

A SPACE TO CHILL
MAKE YOUR BATHROOM AS LUXURIOUS
AND SERENE AS A SPA

REFLECTING THE EARTH
UTILIZING NATURE'S MORE SUBDUED
COLORS TO EVOKE FEELINGS OF CALM

HEALTHY HOMES
DESIGNERS ARE INCORPORATING NATURAL
ELEMENTS TO ELEVATE OUR DAILY LIVES

WHERE LIFE & STYLE COLLIDE

LATITUDE 33

ARCHITECTURE | REAL ESTATE | DESIGN

SUMMER 2024



ON THE MARKET
2209 BAYSIDE DRIVE
CORONA DEL MAR
LISTED BY JOHN STAMALAND



**DETOXING THE MIND,
BODY AND SPIRIT**
ANCIENT MODALITIES AND MODERN
HEALING ARE REFLECTED IN WE CARE
SPA'S ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN



Left: The colorful lobby is a gathering spot for guests; right: We Care's beautiful grounds

CAMP COLONIC

THE LUXURIOUSLY REVAMPED WE CARE SPA IN DESERT HOUSE SPRINGS IS A MIND, BODY, SPIRIT DETOX THAT MAKES CLEANSING FUN.

BY JUSTINE AMODEO

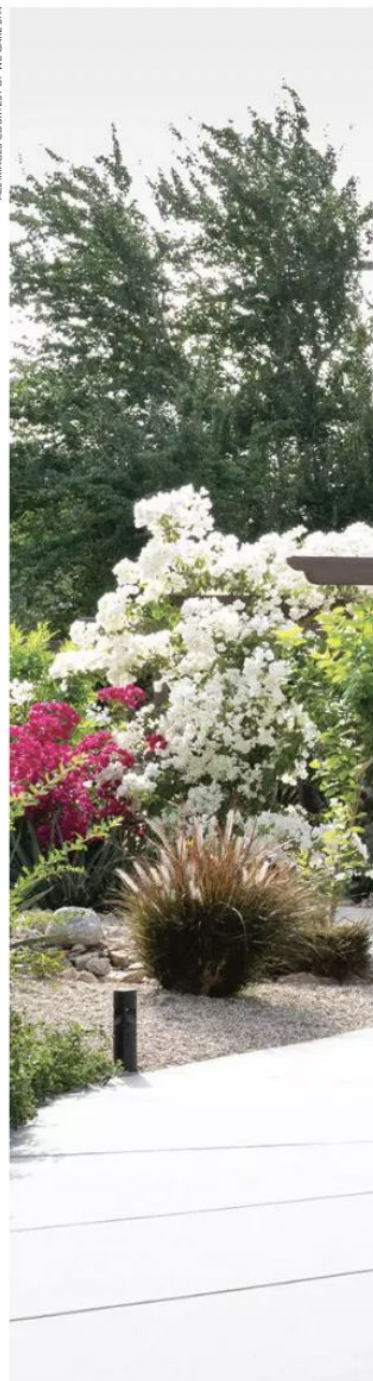


We Care Spa Founder Susana Belen

The porcupine first makes an appearance on a card in a cozy, softly lit yurt at We Care Spa in Desert Hot Springs. Ronda MacNeil, a numerologist, animal spirit guide and life path reader, tells me the card I draw means I am protected with a coat of armor (she also deftly renames my procrastinator an “energy surfer” and makes it clear this “old soul” needs to play more).

The next day, my quilled messenger appears again in a 60-minute spiritual healing session when AJA — a spirit guide coach and medium who is in residence at We Care to lead a week-long Guided by Spirit Retreat — transmits the porcupine’s tough love: She sees me sitting on a muddy bank of a river with spikes coming out of my back. The porcupine, she explains, has a soft underbelly that needs to be able to feel safe to show it. But instead, there is fear. My guides tell her the spikes are a cloak that I can drop. That at some point, I felt the spikes were protection, “but they slowly began to seep into your skin. The promises you make will help you unzip this cloak and drop it. If you can move into a zone of forgiveness, you will be halfway there.” My guides say they’ve been frustrated with me for ten years. “We offer you riches and you walk right by, picking up the dirty plate instead of the golden ball.”

