

FITNESS

Working it out on the Las Vegas strip

Invigorating, innovative sessions make indulging in the city's excesses that much better

BY CATHERINE ROSCOE BARR

We're on our second round of jumping jacks, stair runs and high knees in front of Haze Nightclub at the ARIA Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, and my husband and I are drawing curious looks from passersby.

Our trainer, Tiare Lum, seems oblivious to the stares and calls out our last five repetitions. We pick up our yoga mats and water bottles and walk to the ARIA convention centre before completing the last of five sets of intervals — sprints along the upper hallway, side-moving squats, and crab crawls — and then collapse on our mats for a well-deserved stretch.

For the past few years, my husband and I have been making an annual trip to Las Vegas come spring. We've been sun-starved for too long and are in desperate need of a little Vitamin D, and Vegas, with its glorious heat and intoxicating energy, is affordable, only a short flight away, and a small time commitment because of the concentrated excess one enjoys while there.

But this time we experienced a surprisingly different kind of Vegas-style excess, by trying some of the innovative and invigorating fitness classes offered along the Strip.

That's not to say we didn't enjoy some of Vegas's better known excesses too, but scheduling a workout each day made the dining, clubbing, gambling, exploring and poolside lounging that much better because we earned our fuel and felt better in our swimsuits.

Shortly after checking into our room at the Bellagio, one of the beautifully remodelled lakeview rooms overlooking the iconic fountains, we had a 20-minute walk south to our first fitness adventure at ARIA.

I think ARIA's "Indoor Hike," a fitness class that's part boot camp and part walking tour of the massive CityCenter complex (that includes ARIA), is a bit of a misnomer but I'm told it's designed to simulate the type of muscle soreness one would have after a hike — a very hilly hike.

Our 60-minute workout included all-day access to ARIA's fitness centre and spa, which has three coed areas so you don't have to leave your sweetheart's side: infrared Ganbanyoku beds to soothe your muscles, a Shio salt room to boost respiratory health, and Vegas' only coed spa balcony with a therapeutic infinity pool.

We spent the rest of the afternoon window shopping and exploring Bellagio's Conservatory and Botanical



COURTESY MGM RESORTS INTERNATIONAL

ARIA's fitness centre and spa boasts Vegas's only coed spa balcony, and has a therapeutic infinity pool.

Gardens before getting ready for dinner at Sensi, which is tucked away in the hotel's southwest corner.

We love Vancouver's seasonal and sustainable food scene so executive chef Royden Ellamar's incredible farm-to-table menu was right up our alley.

The earthy restaurant, designed with stone and water features, has exceptional service, conscientiously sourced ingredients, and a unique dining concept: four separate kitchens in a central glass-encased space preparing perfectly-executed Italian, Asian, American grill and seafood dishes.

We had an outstanding meal starting with the sushi sampler, followed by the duo of roasted pork shoulder and crispy pork belly, and the rib-eye steak with sides of truffle mashed potatoes and spring vegetables with tarragon butter.

Before crawling into our luxurious cashmere-topped bed we stopped by

the Lily Bar and Lounge for after-dinner drinks and then tried our luck at the slot machines.

The next morning we had a brisk 20-minute walk north to our Yoga Among the Dolphins class at The Mirage, held in the underwater viewing area at Siegfried and Roy's Secret Garden and Dolphin Habitat before it opens for the day.

Our radiant instructor, Willow Withy, led us through an energizing, hour-long vinyasa flow, which she teaches there every Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 8:30 a.m.

With windows into the habitat on three sides of the room and curious dolphins behind them, we got regular glimpses of the magnificent creatures whether facing forward in tree pose, to our left in side angle pose, or over our shoulder in a seated twist.



AARON BARR/SPECIAL TO THE SUN

JUKARI challenges the body's balance, coordination and flexibility. The JUKIRA band, which acts as a prop, also helps to increase range of motion.

