

Destination Detox

From frou frou to no-frills, California's elite spas offer every kind of recuperative escape

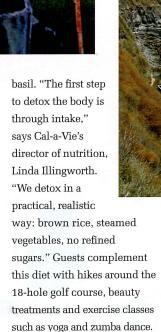


aybe it's the sunshine, but California has long been the place to find a golden state of mind. As early as 1959, Eva Gabor and Kim Novak strolled through Deborah Szekely's Japanese gardens at the

Jack Kerouac and Joan Baez headed to Esalen
Institute to unleash their creative spirits. As the planet seems
to spin faster on its axis, spa owners have noticed an
increased need to detox from daily life. "When we opened
The Ashram, back in the '70s, it was more about weightloss,"
says founder Catharina Hedberg. "Now people need to detox
from negative thoughts and reset to a positive pattern."
Spas and retreats across California go to great lengths to
counteract the toxic effects of iPhones, gridlock and fast food.
And as the number of spas has skyrocketed, the top
destinations have specialized by adopting a style and ethos
tailor-made for their clients' tastes, from spartan to spiritual.

Golden Door, while '60s iconoclasts Aldous Huxley,

Fanciful At Cal-α-Vie in Vista, 40 miles north of San Diego, guests detox within the opulent French surroundings: 17th and 18th century antiques, terraced gardens, a vineyard and a small imported Carmelite chapel from Dijon. On the outdoor patio, guests dine on small portions of quinoa, grilled chicken and agave-sweetened pineapple sorbet flecked with locally grown



INDULGENT
Escondido's Golden Door

Spiritual For an overhaul that seems to alter the body and spirit in the wake of doctor diagnosis, head to the non-denominational faith-based Optimum Health Institute in San Diego. "I would say that 20-30% of people at OHI have some sort of chronic disease or cancer," says Riley Forbes, an actress and Home Shopping Network host who has visited OHI three times.

At OHI, patients undergo a complete dietary detox. During the recommended three-week stay, guests follow a raw food diet, drink wheatgrass, sprout seeds and receive daily colonics with little exercise other than gentle stretching. The focus is for guests to "fight for a life-body balance," says Forbes. Visitors engage in optional prayer, take classes in self-appreciation, nutrition and positive thinking. "OHI is not the most luxurious spa out there, but it is the most transformational, healing place you will ever go to," she adds.



Spartan NBA players, celebrities, investment bankers and stayat-home moms who prefer—and will pay good money for—a more physical approach to detox come to The Ashram for Hedberg's athletic, take-no-prisoners program. At the rustic, '70s-style ranch house in Calabasas, there are no beauty treatments to be had—save for a daily Swedish sports massage.

FREE-SPIRITED

baths in Big Sur

Instead, the 12 guests share rooms, eat minimal portions of vegetarian fare, drink veggie juice and slog through a grueling

exercise regimen. Each day they complete at least one 10-mile hike, two yoga classes

Esalen Institute's restored and a class in the pool. "Halfway through the 10-mile hike, they give you two almonds and one prune," says Tiffany Foster, CEO of a video production company. "I tried to negotiate for a second one!" Still, guests swear they can feel the chemicals oozing out of them. "On Tuesday, if you are addicted to caffeine, you become nauseated. And if you like fake sugars, those take the longest. Some people are sick through Thursday," says Foster. But she would recommend the program in a heartbeat. "My skin was absolutely radiant when I got home—and the weight kept pouring off."

