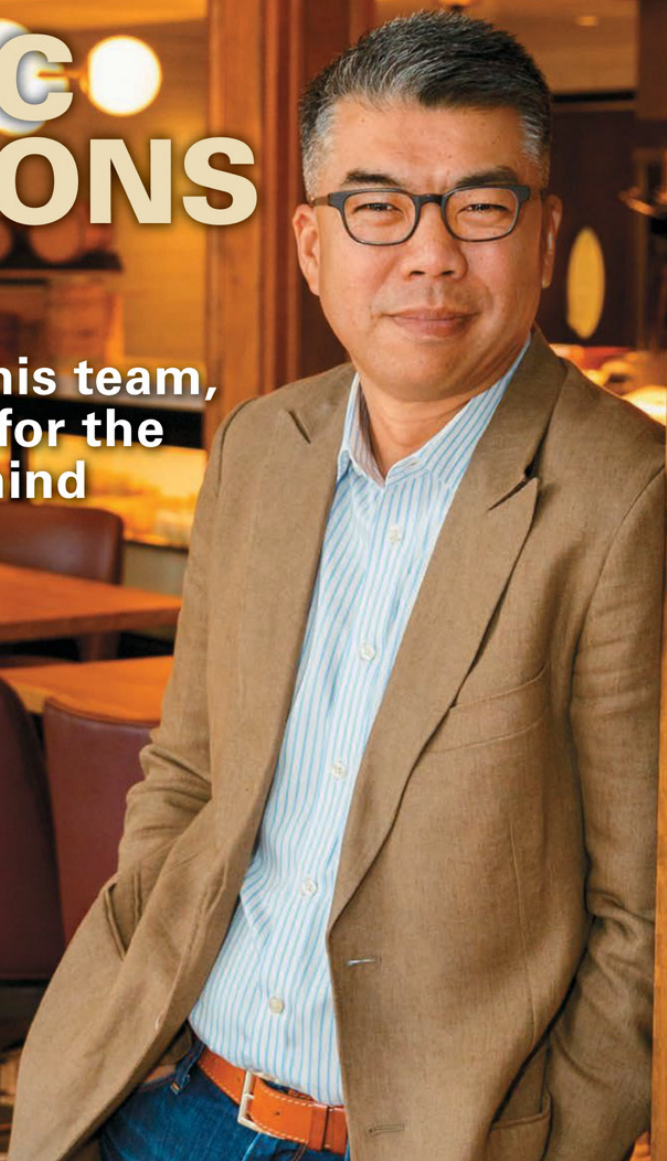
Savoring Seville
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HOTELS

Girlfriend Getaways
Icelandic Luxury

CRUISE

Exotic Ports



L'AUBERGE DEL MAR'S pool, which has views of the Pacific Ocean, makes it tempting to stay at the AAA Four-Diamond hotel all day long.



L'Auberge del Mar

BY RUTHANNE TERRERO

You might have big plans to leave **L'Auberge del Mar** to go exploring up and down the Pacific Coast, but don't be surprised if you find yourself staying close to the intimate-sized resort to enjoy all of its amenities.

L'Auberge del Mar, a Destination Hotel, is 20 miles north of San Diego and set across the street from Del Mar Beach. If you want to see how Southern Californians enjoy the Pacific Ocean, this is the place, with surfers and sunbathers making it very busy in the best possible way.

Back at the resort, there's a chic swimming pool with bar service, where we camped out every morning to enjoy watching the sun fight through the early-day fog. As the day became

more and more sunny, we found fewer and fewer reasons to leave the hotel, and, in fact, sometimes ventured just a few feet to have lunch at Coastline. Our favorite healthy meals? The cobb salad and a choice of super fresh tacos (grilled fish, carnitas or "Cauliflower al Pastor") with a chilled Dos Equis beer. After that, it was a stroll through town, just steps away, to explore boutiques, art galleries and restaurants that fit in well with the southern California lifestyle. Hint: To bring home something unique to the area, we suggest a piece of art or handcrafted jewelry from the Del Mar Art Center (across from the hotel) or a print of the Del Mar coastline from the famed Aaron Chang Ocean Gallery in Solana Beach (415 S.Cedros Avenue, Suite 110). Laurelie's by the Sea (202 15th Street, Suite A, Del Mar) has

sweet gift items for adults and children, including locally crafted starfish wine bottle stoppers.

