

ROBB REPORT  
**BEST  
 OF THE  
 BEST  
 2003**



## MONTAGE RESORT & SPA

*This charming beachfront property is so very SoCal.*

It is ironic that in Southern California, the region of the United States most closely associated with fun in the sun, resorts are typically located across the highway from the sand, causing guests to wonder where's the beach?

The Montage Resort & Spa, which opened its doors in late February, is an exception. It is indeed situated on a beach-and not a rocky patch of shore, but rather a long trench of sand populated by sunbathers, joggers, shell-seekers, wave-riders, and castle-builders.

The resort's atmosphere is pure Southern Californian, with sophisticated glamor and beach-casual elegantly coexisting; (designer) flip-flops are as welcome as suits and cocktail dresses.

Taking advantage of the prime Laguna Beach location, each of the resort's 262 guest rooms, suites, and bungalows features a stunning view of the Pacific.

While not excessively large, the guest rooms do not skimp on the finer touches. They feature lofty feather-top beds and down-filled pillows; ultra-thick, supersize towels; and elegant marble baths chock-full of amenities from bath pillows to showers with shaving mirrors to sound systems that pipe in sound from your television. Massages, beauty treatments, and salon



services are offered at the seaside spa. The glass-walled fitness center overlooks the ocean and includes yoga and Pilates rooms, a lap pool, top-of-the-line resistance and weight-training equipment, and cardio machines with built-in DVD players and televisions.

Chef James Boyce, who was wooed from Mary Elaine's at Scottsdale's Phoenician, serves his robust Mediterranean cuisine at the resort's signature restaurant, Studio. Be sure to reserve a window seat to take advantage of the 280-degree ocean views, and to save room for dessert, because Studio's pastry chef is a genius.

Afterward, you might wander to the comfortable lobby lounge to enjoy cocktails and live music. As you stand on the terrace watching the waves crash below, don't be surprised if a Beach Boys song comes to mind and you find yourself wishing they all could be California beach resorts.

-MARYANN HAMMERS

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