

SENSUOUS SOAKS

Just for you, I submerge

By Carla Breer Howard

Although we all know that warm and wonderful healing waters bubble up right here in the valley, I must embrace my duty to find out: do they really help us feel fabulous?

THE SPRING RESORT & SPA, DESERT HOT SPRINGS

One week into a miserable cold, I took my damp (let's leave it at that), sorry self on a short drive to The Spring Resort & Spa. It turned out to be about the most blissful route I could have taken to feeling better.

As I write this, I'm missing the total peace of the place. Beneath the serene Japanese/Scandinavian-style inn crowning a hill in Desert Hot Springs, silky waters have taken seven years to filter down through the rock.

According to owner Maria Lease, they've traveled all the way from the peak of 11,499-foot-tall Mt. San Gorgonio that towers in the distance.

By the time the mineral-filled water bubbles up under the spa, the temperature is a blistering 170 degrees. The liquid is of such clarity and quality that in 2008, SpaFinder voted it one the top ten mineral springs worldwide, on a par with Germany's Baden-Baden, The Greenbrier in West Virginia, The Homestead in Virginia, Terme di Saturnia in Italy and The Spring's neighbor, Two Bunch Palms. I imbibed a gallon of it at room temperature.

I could choose between three outdoor pools, each at a different temperature. The largest is surrounded by the resort's 10 spare but chic guest rooms, as well as lawn and desert-friendly gardens. The mid-temperature, mosaic-lined pool is



The mineral water-filled swimming pool at The Spring Resort & Spa.

under a shade structure, inviting longer lingering. But it was during my soak in the hottest pool, at 105 degrees, that I realized how exceptional this water truly is: While jet nozzles churned the water, there was no smell of chlorine or sulfur, nothing but the sweet fresh air. As a guest of the day spa, I was invited to soak for two hours.

I walked just a few steps away to begin my treatment, The Spring Buff. It began with an all-over scrub using a special mitt, which I got to keep. This was to exfoliate and to stimulate my circulation. It was followed by a sooth-

ing massage with lavender oil and ended with the most sensual shampoo experienced since of "Out of Africa." (Remember Robert Redford?) Three respites in the authentic Finnish sauna, complete with eucalyptus oil in the steam for my cold, completed the delightful experience.

The view across the gardens, past the palm trees capturing the last of the season's snowpack atop San Jacinto underscored the power of this idyllic spot as a magical, healing place. The Spring Buff \$155; (760) 251-6700; the-spring.com.