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**Rancho La Puerta, founded in 1940 by spa pioneers Edmond and Deborah Szekely,
continues to set the standard
for modern-day fitness resorts and spas**

The original “fitness resort” and spa, Rancho La Puerta welcomes some 140 guests each week to its 3,000 private acres of gardens, mountains and meadows in Baja California, Mexico. All facilities and land are for the exclusive use of guests who come for an entire week, Saturday to Saturday, ensuring the delights of a warm and welcoming shared community. The climate is near-perfect; warm and dry, with some showers and cold nights, in winter, and warm with very low humidity and no rain in summer. Rancho La Puerta is located only about 25 miles “as the crow flies” from the Pacific Ocean (near San Diego, California, U.S.A.) at an elevation of 1,700 feet.

Rancho La Puerta’s fitness program is unmatched: presided over by a staff of over 20 full-time instructors in-residence (the “best of the best”). Exercise classes and activities include Pilates (Reformer and mat work), extensive yoga offerings, guided hikes on over 25 miles of wildlands trails, Feldenkrais, fitness ball, Qi Gong, T’ai Chi, trekking, volleyball, aqua-exercise classes of all types, dance, circuit training, NIA (Neuromuscular Integrative Action), strength training with and without weights, stretch, posture, cross training, cardio-cycling, meditation, and many more. Approximately five classes are offered every hour on the hour from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day of a seven-night stay—known as the Ranch’s famous “Fitness Week.” Many classes are sequential in developing a student’s expertise, assuring that guests become stronger and more skilled in several disciplines by the end of the week.

The cuisine is semi-vegetarian, featuring an abundance of organic fruits and vegetables. We serve lacto-ovo dishes as well (i.e. breakfast eggs, and cheese, lightly used, in some entrees and side dishes). The freshest-of-the-fresh seafood from the port of Ensenada, Baja California, brought in by our own driver and buyer from a fishermen’s market where the local boats come in daily, allows the Ranch chefs to prepare spectacular seafood dishes five times week. All meals offer both vegetarian and modified-vegetarian alternatives. Weight loss, in those who desire it, is a frequent by-product of the Rancho La Puerta experience because of the combination of healthy eating and increased activity—but the resort does not consider itself a “weight loss facility.” Those on gluten-restricted diets can be accommodated, as can those who keep Kosher informally (although we never prepare meats, our kitchens do not have rabbinical inspections).

Spa treatments and therapies, offered in three spacious “health centers,” include nine types of massage, body wraps (including Rancho La Puerta’s exclusive Herbal Wrap created by

Professor Szekely), body masks, polishes and showers, facials (five choices), and full salon services (hair, nails etc.). The Ranch carries the organically sourced products of German-based Amala and Primavera Skin and body care line.

Afternoon and evening programs are a vital part of the Ranch experience. A program of lectures, games, workshops, world-class entertainers (musicians especially), arts and crafts classes, and various discourses takes place throughout the week, continuing a tradition started by Professor Szekely. Edmond was conversant in 17 languages and known internationally for his health and philosophical writings from the 1930s well into the 1960s. Guest lecturers today frequently include such luminaries as journalist Bill Moyers, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright, novelist Erica Jong, critic Roger Ebert, actress Jane Fonda, and many others.

Most important, many guests feel, is the friendliness of Ranch staff and other guests. Camaraderie is a key factor in many guests' passionate loyalty—hardly a week goes by when there aren't 20 or more guests who have been to the Ranch at least 10 times or more. Because almost all guests arrive and depart on the same days together, the experience is like a cruise ship on land. Making new friends is easy. "Being yourself" is easy. Finding solitude and quiet is as easy as finding laughter and the excitement born of new experiences.

"We provide the true luxury of time and space," says founder Deborah Szekely, "that which is most lacking in today's life. Space to breathe freely, to relax and enjoy what will be 'the longer-living, younger life.'"

