



JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa

Desert Oasis

Ayurvedic menu offerings and Turkish hammams lure local residents to this Southern Californian “jewel of the desert.” *By Rachel Kossman*

There’s no question as to why the JW Marriott Desert Springs Resort & Spa is one of the top destination hotels in California’s Coachella Valley. The 450-acre property boasts two golf courses, Venetian-inspired waterways and an endless expanse of palm trees that silhouette the desert sky.

Spanning 38,000 square feet and housing 48 treatment rooms, the resort spa is one of the largest in Southern California. But aside from its sweeping grounds and impeccable locale, a major allure of the Desert Springs Spa is its menu, starting with the ayurveda-focused offerings that center around balancing the body and helping the client find total well-being.

“Ayurveda has been on the menu since the spa opened 28 years ago. At that time, we were one of very few spas performing these types of treatments,” says Lisa Hauser, spa manager. The offerings include varying combinations of *bindi*, a warm, crushed-herb body masque; *abhyanga*, an energy channel balancer and stimulus that uses herb-infused oil; and *shirodhara*, which focuses on the body’s “third eye” to equalize the central nervous system.

Guests also enjoy locally inspired wellness treatments such as the Healing Aloe Wrap and the Date Scrub (each 30 min./\$79 or 60 min./\$140), and the spa’s signature treatment, the Desert Journey (90 min./\$215), a full-body experience inspired by scents of the “desert in bloom” and including a body scrub, massage, paraffin treatment, chakra-focused hot stone placement and reflexology.

Also unique to Desert Springs are its Turkish hammam steam chambers, installed during a 2007 remodel. “The inspiration to bring the hammams to our spa stems from the European influence in our design, which also harkens back to our opening years,” explains spa director Dawn Ferraro. Kept between 100 and 105 degrees, the hammams’ moderate temperatures allow for longer steam sessions.

Although one might assume that the resort’s vast number of out-of-town visitors constitute the spa’s main clientele, Desert Springs Spa has built another loyal contingent thanks to its Valley Resident Program. The locals-only plan (\$165/annually) gives patrons a 60-minute treatment of choice, plus 20% off all subsequent services, specials and retail purchases. The year-long discount also applies to day passes (\$45 per day, \$20 after 3 p.m.), which grant access to the spa’s full spectrum of amenities: a workout space, yoga studio and spa bistro, plus the hammams, Jacuzzi, steam room, sauna and heated outdoor lap pool.

By emphasizing the discount aspect of the program, the resort minimizes the availability challenges of a program that allows for more free services. “Service-oriented memberships are difficult to maintain because we have such a high hotel occupancy, and we can’t always promise that type of regular availability,” explains Ferraro. “Our locals love the value pricing program, and they become loyal clients who boost our business by regularly bringing friends and family.”