CONTINUED ON FACING PAGE

7TH HEAVEN
STAY 7 NIGHTS. GET 2 FREE & KIDS EAT FREE!
Valid 5/12-6/15 & 8/18-12/13/2012
*Select Categories
800.367.5030 | www.napilikai.com

NAPILI KAI BEACH RESORT
Maui, Hawaii

Maui Condos
May/Nov 2012 Special from \$106/nt!
20 Properties Including
Kamaole Sands & Kihei Surfside
Call us on Maui today!
800.822.4409
www.MauiCondo.com

LUXURY MOTORCOACH TOURS
7 DAY RENO CALL FOR DETAILS!
6 DAY WENDOVER
Wendover Tour includes: \$21 Free Slot Play, Free Drinks, Lucky Bucks & more. Valued at over \$60 per day.
4 DAY OREGON COAST
Staying in Lincoln City at the Chinook Winds Casino Resort
Departs June 4 & October 1, 2012
9 DAYS RENO LAS VEGAS
Departs October 6, 2012
11 DAY COACH & CRUISE
Departs Sept 23
*Onboard the Golden Princess for a 3 night cruise, then onto Laughlin, Las Vegas. Reno all for two nights each
3 DAY TULALIP RESORT TOUR
Departs October 15th
Staying in the fabulous Tulalip Hotel. You will receive a coupon book for both the hotel and the Seattle Premium Outlet Mall.
INTERNATIONAL COACH TOURS
604-270-6288
Visit our website www.ictours.com

There's nothing like a zoo without fences.

Australia... Naturally Yours
20 DAYS C\$4172.00 p/p All in Price
Get friendly with the wildlife on Kangaroo Island/Snorkel the Great Barrier Reef & Cuddle a Koala Book this package prior to the 30th June 2012 & Fly for Free between Adelaide & Cairns
CALL FOR MORE DETAILS:
1-855-293-6464
contact@downunder-travel.com
Downunder TRAVEL
There's nothing like Australia

VICTORIA BC | VANCOUVER ISLAND

TWO NIGHT SPA LOVERS GETAWAY
Get away this Spring to Victoria's #1 rated ocean front resort. Package includes complimentary 3-course gourmet breakfast for two each morning, \$100 spa certificate to use on any massage, pedicure, facial or signature couple's treatment in the Spa-Essence of Life and 2 nights in a luxurious king OceanSuite.
TWO NIGHT SPA PACKAGE \$598 FOR TWO PLUS TAX
1.888.544.2079
WWW.BRENTWOODBAYRESORT.COM

BRENTWOOD BAY Resort & Spa

Our endless possibilities
Your non-stop fun
your vacation people | 25.

transat Holidays

EUROPE - AIR, HOTEL & TRANSFERS		SOUTH - 7 NIGHTS, ALL INCLUSIVE	
FRANKFURT \$629 TOP AMBASSADOR 7 NIGHTS - BREAKFAST DAILY - BONUS INCLUSION SAT, JUN 9 - \$558 TXS/FEES	LONDON \$1089 LONDON YOUR WAY 7 NIGHTS - BREAKFAST DAILY - INCLUSIONS WED/FRI/SAT, JUN 1, 2, 9, 13 - \$575 TXS/FEES	PUERTO VALLARTA \$399 HOLIDAY INN RESORT PUERTO VALLARTA SAT, JUN 2, 9, 16, 23 -\$340 TXS/FEES	RIVIERA MAYA \$749 OCCIDENTAL GRAND XCARET PREFERENCE CLUB SUN, JUN 10, 17 -\$340 TXS/FEES
AMSTERDAM \$1099 NH MUSICA 7 NIGHTS - BREAKFAST DAILY SAT, JUN 9, 16 - \$491 TXS/FEES	PARIS \$1099 APART'HOTEL CITADINES PARIS PLACE D'ITALIE 7 NIGHTS - FULL KITCHENETTE - BONUS INCLUSIONS THU, JUN 14 - \$520 TXS/FEES		

Flights from Vancouver via Air Transat/CarJet. Prices shown are p/person, based on double in lead room category. Space/prices subject to availability at time of booking/subject to change without prior notice. Taxes/fees extra and noted above. For details, terms and conditions refer to the Transat Holidays 2011-2012 Sun or 2012-2013 Europe brochure. Transat Holidays is a division of Transat Tours Canada Inc. and is a registered travel wholesaler in British Columbia (Reg #2454) with offices at 555 West Hastings Street, Suite 950, Vancouver, BC V6B 4N5.

