

# Sisters in the Gaslamp Quarter

*This summer and fall, head to the beach, yet hotel in style offshore.*

Story by David M. Brown

**T**WO FOUR-STAR SISTER HOTELS IN—and just bordering—the Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego offer superb, although different, experiences for California getaways. Owned and managed by San Francisco-based Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, the 183-room Hotel Palomar is at the northern gateway to the Gaslamp Quarter, while the slightly larger 235-room Solamar, also managed by Kimpton, is a few blocks away in the well-known entertainment district and adjacent to the many additional urban opportunities of the city's emerging East Village.

The Gaslamp Quarter is California's hip dining, entertainment and shopping district, with 100-plus restaurants and entertainment venues and more than 100 boutiques, spas and salons, fine art galleries and artisan shops, many in the area's nearly 100 placard-marked historic buildings.

## Hotel Palomar: Uptown Downtown

Opened in 2008 as *Sè San Diego*, the Hotel Palomar is a central piece in the city's cultural district, next door to the with-it House of Blues and walking distance away from nearby museums, galleries, the San Diego Symphony and Opera and others.

Those who demand hospitality elegance will particularly enjoy the Hotel Palomar's highest quality finishes and materials. Art and design artistry are everywhere: in the restaurant, lobby, even the elevators. The hotel's "Art in Motion" series celebrates the visual and performing arts as well as fashion, literature, dance and architecture. The Hotel Palomar is the first Kimpton hotel to designate space as an art gallery, here in the lobby. The hotel's proceeds from the sale of the artwork benefit various local charities.

The Skyline Suites are up to 920 square feet, with beds

draped in Italian Frette linens and down comforters and separate living areas, while the Flats and Penthouses feature Brazilian walnut floors, Zen-inspired furnishings, bathrooms finished in Jerusalem bone and floor-to-ceiling windows.

The Luxury Flats are available up to 1,176 square feet, and the two- and three-bedroom bi-level Penthouses encompass 1,843 to 2,779 square feet. The latter are particularly appropriate for long-term stays, with gourmet kitchens with the high-end appliances as well as luxuries like rainforest showers. All rooms are pet-friendly.

Celebrating the diversity of the hotel's design elements, its *Sè Spa* combines Asian-, Indian- and European-inspired treatments, which include skin care, makeup and facials as well as hand and foot treatments and massages.

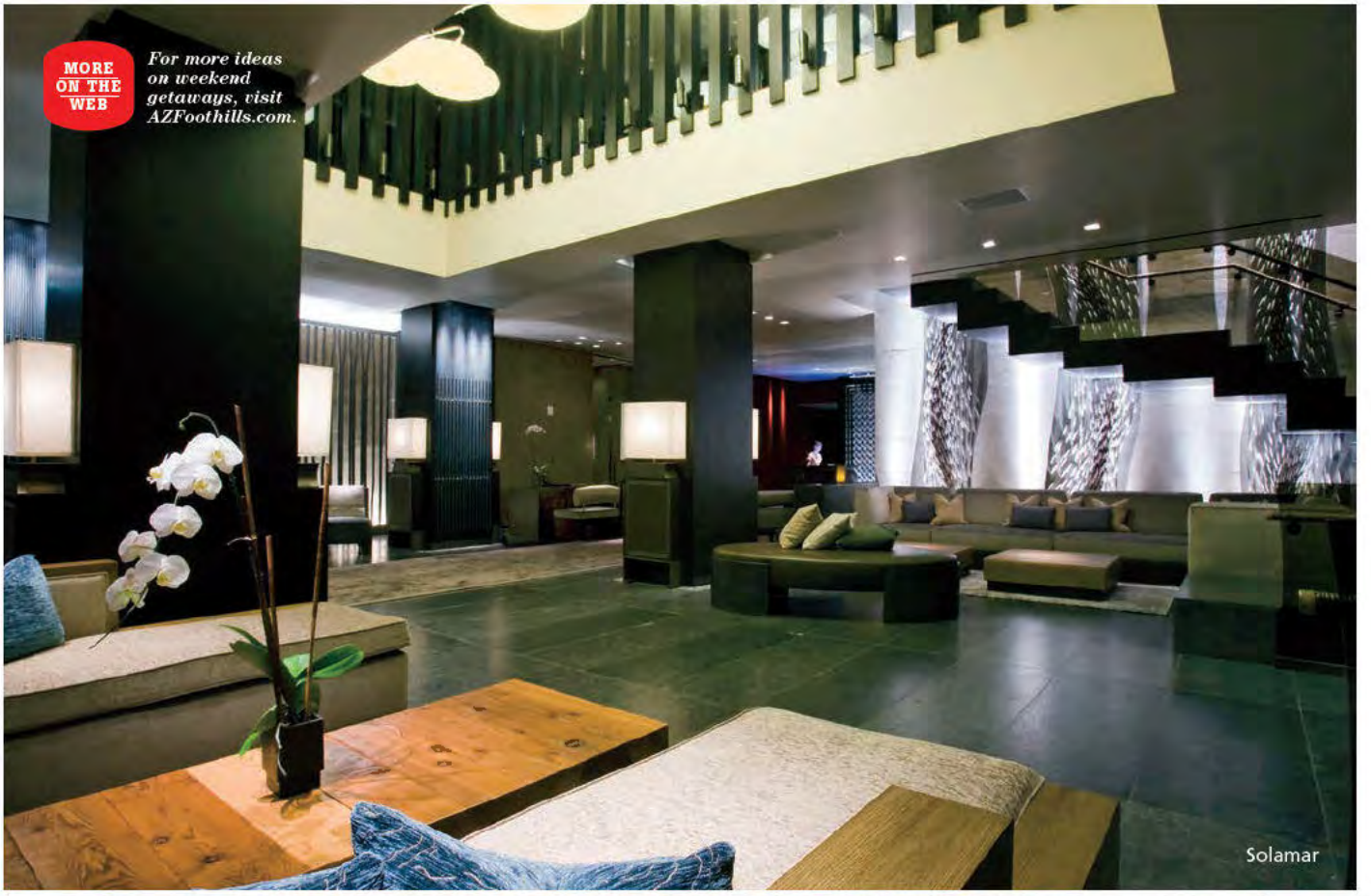
And, for more public enjoyment, and great views of the city and the Gaslamp Quarter, The Summersalt Rooftop Pool and Lounge offers an infinity-edge pool, cabanas, oversize beds and European-style chaise lounges as well as food and cocktails.

