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Savvy Says

Certain flaws are necessary for the whole. It would seem strange if old friends lacked certain quirks.

-- Goethe

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Travel & Eats: Ojai -- The Perfect Escape

By Chaton Anderson
 Friday, April 24, 2009 6:18 AM PDT

After completing a seriously demanding nightmare of a project, I realized it was time for some much-needed respite. Yet with only a few days before my next project began, I needed to find a place where I could recharge and rejuvenate in the quickest, dirtiest way possible. Luckily, I picked the perfect locale -- the charming town of Ojai, California. It was exactly what I needed -- in just two days, I felt like a completely new woman.

I stayed at The Oaks at Ojai (www.oaksspa.com), which I chose because of its reputation for being comfortable and unassuming. It was a great pick -- the staff was legitimately friendly and there was absolutely no attitude -- *I leave Los Angeles for a reason*. The newly renovated rooms were nice and relaxing, and as a whole, the place has a casual yet welcoming feel, perfect for a woman traveling by herself (did I mention I also needed some alone time?). The minute I got there, I felt like I was in an entirely different world -- it was hard to believe I was only an hour and a half away from Los Angeles.



The food at The Oaks was outstanding and amounted to between 1000 and 1200 calories a day -- obviously ideal for anyone trying to lose weight. I consider myself a foodie, so was a little apprehensive about such a small allotment of calories, but everything was full of flavor and texture, and I felt full after every meal. Best of all, both lunch and dinner included a low-cal, delicious dessert.

The fitness classes were fun -- I took a relaxing yoga class and belly dancing, as well as the mind/body awareness class, which is an awesome stress reliever. There are a full array of exercise classes, including guided hikes, cardio, muscle conditioning, rollerblading, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, Dance and water workout classes, among others. In addition, there is a special optional program every evening so you can continue your foray into wellness.

The spa services were equally outstanding. There is a wide array of body treatments, salon services and

massages. I indulged in the Massage.com treatment and was absolutely blown away. At first, I was a little disappointed when I saw that my massage therapist was a woman. I hate to admit that a savvy gal like me has always preferred male massage therapists; I've just never had a female who was strong enough to affect my extremely tense muscles. Yet my therapist at the Oaks, Heather, was probably the best to ever work on me. Strong and well-versed in the healing arts (she does Reiki, too), she gave me one of the deepest and most relaxing massages in my life!

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Being in what is coined as the "spiritual capital of the world," I couldn't spend my *entire* stay indulging and pampering myself, so I decided to check out some of Ojai's highly recommended sites and places. My first stop was Meditation Mount (www.meditation.com), an absolutely gorgeous point at the top of the East End of the valley. It is beautiful and serene, and a definite inspiration for meditation. Next was a visit to Soul Centered (www.soulcentered.com), a metaphysical shop like no other, where I picked up some awesome aromatherapy products, books and fragrant chakra sprays. The store holds all sorts of great events, from astrology courses and Qi Gong classes to concerts, healing ceremonies and other cool workshops. The owner is full of information (I learned that Ojai is basically a feminine energy vortex -- love it!) and is extremely generous and

helpful.

If you are looking for some good shopping, downtown Ojai hosts quaint bookstores, shops and charming art galleries, in and around the Arcade Plaza. Also worth a visit, if you're in the mood for some challenging yoga, is Lulu Bandha's -- more than just a yoga studio, Lulu Bandhas (www.lulubandhas.com) hosts Ojai's famous Yoga Crib, a weekend immersion in yoga and meditation in historically significant and sacred venues. Yogis travel from all over the world to attend this "yoga pilgrimage," which takes place Friday, October 23- Sunday, October 25 this year.

All in all, my mini-vacation worked wonders on my mind, body and spirit. I was more relaxed, a little lighter in weight, physically challenged -- and wondering how quickly I can make it back to Ojai!

Chaton Anderson is a Writer and the Publicity Director for TheSavvyGal.com. A product and pop culture addict, she is always looking for the coolest, hippest things on the market, as well as the newest health and fitness trends to hit the scene. Email her at Chaton@TheSavvyGal.com with questions or leads on products and services on the cutting edge.

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Lisa L. wrote on Apr 24, 2009 9:24 AM:

" Loved this article. You've totally inspired me to check out Ojai! "

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