Week-long packages start at approximately \$3000 per person for a double occupancy room and are inclusive of complimentary transportation from San Diego airport and back, meals, snacks, accommodations and a wide array of fitness classes. Certain special rates and packages are occasionally available at approximately \$2500, double occupancy.

FOUNDING: 1940, Tecate, Baja California, Mexico. The world's first fitness resort and spa – the progenitor of what is now called a "destination spa".

NAME: "Ranch of the Door" – named for two arching oaks; the "door" to the original Rancho La Puerta campsite. Also named for an early 20th century railroad siding located in the pass between our mountain town and the coast.

LOCATION: In Mexico, just three miles from the U.S. border. The Ranch is 40 miles southeast from San Diego; a one-hour drive. The Ranch is a three-hour drive from Los Angeles.

FOUNDERS: Edmond (d. 1979), a philosopher, writer, and biochemist, and Deborah Szekely, who later founded the legendary Golden Door, and is now the doyen of the modern spa movement. In addition to her 66 years in the fitness and wellness business, her innovative project for America's inner cities, Eureka Communities, has won the support of Bill Moyers (Chairman of Eureka's National Advisory Board). An acknowledged social activist and recipient of numerous national and

international awards, Deborah is – most recently – the founder of the Immigration Museum of New Americans. (Complete biography available.)

MANAGEMENT: Still family-owned and family-run. Sarah Livia Brightwood Szekely, daughter of the founders, is Ranch President and primary designer, responsible for the gardens, buildings, and the creator of her organic farm, Tres Estrellas. General Manager Roberto Arjona joined the company in 2004. Deborah Szekely is active in an emeritus status: busy with her various wellness projects as well as serving on various boards, including Center for Science in the Public Interest.

PROGRAM: A balance of Mind/Body/Spirit. The classic 7-day visit, a Saturday-to-Saturday program first developed at Rancho La Puerta, is an equal mix of active challenging exercise, stretching, and relaxation, which ranges from meditation and massage to simply enjoying the pleasures of a sunny patio or a shady hammock. Each “Fitness Day” is an exhilarating blend of all three elements. The Ranch is known as “the Friendly Spa,” for the unique blend of camaraderie and opportunities for profound quiet, contemplation, and renewal.

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE: Meditation, organic gardening, labyrinth, movement as metaphor, chanting, Tai Chi, yoga, prayer arrow affirmations, dancing, reflexology footpath, silent dinner and Inner Journey.

CLIMATE: An ideal year-round climate: temperate, with over 340 sunny days a year and starry nights. Winters are sunny and summers mild and dry, with very low humidity and a pleasant prevailing breeze. Annual rainfall is 10 to 20 inches.

“TRES ESTRELLAS” ORGANIC GARDEN: A six-acre working farm located north of the main Ranch area (and reached by our “Breakfast Hikes”). The name means “Three Stars.” The creation of Sarah Livia Brightwood, it produces fresh vegetables, herbs, and fruits for the Rancho La Puerta kitchen using organic gardening and companion-planting techniques. Also the site of the Ranch’s cooking school and culinary center, La Cocina Que Canta (see below).

LAND: Over 3,000 acres of unspoiled, rolling countryside at a 1,750’ altitude and above. Accommodations, gyms, and exercise studios are located in our own valley, while over 25 miles of hiking trails climb up through wild-lands on the lower flanks of 3,885’ Mt. Kuchumaa. The mountain was the first natural feature in the United States to be recognized as a National Historic Site – so honored for its sacred importance to Native Americans. Two thousand acres have been set aside by the Szekely family, in collaboration with both U.S. and Mexican environmental and governmental organizations, as a permanent nature preserve.

LANDSCAPE: Over 150 acres (in a sense, one acre for each guest) of Mediterranean-style gardens, native trees, olive groves, ponds, and fountains. Xeriscape principles minimize irrigation. Indigenous flora as well as other low-water-use plantings create a lush tableaux of intimate meditation gardens, contemplative bowers, and pockets of serenity conceived for quiet moments either alone or in the company of a favorite book. The gardens have been featured on the PBS series *Victory Garden*. The landscape was designed by Sarah Livia Brightwood.