UNIGLOBE Travel
1-800-3-UNIGLOBE (1-800-388-4456)
visit us online at www.uniglobetravel.ca
access more

CONTINUED | FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

"It has always been important for me to set the right ambience for a yoga practice, but there is something wonderfully grounding that cannot be generated through words or music that the dolphins give naturally," Withy said, after telling us that interacting with dolphins actually triggers the release of oxytocin, a hormone that reduces stress and stimulates restorative processes.

After class, we were lead past the dolphin pool — where we had the atypical and incredibly fortunate chance to say a quick hello to one of the dolphins — and back to the spa for a complimentary smoothie and a pass to use the men and women's wet areas and meditation rooms, and the coed fitness centre, throughout the day.

We spent the rest of the morning and afternoon strolling along Las Vegas Boulevard from The Mirage south to Mandalay Bay (a deceptively long one-hour walk from point to point), where we stopped in to check out the Shark Reef aquarium.

Then it was back to ARIA for dinner in the opulent, low-lit dining room at Sage where we enjoyed another decadent and sustainably sourced meal.

We swooned over the beef tartare with crispy chocolate, the grilled American Kobe skirt steak with Brussels sprouts, and the 36-hour braised Wagyu short rib with parsnip and pickled red onion. If you're feeling extra adventurous, Sage has an after-dinner Absinthe menu with almost a dozen varieties of the spirit.

We passed on the Green Fairy and headed to the glamorous and newly-opened Hyde Bellagio — designed by Philippe Starck of Louis Ghost Chair fame — for cocktails and beautiful-people-watching on their breezy terrace overlooking the fountains from centre stage.

On our last morning in Vegas we headed to the bamboo studio at Bellagio's spa for a JUKARI Fit to Flex class (which included all-day access to the fitness centre and spa, including the men and women's hydrotherapy pools).

I first heard about JUKARI, a collaborative effort between Cirque du Soleil and Reebok, a few months ago and immediately began searching for classes in Vancouver (there are none). So as we were planning our trip I was thrilled to hear that Bellagio offered them, on Thursdays and Fridays at 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. on Saturdays.

Our instructor, Dustin Bradshaw, led us through 50 minutes of lively choreography that challenged our balance, coordination and flexibility in cardio-infused combination, while we used the colourful JUKARI Band to increase range of motion and act as a prop.

We became less awkward and more coordinated as the class progressed but I couldn't look my husband in the eye without bursting into laughter as we gyrated and pranced around the room.

We performed moves like the Flamingo (balancing on one leg while moving around the other), the Flying Windmill (twisting side to side with the band wrapped around our outstretched arms) and La Capa (bounding across the room like a matador with the band billowing out front) to custom-mixed Cirque du Soleil music.

After our workout we visited the *Claude Monet: Impressions of Light* exhibit at the Bellagio Gallery of Fine Arts, and that afternoon — a balmy 27 degrees Celsius — had a divine late lunch on the patio at Olives.

They don't take patio reservations but you must persevere because it's worth the wait for one of those coveted spots with front row seats to Bellagio's fountain show, beginning weekdays at 3 p.m.

From the modern Mediterranean menu, our server said we must try



A divine late lunch was served on the patio at Bellagio's Olives. Yoga Among the Dolphins (top right) at The Mirage takes place in an underwater viewing area.



the beef carpaccio with Gorgonzola polenta, and so we did. It was so good that the gentlemen at the table next to us each ordered the gargantuan appetizer for their main, and excitedly talked about it until it arrived, and then silence. We also indulged in two of Olives' desserts, the chocolate fallen cake and the banana tiramisu.

Following lunch we made our way to Cypress Premier Lounges, Bellagio's adult-only pool, where we'd reserved lounge chairs to spend our final hours in Vegas relaxing, digesting and soaking up the sun before boarding the plane back to Vancouver.

We can't wait for our next Las Vegas adventure and will definitely take advantage of the fabulous fitness and spa amenities along the Strip — luxuries that may just be Vegas' best kept secret.

