



THE BIG CHILL

Amid all the demands in the days before your wedding, the best bachelorette party may be one with an emphasis on relaxation. Ask your friends to host yours at one of these pampering spas. *By Bekah Wright*

solace in San Diego

At The Spa at the Grand Del Mar, girlfriends enjoy the serenity of the surrounding Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve and get pampered with ingredients from it: warm mineral muds, fragrant herbs and botanicals, and soothing stones.



Weddings are surrounded by a whirl of functions and events. So when it comes to celebrating upcoming nuptials with the girls, sometimes the best bachelorette party is about catching up, partaking in full-scale pampering, and taking time to simply chill. These spas have all the elements for just such a perfect get-together.

CHILLING IN TOWN

THE SPA AT THE GRAND DEL MAR

A road meanders through the wilderness, leading up to the newly opened Grand Del Mar. Set in Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, the resort offers solace in lieu of big-city chaos, a place where hawks float on gentle breezes and rabbits eye the golf course as a potential buffet. Despite its rustic locale, the Grand Del Mar is all about formal elegance with décor reminiscent of Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Morocco. And when it comes to blending a peaceful environment with cosmopolitan trappings, what more could one ask for in a girls-only getaway?

Regal accommodations come by way of one of the property's Presidential Suites with up to three adjoining guest rooms. Providing a warm welcome, pre-drawn bubble baths sprinkled with rose petals await in European-style soaking tubs. The evening gets started when a Mercedes-Benz arrives to drive the gang just up the hill to Addison's, Grand Del Mar's fine-dining restaurant. Set aside for your very own party is the Chef's Table, an elegant, private room seating up to 12. Chef William Bradley checks in, giving a preview of the

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spa sampler Put your party up in one of La Costa's new Spanish Colonial-style villas, and let them sample a variety of luscious spa treatments.

French-inspired four-course dinner he'll be preparing with you in mind. The girls will be front and center for the action via two flat-screen televisions running live feeds from the kitchen. Afterward, return to the resort's lounge for singing around the grand piano or to cozy chairs by the bar's fireplace for exchanging stories.

In the morning, grab a cup of joe and watch the sunrise from rocking chairs strategically placed at the edge of the Grand Del Mar lawn. Stroll past the cypress-lined fountain pool and its ornate gazebo for breakfast at the resort's casual dining venue, Amaya, where red-striped canopies shading the terrace feel like an escape to the Italian countryside.

Next stop, the spa. Don cozy bathrobes and slippers and make a beeline for the private Jacuzzi area to spend time in the sauna, in the steam room, and on plush chaises. Prior to treatment time, migrate to the Tiffany-blue relaxation lounge to be warmed by the fire from

canopied chaises. Further creature comforts come by way of luscious signature treatments like the 90-minute "Renaissance." This heavenly journey begins with a body scrub of goat butter and microbeads. Then, the skin is slathered with mineral-rich Moor mud and guests are wrapped in a special blanket and lowered into a heated, free-floatation bed where snores are soon elicited. A treat unto itself, a rosemary-infused Swiss shower waits for rinsing off mud. Following is a hands-on massage that works out kinks through stretching and kneading.

Regroup for lunch by the spa pool (one of four at the resort). The best spot for your group—the cloistered hot tub with cushioned banquettes that include several double loungers. As the day wanes, make your way to The Salon at The Grand Del Mar for herbal manicures and pedicures as well as impromptu hair and makeup lessons. Once all "shiny and new," proceed upstairs for something a bit more civilized—high tea in the library. Before departing, duck into Elizabeth Capella, the Grand Del Mar's chapel, where visions of the bride's big day will conclude your stay with a romantic sigh.

The Spa at The Grand Del Mar, 5300 Grand Del Mar Court, San Diego, CA 92130, (858) 314-2000, www.thegradndelmar.com.

SPA AT LA COSTA

Carlsbad's La Costa Resort and Spa has long been known for its golf and tennis. Discerning bachelorettes, however, know the resort's best feature is its spa. With so many treatments to sample, book an overnight stay filled with the ultimate in pampering and "girl time." Reserve one of La Costa's new Spanish Colonial-style villas that has up to three bedrooms, a gourmet kitchen that can be fully stocked prior to arrival by the resort, and a fireplace that's just right for late-night gabfests. Although the oversize bathrooms with soaking tubs and spacious patio lure, bliss awaits in the spa.

An idyllic wall of candle-filled niches leads the way into Spa La Costa and sets the tone for a day of relaxation and bonding. Inside, the movement studio has been transformed into a Goddess Lounge with your divine group in mind. Private sessions in yoga, meditation, and massage equip everyone with take-home spa skills. "Class" is dismissed with a champagne toast to the luxuriating that lies ahead.

