

**SPECIAL REPORTS:** MEETINGS AND INCENTIVES IN LAS VEGAS AND INDIA

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**BERLIN**





## Borrego Ranch Resort & Spa

**Arrival/Check-in:** I left Los Angeles at the end of the day and hit an enormous amount of traffic until I reached Route 86, heading toward the Salton Sea. The final approach, on Route 22, brought further delays. Make sure to get gas — there is nothing open at night within 30 miles of Borrego Springs — and beware of winding canyon roads. When I arrived, I was unsure where to check in; it looked like a private home. I went through the wooden, Spanish-inspired door and found a reception desk. I then parked my car and was shown to my room in a golf cart. The bellman pointed out the walking route back to the main building through beautiful gardens and koi ponds. (28/30)

**Guest Quarters:** My room, with high-vaulted wooden ceilings and beams, was nicely appointed in Southwestern desert style and furnished with a king-sized bed, a desk and an oversized dresser that housed a 32-inch plasma TV. The bath was large, with a combination bath/shower and two sinks. A balcony overlooked the courtyard. (29/30)

**Service/Amenities:** Borrego Ranch is all about outdoor activities. I took a rock-climbing lesson with program director Kevin Armendariz. Having never climbed before, I approached this activity with some trepidation, but it was easier than it appeared. Kevin took me through the catwalk, a plank suspended between two poles 30 feet in the air. Tethered, I climbed one of the poles, walked across and then dropped to the ground. This is a great confidence builder. I tried my hand at archery, which was also exhilarating. Other activities include tennis, mountain biking and ATV

riding. There are several pools and Montesoro, a beautiful Tom Fazio golf course (GTee, April 2009). The Morado Spa offers a full-service menu, and I had a 90-minute deep-tissue massage — just what the doctor ordered after days of golf and resort activities.

I can't say enough about the restaurants — Cimarron, La Cantina and Fox Bar — run by Executive Chef Jo Ann Plympton and her staff. I had dinners at Fox Bar, which shares a menu with Cimarron, enjoying beef filet, fish and wonderful salads, accompanied by a magnificent wine selection. During my stay the Philadelphia Eagles, my hometown team, played the Arizona Cardinals in the NFL play-offs. I had lunch at Fox Bar that day, surrounded by Cardinals fans, and had a good time. (39/40)

**The Experience:** The resort has been extensively remodeled. It opened as Desert Lodge in 1937. Purchased in 1960 by Copley Press (owners of the *San Diego Union*), it was renamed La Casa del Zorro Desert Resort. In 2007, GH Capital, LLC purchased the property, and it reopened in 2008. I would certainly return here. It exceeded my expectations on every level and is a great getaway for those in L.A. or San Diego.

**Total Score:** 96/100 Francis X. Gallagher

### BORREGO RANCH RESORT & SPA

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