“The gardens are reason enough to visit, even if you’re not interested in unwinding.” – *The New York Times*.

FITNESS: Over 70 different indoor and outdoor classes and activities—a total of approximately 325 instructor-led clinics and classes to choose from throughout an entire week. Forty-five minutes in duration. Most classes can be enjoyed by guests at all levels of fitness, and a wide age range. Already-fit and super-fit guests will find many activities that are challenging.

Named “Most Innovative” fitness program by *SELF* magazine as well as given the Number One rating for Spa Program by *Condé Nast Traveler*.

HIKING: The most extensive on-site hiking program of any spa, anywhere. Over 25 miles of trails range from rolling meadow walks to challenging, steep hikes on mountainous terrain. Distances range from about 2 miles to 5 or more miles. Daily hikes at dawn year-round are complemented by an intensive extended daily hiking program during the winter months.

TREATMENTS: Massage, aromatherapy, scrubs, scalp treatments, facials are all available at modest charges. Hot Riverstone massage, hydrotherapy, and wraps of steaming hot linens steeped in indigenous herbs are also offered. With 47 treatment rooms, Rancho La Puerta’s massage and therapy program is the most extensive of any spa.

CUISINE: Rancho La Puerta’s innovative Cuisine of the Californias offers organic vegetarian entrées with the option of seafood (4-5 times a week. Many recipe ingredients come fresh-picked, only-hours-old from Tres Estrellas organic garden. Fresh seafood is purchased directly from the local fish market, two hours away in Ensenada, Mexico.

“Inventive and nourishing recipes.”– Alice Waters, Founder, *Chez Panisse* restaurant.

LA COCINA QUE CANTA—THE COOKING SCHOOL AND CULINARY CENTER AT RANCHO LA PUERTA: “The Kitchen That Sings” is a 4,500-square-foot \$1 million facility set in the midst of a 6-acre organic farm. Guests experience a hands-on culinary class that starts with picking the day’s ingredients, and moves on to meal-making cooking classes that combine culinary technique with the joyous camaraderie of working side by side with top chef instructors and fellow guests. The center also has a gift shop and hosts complementary learning programs, such as aromatherapy, herbal uses, organic gardening, and more.

MEALS AND NUTRITION: Menus are primarily lacto-ovo vegetarian, with fish at most dinners, and eggs as an option at breakfast. Although many of the dishes reflect the region’s culinary heritage, all are equally accessible to North American palates. Breakfast and lunch are served buffet-style in a beautiful dining room that opens to an outdoor terrace where tables sit overlooking fountains, water gardens, and a view of the Mountain. Dinner is “sit down,” with wait staff attending. Cooking classes are offered weekly as are nutrition workshops. Gluten-free diets can be accommodated, as can those who informally keep Kosher (our kitchens never prepare meats).

SATURDAYS AT THE RANCH: A new one-day adventure full of fitness classes, spa services, and cooking class and relaxation for locals. Launched in June, 2008, this program is a sneak peek for those who’ve always wondered what the legendary Rancho La Puerta fitness week is all about. Priced at \$225 per person for the day, the package includes pick-up and drop-off by motorcoach from San Diego, lunch, several fitness classes, a hands-on cooking class and dinner plus plenty of rest and relaxation. Spa services are extra.

ROOMS: Over \$10 million was spent to complete a fully renovated resort that is more than 75 percent new, and more improvements continue. Eighty-seven rooms built to accommodate solo travelers, doubles, triples and quads are remarkably spacious and private, each with a unique décor. All are individually landscaped, placed in the midst of gardens surrounded by sun-filled patios. Each is one of a kind. Accommodations include living-room-like sitting areas, desks, wood-burning fireplaces (in most), CD players, refrigerators, robes, safes, other standard amenities, and a distinctive collection of Mexican folk art throughout.