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF WE CARE SPA







Various spaces are available throughout the property to sit, relax, read or enjoy nature.

I get it. It's time to shake up the burdensome blocks and stagnant energy. Time to quell the quills. Lose the cloak. Give my insides a good power wash. Which is why I've signed up for a three-day fast at this luxury detox spa famous for its colonics and celebrity cult following, which includes devotees like Ben Affleck, Gwen Stefani, Cameron Diaz, Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon, Andie McDowell and many others. Actually, everyone here during my stay looks like they are famous for something; models, Hollywood execs, writers, CEOs preparing for nicotine and caffeine withdrawal are all walking around in robes, ready for the colon hydrotherapist to, well, clean the pipes. And most of them are repeat guests, returning again and again for tune-ups, slow-downs, and to give their organs a rest from food.

HELPING THE BODY HEAL ITSELF

One of the guests I meet around the juice bar is Gloria Garrett, who has been coming to We Care since 2002, returning over 40 times. When I ask her why, she extols the opportunity people have here to "let go of some of the layers of toxins and trauma that we all hold and have very few outlets to move through in a supportive environment to get back to our grounded balanced selves." That, she says, is provided through the nutritional detox that We Care offers. "Ultimately," says Garrett, who holds an advanced degree in energy medicine, "it has to happen at home, because you can't detox to retox, unless you want to stay out of balance and circumvent your own ability to reach your potential for achieving peace, calm and happiness. If we detox to retox, we will never reach that stable, calm state." Garrett spends most of her free time here roaming the 20 acres of bougainvillea, lemon groves and shaded meditation gardens. She finds her best therapy is in nature.

That philosophy is also the one advocated by We Care Spa founder Susana Belen, now in her 80s and still teaching yoga, who believes that if you remove emotional, spiritual, and physical toxic build-up in the body (like my quills), you can make space for the body to heal itself. This includes breathwork, meditation and yoga, eating a mostly organic plant-based diet, eliminating gluten and alcohol, minimizing sugar, maintaining a home free of toxic cleaning products, keeping an alkaline PH balance in the body through alkaline water and diet, and conducting a weekly or quarterly fasting protocol, which increases the efficiency of the digestive system, stimulates the organs responsible for cleansing and elimination, and triggers autophagy and antiaging at the cellular level.

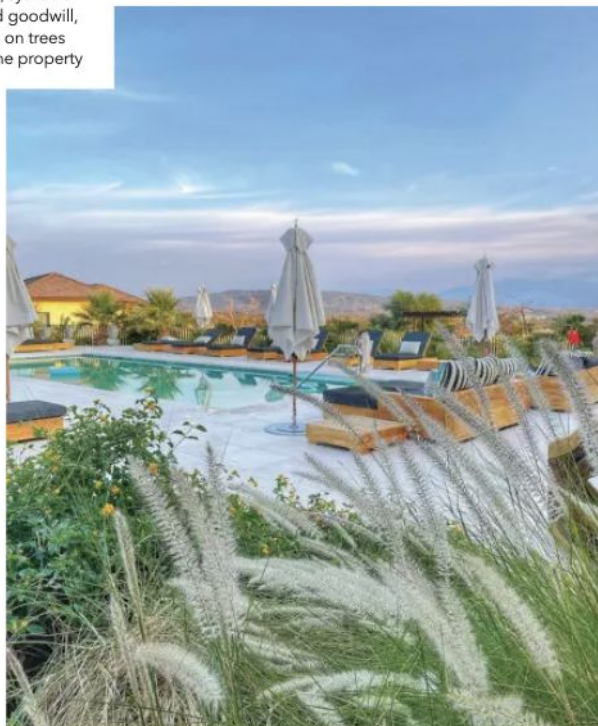
Easier said than done, of course, which is why getting healthy is a process that can be jumpstarted here. The liquid fasting protocol provides all of the nutrients needed while giving the five organs of elimination a rest, to repair and rejuvenate tissues of the body, and enhance overall healing. Free workshops and classes teach you how to do the rest.

