

# Robb Report

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## Tennis and More at Rancho Valencia



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Having lived in Los Angeles all my life, Del Mar in San Diego has always been the perfect quick getaway: close enough for a weekend retreat, but far enough away to feel like a vacation. For years, my husband and I have traveled down to watch the horses race at the Del Mar Racetrack or stuff our faces at the annual county fair, which runs from June 12 to July 5 on the track's beautiful fairgrounds, just minutes from the ocean.

So when I was invited down to Rancho Santa Fe to celebrate Rancho Valencia's 20th anniversary, I was thrilled that it was just minutes from the seaside town I had always loved so much.

The town of Rancho Santa Fe is charming and the resort is tucked into a green canyon. I stayed in one of Rancho Valencia's 12 fractional-ownership villas, which are adjacent to the resort's 49 guest suites. The three-bedroom hacienda-style villa (available in one-eighth interests, currently priced at \$515,000) was luxurious, yet cozy. The homes are designed with two master suites, and the bedroom my husband and I chose opened onto a private terrace with a hot tub, a fireplace, a dining area, and a gorgeous view of the surrounding mountains. (The other master suite opens to a courtyard and includes a large bathroom with a walk-in closet and steam shower.)

Rancho Valencia started out as a tennis ranch, and its 18 courts are surrounded by citrus trees and other sweet-smelling flora. While tennis remains one of the resort's biggest draws, most of the property's members and guests say that their favorite time of year is summer, when the horses race at the track. Although the races weren't running at the time of my visit, I was content to stay on the grounds and enjoy the property's 10-room indoor/outdoor spa, which opened in 2006, as well as cuisine from The Restaurant, led by new executive chef C. Barclay Dodge. The 48-hour short ribs were fantastic, but the most memorable dish was the ricotta cheesecake made with citrus from the property's groves.

I also signed up for a round robin tennis tournament and became a little worried when I saw that most of the participants, many of whom have been members of the resort for years, had skill levels way beyond mine. But everyone was courteous and understanding of my limited playing abilities. Nobody more so than Jack Anderson—one of the certified tennis professionals on hand to help members with their game—who kept telling me, whenever I missed a shot, "Don't worry about it! We're all just having fun." Indeed we were.

For those who can make it to Rancho Valencia for a weekend getaway, I recommend going during track season, this year running from July 22 to September 9.

—*Nikki Prange*

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