

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, AND WHY IN THE WORLD OF STYLE

THE ART ISSUE

STARRING

Kim Kardashian

Barbara Kruger

Pee-wee Herman

Daniel Libeskind

Johnny Knoxville

Juergen Teller

Ryan Trecartin

Salvador Dalí

(Warhol would be proud)

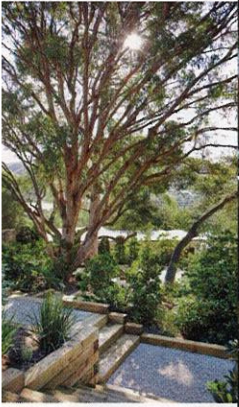
It's all about me

I mean you

I mean me



WHERE



Clockwise from top: At the Ranch at Live Oak Malibu, views of the dining room, a guest cottage, the pool, the grounds, and the exterior of a cottage.

MUST LIKE HIKES

For DANA DICKEY, a week at fitness boot camp the Ranch at Live Oak Malibu is an uphill battle.

At 11 o'clock on a hot Southern California morning, nine miles into a guided silent hike, I rub my neck and see salt crystals on my fingers. Before I can alert my guide to this odd discovery, my body starts shaking, my hands clench like claws, and I keel over and vomit. “Am I going into shock?” I ask the guide as he takes my pulse. “No, you’re just dehydrated,” he replies cheerfully. “I see this a lot in heavy Diet Coke drinkers.” Just another day, it seems, at the Ranch.

A white walled aerie set high above the Pacific, with an exercise pavilion and treatment cottages, the Ranch at Live Oak Malibu may look like a spa, but make no mistake: It’s a boot camp. Movie stars and socialites routinely pay large sums to eat tiny portions and sweat buckets at such places, the most famous of which, the Ashram, is just an hour’s drive south. The Ranch is billed as a less spartan alternative, having chic guest rooms and private baths as opposed to the Ashram’s shared bedrooms and showers. How tough could it be? I think as I check in for a weeklong stay, hoping to kick my caffeine and nicotine habits.

As at the Ashram, hiking is the focus of the program at the Ranch. After a 6 a.m. stretch

class and a minuscule breakfast, guests endure a daily four-hour Bataan Death March through the foothills in full sun. Lunch and a nap follow before exercise resumes with yoga, water aerobics, and resistance training. Massages are also part of the schedule, but the emphasis is on preparing for the next day’s exertions.

The Ranch takes detoxing very seriously. “All the validations of family and work we use to treat ourselves badly are taken away here,” explains Marc Alabanza, the Ranch’s head guide. “In this peaceful environment we take time to be silent and eat wholesome, fresh food.” What’s less peaceful are the “severe detox symptoms” Alabanza warns of: headaches, stomach upset, muscle twitches, even phantasmagoric dreams. I nod earnestly but shrug off his drama, like the warning voiceovers on prescription drug ads. Lo and behold, by day two I’m hit with a blinding caffeine-withdrawal headache and have impure dreams about red velvet cupcakes.

Though daily intake is capped at 1,500 calories, the diet, for me, is the easy part. Chef Kurt Steeber uses ingredients from the Ranch’s organic garden to create dishes like pressure-vacuumed yellow watermelon atop shiso—which has the

texture and taste of tuna sashimi—and vegetable pot-au-feu with a zesty leek dressing. The hikes, on the other hand, are torture. On day three, queasiness forces me to cower in the shade along the trail until a fellow guest slips me some contraband electrolyte chews. The next morning I stop after an hour in the 90-degree heat and announce, “I’m considering which would make the pain stop sooner—jumping off this cliff or continuing to walk.” But on Friday, a few miles before the salt crystals and vomiting, I experience a creative high, my head bursting with ideas, plans, and goodwill toward my fellow man.

Now, two weeks later, my time at the Ranch has become, for me, one of those incredibly uncomfortable life experiences whose pain levels are difficult to remember afterward—like childbirth or home renovation. And as is the case with those other big events, the payoff outweighs the inconvenience: I’ve lost 15 inches across my body, including four from my hips; I’ve stopped smoking; I’ve switched to decaf; I’m eating more vegetables; my energy is up. Perhaps most surprising, I’ve started hiking the hills around my home. The Ranch, I have to admit, was worth its salt. ♦