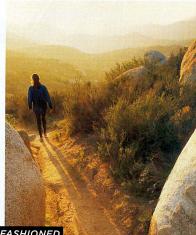
> *Indulgent* The storied **Golden Door**, founded by Szekely, offers the most pampered way to

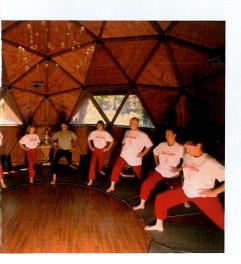
unwind. From the moment spa-goers arrive at the Honjin Innlike grounds, "They practically kiss your feet," says Lisa Wolf, a former Wall Street executive. While a staff of 160 tends to its 40 guests, Wolf adds, "Everyone speaks in hushed tones so they don't upset you." Upon arrival, each client is interviewed and assigned a fitness guide in order to better develop a personalized program of utter and complete indulgence. Guests are encouraged to spend their time being solitary in the Eastern tradition of meditation and reflection. They walk a labyrinth, receive gourmet breakfast in bed, daily massages and beauty treatments. Exercise is an option but not necessarily a focus. "I would not recommend Golden Door for someone who is seriously fit," says Wolf. "But I would recommend it for someone who is trying to get away from severe emotional stress such as a divorce."

Old-Fashioned In contrast, Szekely's Rancho La Puerta is the Golden Door's more physical older sister. Located in Tecate, Baja California, just an hour south of San Diego, the 3,000-acre ranch was founded in 1940 and offers an abundant organic garden, spa, fitness center and old-fashioned casitas nestled against the mountains. Each day, nearly 150 guests hike up Mt. Kuchumaa, partake in a variety of spa treatments, sample vegetarian, fish and dairy dishes, listen to lectures, exercise and take group classes in subjects such as cooking and chanting. "That place was sacred to the Native Americans and has a magnetic resonance—a slightly different air quality and a different vibe," Wolf says. She ranks the spa among her favorites for rustic, spiritual growth.

Free-Spirited For a more whimsical way to de-stress, the Esalen Institute in Big Sur may strike your fancy. "It's not for people who want a luxury vacation on the Queen Elizabeth II," warns Scott Taylor, a master masseuse who first came to Esalen in 1969. "Plus, there is nakedness." Esalen presents a broad spectrum of self-improvement classes. Weeklong massage, writing, perfume making, alternative healing and shamanism workshops are merely a scratch on the surface of course offerings. Guests also come to the 27-acre property to try out the sweat lodge, massage, hot tubs, night bathing in the hot springs and commune with nature. "A lot of places are dogmatic," Taylor says. "You have to be a member or a religion or a vegetarian. But at Esalen, you'll see doctors smoking cigars and across the table, some Zen Buddhists eating veggie foods. It's a good place to put aside what you think you know." **CONTINUED ON PAGE 123**

"YOU FEED people GOOD FOOD, EXERCISE **THEM** and put in some THINGS FOR **THEIR SOUL**. IT'S A VERY simple FORMULA." CATHARINA HEDBURG, THE ASHRAM







THE INAUGURATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

The Huffington Post Ball at the Newseum was the hottest ticket of inauguration eve. Security was tight with most streets closed to thru traffic, transforming a 15-minute cab ride into well over an hour. Photographers were everywhere, clamoring to get at a guest list, 700 strong, that quickly morphed into thousands. Revelers were packed in toe-to-toe, wearing party hats, drinking champagne and enjoying entertainment by Sting, Sheryl Crow and will.i.am. There were stunning young women, aging baby-boomers and politicos old and new swaying to the beat. Ben Affleck, Ed Harris, Ed Norton, Jamie Foxx, Jennifer Beals, Jessica Alba, Josh Groban, Kate Walsh, Marisa Tomei, Sarah Silverman, Oprah, Robert de Niro and Sharon Stone partied on the second floor overlooking the crowds below.

Snow was predicted for inauguration morning, but instead we got sunshine with temperatures freezing enough to command long underwear, wool pants, three layers of cashmere, a furry hat and lined boots. Even so, the cold seeped into my bones as I

trudged through security checks and reached my seat outside the Capitol. The Marine Band began to play, senators, former presidents and Malia, Sasha and Michelle Obama were introduced, and then Obama appeared atop the Capitol steps.

