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They know what's good for you!

The women of the Pinnacle give the "fitness boot camp" concept a swift kick with a stylish and educational Palm Springs fitness weekend

by Elyse Glickman

AH, PALM SPRINGS ... HOLLYWOOD'S DESERT OASIS "suburb", known for high-end shopping, ritzy spas, golf and old school celebrities (Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin) with pricey tastes. However, southern Californians also know it to be a great sports town, particularly those who would rather participate than watch.

While there are a plethora of sport-and-spa weekend offerings as well as "wellness destinations" in the area, the Pinnacle, conceived by founder Robin Sullivan, Meredith Miller and Lisa Austin is, perhaps, one of the most authentic Palm Springs fitness retreats you can check yourself into, especially when it comes to working in the area's famous attributes—desert, mountains and even swimming pools—to full effect. While the ladies call the experience a retreat, do not expect to sit around the pool soaking in the sun. This is a serious fitness boot camp, and the trio is intent on kicking some serious butt—yours!

Although these A-list trainers built their reputations and a combined 50 years of experience on improving a stellar array of heavenly bodies (Jennifer Capriati, Martina Navratilova, Eleni Danilidou, Kevin Nealon and Steven Segal, as well as AVP players including Holly McPeak, Sean Rosenthal and Nicole Brana), they ultimately saw a need for taking their shared knowledge and wisdom beyond the Red Carpet and the confines of *The Wide World of Sports*. "We saw a need to reach out to the public because of the lack of awareness and education. I feel like that is my life purpose, to bring fitness education to people who want it," explains Meredith Miller. "It's fabulous to be at a place where we can make this available to anyone and we hope to reach as



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dinner, group discussions are planned, covering topics such as nutrition, cardiovascular health and meditation.

While the meals are vegetarian and organic, they indeed are hearty and surprisingly appetizing. Though *raw food* are the buzz words of the moment (at least at press time) among the fit and fabulous, thankfully, the caterers providing the food get that most normal people subjecting themselves to this intense immersion into whole fitness want to carb up and fuel themselves with things they *want* to eat. The vegetarian tacos, hummus, blueberry protein smoothies, quinoa salad and blueberry muffins were winners among our crew of brave soldiers, who delighted that they could enjoy such guilt-free variations on favourite foods. Another great discovery was that agave is not just for margaritas anymore. While agave makes tequila, it also makes for an appealing sweetener that's far healthier than Aspartame (a real no according to our trainers) and lighter than honey. A touch of agave syrup on grapefruit? Perfection!



Daily massages are also integral segments of the weekend, but as this (again) is no spa weekend, the healing touches are less about pampering and more about discovering muscles you never knew existed. In fact, the term *deep tissue* will probably take on a new meaning for most participants as it did for me.

With all the lofty goals Lisa, Meredith and Robin put into place for every participant from novice to pro, their charisma and support genuinely make the experience fun, from Robin reminding you to 'drink your water' in a motherly tone, to Meredith pushing you along like the coach you wish you had in high school to Lisa's easygoing way of coaxing you into trying new exercises (such as the correct use of a seemingly innocent Styrofoam roller that is anything but, putting you in touch with your inner athletic massage therapist). Although you won't be lying around the Desert House Inn's chlorine-free pool, you really will appreciate pushing yourself to extremes in an environment that includes blue skies, flowers, hummingbirds, palm trees and comfy beds (which you will really love after supper and day-closing educational discussions) instead of tents and sleeping bags.

While most kinds of camping are not easy, the Pinnacle is certainly very balanced and civilized. It's fitness without meanness, cleanse without deprivation, knowledge without propaganda, spirituality minus schmaltz and coaching without cursing. Even if you may not be able to stand to attention after three days (temporarily), you will respect your body anew come Monday morning.

'We truly get inspired from our participants,' concludes Sullivan. 'All

levels can be pushed like crazy. A lot of people don't have a vast range of tools available to them and don't really know what they are capable of. It is so great to show them and it reminds us that you can take anyone to the next level. Plus, it is very fulfilling to hear how our participants maintain the routines and pick up a lot of healthy tips about nutrition, fitness and training.' •

For more information, visit www.thepinnaclechallenge.com.

Elyse Glickman is US west coast editor of Lucire.

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