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Heaven's Gate is in Sedona, Arizona

BY DEBBIE MARTINEZ



Nestled between monolithic red rocks at the entrance to Boynton Canyon, long considered sacred ground by Native Americans, is The Enchantment Resort, a 70-acre retreat surrounded by the natural splendor of the

Coconino National Forest.

Opened in 1987 as a tennis facility, The Enchantment Resort has transformed over the years into something that can be summed up in one word — magical. From the time you round a bend and are faced with the awe-inspiring red rocks, to the moment you enter the front gate where the guard smiles and says, “Welcome back!” you suddenly realize that you have passed through something akin to Heaven's Gate.

The quiet that envelops the resort, coupled with the peacefulness exuded by the staff puts you in an amazing state of mind and body. My first taste of this calm came as I suddenly realized during my layover that I had not booked any activities for my resort stay. A wave of panic, caused by the thought of missing out on something special, prompted me to call the resort as I was boarding the plane. Juggling a carry on and my phone and trying to hear over the screaming of children, I was put in touch with Eileen, the concierge. Through several dropped calls and a flight attendant telling me to hang up the phone, I successfully explained what I was looking for.

Eileen was always calm and, laughing at my predicament, told me not to worry, assuring that my itinerary would be waiting for me when I arrived. True to her word, as I checked in, my itinerary was waiting along with a glass of refreshing cucumber water.

My accommodations could not have been more inviting. As I unpacked, there was a knock at the door and an attendant delivered



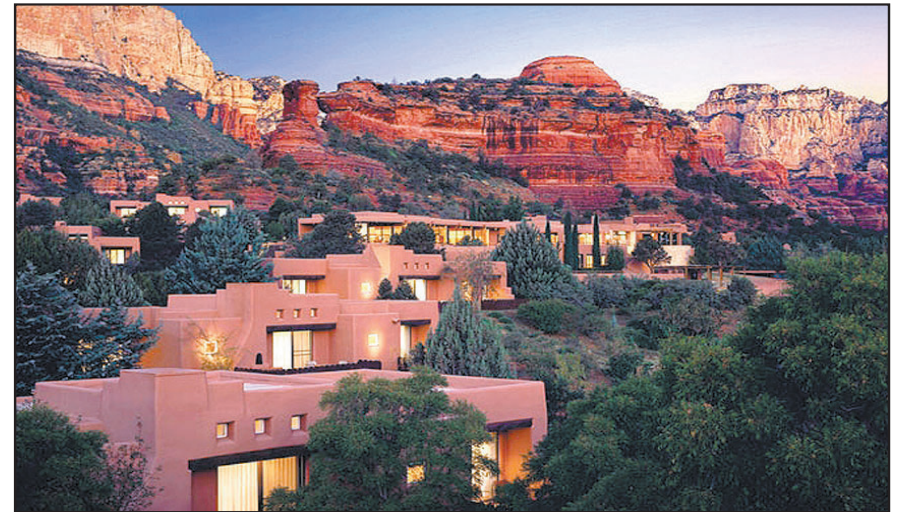
a small plate of chocolate covered strawberries (which I promptly devoured). And every morning when I pulled back my drapes, the view of the red rocks simply mesmerized me. Meantime, a daily newspaper and a basket of iced orange juice greeted me when I opened my door. At bedtime, a bottle of water and a card with an Indian quote wished me good-night as I slipped under the down comforter.

In addition to the standard rooms, there are casitas that offer the romance of a fireplace. The resort boasts two restaurants and a pool bar, and the pool and hot tub are open 24 hours a day. Food and drink service is available around the clock.

As darkness overtakes the red rocks, the oversized fire pit is a big draw for drinks and good conversation. The Enchantment has no outside lighting so guests can appreciate the vastness of the evening sky unencumbered. Flashlights are provided in the guestrooms so one can venture out into the darkness to possibly sit in the hot tub and wish upon the many twinkling stars while sipping on a famous Prickly Pear Margarita.

Mii Amo is a destination spa on the grounds of the resort. Serene and spiritual are two feelings you feel throughout your stay there. It has the Crystal Grotto, where meditations take place daily, and two private pools — one indoor and one outdoor — with unparalleled pool service. The spa menu is pretty extensive, so I was hard pressed to choose. But I opted for a Dosha Wrap and a Psychic Massage that not only felt amazing physically, but also lifted my soul to new heights.

Notwithstanding the wonderful spa experience, Eileen also had arranged other new adventures for me.



An early morning hike the next day brought me up close and personal to the beauty that surrounds the resort. There are many hiking trails to explore on your own or with a guide, and you can't help but think as you walk among the Manzanita, Crucifixion Thorn and Yucca how the breathtaking scenery looks like a backdrop from an old western movie.

Other activities on my agenda included playing tennis with Mike, the tennis pro, taking a fun and serene kayak trip with Shayne from Sedona Adventure Tours down the Verde River equipped with water guns and a stop at a local vineyard for a wine tasting. A 4:15 a.m. balloon trip with Phil from Red Rock Balloons left me speechless as the sun rose from behind the red rocks to welcome yet another magical day.

By far, the most soul-searching experience I had was with Feather Jones. She led me on a hike up Cathedral Rock to the top of the vortex where we sat and listened to the sound

of silence, my thoughts only broken by the call of a canyon bird and the music from her flute carried by the wind.

As I tucked the last night's Indian quote into my suitcase and said goodbye to my newfound comedic friends, the Sniders and Goldfelds, I knew that The Enchantment had touched me in a way that would linger long after my plane touched down in Miami. Even now, if I close my eyes and still my breathing, I can hear the red rocks calling me back to a place I now call home.

For more information, go to:

<www.enchantmentresort.com>,
<www.RedRockBalloons.com>,
<www.SedonaAdventureTours.com>, or
<www.canyonspiritventures.com>.

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