The best, and warmest, seat in town: Mary Alice Haney and Ben Silverman's parade viewing party in an apartment overlooking the Capitol. Fifty guests, a mixture of D.C. power players along with Laurie David, Sheryl Crow, Ron and Kelly Meyer, Colleen Bell and Fisher Stevens, enjoyed a bird's-eye view of the parade. Right in front of the Haney apartment, President and Mrs. Obama emerged from the new presidential Cadillac, looked up and waved to the cheering guests.

I found my way back to The Hay-Adams for a quick cheeseburger and hot tea by the fireplace, changed costumes and headed out to Eli and Edythe Broad's intimate and elegant dinner. A select 200 gathered at the Tony Chi-designed Park Hyatt for an evening only L.A.'s "first citizens" could have pulled off: Prominent speakers Bill Clinton, (who spoke for 20 minutes without notes, of course), Secretary of State Hillary Clinton,

former Fed Chairman Paul Volcker and National Economic Council Director Larry Summers shared their thoughts on a re-energized America. Also on hand: Arianna Huffington, Jamie McCourt, Mayor Villaraigosa, Representative Henry Waxman, Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky, Pat and Michael York, Mel Levine and Connie Bruck, Placido Domingo, Thomas Friedman of *The New York Times*, Vernon Jordan, Charlie Rose, George Soros and Newark's dynamic young mayor, Cory Booker.

After all the hours of preparation securing hotel and restaurant reservations, tickets to events and even a full-time driver to help me negotiate the complicated and clogged Washington streets, suddenly it was over. Though I had battled the cold, the lines, the traffic and even my will to persevere, when it ended, I wanted more. As I sat with my family in the warmth of our hotel living room and re-lived the day over and over via CSPAN, I realized I would bring back to California "the more" I had wanted: a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility garnered from the magic moments of President Barack Obama's historic inauguration. •

DESTINATION DETOX CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

Regardless of a spa's unusual or indulgent approach to encouraging inner peace, scientific research supports the claim that stress reduction is beneficial for your health. Studies suggest what was once a perfectly normal fight-or-flight mechanism becomes harmful when set off repeatedly. Chronic low-level stress secretes an overabundance of cortisol, which is linked to a surfeit of health and aesthetic problems. Clinical depression, short-term memory loss, a

suppressed immune system, sleep problems and even abdominal weight gain are all attributed to too much of this hormone.

Rest and relaxation is no longer a whim of the pampered and independently wealthy; it's a plan of attack for many hardworking professionals, mothers and athletes. Fortunately, Ashram's Hedberg reminds us that getting out of a nasty stress cycle can be easier than it seems. "It's simplicity," she says. "You feed people good food. You exercise them, and you put in some things for their soul. It's a very simple formula." Cal-a-Vie, from \$7,295/week;

29402 Spa Havens Way, Vista, 760-842-6831; cal-a-vie.com. Optimum Health Institute, from \$625/week; 6970 Central Ave., Lemon Grove, 619-464-3346; optimumhealth.org. The Ashram, \$4,250/week; 2025 North McKain St., Calabasas, 818-222-6900; the ashram.com. Golden Door, \$7,995/week; 777 Deer Springs Rd., San Marcos, 760-744-5777; goldendoor. com. Rancho La Puerta, \$2,795/week; Tecate, Mexico, 619-478-1443; ranchola puerta.com. Esalen Institute, from \$670/weekend workshop; 55000 Highway One, Big Sur, 831-667-3000; esalen.org. ●

CULINARY HEIGHTS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 68

and Rita Hayworth bought this mountaintop cabin on a whim when they were taking a drive on the brand-new Highway One in 1944. They paid \$167 for it, but

they never ever came back, selling it to the grandparents of the present proprietors a few years later. It's easy to see why two mercurial movie stars fell in love with this enchanted spot, seemingly on top of the world. Perhaps not wanting to gild the lily, Nepenthe keeps the menu free

of showiness. A simple meal like fresh pea soup and an ambrosia burger (with its nod to Mexico—there's mild chili salsa in the sauce) is as divine as the view.

My big disappointment was we did not get to eat at the "new" guy in town—the Big Sur Bakery (hardly new since it >>