FACILITIES: Several gyms for mind-body-spirit focus are a special feature of the Ranch: Inspired by the congenial climate, these gyms forgo mirrors and instead open to face the mountain or the arroyo and are devoted to the quieter disciplines of meditation and yoga. The Ranch also offers eleven other gyms for dance, stretch, strength, and other workouts, one with a fireplace; a weight-training gym with advanced equipment; three swimming pools; Pilates studio; running track; four lighted tennis courts; volleyball and basketball courts; men's and women's health centers with steam rooms, whirlpools, and saunas; and three dozen hammocks for rest and balance.

EVENINGS: Guests such as Pulitzer-Prize winning poet Galway Kinnell, best-selling author Dan Wakefield, novelist Erica Jong, PBS commentator Bill Moyers, Grammy-winning entertainers, critics (Roger Ebert), politicians, noted conservationists, and hundreds of other writers, academics, architects of social change, and media mavens are among those who have led evening programs at the Ranch. In addition to poetry and journal keeping, other talks and workshops have included health, science, and the arts. Other learning choices include aromatherapy, star gazing, sculpture classes, and jewelry-making (and other crafts at the art studio).

LABYRINTH: Located in a Tolkienesque oak grove, this archetypal and non-denominational experience takes place on the Ranch's replica of the famous floor labyrinth laid in Chartres Cathedral sometime between 1194 and 1220. Not a maze, the path is a classic eleven-circuit design which you walk continuously and meditatively toward the center, then back out again—a powerful metaphor for everyone's life journey.

SPIRITUAL LEGACY: Kumeyaay tribes knew Mt. Kuchumaa as the “exalted high place.” In their eyes, Kuchumaa was the womb of the world, the place from which creation sprang. Only shamans were allowed on the summit. It was the place of initiation for spiritual leaders, while the valleys and oak woodlands below were an important gathering place for the tribes. Rancho La Puerta is an important archaeological site, carefully stewarded.

GEOLOGY: The distinctive giant boulders on our property and surrounding hillsides were formed when great masses of “mother rock” (cooled magma) slowly worked their way to the surface millions of years ago, there to be smoothed and rounded by the inexorable forces of rain and wind.

NATURAL HISTORY: Chaparral holds the slopes and foothills of the mountain in a wild embrace. Huge and fantastic granite boulders surface from a sea of blue when the wild lilacs (ceanothus) bloom. Artemisia and sage scent the air. Home to coyotes, cottontail rabbits, and foxes, Kuchumaa also enjoys some of the greatest diversity of bird species in North America.

STEWARDSHIP: Las Piedras Nature Center was a gift to the school children of Tecate and Baja California from a non-profit foundation (Fundacion La Puerta) started by the Szekely family and former general manager Jose Manuel Jasso. This learning center features unique boulder-like architecture housing an active natural history education program. A marsh-based gray water treatment plant and a variety of other green projects combine to make the Ranch the “Ecological Spa”. The Ranch has also been a long-time sponsor of Well Baby Clinics in and around Tecate. It helps subsidize the local La Paloma orphanage and on a daily basis provides food to Our Lady of Guadalupe church in Tecate. Rancho La Puerta is one of the only spas in North America to be actively engaged in land protection and most recently has created a 2,000-acre nature preserve. Most of these initiatives are the work of Rancho La Puerta and Fundacion President Sarah Livia Brightwood—a staunch community activist and environmentalist.

MOTTO: “Siempre Mejor” (Always Better).

RATES & SCHEDULES: One-week visit, with program starting anew each Saturday and ending on the following Saturday. Many weeks feature special themes and guest presenters.

2012 rates range from \$3,000 to \$4,450 per person, depending on occupancy, accommodation type, and time of year. Seasonal and promotional savings packages and group rates available.

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