

# OFF TO THE RACES

STORY BY DAVID BROWN

*Luxury boutique hotels anchor the coastal paradise of Del Mar, which just introduced an expanded racing season this fall.*

**I**F IT'S JULY, IT'S TIME FOR horse racing at Del Mar Race Track. Beginning this year, extend that seasonal reminder to November. For the first time, Del Mar, Calif.—“Where The Turf Meets The Surf”—will be running a fall season, Nov. 7 to 30, at the historic track, just a few months after its famous July through September summer schedule, which annually attracts equestrian fans worldwide to this super-cool seaside village just 20 miles from San Diego International.

Welcoming them will be the area's fine hotels, in particular, L'Auberge Del Mar and the different but also highly regarded Hotel Indigo Del Mar. Both properties are about a quarter-mile walking distance west to the beach and steps away from the designer shopping and dining that has made Del Mar so attractive to those seeking a quiet upscale getaway.

Reopened in 2008 after a luxurious renovation, the 120-room/suite L'Auberge Del Mar offers dining options like the casual oceanview Waterfall Terrace. And, just across from that restaurant's optional cabana and waterfall outdoor dining setting, Spa L'Auberge, guided by its inspired director, Leah Strohecker, is creating a menu of ocean-inspired and other



treatments to refresh those fortunate enough to book some well-deserved pampering.

More vibey and trendy, a hip boutique hotel, the nearby 94-room Hotel Indigo Del Mar is unabashedly young people- and family-focused, with its California-cuisine Oceanview Bar & Grill, opening out to

the lobby and to a beachview balcony, and the European-style day spa, overseen by Kara Willingham.

**FALL RACING AT THE GATES**  
When the fall season runs for the first time at the track, it will continue an almost 80-year-old legacy of Del Mar hospitality. At

the same time, it meets a need following the recent closing of Hollywood Park in Los Angeles.

Opened in 1937, the Del Mar Race Track was built by a partnership of actors: Bing Crosby, who greeted everyone at the gates opening day, Pat O'Brien, Gary Cooper, Joe E. Brown, Oliver Hardy and businessman Charles S. Howard. A year later, one of the great match races took place Aug. 12, 1938, when the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club hosted a \$25,000 winner-take-all match race between Howard's immortal Seabiscuit and the Binglin Stable's colt, Ligaroti, with Seabiscuit taking honors.

The track will showcase its Hollywood past by naming the new fall season “Del Mar Bing Crosby Season.” In addition to the weekday and weekend racing (see [dmtc.com](http://dmtc.com) for schedules), guests can also attend a Gatsbyesque Opening Day red carpet party, Nov. 7, and enjoy free concerts throughout the month.

“Most may not realize but one of San Diego's nicest months is actually November, and we're excited to make Del Mar a destination in the fall when temperatures average mid-70's and the rest of the

country is starting to get that winter chill,” says Craig Dado, executive vice president and chief marketing officer for the Del Mar Racetrack. Because of this second season, he notes, the track will host the prestigious Breeders' Cup World Championship in 2017.

When the daily racing is done, the many premiere attractions of Del Mar, including L'Auberge Del Mar, await. Opened in 1910, the Stratford Inn, on the site of today's property, attracted silent film stars, who spoke eloquently about its serenity and proximity to the beach. In 1927, the landmark became the Hotel Del Mar and was closely tied to the draw of Crosby's new Del Mar Race Track.

During WWII, the inn welcomed soldiers and their families and, when peace returned, the hotel did as well. In 1969, the old property was razed and the Inn L'Auberge built in 1989. Six years ago, L'Auberge Del Mar opened after a \$26-million renovation on 5.2 lushly landscaped acres.

For sure, L'Auberge Del Mar is coastal estate rather than hotel, a friend's home on the ocean, with a front entry that opens right to the sights,

sounds and smells of the ocean. Nearby are the magnificent Torrey Pines Preserve, with the rarest pine in the world; world-famous SeaWorld; and the many museums and attractions of Balboa Park, including the San Diego Zoo.

They're also talking about Chef Brandon Fortune's KITCHEN 1540, combining Modern American with an upscale Southern influence from his past, while supporting sustainability and local farmers and their products. These dinner enticements include the signature shrimp and grits, with organic heirloom grains and a roasted corn and chorizo crème.

Before or after any meal, make an appointment with the spa therapists at their delicious retreat. Designed by Cary Collier of Blu Spas Inc., the 5,000-sq.-ft. Spa L'Auberge has a beach cottage spirit, connecting it thematically with the laidback sophistication of the hotel.

To celebrate the new fall season, Spa L'Auberge has debuted race-inspired treatments. Choose, for example, the Daily Double, a choice of two 25-minute express spa services, or the Exacta, including a Mint Julep Scrub with a Bourbon Bubbler full-body scrub comprising Kentucky Whiskey and brown sugar, which stimulates and renews dull and dry skin. Just introduced, too, are Spa Rituals incorporating healing practices from cultures around the world.

**MORE ON THE WEB:** For the top restaurants along Del Mar Plaza, visit [AZFoothills.com](http://AZFoothills.com).



L'AUBERGE DEL MAR

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