



THE GRAND DEL MAR

An Exquisite Performance

BY KAREN VILLALPANDO

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a world-class resort, nestled in a beautiful canyon, with Mediterranean charm and unparalleled accommodations. With meticulous attention to detail on every aspect from the top quality furnishings and gold plated fixtures, it is easy to see why the Grand Del Mar Hotel has been named the premiere destination in San Diego County.

From the moment we checked in, we knew this was a very special resort. The staff is polished and excellently trained. We met a friend in the elegant lobby lounge upon arrival, and I was so impressed with the selections of wines by the glass, and even better, the beautiful stemware in which it was served.

Many of the furnishings were hand-selected from around the world, complementing the Portuguese, Spanish and Moroccan themes throughout the hotel. Deep hues of reds and gold were evident in the draperies, carpets and wall coverings, resulting in a rich and elegant ambience.

We were escorted to our lovely suite in the 249-room hotel. The Mediterranean theme is carried through to the guest-rooms, with comfortable yet sophisticated furniture. A semi-circular sofa in the master bedroom offered a comfortable place to lounge. Two large bathrooms, again replete with gold plated fixtures, offered us plenty of space. An outdoor patio with lounge chairs extended the space even further.

The accommodations at the Grand Del Mar proved to be just the place setting at this impressive resort. The real treat awaited us in the form of outstanding dining and first-rate golf on their 18-hole championship course.

First, the dining options at the Grand Del Mar are in the two main restaurants, Amaya and Addison's. Amaya is the more



photo courtesy of The Grand Del Mar

Amaya is The Grand Del Mar's all-day dining venue. Start your day with breakfast, brunch or lunch on their outdoor patio, dining amid lush gardens and under a red and white awning. A grand staircase shows off the Mediterranean-style architecture.

casual of the two; however it is also simply elegant with a top-notch chef, Camron Woods. Chef Camron (no "e", he pointed out) prepared for us a tasting menu consisting of his signature dishes. We began with a salmon Carpaccio neatly displayed on a small plate with candied onions and crème fraiche. Also, a golden tomato gazpacho was presented in a large bowl, with sherry vinegar and avocado par-fait. Finally, a seared foie gras with sweet corn purée was accompanied with a refreshing Sauterne. All three were delightful, light and perfect starters. The staff at Amaya is attentive and friendly, and obviously well trained, presenting dishes in unison. For entrées, Chef Camron chose three different dishes for the table, giving all three of

us an opportunity to taste his culinary creations. He paired wines with each course that perfectly complemented the dishes. A fabulous Spanish was the ideal wine to go with the duck, while a big cabernet was well

matched with the duo of beef – a petit filet and slow roasted short ribs. Another winning entrée was the duo of lamb consisting of grilled chops and Shepherd's pie. For a casually elegant dinner, let Chef Camron do the cooking!

Amaya is The Grand Del Mar's all-day venue. Start your day with breakfast, brunch or lunch on their outdoor patio dining amid lush gardens and under a red and white awning.

Moving on to the main event, let me present Addison, the signature restaurant at The Grand Del Mar. Named after architect Addison Mizner whose style defined the resort communities of Boca Raton and Palm Beach in the 1920s, the restaurant features influences from Spain, Portugal, Italy and Morocco. It is supremely appointed with decorative pieces and sensational lighting. Stone flooring and limestone fireplaces are balanced with earth-toned hues and graceful yellow-plastered arches.

The restaurant opened as a destination location in September 2006, with Executive Chef William Bradley leading the team. Bradley hails from another San Diego resort, the Loews Coronado Bay's Azzura Point, under the tutelage of Chef James Boyce. After stints at various restaurants in Arizona,

he was named a "Rising Star Chef for 2006".

Bradley is at home in his native San Diego, and his kitchen – his command is clear. He is a conductor and inventor, maestro and sculptor. Creative, yet with a subtle hand, Chef Bradley perfectly seasons and plates his food.

Dining at Addison is prix-fixe with a choice of three (\$80) or four (\$98) courses. A cheese carte is also offered with selections from California, Wisconsin, Italy and France. However, Addison's "Carte

Blanche" menu is my recommendation, where Chef Bradley creates seven courses for the table for a prix-fixe of \$140 per person.

We were seated and immediately presented with an amuse bouche of tomato consommé with raspberry and yuzu – a relatively clear broth, yet intensely flavorful. I mentioned the servers at Amaya presenting dishes in unison; here, the wait staff appears seemingly from nowhere with silver-domed plates that are placed harmoniously in front of you, with the domes lifted in synchronicity. This "culinary ballet" continued for the entire meal – every dish was presented with aplomb.