BLISS, CALM, ENLIGHTENMENT AND A LITTLE RELEASE

We Care features more than 40 spa treatments designed to cleanse the body, and the fast includes pressed organic juices, fresh vegetable soup purees, detox teas, alkaline water, green powdered drinks and a special Detox drink. Guests enjoy daily yoga, breathwork, sound healing, nutrition classes, meditation, and many other activities. There is reverse osmosis water on tap throughout the property, including all of the guest accommodations and public areas, plus two Kangen water alkaline systems. The kind of water you drink, it turns out, makes a big difference. We Care also offers IV therapy in your room in case



Clockwise from top left: a sculptural view of the pool; a meditative labyrinth; the view from the breezy pool; Tibetan prayer flags, symbols of peace and goodwill, are draped on trees throughout the property





A womblike floating bed rocks in the shade, a one-point pendulum lounger that aids blood flow to the brain.

your immune system needs a boost of vitamins and antioxidants.

Based on your own unique goals and health challenges, the attentive staff creates a custom itinerary before you arrive, so you get the most out of your stay, whether it's two days or two weeks. Besides the daily colonics, I get a series of treatments, all designed to facilitate the detoxing. One day it's the System Recovery Master Treatment, where I lay on a heated amethyst mat and get dry brushed before being blissfully wrapped in castor oil, followed by a soothing foot and scalp massage. The treatment is meant to reduce abdominal discomfort and inflammation while activating a liver and bowel detox, the perfect partner for a colonic. On another day, I try the Magnesium Detox, another wrap comprised of mineral magnesium and aloe paste, which increases transdermal absorption and imparts much needed remineralization, relieving and calming overactive nerves. An enlightening scalp and nurturing shoulder massage follows with warm hydrating lotion. I also try the Crystal Cranial Sacral treatment, which combines the energetic properties of crystals with contemporary physiology to clear and balance physical, spiritual and emotional states. As you hold two quartz stones in your hands, a therapist uses light touch to move the fascia and blood around the central nervous system.

All of these are meant to work in conjunction with the daily colon hydrotherapy, a closed system used to flush out toxins, irrigating and exercising the colon as well as the intestinal tract by stimulating peristalsis, the breakdown and release of accumulated toxins and other waste including bile, mucus and debris that's been lodged in the body. It's a little awkward, strangely comforting and definitely makes you feel like you've just been given a new lease on life.

FROM HIPPIE RETREAT TO BOUGIE LUXURY SPA

Colonics and juicing are the core of the detox program that hasn't changed since it opened in 1986. But the earthy, hippie We Care Spa of the past has now been refurbished with luxury villas, a new pool, private saunas, elevated treatments, week-long workshops (the next workshop guided by AJA, "The Promise" is scheduled for June 24-29) and shamanic healing. Between colonics, guests can bounce on their own personal rebounders while looking out to the mountains, vibrate on power plates for lymphatic drainage, tiptoe through a meditative stone labyrinth, relax in bougie loungers by the pool and schedule spa treatments and spiritual healing sessions.

The full design transformation, which was completed during the pandemic, is a massive change from Belen's original three-room home, where she originally helped people with the knowledge she accumulated from her own healing journey after a difficult divorce. Consumed by anxiety and frustration, she sought out practices that left her feeling strong and was able to reform her relationship with food and nutrition and tap into her body's natural vitality through yoga and exercise.

The We Care Spa methods are derived directly from Belen's personal experience and ongoing education, paired with her daughter, We Care CEO Susan Lombardi, who began partnering with her mother 35 years ago after a fast-paced modeling career and melanoma scare. Lombardi's business acumen and love of hosting has created an inviting, nurturing escape for guests wanting to make a serious commitment to their health.

The convergence between ancient modalities and modern healing is reflected in the retreat's architecture and design. Lombardi worked with



Guests at We Care gather for a healing crystal bowl sound circle.

renowned interior designer Debbie Fogel of Fogel Interiors in Los Angeles on the redesign of the public areas and guestrooms and suites which can now accommodate up to 40 people and sourced Buddhist and Hindu sculptures, large crystals and other artistic elements from around the world which now grace the grounds of the property.

