

The Weekly Calistogan

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Calistoga resort nabs the city's first 4-diamond rating

By Anne Ward Ernst
EDITOR

Solage Calistoga announced its designation as a AAA Four-Diamond rated property, a first for the resort and Calistoga.

"We're honored to receive this distinction," said Richard Hill, general manager of Solage Calistoga, in a statement. "The Solage Calistoga team has always been known for its superior level of service and amenities and we are pleased that AAA Four-Diamond recognition solidifies Solage as one of the best resorts in Napa Valley."

Earning four diamonds is no easy feat; less than 5 percent of 30,000 reviewed hotels earn the distinction. The difference between a four- and five-diamond hotel does

not necessarily mean the property with fewer gems is a step down in service or quality. To qualify for a five-diamond status, properties must start with a minimum number of such check-marked items as guest rooms and amenities.

Solbar, the resort's restaurant and bar, has been awarded a Michelin star for four years running, said Renee Risch, director of sales. That distinction has brought acclaim and repeat guests, she said.

Located on 2,200 acres on Foothill Boulevard, the 89-room resort (83 rooms and six suites) is focused on providing health and wellness wrapped up in "fun," Risch said.

The resort opened in July 2007 and has already renovated its guest rooms which have an elegant,

sophisticated yet casual ambience, Risch said. The rooms' décor is juxtaposed by the private or semi-private patios and canopies made of branches, echoing the region's vineyards.

"We call it San Francisco loft meets Napa Valley barn," Risch said.

Instead of a tiny one- or two-cup coffee maker with stale coffee packets that need sweetener and cream, Solage offers full-size coffee makers with a bag of custom-blended coffee roasted by Calistoga Roastery. Guests can make two cups, three cups or more at whatever strength they please.

Bicycles are a staple at Solage.



Photo by Anne Ward Ernst/The Weekly Calistogan
Bicycles are a staple at Solage Calistoga. The resort is committed to environmentally-friendly practices, and provides two-wheeled cruisers to all guests so they can pedal into town without creating pollution.

See SOLAGE, Page A5

Solage

From Page A1

Bellmen ride them, room service servers use them for delivery, housekeepers move from room to room on them, and each guest room comes with a bicycle for each guest so they can travel into town at a leisurely pace never worrying about parking or exhaust emissions.

"It makes people feel like a kid again," Risch said.

The bicycles can be seen parked by The Depot in bike racks and in other hot spots around town, a sign of the guests' use of the two-wheeled, human-powered, non-polluting vehicles.

The resort's demographic leans to a younger age group, she said, but the appeal of the resort is ageless. There is a separate pool for children; a bonus for adults who want to swim without being splashed by belly-flopping boys and equally as nice for the kids who want to splash around and not get told to stop because they are bothering other guests.

The Michelin-star restaurant and bar is at once intimate and social, Risch said. It's not uncommon to find local vintners having dinner at Solbar, wandering over to a winemaker's table and sharing a glass of their latest vintage, she said. And for those who prefer a cocktail to a glass of wine, the cocktails at Solbar are top-notch and creative, she said.

There is as much for out-of-town visitors at the restaurant and spa as there is for locals, and the spa has a healthy local membership that enjoys a variety of massages, facials, mud bar treatments, mineral pool soaks and more.

Risch said a place like Solage tempts people to never leave the resort,



Submitted photos
The bathhouse at Solage Calistoga's spa offers a mud bar, private rooms for individuals, couples or small groups of friends.

offering fabulous food, a stellar local wine list, and a fitness and relaxation menu so complete that she said she overhears guests contemplating not going out for the day, but instead indulging in one more spa treatment.

The yoga center, which had an inspirational view of a giant oak tree, is still peaceful yet invigorating, but now lacks the ambience of the 300-year-old tree that was felled during a recent wind storm. The resort is trying to decide how to replace it, Risch said.

Another room holds a full cycle of exercise equipment that includes treadmills, elliptical machines, weight machines and more. And if a guest pushes their body through all the rigors of the exercise routines available to them, their muscles are in the right place for a total spa treatment.

The spa facilities that include a wide range of services are made for those who want to be social, and conversely those who desire privacy. There are rooms designed for "a girls' weekend," Risch said, for those times when people



A Capella suite at Solage Calistoga. The luxury resort has 83 studio guest rooms and six suites.

want to hang out with friends and chat while getting treatments.

Mud bar treatments at Solage are a little different splurge than the mud bath service people are accustomed to, she said. It starts with the personal selection of a fragrant essential oil that gets mixed with volcanic ash and other ingredients; guests are given a private room where they can apply the mud mask to their body alone, or with the help of a partner.

It can be a private, intimate, relaxing mud mask, or an enthusiastic experience that could be a mud-slinging party, said Risch.

Either way, rooms are equipped with showers for rinsing off the mud.

In other words, Risch said, guests can make the Solage spa experience as soothing or as invigorating as they choose.

Solage Calistoga is owned and managed by the same company, Auberge Resorts, that owns and manages Calistoga Ranch. Solage Calistoga has garnered numerous industry awards, including recent appearances on the Condé Nast Traveler 2013 Gold List and Travel+Leisure's 2013 World's Best Awards. For more information visit SolageCalistoga.com.