Note: Reserve a bike free of charge at the hotel if you really want to be free and explore the area in depth.

For dinner, it's all about the hotel's Kitchen 1540, which often has live music and always has a dynamic menu (think: Iberico La Pluma with kuri squash, braising greens and apple chutney). Dine on the patio during the warmer months; for indoor seating, snag a table near the fireplace (we hear table numbers 40-43 are tops). Madelyn Dukes (mdukes@destinationhotels.com; 858-793-6460), the assistant food and beverage manager, can assist with special requests.

The small footprint of L'Auberge del Mar makes it ideal for a multigenerational vacation.

DEL MAR BEACH, across from L'Auberge del Mar, is the ultimate Southern California scene with surfers, families and ocean lovers soaking up the sunlight.



Photo by Ruthanne Terrero

THE DEL MAR SUITE has two living room areas and three balconies. It can be configured to comprise two king-size bedrooms.



THE HOTEL'S SPA is in a stand-alone building and has a fire pit; it's a great spot for a girlfriend getaway activity.



Older folks will enjoy that everything is close by: town, the ocean, the lobby bar, the pool and even the guestrooms. Children can explore their surroundings and likely always be in sight as their parents get to enjoy a glass of wine. Nice Touch: The hotel is pet-friendly; there's even a dog park nearby and a spot called Del Mar Dog Beach.

Count on Amanda Esposito (aesposito@destinationhotels.com; 858-793-6442), leisure sales manager, to guide you through the top accommodations. The Del Mar Suite is the largest and considered the best. We like that it has two living rooms and a Roman bathtub, but we're crazy about its three balconies with coastal views. Sweet!

Considering a girlfriend getaway? The Del Mar Suite can be converted into a two-bedroom suite; both bedrooms are masters with king-size beds. The Del Mar Suite also has a dining room table for six.

If the suite is taken, there's a row of four Village Fireplace Guestrooms that can be

booked together, and they share a private patio with couches and sunbeds that gets plenty of sunshine. (Cocktails, anyone?) Each room has a king-size bed, a fireplace and views of Del Mar village.

Note: The hotel also has 11 sets of connecting rooms throughout and can guarantee them at the time of booking.

If you're making this California trip because you're all about the ocean, be sure to book the Del Mar Suite, a Coastal Guestroom or a Pacific Suite for a top view. Pacific Suites range in size from 600 to 793 square feet; two have fireplaces.

The guest services team is considered the best contact for concierge services and can be reached at La-concierge@destinationhotels.com or 858-259-1515. They can arrange surf lessons, coastal biplane rides, a jaunt in a hot air balloon, tennis lessons, a brewery tour or golf at a local private country club.

Note: Terry Buchholz (tbuchholz@destinationhotels.com; 858-793-6401) is L'Auberge del Mar's general manager and welcomes contact from luxury travel advisors.

The nearest airport is San Diego International (20 minutes away); private helicopters can land at Montgomery Field or McClellan Palomar Airport, which also accepts private jets and is 20 minutes away from the hotel. Los Angeles is a 90-minute drive from the hotel.

Another reason to stay on property? Spa L'Auberge has its own building, which makes it a swell option for a bridal party to hang out in. An "All Yours" program allows a group to take over the entire spa for three hours. They get 10 50-minute spa treatments and lots and lots of champagne and snacks (the relaxation lounge has an open-air fire pit).

The spa director, Leah Porlas (lporlas@destinationhotels.com; 858-720-6193), can assist with takeovers or with simple requests, such as whether to get the Himalayan Superfruit Facial or the Ocean Body Indulgence, which includes a body scrub, a wrap and a massage.

Good to know: the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club is a short drive away and the hotel valet team will drive you there and pick you up. This is an enjoyable, traditional horseracing venue (men must wear jackets!). Reserve a table in the Turf Club for the great views of the track and attentive dining service (be sure to try the Del Mint Julep). If you must leave L'Auberge del Mar, this is a unique experience that will round out your California beach vacation. ■