My spacious executive suite, one of 28 accommodations across the property, has breezy interiors that open to the vibrant mountains and is equipped with weights, a balance ball, an oversized soaking tub with bath salts and body brushes, shower, air purifier, circadian light system, yoga mat, bed you can nest in, Rabbit Air purification system, rebounder trampoline outside on my furnished patio to enjoy the desert sunset, diffuser with essential oils and a refrigerator with detox drinks and teas if I don't want to leave my room. I do and I don't. I want to stay here and meditate, journal, breathe. And I want to walk amongst the perfumy orange groves and trees whose boughs are wrapped in colorful prayer shawls, emerge in tucked away hot tubs and find out who all these interesting people are who are making an investment in their well-being.

LEARNING TO BE UNBUSY

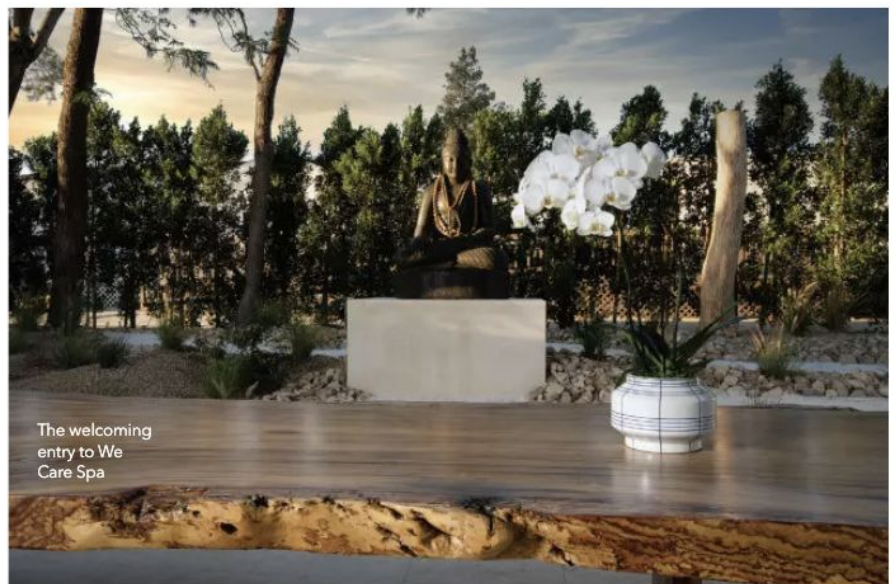
But there is still so much to do. Starting on day two, all the liquid nourishment and colonics feel like they've flushed out years of physical and mental gunk and I just want to walk the grounds. Those acres of gardens and land beckon me to wander throughout the property, stopping to nap on the womblike floating bed, a one-point pendulum lounger that aids blood flow to the brain. I lay back and rock to the singing birds, the fast-moving clouds opening up to the blue desert skies and wonder how I

can get one of these at home. I drift off to sleep, lucid dreaming, imagining my porcupine quills clinking into a metal bowl, one by one, until I am whole again.

When it's time to leave, I am given a delicious salad and instructions on how to reenter the real world and it's going to involve a LOT of change. Following the fast, the staff at We Care recommend a healthy, mostly plant-based diet, free of toxins to help continual rebalance of the body. Belen advocates — and her book, "Detox & Revitalize," lays it all out in detail — starting each morning with a vegetable-based smoothie, and then enjoying salads, an array of vegetables, gluten-free grains such as quinoa, brown rice and millet, legumes such as lentils, garbanzo and black beans, a range of herbs such as cilantro, oregano, and rosemary, as well as small amounts of fruit, nuts, seeds, and beneficial oils such as olive and unrefined coconut. She

suggests avoiding microwaved, processed and GMO foods, preservatives, food additives, toxic oils, alcohol, processed sugar and coffee. Matcha, here I come.

On my drive out the dirt road, I think about what the spirit guides have asked me in my channeled journey with AJA. "Where are you pretending certain things you are doing really matter or are just filling up space? Where are you not living? Once you decide to keep these promises, everything will be lighter, brighter, better." If I can make this commitment to myself, they see transparent wings coming out of my back. In this moment, I see them too. (wecarespa.com)



The welcoming entry to We Care Spa