Special to *The Vancouver Sun*

Escorted Premier Tours

Taste Of Oregon Including Magnificent Oregon Coast 6 Days Oct. 5 - 6 Meals Fr. \$1280
New York, Washington, Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard & Boston By Coach 10 Days Oct. 9, May 18 & 10 10 Meals Fr. \$2995
Atlantic Canada Grandeur 21 Days Sep. 4, 11, & 18 16 Meals Fr. \$3595
Jewels Of The Maritimes 16 Days Sep. 7 & 11 17 Meals Fr. \$3140
Eastern Canada & The Maritimes 21 Days Sep. 4, 11 & 18 16 Meals Fr. \$3270

For a detailed itinerary call your travel experts:
OR **PacificGoldTours**
www.pacificgoldtours.com
604-943-3200 or 1-800-667-8122

HUMETRAVEL.com
"the human touch"

ROUND TRIP CRUISES FROM VANCOUVER

ALASKA 7 Days priced from \$945	MEXICO 15 Days priced from \$1358	HAWAII 16 Days priced from \$1956
---	---	---

Plus taxes. Limited Availability.
500-1525 Robson St. Vancouver BC V6G 1C3 BC Reg: 1204-0
604-682-7581

UCLUELET LONG BEACH
• Waterfront • Hot tubs • Pet-friendly

reefpoint
COTTAGES

Visit our website for current Rate Specials

1.877.726.4425 reefpointcottages.com

marlin travel

Exclusive Europe Sale

SAVE \$100 PER PERSON on a European Vacation 10 days or longer*

Call Marlin Travel at 1-877-622-8014 or visit www.marlintravel.ca

*For complete details visit www.marlintravel.ca. Marlin Travel is a division of Transat Distribution Canada Inc. ON Reg. #50015084, BC Reg. #23567. Head Office: 191 The West Mall, Suite 710, Etobicoke, ON, M9C 5K8

Holland America Line
A Signature of Excellence
ms Noordam

MEDITERRANEAN
CRUISE, HOTEL & AIR PACKAGE
22 nights – August 23, 2012

BALCONY \$3999* CAD	Rome, Dubrovnik, Corfu, Katakolon, Santorini, Ephesus, Athens, Messina, Florence, Monte Carlo, Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca, Tunis, Sicily, Naples	OUTSIDE \$3599* CAD
----------------------------------	--	----------------------------------

Amenities: \$50 pp beverage card & Pinnacle Grill dinner
Prices include roundtrip Vancouver air, 2 nights (4 star) hotel, 20 night cruise and all taxes

BALCONY PRICE BASED ON A HIGH CATEGORY STATEROOM! FABULOUS VALUE ON THIS AND MANY OTHER MED SAILINGS!

CRUISEPLUS OFFERS BIG AGENCY DEALS WITH A SMALL AGENCY FEEL!

1-800-854-9664
www.cruiseplus.ca
One of Canada's Top Agencies for 13 years!

*New bookings only. Prices are per person based on 2 sharing and are subject to availability at the time of booking. Fuel surcharges (if reinstated by the cruise line) would be additional. PRICES INCLUDE TAXES - however, should the cruise or airlines increase them after booking, those increases would be additional. Ships registry: Netherlands. CruisePlus Management Ltd. BPCPA # 3325-0

PAINTER'S LODGE
CAMPBELL RIVER, BC

Getaway for two includes:

- 3 nights' accommodation
- Two, 4-hour fishing trips
- A \$250 credit at the resort

THE VANCOUVER SUN

CHOOSE YOUR GETAWAY CONTEST

Which would you prefer, a weekend of adventure at Painter's Lodge or a weekend of serenity at April Point Resort & Spa? Make your choice for your chance to **WIN YOUR GETAWAY!**

APRIL POINT RESORT & SPA
QUADRA ISLAND, BC

Getaway for two includes:

- 3 nights' accommodation
- Whale watching trip
- \$250 spa credit
- \$250 resort credit

ENTER ONLINE: WWW.THEVANCOUVERSUNCONTESTS.COM

No purchase necessary. Contest open to legal residents of B.C. who are over the age of majority. Odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. Enter online at www.thevancouvercontests.com (the "Contest Website"). One entry per person. Winner must correctly answer a time-limited skill-testing question. Contest starts May 2, 2012 and ends June 3, 2012. Winner will be selected on June 4, 2012 in Vancouver B.C. There is one grand prize available to be won consisting of either a trip for two to Painter's Lodge or April Point Resort & Spa. Either prize has an approximate value of (CDN \$ 1,400). Full Contest Rules can be found at the Contest Website.