

The Perfect Way to Pacify Your Mind and Body

BY LISA ARCELLA



Float your wrinkles away at Mii Amo.

Relaxing at a spa usually means spending lots of time with your eyes closed, concentrating on the fingers that are loosening every knot in your over-stressed shoulders. However in Sedona, Arizona, you'll want to keep your eyes open every minute or you'll miss out on some spectacular views.

At the Enchantment Resort/Mii Amo Spa, you're surrounded by a red-rock canyon, a living, breathing oil painting. The first thing I did when I arrived was to sit out on the Tii Gavó lounge's balcony patio, wrapped in an Indian blanket, just watching the canyon's colors change with the day's light. The relaxation had begun.

The Enchantment Resort, a two-hour-plus drive from Phoenix, is well worth the trip into the higher elevation, crisp air and four-star accommodations. It's also a bit new-agey. By those who believe, Sedona is considered a "Vortex" center—a place where all of the earth's energy converges. The Yavapai Apache Indians also consider it the holy place where the tribe was born.

Enchantment/Mii Amo reflects the area's spiritual bent, but even to nonbelievers, who are simply inspired by the landscape, it all adds up to a peaceful setting conducive to healing body and soul. Located in Boynton Canyon, Enchantment is one of the country's few "destination" spas (a resort and a spa). The Enchantment Resort features adobe-like rooms nestled into the rocks and a central lodge with activity centers, a pool and lounges. Across a narrow street sits Mii Amo with 14 rooms and two suites in addition to 24 spa-treatment facilities, two pools, an aerobic studio, a communal-style spa cuisine restaurant and a "crystal grotto" for meditation. Guests have access to both parts of the complex, although the packages offered at both vary.

Treatments

I took a "Milk and Honey" bath, and after being massaged by water jets for 90 minutes, my skin was baby-soft. I could have opted for a massage on my own private outdoor wikkiup (balcony) or traditional spa treatments like shiatsu, Swedish and lymphatic massage. Here are some of the other treatments offered:

Soothing Stones Massage (\$155) A therapist uses smooth, heated basalt river rocks and Swedish massage techniques to melt away the tension and stress of living.

Watsu Massage (\$115) The therapist supports your body, which floats in 96-degree water.

Custom Massage (\$115/\$155) Create your own massage to suit your individual needs.

Couples Massage (\$230/\$310) Enjoy any of the spa's massages with your significant other in a special room for two.

Cranial Sacral (\$115) This improves the flow of cerebral spinal fluid through the head and spine to help people who suffer from headaches, chronic neck and back pain, and chronic fatigue.

Reiki Energy Healing (\$115) A Japanese healing technique, Reiki attunes the energy flows within the body and stimulates natural healing processes.

Mii Amo Crystal (\$115). Crystals placed around you in a warm aromatic tub "magnify your intentions and affirmations."

Hydrotherapy Baths (\$115) Water jets, herbs, essential oils or mineral salts caress your body in a gravity-freeing environment.

Blue Corn Body Polish (\$115) Following Native American tradition, the spa blends corn with mineral-salt crystals and oil into a vigorous scrub to cleanse and purify the skin.

Sedona Clay Wrap (\$115/\$155) Your skin is exfoliated using native corn husks, then a mineral-rich Sedona clay mask is applied and finally you are massaged with an oil infused with native herbs.

There are also Ayurvedic treatments (ranging from \$115 to \$155, based on ancient treatments from India, as well as many hair, skin, nail, nutrition, meditation, yoga and other fitness treatments. And for \$200 the spa will provide four Equilibrium Oils applied in a gentle massage that is supposed to offer the transforming power of color, plant and crystal energy on your mind and spirit. Maybe you'd prefer Past Life Regression (\$200), which promises to take you back to an earlier time, in order to retrieve memories that may still be influencing your present life.

Where to Eat

Sedona has great restaurants for every taste and budget. If you decide to stay on-site, the Mii Amo Cafe features organic spa cuisine. The Yavapai Restaurant (at Enchantment) provides upscale dining with 180-degree views. Tii Gavó is a casual restaurant that offers a jazz brunch on Sundays.

Getting There

Although there is an airport in Sedona, most travelers fly into Phoenix and rent a car for the 115-mile journey north to Enchantment and for exploring some of the beautiful scenery nearby.

Accommodations

Enchantment offers nightly room rates as well as packages starting at \$665 for a 4-day/3-night bed-and-breakfast package or \$1,300 for a 5-day/4-night "premiere" package with tours and treatments.

Mii Amo offers a 3-night/7-treatment program (starting at \$1,590), a 4-night/7-treatment program (starting at \$1,750) and a 7-night/13-treatment program (starting at \$2,800).

Other Activities

Pink Jeep Tours provides an off-road trip through the canyons, where you can see those fantastic red rocks, some exotic fauna and the spots where old Westerns were filmed. There are also hiking excursions, horseback riding, tennis courts and swimming.

Sedona boasts hundreds of art galleries, excellent shopping and fascinating ancient Indian sites. The Grand Canyon is about 100 miles to the north. For more information, call Mii Amo at 928-282-2900 or visit www.enchantmentresort.com or www.miiamo.com **BE**



Sherri Shepherd and Jeff Tarpley

"It was unrealistic to say we were boyfriend and girlfriend because we only had one date and lots of letters," Leanne says reflectively. "But the anticipation was so great and I remember thinking what it was going to be like to see him."

