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FLIP PAGE

life

travel

by Kristen Schott



Andaz San Diego

Friday, 5:20 p.m. Tickets? Check. Bags in tow? Check. Pre-train cocktails? Finished and paid for. All we needed was the southbound train, but when it arrived at 5:23 p.m., we missed it. After another hour of waiting – this time on the boarding platform – and an hour and a half of travel, including a short taxi ride to our destination, we finally arrived at the Andaz San Diego. Then, the past few stressful hours melted away.

Situated in the heart of the city's historic Gaslamp Quarter, the 159-room Andaz offers a localized, Southern California vibe and a contemporary atmosphere, with no detail overlooked. The building's brick façade houses a city-chic interior, with red lighting

accents, earthy décor in shades of brown and cream furnishings.

The hotel prides itself on making its guests as comfortable as possible – and it does. The check-in process in the Andaz Lounge – part lobby, part living room – took all of two minutes, thanks to the use of laptops and our hostess, who combined the roles of front-desk staffer, concierge and bell attendant. I felt like I had arrived in an urban heaven.

The feeling only grew stronger upon opening the door of our guest room, which captured my attention with its three large windows overlooking the Gaslamp Quarter. Amenities include luscious bedding, a 42-inch flat-screen TV, iPod docking station, work area,

Keurig coffemaker and spacious bathroom. A blend of rich woods, innovative texturing and contemporary artwork finishes off the space.

Of course, the rooms are just the beginning of the Andaz; the destination offers a 24-hour gym, retail boutique, business center and a rooftop pool, sundeck and lounge. Head up there at sunset for an unforgettable view of the city's oceanfront skyline. Or visit the sultry wine bar located near the Andaz Lounge, and enjoy one of 88 rotating vintages.

After partaking in the view from the roof or sipping vinos – or both – please your palate at the hotel's Quarter Kitchen, a stylish eatery offering a new

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take on American cuisine. The spot exudes chic sophistication, with an ample bar, dim lighting, marble floors, lounge seating, a dining space surrounding an open cooking area and floor-to-ceiling windows that provide a full view of the bustling city streets.

Chef Michael Liotta's menu changes seasonally, and his innovative twists give the dishes just the right amount of daring. On the recommendation of our server, we split the Crispy Pork Belly with sour apple bon, a mustard sauce and sage. While the texture took a few minutes to get used to, the velvety yet crunchy bites of pork were a perfect way to begin the meal. Next up: Half a Roasted Farm Chicken with sweet potato and a smoked maple glaze, and Braised Prime Short Ribs with a side of potato gnocchetti and

wild mushrooms. My friend's chicken was deemed "really good" (a high compliment from a woman whose mother has been cooking up killer homemade dishes for years). As for the short ribs, the meat was fall-off-the-bone tender - enough said.

We still made room for dessert: the seasonal Fruit Cobbler, topped with an Irish oatmeal crumble and vanilla bean gelato; and the Marjolaine Torie, a hazelnut and almond meringue with chocolate ganache, praline cream and chocolate hazelnut gelato. Then came a taste of the Lustau Pedro Ximenez Sherry, which brought the dishes to a whole new level - one that I don't think I'll ever come down from.

If that's not enough, the resort doubles as a nightclub Thursday through Saturday

Clockwise from top left:

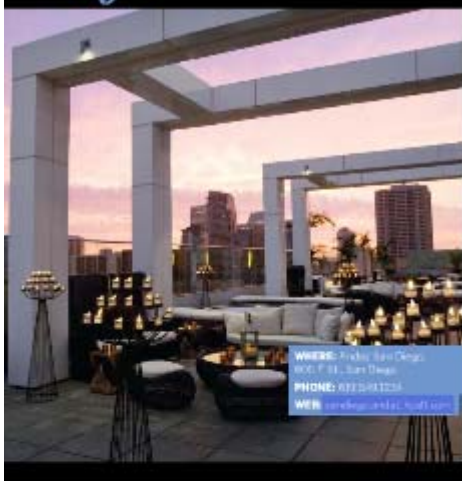
The Artek San Diego's rooftop pool, sunbeds and lounge offer views of the city's historic Gaslamp Quarter and skyline. Visitors will surely enjoy the hotel's vibrant lobby. Guest rooms at the Artek are plush, comfortable and stylish.



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WHERE: Andaz San Diego, 600 F St., San Diego
PHONE: 619.594.1234
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travel (continued)

nights. Hotel guests receive VIP access to the multilevel venue, which extends to the rooftop lounge down to a sub-level dance floor and bar area. My friend and I danced the night away to the upbeat music, sipped cocktails and mingled with other guests before finally turning in at 2 a.m. – without ever leaving our hotel.

The Andaz San Diego certainly keeps its guests busy, but there's also a whole city at your fingertips. Be sure to stroll through the Gaslamp District, which offers a range of bars and restaurants – check out the quaint Zambar Café for brunch – and retail boutiques. Or take a 10-minute walk to Petco Park for a Padres game. Also nearby: Seaport Village, which offers a range of coastal-inspired eateries and unique shops, and the San Diego Zoo. While the latter two destinations are a bit farther, the hotel offers a complimentary SUV luxury transportation service for seeing the sites.

Of course, all this barely skims the surface of this city by the sea, but when paired with a stay at the Andaz San Diego, you'll be in for a little of everything – and you won't be disappointed.



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MAY 17-JUNE 5

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