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Hotel Palomar



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**HEART AND SOL:** San Diego's Solamar offers an urban atmosphere with a side of sun and sea.

Solamar: Celebration of Sun and Sea If Hotel Palomar is urban-elegant and artistic, Solamar is urban-slick and coastal chic and cool.

Opened in 2005, the boutique hotel enjoys a Gaslamp Quarter location as well as proximity to the luxury hotels and restaurants, rooftop bars, cafes, boutique shops, galleries and live music venues in the emergent East Village, San Diego's arts district. Here, too, is PETCO Park, the San Diego Padres' stadium, which opened in April 2004.

Solamar rooms are contemporary and sophisticated, with a palette of aqua blues, chocolate browns and tans and finished with mahogany furniture, work spaces, flat-screen TV's and overstuffed chairs. The 570-sq.-ft. corner Masters Suite includes a king bed and a sofa sleeper in a separate living room, two LCD flat-screen televisions and a Fuji soak tub and separate shower. On the fourth floor with views of Solamar Terrace and a pool deck patio, the luxe 725-sq.-ft. Choreographers Suite has a wet bar and can connect to a king room or spa guest

room—or both—to become a generous two-bedroom suite.

Solamar guests receive a variety of services, including an evening wine hour and morning coffee and tea service, both in lobby living room; a business center; Wi-Fi Internet access throughout; concierge services; participation in the "Mind Your Ps: Pilates, Power Walks and Pedal Pushers" wellness program; and use of the rooftop pool and lounge deck. Solamar is also pet-friendly.

**The Sisters Serve Great Food, Too** While both hotels are near many fine restaurants, both Executive Chef Simon Dolinky at Hotel Palomar and Executive Chef Christian Graves at Solamar invite their hotel guests to enjoy in-house cuisine.

At Hotel Palomar, Saltbox Dining & Drinking is a New American gastro-lounge, featuring ingredients by San Diego-area purveyors and farmers. Chef Dolinky's small plates include the roasted marrow bones with pickled onions and celery leaves; chicken liver mousse with grilled green onions,

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pickled radish salad and sourdough bread; and Hiramasa crudo, with vanilla-scented Picholine olives, local citrus and arugula. His popular starter, Four Flatbreads, includes Uovo with braised nettles, basil, arugula, garlic confit, tomato sauce and quail eggs.

One of the chef's many fine entrées, Jidori chicken, prepared with peppercorn fricassee and Anson Mills grits, has become a favorite for both hotel guests and locals.

"Whether it's something as quick and simple as the lobster corn dogs, or something more involved like the whole-fried-bass 'Build Your Own Tacos,' we put the same amount of attention and love into it," says Dolinky, a Milwaukee native. "We take advantage of every opportunity to make things tasty."

At the Jsix restaurant and LOUNGEsix on the roof patio, Chef Graves specializes in California Coastal

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cuisine. A leader in the city's Slow Food movement, he selects choice meats, sustainable seafood (following Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch List) and herbs from his rooftop garden and organic produce from nearby farms.

"At Jsix, we are obsessed with fresh ingredients and look forward to each season's bounty," says Graves, who learned his craft in his native Bay Area at restaurants such as Farallon, under Chef Mark Franz, as well as MoMo's, Aqua, Roti and One Market. "This summer, for example, we are excited for the return of the many different types of cucumbers—from the meaty, hearty lemon cucumber to the delicate crunch of Persian cucumbers. That also means the beginning of our pickling process. As the cucumbers just start to grow, we pick them young and dress them up with spices, vinegar and a dash or two of sugar. In weeks, we will have a cornucopia of pickles!" ■