In spite of the many feelings shared within their letters, the two had only shared a few days together before parting and didn't know where the relationship would lead once they were back in the same state again. But on December 23rd, after only stopping in to quickly see her family, Leanne flew back down to DC, surprising Alex by showing up at the basketball game he was coaching.

"When the game ended I see these two girls walking towards me, I didn't know them and then I realized one of them was Leanne," he says still sounding slightly confounded over the memory. "I was totally caught off guard, but was very excited to see her." But as had become the pattern, the two didn't have much time to catch up initially, and didn't connect again until the next day, Christmas Eve.

They both agree that after five months, a sea of love letters and the uncertainty of where the road might lead, they officially sealed their destiny as a couple that Christmas Eve, night. And this holiday, five years later, the newlyweds celebrate their first Christmas as husband and wife. "I'm looking forward to waking up on Christmas Day with my husband, just us two," she says proudly.

The Gift of Love

18 years ago, Tina Andrews was an actress/writer, one among the many starving artists trying to make it in Hollywood. "I had one foot in the acting world and one foot in writing," she says in amusement. "And I would quickly leave writing the minute an acting job came along."

As one half of daytime's first interracial couple, Tina's run as Valerie Grant on "Days of Our Lives" helped to propel the soap to #2 in the ratings. The actress's then boyfriend, Stephen Gaines, believed Tina was underutilizing her writing skills. A documentary filmmaker, Gaines knew Tina could succeed as a screenwriter, but he'd have plenty of time to encourage Tina to maximize her writing talents. In 1983, after dating for three years, he used his power of persuasions for the purposes of love.

As the holidays drew near, the couple was trying to figure out what they were going to do for Christmas. "It was either go to Chicago, where I'm from or to his family in Queens," she reflects. As they mulled over the choice of which chill factor they preferred Stephen said: "Okay, we can be in Queens or Chicago where it's cold or we can stay in Los Angeles. If we stay in LA, Honey will you marry me?"

Tina laughs at the memory. "The thing was, he had spent all of his money buying the engagement ring, so we didn't have money to travel anyway," she says. The couple spent a rainy

Christmas in LA, "But it [the rain] didn't matter because I knew I was going to be getting married."

Thanks to Stephen's loving encouragement and insight, Tina is now a successful screenwriter and producer and her book, *Sally Hemings An American Scandal: The Struggle To Tell The Controversial True Story*, recently earned the 2002 NAACP Literary Image Award.

Although they did not get married on or around Christmas, the couple still celebrates the anniversary of their engagement during the holidays.

Creating Christmas Traditions

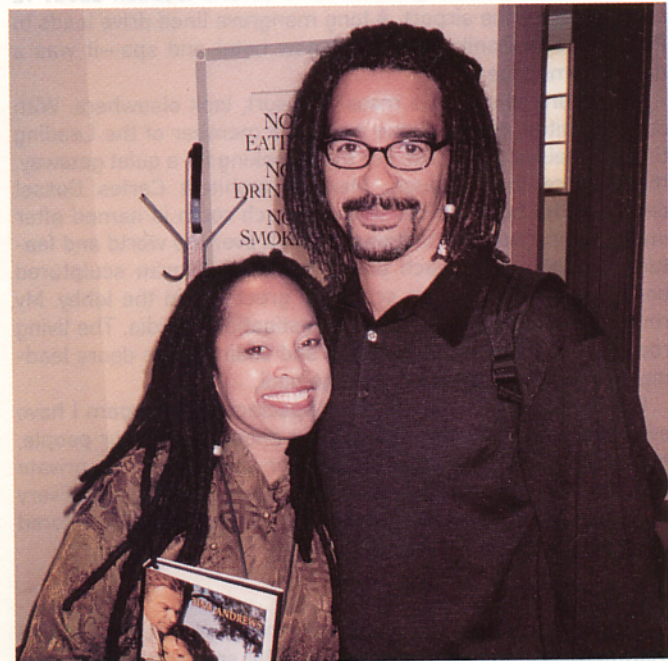
When Sherri Shepherd married Jeff Tarpley, the newlywed wasn't just new to marriage but to Christmas as well. "I was a Jehovah's Witness growing up and we didn't celebrate any holidays," Sherri says. "But it's special for me now because I didn't celebrate it until I got married."

Since marrying two years ago, the couple has made Christmas their special time, taking their two dogs with them to choose a tree, decorating the tree together and hosting a big catered dinner for their friends without family in the Los Angeles area. "We put some music on and anyone without a family [in the area] is invited to hang with us," she says with enthusiasm at the memory of dinners past.

Jeff records Sherri throughout the holidays, capturing the Christmas novice on film as she wraps gifts and puts up the tree. "He hooks up the camera with the self-timer and we jump in front of the tree in crazy poses with our dogs," Sherri says laughing. "We put on the Santa hats, the whole nine yards."

Although new to celebrating Christmas, the blushing bride is now a hardcore fan of the holiday. "Christmas is so much more romantic than Valentine's Day to me," she gushes. "And it means so much more because it's just he and I, we're just married and we love each other."

An actress, Sherri keeps audiences laughing with her sister girl sarcasm, whether as the funny Sgt. Judy Potter on "Everybody Loves Raymond", or in the new ABC comedy "Less Than Perfect". But, she doesn't reserve her silliness for the small screen, saying only half jokingly: "I love Christmas, but I'm so ghetto, the tree will stay up until March. — It's so pretty and I'm just lazy." **BE**



Tina Andrews and Stephen Gaines