Over the next few hours, we enjoyed seven remarkable courses paired with wines. From petite crevettes (shrimp) we moved on to a roasted sable fish with tomato confit and sauce vermouth. Both dishes were extraordinary examples of Bradley's superb culinary talent. An interlude of terrine of foie gras with a ginger-lime jam was matched with a Chateau Soudiraut from France. The Sauterne-like wine was the perfect balance to the rich and delicate foie gras. The pinnacle of the meal was the ris de veau poelee, or veal sweetbreads, gently flash-fried with a fine coating and served with Parmesan risotto. The captain was hesitant to tell us what was in the dish – some diners may shy from such an item, but we have had the pleasure of dining on sweetbreads before, and knew right away this was something special. A Gaju



photo by Rebecca Villalpando

The spacious balcony boasts spectacular views of the Peñasquitos Canyon Reserve and The Grand's championship 18 hole golf course.



photo by Michael Villalpando

Whimsical rocking chairs prove to be the perfect respite after a mid-morning brunch at Amaya. Picturesque views of the canyons and golf course seem to go on for miles.

Nebbiolo/Cabernet from Italy was poured with this main course, simply fabulous.

Speaking of wines, Jesse Rodriguez, the sommelier, has

compiled a wine list like none other I've seen. Wines from all over the world are offered, with which most I was not familiar. What a wonderful treat to experience such hidden gems! In the dining room, a table is full of crystal decanters, of all shapes and sizes that appear more like objets d'art. In fact they are very functional vessels for many of the wines Jesse pours.

For the culinary ballet's grand finale, we were presented with

the cheese cart, and two desserts, one, a light lemon-honey sorbet and grapefruit granite, the other a Nutella mille-feuille (a delicious pastry

busy cleaning up for the night, since we were the last diners, and Chef Bradley proudly showed off what was "behind the curtain". The maestro, or director, definitely produces an award-winning show.

The Grand Del Mar is more than just dining, although that was definitely the highlight for me. A world-class golf club, stunning spa and two pools are among the amenities

that have garnered The Grand Del Mar the Five Diamond award from AAA; and rated them a Top Resort for Travel + Leisure's 2009 "World's Best" awards. The Grand Golf Club is a Tom

and custard) and crème fraiche ice cream. What a satisfying end to, possibly, the finest dinner I've ever experienced. Afterward, we were taken backstage for a tour of Chef Bradley's kitchen. His crew was

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Fazio-designed 18 hole course spread over 380 lush acres. The course is situated in the Peñasquitos Canyon Reserve, with rolling greens, and spectacular fairways throughout the scenic valleys. The golf club offers a caddie program, reinstating a long-standing tradition that has been "out of bounds" for many courses. An experienced caddie guides golfer through the course, providing assistance, fixing ball marks, and raking bunkers. The caddie ensures all needs are met and enhances a player's experience.

The Spa at The Grand Del Mar continues the Mediterranean theme of the resort, with opulent interiors reflecting the beauty and grace of the Renaissance. Guests are presented with luxurious robes and slippers while waiting for treatments amid a serene environment. An array of body treatments is offered, including the signature Renaissance 90-minute treatment. Guests are swathed in a mineral rich mud and aromatic oil wrap, then immersed in a warm pool, of sorts. The treatment bed's surface converts from firm to a cozy waterbed, which you sink into. Floating, suspended in the waterless pool, ensure ultimate relaxation. Following this, a multi-head shower is turned on to wash away the refreshing mud. The treatment concludes with a rejuvenating massage. The Spa at The Grand Del Mar was voted "Top New Spa" by Condé Nast Traveler in 2008.

The Grand Del Mar resort is perfect for a Fall weekend getaway, or perhaps the ultimate place to spend the holidays. For the holidays, The Grand Del Mar is offering a Holiday Grandeur Package with one night's accommodation, \$50.00 resort credit per guestroom stay and \$100.00 resort credit per suite stay for use at The Spa, The Grand Golf Club, six dining venues or resort shops and more. Weekday rates from \$365.00; weekend rates from \$395.00. Suite rates from \$665.00. Available November 1- December 31, 2010. Weekday rates are available Sunday- Thursday only.

With its lavish amenities, magnificent dining, and top-notch spa and golf club, a stay at The Grand Del Mar resort could be the prime ticket this Fall. Make sure you get a seat in the front row of this grand show.



photo courtesy of The Grand Del Mar

Chef William Bradley is the culinary star at this Five Diamond resort.

The Grand Del Mar

Location: Coastal North San Diego County, east of the I-5 near Del Mar. Just minutes from the beach and Del Mar Thoroughbred Club and Racetrack. 5300 Grand Del Mar Court, San Diego, CA 92130, 1.858.314.2000.

Guest Services: State-of-the-art fitness facility; The Grand Del Mar Spa; business center; Valet parking; Complimentary Town Car for transportation within a 14-mile radius.

Dining: Six dining venues: Signature restaurant Addison; All-day dining at Amaya; The Clubhouse Grill; Poolside eatery; Lobby Lounge; gourmet coffee shop; Afternoon Tea in the Library.

Golf: 18-hole Championship Golf Course & Club

Recreation: Four heated pools; Two tennis courts; hiking and jogging trails.

Website: www.granddelmar.com

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