

Fairmont Grand Del Mar - Beverly Hills Magazine

One of the top ten must-have experiences as a Los Angeleno is to take the Amtrak south to San Diego because the last memorable hour is by the blue Pacific with hopeful sightings of gray whales breaching and pods of frolicking bottlenose dolphins. When you travel to San Diego it's always a unique and refreshing experience. The air is sweeter and the sun just seems to shine at the perfect temperature.

Disembark at the Solana Beach train depot and with advance reservations, a chauffeured car will whisk you to the Grand Del Mar, newly acquired for the Fairmont luxury hotel collection. This sun-drenched palace is nestled within the native white sage of Los Penasquitos Canyon Nature Reserve.

Addison Mizner, a famous architect, whose style of Mediterranean resorts during the 1920s, inspired Fairmont Grand Del Mar's design. Amidst the surrounding rolling hills, championship fairways and greens, it's easy to imagine the elusive bobcat padding through. Tom Fazio probably never considered that his design would be used as a wildlife corridor in the glowing sunset.

GDM has been awarded the coveted *Forbes Travel Guide* Triple Five-Star Resort: Hotel, Spa and Addison (fine dining), AAA Five Diamond Award: Hotel And Addison, #1 Luxury Hotel in California: TripAdvisor Traveler's Choice and *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Resorts.

Fairmont properties are in 19 countries and its flagship landmarks include The Plaza in New York and The Savoy in London. Since 1907, Fairmont has been made famous by visitations from British royalty such as Queen Elizabeth in 1969; the staged Bed-In for Peace by John Lennon and Yoko Ono; Claude Monet's muse of London at the Savoy; and many of the hotels served as movie locations.

"Papa" Doug Manchester, former publisher of the UT San Diego newspaper, still retains a minor role in GDM. He originally developed and built the luxury resort seven years ago, sparing no expense. A true luxury travel destination that allows you to step into a whole new world when you enter the property.

At Amaya's epicurean exchange, along with the 29 pages of European and California varietals on Amaya's detailed libations list, sommelier, charming Ryan Winnegar shared GDM tidbits such as, "An Italian family of artisans, one of only three left in the world, hand-carved our fireplace from a single piece of marble. Marble is used in archways, flooring and walls along with real gold leaf on some of the more intricate wrought iron."

Things To Keep In Mind

- Pups under 25 lbs or less are welcome
- Four heated pools: an adults-only relaxation sanctuary, including one for children with a wading area

and another with an outdoor pool bar

- Spa treatments range from multi-tiered to wraps to facial therapies
- Nail & hair salon, Gentlemen's Spa and salon services, Children's services, Bride to be services
- Fitness & Movement Studio: Zumba, Pi-Yo Strength
- Self-guided scenic trails
- Horseback Riding through the Reserve
- Tennis courts
- Weather permitting, shuttle and full beach accessories offered for GDM guests at the pristine Del Mar Beach (comparable to Malibu)
- Attraction tickets: San Diego Zoo, Legoland

Unlike the wine list, the single page-dining menu had select gourmet offerings. I chose the de-boned, fresh Grilled Idaho Trout served with my preference of head and tail in tact, topped with succulent Lump Crab, crisp Haricot Vert and sublime Brown Butter.

"This dish was culled from a 150-year-old recipe," said Amaya's manager, Chris Sadelack. "It is still being served in a very exclusive bistro called Le Comptoir in Paris."

One word: délicieux.

The next morning, I felt spellbound by my golden slumbers. Like the storybook *Princess and the Pea*, I am sensitive to loud noise and inferior beds so GDM is my official thumbs up for quiet and profound rest. Apparently, there are other enchanted guests seeking the Fairmont Stearns & Foster bed and the 100% Egyptian cotton, 300 thread count, sateen linens because they are available for purchase online.

Ten minutes late, I arrived in a somnolent state to the elegant 22,000 square feet spa for my Signature Touch Therapy. Therapist Sarah Zimmerman was the perfect blend of small talk, no talk, and commanding hands of strength. As she banished the dragons of tension with essential oils, I slept—yet again.

Afterward, subdued with bliss, I savored guilt-free bite-sized, boneless fried chicken on handcrafted mini waffles at the Clubhouse Grille before reluctantly departing.

Heading northbound reminded me that a staycation of fresh air and opulent deep rest is sometime just what you need.

By Jeanne Ferris