Start the unwinding process in an area of the women's locker room devoted to a ritual known as Aqua de la Vida. Begin by slipping into the hot

tub, then rotating between the steam and sauna with time set aside for soaking in the sun on the private patio. Muscles relaxed and pores open, savor a moment of repose in one of two waiting areas. A private lounge in the locker area has lush velvet curtains, comfy leather chairs and couches, and a fireplace that offers a warm glow. In the coed lounge, a bit more energizing with its bright white walls and high ceiling, spagoers can linger over a magazine by the fireplace and sip hot tea.

On the hour, a series of bells sound and black-smocked therapists make their way through the lounge's oversized French doors to pick up their charges. Direct your party into the spa's two couple suites with private whirlpools and fireplaces. Fun menu choices include La Costa's three two-hour-and-40-minute Signature Spa Voyages that transport your group around the globe. "Paris in the Springtime" combines a bath with scalp massage, moving into a jojoba body scrub and lily body wrap, and concluding with a massage. "Indochine Indulgence" would get a nod from Cleopatra for its brown sugar and Dead Sea salt scrub that moves into an Egyptian milk bath and finishes with both a Marine Qi-balm and an Ayurvedic oil massage and body wrap. Giving spagoers a taste of the Far East is the "Pacific Rim Ritual" with its bamboo ginger scrub, shower, milk wrap, and Thai or sports massage.

Reconvene for a light lunch by the outdoor fireplace at Spa Café. Afterward, set up camp around the spa pool (one of seven on site) in hooded loungers. The Roman bath is perfect for quick cooldowns. As the sun sets, gravitate to Yamaguchi Salon for "Yin-Yang" pedicures. Glossed to a fine sheen, make your way to Blue-Fire Grill's patio for a dinner of fresh California fare prepared by Chef de Cuisine Scott Diehl. As the moon rises and strains of live music (Thursday through Saturday) join the chirping of crickets, hit the "floor" for practice sessions of dancing for the bride's forthcoming nuptials.

Spa at La Costa, 2100 Costa Del Mar Road, Carlsbad, CA 92009, (760) 931-7570, www.lacosta.com.

SPA MONTAGE

Set atop a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean, Montage Laguna Beach is known for its breathtaking beach and killer views. Add to the mix the resort's myriad other offerings, including its renowned restaurants and, most importantly, Spa Montage, and you've got a bachelorette getaway to die for.

Set up the ladies in decadent accommodations by way of the Catalina Suite with its two-

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relaxation 101 At the Montage Spa, your group will learn the “Art of Spa,” how to move among the Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room and plunge pool for maximum benefits.

sided fireplace, large dining table, and spacious balcony with a telescope for stargazing. After catching the sunset over cocktails from the resort lounge’s prime vantage point, head the party into The Loft for a gourmet dinner of American fare prepared by Chef John Cuevas with dishes such as BBQ Shelton Ranch organic chicken with grilled corn and fried pickles. Inspired by the Liquid Chocolate Cake, plan a return visit for a breakfast of mouth-watering entrees like the challah bread French toast with caramelized

citrus and whipped crème fraîche.

Get the day started with a Thalassic Beach Walk along the shore, led by a wellness manager from the spa. Invigorated by the ocean air, make your way into the indoor/outdoor Spa Montage for a day of luscious pampering. A staff member can instruct your group on the “Art of Spa,” a therapeutic way of moving between the Jacuzzi, sauna, steam room, and cold plunge pool for maximum pre-treatment benefits. After three cycles, those in relaxation mode can adjourn to comfy chaises on the terrace or by the ladies’ lounge fireplace for mini-naps.

Move the gang into The Gallery, a special room available for concurrent treatments for groups of up to six. A must on the spa menu, “Surrender” is a veritable religious experience, bringing both body and soul into focus. Before the treatment gets underway, a therapist consults with the spa-goer to tailor a series of specialties—from hydrotherapy to massage, from wraps to scrubs—that last a minimum of two hours. Once verging on comatose, emerge outdoors to get a dose of sunshine with lunch catered around the spa pool to reflect on your various “Surrender” journeys and

to watch the waves crash against the shore.

Next up, manicures and pedicures in the salon, followed by haircuts and makeup applications for the night ahead. On the docket, dinner at the Studio’s Chef’s Table. The girls will have their own fireside table with a view of Executive Chef James Boyce and his skilled staff cooking regional specialties with an international flair, such as the tasting menu’s grilled veal flank steak au poivre and confit Australian lobster tail. After dinner, gather around a fire pit on a bluff for sipping hot toddies, savoring melty s’mores, and wishing upon stars.

The best send-off: breakfast delivered to a cabana at the resort’s Mosaic Pool. As a reminder of your spa day, attendants arrive from Spa Montage for a round of hand and foot reflexology. Later, Wellness Manager David-Dorian Ross conducts a private hour-long session on “The Art of Romance,” instructing your group on how to enhance personal relationships. And, after a weekend like this one, you’re off to a great start when it comes to your BFFs.

Spa Montage, 30801 South Coast Highway, Laguna Beach, CA 92651, (949) 715-6000 or (866) 271-6953, www.montagelagunabeach.com. ❏