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World's Fare

World's Fare combines the topic of travel with culinary traditions around the globe. Globetrotting food and travel writers introduce readers to a broad range of destinations and food. The monthly package includes two destination features and three regular columns — Best Addresses, the Intrepid Gastronome and Snapshots. Moves with art.

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WORLD'S FARE-BEST-ADDRESSES

For release 09/01/07

(ATTENTION EDITORS: This column ends with the words "...visit www.redmountainspa.com." If the column you see below concludes any other way, you have received an incomplete version. Please contact TMS customer service at 800-346-8798 for a retransmission.)

(PHOTOS: Three color photos accompany this story. PHOTO 1. CAPTION: Resort offices and activities buildings blend into the surrounding hills, Red Mountain Spa, St. George, Utah. CREDIT: Steve Haggerty/OneWorld. FILENAME: 20070901mswd-r.jpg. PHOTO 2. CAPTION: Outfitter Patty Arnett points out red-and-white Navajo Sandstone formations capped by black lava, Snow Canyon State Park. CREDIT: Steve Haggerty/OneWorld. FILENAME: 20070901mswdf-s.jpg. PHOTO 3. CAPTION: Bedroom in one of the 12 villas, Red Mountain Spa. CREDIT: Steve Haggerty/OneWorld. FILENAME: 20070901mswdf-t.jpg.)

ADVENTURE ON THE ROCKS

By Anne Z. Cooke

Tribune Media Services

IVINS, UTAH - There are times when a name change is in order, times when it's right and times when it's smart. And for Red Mountain Spa, in the heart of Utah's red rock country, that time has come.

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"Red Mountain," the name of the towering hunk of red-and-white Navajo sandstone that rears up behind this adobe retreat, on 55 acres west of St. George, nails the location. Close your eyes, picture fat white clouds floating over stark red peaks, eroded red canyons and sculpted spires and you've got it.

But calling this 94-room adventure and fitness resort, at the entrance to Snow Canyon State Park, a "Spa" doesn't even come close. There is a spa, of course, a cool and secluded sanctuary inside a funky geodesic dome. Entirely remodeled (and renamed), the Sagestone Spa has 12 treatment rooms, fuzzy bathrobes, lockers and showers, shampoo and hair dryers, steam rooms and whirlpool tubs, and a relaxation and meditation lounge with a glass-wall window with views of the mountains.

But it's possible to spend an entire vacation here, never see the inside of the dome and not even miss it. So many other recreation experiences are dangled in front of you, like a carrot on a stick, that a guest who spends a week here - the average length of stay - can create his or her custom adventure.

"You might go home thinking we're a mountain biking center, or a gateway to the red rock region, or a fitness and health retreat, or a weight loss center," said Denise Perkins, director of marketing and sales. "The fact is we're all of those."

Founded in 1983, the first Red Mountain Spa was a holistic weight-loss retreat, operating on a shoestring out of two funky geodesic domes tucked between in among Utah's red rocks. Meditation, crystal gazing 23 years later and under new owners who believe that physical fitness has everything to do with personal self-realization, Red Mountain has gone big, sleek and mainstream, with a dozen new adobe-styled buildings that melt into the landscape.

"We don't turn people away who want to come for a weekend," said Perkins, "but if you don't stay for five days, you won't have a chance to try everything. You can hike in Snow Canyon, or go horseback riding, or try a yoga or aerobics class, or take a spa treatment. And the room price includes three gourmet meals daily and the entire basic activities program."

If you want to get in shape, you could plan a program at the Fitness Center, with stretch, yoga and Pilates workouts, plus low-fat cooking demonstrations and nutrition classes. After a massage, you could join a water workout at the pool or hang out there and watch other people work up a sweat.

If you're on good terms with horses, you could sign up for morning and afternoon rides with Patty Arnett, whose string of a dozen glossy, dressage-trained beauties includes several blue-ribbon-winners; riding these horses is a treat (and costs extra).

Mountain bikers might pass up the horses and dance classes for a variety of workouts on trails in Snow Canyon State Park's moderate to rugged terrain, which are challenging and scenic. You can rent mountain bikes at the resort, or bring yours along. Other sports in Snow Canyon include guided hikes, and birding - peregrine falcons nest in the canyon's red cliffs. Kayaking and river rafting is also scheduled at nearby lakes (with transportation, and for an extra fee).



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For guests fleeing from traffic, noise and stress, moonlight hikes, afternoons by the swimming pool, massages and beauty treatments, and leisurely meals are better than Valium. If you're taking stock of your life, stretch classes and beginning yoga promote relaxation and mental concentration, as does the Red Feather Fire Ceremony, a "release and renewal" event designed to inspire your "inner dreams."

"We're popular for small reunions, family anniversaries, girlfriend getaways and small corporate retreats," said Perkins. "This week we've got people here from Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit and Dallas, and three honeymoon couples. You can be as active as you want, or not at all. And it's so easy to get here. We've got direct flights into Las Vegas and St. George."

Chef-prepared cuisine is served in the Canyon Breeze Dining Room or on its shaded outdoor patio. Other resort buildings house an Olympic-sized indoor swimming pool, meetings and classrooms, a gift and sports shop, offices and a conference center. Oasis-style landscaping includes shade trees, ponds and lawns, as well as natural desert sand and plants, and herb gardens.

Seven two-story lodges house 82 double rooms, decorated in contemporary Southwestern themes; most guests come in pairs, with a friend, roommate, sister, spouse or co-worker and share. For small reunions, the 12 one- and two-bedroom "villa" units with fireplaces, sitting areas, flagstone hallways and bathrooms, big closets and outdoor patios are fairly posh. Privately owned they are in the rental pool, or buy one while you're there. You can't drive off the property without spying the sales office near the front entrance.

All-inclusive prices, per person for two in a double room start at \$229 a night. You pay more only for the extras that fit your personal choices, such as energy therapy sessions, crystal stone healing treatments, off-site, all-day tours to national parks, geology tours, golf games, and kayaking. If you're up for the Big One, sign up (in advance) for the guided Rim-to-Rim Grand Canyon hike, a three-day trip with an overnight at Phantom Ranch on the Colorado River.

Resort, retreat, hideaway, fat farm, revelation, stress-buster, lodge, summer camp for adults, navel of the Red Rock country - all true, and better than "spa." Check it out yourself.

REPORT CARD:

Biggest Surprise: Tasty low-cal, high-energy cuisine appeals.

Special Moment: Holding Sable, the trained Harris hawk.

Best Buy: Five nights on the basic All-Inclusive Package.

Primitive pleasure: Connecting with Mother Earth on the Sacred Spiral Walk.

Memorable: Hot, dry and comforting.

Forgettable: Very hot and dry in August.

Don't Miss: Rent a car and add a stop in Las Vegas, or Bryce, Zion, Cedar Breaks or Grand Canyon National Parks.

GOING THERE: Shuttles from the Las Vegas take two hours and cost \$75. Or fly into St. George and take the free resort shuttle. Red Mountain is five miles west of I-15, near St. George, at 1275 E. Red Mountain Circle, Ivins, Utah 84738. Call 800-407-3002, or visit www.redmountainspa.com.

Anne Z. Cooke and Steve Haggerty explore the world from Venice, Calif. They can be reached at TravelsWithAnne@cs.com.

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