

# Arizonaoothills

STYLE SUBSTANCE SOPHISTICATION

## *The* **LUXURY** *Issue*



# A Family Affair

*Live it up with the kids—and without—  
at this luxury Laguna Beach escape.*

Story by Allison Young

**T**RAVEL TAKES A TURN WHEN YOU HAVE KIDS. Instead of the freedom to lounge on a white sand beach in silence, you end up chasing around your uncatchable kids and indulging their every request instead of nursing your own. Bottom line: you return home with full parent points, yet you ultimately need a vacation from the vacation. Needless to say, luxury and family travel don't usually go hand in hand. Not so at Montage Laguna Beach, a 250-room Craftsman-style resort in Laguna Beach, Calif., where parents and kids equally get pampered.

Check in is a good indication of what's to come. The five-star staff rolls out the welcome wagon (literally) with a Red Flyer packed with plush aquatic animals for the picking. While your little one deliberates between the penguin and the snake, parents will luxuriate in their surroundings. The sense of getting away is immediate thanks in part to the lofty lobby that looks out onto the panoramic Pacific.

The warm and fuzzy feeling continues in your suite. Kids will love the homey feeling while parents will love the luxurious amenities, especially in the five-fixture marble bathroom (Egyptian cotton terry towels, plush bathrobes, a deep soak tub complete with soothing bath salts); both will love the ample space. With two oceanfront balconies, two flat-screen TVs and two bathrooms, you won't have to fight over the view, the remote or the commode. To make parents' lives even easier, baby-proofing and cribs are available, as well as adjoining rooms.

Not that you're going to be spending much time indoors. The aquamarine oasis, also known as the Mosaic Pool, is football-field ginormous and set at a perfect 82 degrees year round. It's family friendly, but not overtaken with unruly, cannonballing kids. Set off to the side is the kiddie pool, a place where the wee ones will have fun floating and frolicking and parents will have peace of mind thanks to the shallow depths. And then there's the ocean, arguably the best playground in the world, complete with crashing waves, tide pools, crabs, starfish, rock formations and all the raw ingredients for castle building. Even your ocean experience is elevated thanks to the attentive staff who'll deliver beach chairs, canopies, munchies, beverages and sand toys galore. The concierge can also arrange

fishing, ocean kayaking, golf, family surf lessons and boat excursions.

The ocean will more than entertain the tykes, but the true piece de résistance for parents is Paintbox and Paintbox Petite, a toddler-to-tween program designed to ensure that the kids have a blast and parents feel zero guilt for passing off their progeny. In fact, the kids will be glad to get rid of you thanks to the sweet roster of activities. Tiny tots aged 2 to 5 (potty training is not a prerequisite) will go berserk for the play room stocked with toys, games and crafts, and they'll have a blast blowing bubbles on the lawn, going on wagon rides or getting their face painted. Five to 12 years olds get to partake in Paintbox, an action-packed day camp that offers everything from tide pool tours to tie-dyeing tees, but what really keeps them engaged and excited are the smiley instructors who have an uncanny ability to make everyone feel at ease. The summer months also offer a special program for teens (M-Teens for ages 13-17) to blow off steam their way; think beach volleyball, flag football, Wii tournaments and movie nights.

With the kids off playing, parents can downward dog their stress away in a complimentary yoga class, check out the on-site organic garden, grab a poolside bite at the Mosaic Bar and Grille, take a romantic stroll

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## TURNDOWN TREATS

MONTAGE LAGUNA BEACH'S PILLOW PRESENTS ARE ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY. HERE'S A SMATTERING...

**Chef Craig Strong's Sparkling Elderflower** A few drops of this magic potion will add flavor and flair to your night cap (recipe included).

**Turndown Chocolates Passion** caramel, lemon blueberry, honey-vanilla cognac, cinnamon truffle. *Need we say more?*

**Marine Repair Cream** from Spa Montage Healing marine minerals will turn you into a sleeping beauty.





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**LOUNGE IN LUXURY:** Thanks to oceanfront balconies at Montage Laguna Beach, there's blue as far as the eye can see.

along the beach, or hit up Laguna's stylish boutiques; just whatever you do, don't miss the spa. The pampering pad has all the ingredients for primo me-time, including a kid-free lap pool, sauna, steam rooms and a lengthy list of holistic services. Standouts include the Laguna Beach Kur, a combo cold wrap/hydrotherapy treatment that uses local botanicals to enhance immune function and combat fatigue, and the Montage Anti-Aging Facial which includes a connective tissue massage to bring back your youthful glow. But what really sets the spa apart are its skilled therapists. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, the treatments are personalized. Knowing the kids are in good hands means plenty of time to take a plunge in the cold pool (it's great for circulation) and savor an organic tea on a lounge overlooking the Laguna coastline.

If you're like most parents, eating out with the little ones is more family friendly than fancy shmancy. Not many high-end eateries have high chairs and kiddie menus. Thankfully the Loft has both, plus a staff that won't scoff if your toddler decides to chuck his chicken

fingers on the floor. Not that you'll notice his antics, you'll be too busy mmm-ing over the local oysters or a coffee-crusting New York strip so tasty that it practically melts in your mouth or the to-die-for Dark Manjari Chocolate Cake. The Loft's menu is divine, but it's not the best grub the Montage has to offer.

If the spa wasn't excuse enough to escape the kids, Studio is. Headed by culinary star Craig Strong, the modern French cuisine, which focuses on seasonal and artisanal ingredients (there's even a professional forager on staff), is as delectable as it is artful. The panoramic views of the Pacific don't hurt either. Organize a babysitter through the concierge and plan for a late night.

So what's the downside to all this relaxing, relishing and reconnecting? Returning to regular life can be tough, even though the staff make it as smooth sailing as possible. They'll expertly pack up your car and send you away with souvenir hats and bottled water. It really is the little details that set Montage apart—and make family travel a joy rather than a job. ■