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From Times Online

April 28, 2010

Canyon Ranch Miami Beach, USA

Canyon Ranch's latest opening is so much more than a spa - it's a boot camp that doesn't stick the boot in



Rachael Scott

RECOMMEND? (11)

USP A laid-back retreat from the bling of Miami's South Beach, Canyon Ranch is a boot camp that doesn't stick the boot in.

AMBIENCE Billed as a 'life enhancement resort' CRMB offers 'the luxury of a healthier, happier, better you'. Going beyond a regular spa experience there are comprehensive health and wellness packages for innumerable ailments your GP can't fathom and residential properties next door for those who can't get enough of 'Canyon Ranch Living'.

The 70,000-square-foot spa and wellness facility has 54 treatment rooms designed by David Rockwell, the man behind the look of trendy Japanese restaurant chain Nobu and the production design of the 2008 Academy Awards. Far from theatrical, the spa is understated with clean, efficient lines, wood panelling and intricate, but subtle, tile work.

There's a dizzying array of pampering and wellbeing treatments. The 'Aquavana Experience' includes a Finnish sauna blasting 80C of dry heat, a crystal steam room at 45C moist heat, a hydro spa, a herbal laconium between 40-60 per cent humidity that filters lavender into a small ceramic room, an ice igloo with mint, menthol and eucalyptus aromas, whirlpool and a foot spa.

QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE Canyon Ranch Your Transformation Oxygen Boost Facial: It's hard to fault the staff at Canyon Ranch but Maggie was utterly delightful. She'd been performing facials for 13 years and couldn't praise the Oxygen Boost Facial highly enough.

Canyon Ranch's signature facial combines skincare products by O2 Intracuticals, the specialists in oxygen facials Madonna is said to be so keen on and Canyon Ranch's own range Your Transformation. Alongside scientists from Arizona University Canyon Ranch developed ProNAD, which is said to penetrate the skin more effectively than its derivative niacin (vitamin B3) therefore increasing firmness and moisture retention. "Some people say they feel like they've just had a facelift", enthuses Maggie.

Firstly she cleansed my face with Your Transformation Vitality Cleansing Cream followed by a Radiance Facial Scrub. She then did a patch test behind my ear to ensure I didn't react adversely to the ProNAD, then performed extractions and a face massage. She applied a mask, which contained the magical ProNAD molecule and gave me a head massage while it moisturised my skin.

To remove the mask she moved onto the O2 Intracuticals range. She mixed serums, which combine vitamins A, C and E with hyaluronic acid and green tea and put it into a type of airbrush pen that attaches to an oxygen machine. She then sprayed my face, concentrating on the areas around my eyes and mouth, for about 20 minutes. She even airbrushed my earlobes because they show the signs of aging too apparently. Finally she applied O2 Intracuticals eye gel, hydration gel and a moisture binding gel.

The Oxygen Boost is definitely one of the best facials I've ever had and my skin was glowing and soft. On closer inspection a bump on my chin, the after effects of a ginormous spot, has reduced in size.

Gyrotonics: I was eager to try Gyrotonics because I suffer from arthritis in my knee joints and had heard that it was a gentle exercise that wouldn't tax them too much. Originally developed by former ballet dancer Juliu Horvath Gyrotonics incorporates circular movements from yoga, swimming, tai chi and gymnastics to increase flexibility, posture, muscle strength and mobility in the joints.

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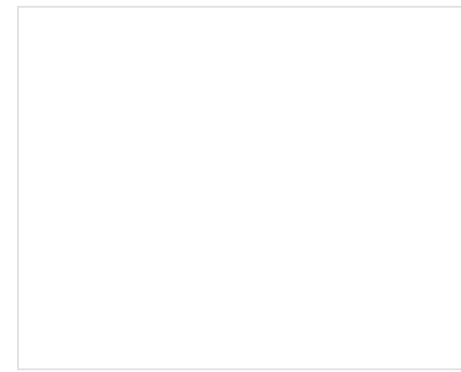
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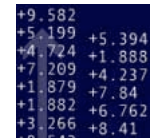
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The very well informed Paul explained that the machine would help me expand my body and strengthen the internal muscles that get neglected through a regular fitness routine. He swept through the exercises and explanations of what we hoped to achieve at breakneck speed. I couldn't keep up. I pushed the round discs on the machine in circles with my hands, had my legs pulled up and down by the pulleys, stretched from side to side, twisted round, up and down in gentle movements.

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Coordination is key and sadly I don't have much of it. When I had to include the breathing exercises along with the movements I was totally confused. I also felt at a disadvantage because I shamefully know very little biology. So, for instance, when Paul started talking about utilising my plexus I had no idea what he meant. I found the legwork easier than the upper bodywork but I think I'll need quite a few sessions before I master Gyrotonics on my own.

Deep Tissue Thermal Therapy: Before the massage begins my therapist Christine put me in a hydrotherapy bath with mustard seed in it for 30 minutes. Powerful jets of water escaped from every inch of the bath to massage my weary joints while the water changed colour, sometimes to a bright orange which made me feel as if I were in a liquid volcano. It was one of the strangest spa experiences I've ever had it was definitely the most personal without anyone else being present.

Christine explained that the hydrotherapy tub brings blood to the surface of the body making it easier to flush out toxins during the massage. The jets of water are good for problems a massage can't access, like a frozen shoulder, because the water massages passively. She then performed a very thorough and firm massage using mustard oil. She loosened knots in my shoulders and worked the muscles all over my body. I hadn't had a massage in a long while and couldn't cope with the pressure so Christine lightened it a little.

