

EDUCATION CAN  
BE FIXED — WE  
CAN HELP **PG 64**

IS A MEDICAL  
MONOPOLY  
IMMINENT IN  
NEVADA? **PG 30**

STAR CHEFS' SONS  
TALK ABOUT DEAR  
OLD DADS **PG 34**

LAS VEGAS LIFE

**L V L**

A SPA SECRET  
REVEALED —  
IT'S SAFE FOR  
MEN, TOO! **PG 42**

THE LATEST IN PET  
PAMPERING (IT'S  
SHOCKING) **PG 70**

A HOUSE THAT  
COMBINES WINE  
AND ROCK **PG 38**

*Our list of new  
on- and off-Strip  
restaurants, with  
tales of wretched  
excess and who's  
who in the food biz.*

# Great Local Dining

March 2008

\$3.99

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# Near Perfection

The **Beach Villages** are different from a stay at the Hotel Del Coronado, but the view is the same. *By Michael M. Meyer*

From the ultra-urban amenities of the Valley's newest high-rises to the Mediterranean charm of Lake Las Vegas and all of the themed Strip hotels — from Ancient Egypt to Paris, France — Las Vegas offers almost every type of living environment imaginable. But until a superquake brings the West Coast to the state line, or global warming melts the ice caps and brings the ocean to the desert, we still have to drive to Southern California to experience the aquatic ambiance of life on the beach. The salty offshore breezes, the fresh seafood and produce, a reason to finally iron that linen shirt and walk around bare-

foot in public — whatever your coastal craving may be, you'll find your fix at the newest addition to a Californian icon, Beach Villages at the landmark Hotel Del Coronado.

The Del's "resort within a resort," Beach Villages is a collection of beachfront, poolside condos tucked into a secluded corner of the property's recent expansion adjacent to the historic hotel's ocean-facing promenade of restaurants, shops and new spa.

Although driving past the Del's bustling, turreted, postcard-worthy grand entrance to the back of the west valet parking lot to enter Beach Villages can feel a little like being snuck



## THE DETAILS

**How To Get There** From downtown Las Vegas, take I-15 south about 309 miles, into California, to CA-163 south. Go 10 miles and merge onto I-5 south. Go three miles and merge onto CA-75 south toward Coronado. Total drive time: Five hours.

**What To Do** Check in to Beach Village. 800-582-3533. [hoteldel.com/beachvillage](http://hoteldel.com/beachvillage). Go out on your private terrace and try to decide if you want to jump in the pool or the ocean first. Still not relaxed? Make a reservation to be pampered at the Spa at the Del. 619-522-8100. \$120-\$600. Or try the Yamaguchi Salon. 619-522-8808. \$120-\$370. For golfers, Beach Village guests receive a \$20 discount on greens fees at La Costa Championship Golf Course. 866-574-7557 for tee times. For off-property exploration, your 24-hour concierge can provide discounted tickets, reservations and back-of-the-park tours for the San Diego Zoo, Legoland, Sea World, and Disneyland. 619-522-8195.

**Where To Eat** For breakfast, Beach Village guests have exclusive access to Windsor Cottage, a private combination breakfast buffet/sun deck/reading lounge/cigar bar. On the weekends, you can't miss the Del's famous brunch, voted "Best in San Diego" in the opulent Crown Room. For a snack or quick lunch, have a seat at the 120-year-old Babcock & Story Bar, or opt for outdoor California coastal cuisine (and signature margaritas) at Sheerwater. Later in the afternoon, ENO wine bar is the perfect place to enjoy a bottle of wine along with an eclectic assortment of 35 types of international cheese and chocolates hand-made by local chocolatiers. There's also the Sun Deck Bar & Grill with its amazing views of the Pacific Ocean. And if your cocktail hour stretches into dinner, it's only a few steps to the elegant and luxurious 1500 Ocean. All brunch and dining reservations can be made by calling 619-522-8490.

into a five-star restaurant through the back kitchen, I'm swiftly reminded upon walking through the front door of my suite that such redirection from the rest of the herd is usually reserved for those going to the best table in the house.

I've never felt at home at a resort, but looking through my airy, comfortable beach house to the expansive ocean outside the balcony's French doors, I'm already dreading going back to my cream-colored, cookie-cutter cul-de-sac in Vegas. The uncluttered, minimalist approach to the design of the space is offset by unobtrusively placed modern amenities such as ultra-thin, big-screen televisions, recessed surround sound speakers, and a full wet bar and refrigerator in the fully stocked kitchen.

The beach, though, is the main attraction — a wide expanse of tufted, wind-swept dunes leading out to white sand and warm waters, where pods of dolphins breach in unison in the early morning, and tanorexics, castle-building children and hand-holding couples soak in the blissfully long hours of afternoon sun.

As the sun starts to set, I head into the Spa at the Del, where the surrounding seascape has been brought inside through driftwood décor and somewhat creative products — beach sand as an exfoliator, a sea sponge for the shower ... why not? — but most noticeably in my Ocean Massage, an hour-long soak session in an open cocoon right out of a retro '50s vision of the future. A combination of sea-salt aromatherapy, qigong color chromatherapy and, once the bubbles are added, foamatherapy (okay, that last one is made up),

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the experience is capped by a scalp and aqua-pressure body massage that left my body tension level somewhere between jellyfish and the aforementioned sea sponge.

After a short nap and a cup of tea next to a gas fire pit at the spa's relaxation pool, I

take the short stroll into Beach Village to get dressed for dinner at the Del's elegant 1500 Ocean. There's a distinct transition from the light, beachy feel of the Village to the classic, low-lit luxury of the Del.

After a difficult selection from an extensive international wine list, a truly extravagant culinary experience ensues. All of the meat, fish and produce used by 1500 Ocean comes from local markets, fishermen and vendors, ensuring that every bite of carefully concocted cuisine bursts with the unmistakable, fresh flavors of Southern California. Between the Carlsbad squash blossoms stuffed with ricotta and basil and lightly fired, to my main course, an indulgent black truffle risotto, I completely lose all track of time and succumb to my over-stimulated palate.

Later that evening, in a comfy chair on my beach house's balcony, with the suite lights turned down low and a generous glass of a Californian merlot, my mind is lulled to submission by the rhythmic waves of the Pacific. The nightlife is just getting started across the bay in downtown San Diego, but I'm done — fully satiated and content to wait for the sunrise, the dolphins, the beach, and another day at the Del. **WV**