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VOLUME XI, NUMBER 8



\$4.99 U.S./\$6.99 CANADA

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Highline Living HOTEL DEL CORONADO: CONCOURS CLASSIC

by David M. Brown

Hotel Del Coronado: graceful, like a Talbot-Lago; eye-catching like a one-off Ferrari; and high-performing like a 427-cubic-inch Shelby Cobra. After 126 years, the Grand Lady of the Sea, on Coronado Island in San Diego, continues to impress with its multi-award-winning synthesis of history, beauty, elegance and hospitality.

Here's how one local paper gushed, in 1888, of the now seven-story 679-room Hotel Del: "The story of Aladdin and his wonderful palace, built in a single night, comes closer to being realized into actual fact upon this Coronado beach than possibly any other place on earth known to man."

A magic lamp for so long and to so many, the Hotel Del became a California Historical Landmark in 1970 and, seven years later, a National Historic Landmark. The second largest wooden structure in the United States, the Queen-Anne-style Victorian masterpiece is celebrating this year the completion of a \$13-million renovation of its guest rooms, beach village and lobby.

"Hotel Del Coronado offers a truly unique destination located right on the sands of one of the most beautiful

beaches in America," says General Manager Andre Zotoff. "The historic property offers the right amount of charm, combined with personalized service from a dedicated staff, luxurious guestrooms and the quintessential SoCal beach experience. Just a ferry ride away from San Diego, there's no shortage of things to do and see on- and off-property."

Adjacent to the hotel, The 78 cottages and villas at Beach Village offer premium beachfront guestrooms and suites, with up to three bedrooms, dining and living great rooms, oversized baths with white Calcutta marble floors, fireplaces and gourmet kitchens featuring Sub-Zero® refrigerators, stainless steel Wolf® cooktops and built-in ovens.

Opened in 2007, the cottages and villas reiterate the Del's signature turrets and red-shingled roof, white lap siding and accents; the interiors are transitional/cottage style characterized by blue-textured linen upholstery and striped linen draperies. Outside the cottages and villas, a contemporary interpretation of The Del's lush traditional landscaping, incorporate gardens accentuated by stone-capped borders and quiet promenades.



Services exclusively for Beach Village guests include dinners prepared in-room from the Del's culinary team, access to the private Windsor Cottage for breakfast and sunset cocktails, private pools and more.

Overseen by Executive Chef John Shelton, the Del provides its guests many dining options. For nightly dinner, 1500 OCEAN features California Coastal cuisine, with much of the food and cocktail menu grown in the culinary herb and produce garden adjacent to the restaurant. Select covered verandas, intimate booths, private rooms for special events, or the Sunset Bar, for pre- and après-dinner fireside cocktails, light fare and breathe-deep sea views.

Sheerwater, with extensive oceanview dining terraces, offers breakfast, lunch and dinner menus; it's a classic bistro, focusing on fresh and sustainable seafood, with a variety of meat and vegetarian options, slow-cooked barbecue and other classics. ENO Pizzeria and Wine Bar has artisan Neapolitan style pizzas from its outdoor wood-fired oven in addition to boutique wines, local craft beer, artisan cheese, exotic chocolate confections and charcuterie.

Two additional venues celebrate the history of the Del. Babcock & Story, with its handcrafted mahogany bar shipped around Cape Horn to Philadelphia in 1888, recalls the hotel founders Elisha Babcock and H.L. Story, two savvy Midwesterners who dreamed of building a resort hotel that would be the "talk of the Western world." Here you'll enjoy cocktails, premiere California wines, espressos and lighter fare you'll certainly talk about.

And, the Crown Room is noted for its award-winning Sunday Brunch, served by white toque-wearing sous chefs. Once a long-term Del resident and guest, L. Frank Baum is credited with designing its crown chandeliers. Next August, in fact, the hotel plans its second Oz Con International, a celebration of the magical literary works by the Wizard of Oz author.

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh was honored in the Crown Room following the inaugural transatlantic flight, joining the list of many who dined here and stayed at the Del: Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin (who enjoyed playing polo here), Greta Garbo, Mae West, Anthony Quinn, Edward



G. Robinson, Will Rogers, James Stewart, Clark Gable, James Cagney, Errol Flynn, Judy Garland and Bogie and Bacall.

And, in 1958, Billy Wilder chose the Del to film what some consider the greatest comedy movie ever: *Some Like it Hot*. That's the one with Tony Curtis, Jack Lemon and a resplendent Marilyn Monroe.

Memories are made at the Del; so many are here when you arrive.

If you're planning a Hotel Del visit this fall, try Oktoberfest, celebrating local and international brews, Friday, Sept. 26, to Sunday, Sept. 28, 2014. Two weeks later is Sea + Food, Saturday Oct. 18, with food and wine on The Del's beachfront Windsor Lawn, with proceeds benefitting Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation to fight childhood cancer. And, the 5th annual, Hallo-wine & Spirits Party celebrates Halloween with the adults-only "Hallo-wine and Spirits" party Saturday, Oct. 25, 7-9 p.m.

For the holidays, the beachfront ice rink returns for the 11th year this season. In 1904, in fact, America's first electrically-lit outdoor Christmas tree was switched on at the

Hotel Del. And, year round, the Del centers many of the island's events, including the annual May car show.

"From offerings designed for families like the DelVenture program, where kids tackle a property-wide scavenger hunt to romantic dining, the private Del Beach with lush cabanas and day beds and an award-winning spa for romantic getaways, Hotel Del offers it all," Zotoff says.

Any time, bring your pet: A visit includes a guide to Coronado Island with its dog beach, less than a mile walk from the resort.

And your classic car: Hotel Del staff will ensure its stay is ribbon-worthy, too.

For more information on the great Hotel Del Coronado and Beach Villages, see www.hoteldel.com or call 1.800.HOTEL.DEL. For more info on San Diego, see www.sandiego.org.

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