Wellbeing: Canyon Ranch's Medical Director Dr Karen Koffler thinks Western society is no longer in balance. "We're so dislocated from our bodies that we don't stop and ask 'What is it my body needs or what am I over-exposing it to?'" As a former ER doctor she saw the same patients with the same ailments over and over and all she was required to do was patch them up until they died. Realising the futility of her job she signed up for a programme run by alternative medicine guru Andrew Weil at the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine, and never looked back.

Canyon Ranch wellbeing therapists employ varying techniques that will resonate with different patients depending on their ailment. The extensive menu includes acupuncture, meditation, chiroprody, healthy eating and stress and life management. After a consultation that may include a stool test Koffler will design a 5-day package she thinks suitable for your needs and then tailor it appropriately.

During a consultation she would want to know how you deal with stress. Do you feel you're on top of things or do you feel overwhelmed? Your diet would be discussed because, "The majority of your immune system is located within your gut", say Koffler. Many of the diseases she sees are reflective of a weakened digestive system. She will even go so far as to ask if you were a full term baby, were you breastfed, or given antibiotics as a child. Sleep patterns and personal relationships will be discussed and once she has a detailed overview of your life a tailored health plan can be put in place.

Hotel: Designed by Bernardo Fort-Brescia, a founding partner of trendy architects Arquitectonica partly responsible for overhauling the tawdry of Miami's hotels, the Canyon Ranch opened in November 2008 at a time when indulgence was seen as virtually criminal. It's arrival has rejuvenated the underutilised area north of South Beach and Miami's Art Deco district and one local informed me property prices have risen substantially since its opening.

My Ocean Palm Suite had two king-size beds, a sunken bath and a kitchen with a microwave, fridge, dishwasher, Miele hob and central reservation if you're dietary needs are so specific you fancy cooking your own dinner.

FOOD The food is probably one of the best things about staying at the Canyon Ranch but don't expect to find French fries on the menu at the Grill or the Carillon Café. The only 'chips' on offer are made from artichokes, and have a decidedly acquired taste. You don't have to cherry pick the good foods from the bad because Scott Uehlein, chef at Canyon Ranch's Tuscon resort, has devised a menu that ensures nothing will pass your lips that's likely to contribute to a blocked artery.

Unlike Canyon Ranch's other resorts in isolated Tuscon, Arizona and Lennox, Massachusetts where no alcohol or smoking is allowed the Miami Beach hotel is less strict. Although I had to sign a waiver saying I wouldn't smoke in my room otherwise I'd be billed \$650 to 'deodorise' it they do serve alcohol. Spirits and beers are organic, and wines sustainable, organic or biodynamic. Calorific, carbohydrate, protein, fat and fibre content of each dish are stated on the menu.

The Grill is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and there's an extensive choice of imaginative and beautifully prepared dishes. The 'Chilled Seared Lamb' with grapefruit, mint and pistachios to start was particularly good, as was the 'Rosemary Roasted Black Cod' accompanied with wild mushroom sauce and roasted rapini (a broccoli like vegetable). At only 105 and 340 calories respectively there's no need to feel guilty. The desert choice is sparser with a 'Warm Chocolate Cake' being the best

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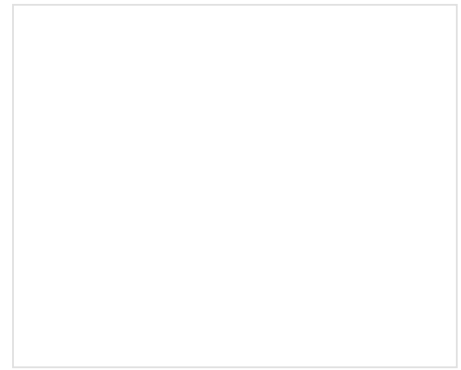
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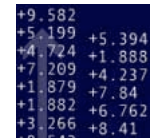
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option.

Service is very fast, sometimes a bit too so, with no time to digest one course before the next one arrives. Delivery of the bill is also super-speedy.

IN-CROWD There's not a designer Chihuahua wearing a cashmere overcoat, so beloved of Miami residents, in sight. Guests are totally unpretentious 30-50-somethings on a health kick and it's the sort of hotel where single women feel completely at ease. Much of the clientele are from the residential properties next door and seem to be dedicated to the Canyon Ranch lifestyle. They utilise the facilities all year round, use Dr. Koffler as their primary care physician and eat the food in the restaurants on a daily basis. Dress is casual and guests wander around in tracksuits and soft shoes as if they were at home.

WALLET WATCH Canyon Ranch Transformation Oxygen Boost Facial – 80 minutes \$320 (£234); Deep Tissue Thermal Therapy – 80 minutes \$250 (£167); Gyrotonics – 50 minutes \$120 (£80).

An Ocean Palm Suite costs \$600 (£400). That price includes full use of the fitness facilities; the Aquavana Experience; access to approximately 40 classes a day, such as yoga, boxing, meditation and pilates and lectures on subjects as diverse as Burdenko Water therapy and Qi Gong. Spa treatments and meals are not included in the room rate.

A 90-minute medical consultation with Dr Koffler costs \$500; A 'Comprehensive Health and Performance' package costs \$5,300 (£3,500) and a 'Stress Management for Healthy Living' package costs \$1,750 (£1,155).

Flights from London Heathrow to Miami International with British Airways from £529.

NEED TO KNOW Canyon Ranch Miami Beach, 6801 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, FL 33141-3243. Tel: (305) 514-7000; www.canyonranchmiami.com

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