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MAGAZINE

ULTRA LUXURY

A Piloted Tour of the VIP Lifestyle



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LIVING LA

Vida Luxe

Private jets, fine wines, exotic cars, personal chefs. Peek into the gilded world of San Diegans living the luxury life — where the VIP perks flow as freely as the champagne and caviar.

BY JULIA BEESON POLLORENO

CYNTHIA ATKINS IS THE ULTIMATE INSIDER on the local luxury scene. Eleven years ago, she founded Concierge At Large (619-234-7766; concierge-at-large.com), a personal-concierge service catering to a high-powered, high-profile clientele in San Diego. The personal net worth of her average client exceeds \$2 million.

“The type of people we support have a lot of discretionary income,” says Atkins, who employs a Luxury Service Team made up of “highly resourceful” concierges specifically trained to meet the demands of high-net-worth clients. From setting up a meet-and-greet with New York Yankees players for a baseball buff celebrating his 50th birthday, to snagging a corner table at booked-solid Bertrand at Mr. A’s on Valentine’s Day,

Models: Donna Feldman/Jetset, Todd Dunlavey/Nouveau Model & Talent; hair: Tara Copeland; makeup: Alma Anguiano; stylist: Mahjuba.

Rolls-Royce Phantom courtesy of Luxury Toy Club. Platinum ring with round brilliant-cut 12.08-carat center diamond and 2.21-carat pavé diamonds, and 18-karat white gold chandelier earrings with 4.49-carat pear-cut diamonds and 6.27-carat rose-cut diamonds from C.J. Charles Jewelers. Zac Posen dress and Prada clutch from Neiman Marcus. Photographed at The Grand Del Mar.

BENTLEYS, BENZES AND BOATS,

Oh My!

Can't decide if you want to drive your Bentley Arnage up to Santa Barbara wine country or joyride around Coronado in your 400-horsepower Ferrari? Join the club. A number of San Diegans indulge their craving for high-performance cars with a membership in La Jolla-based Luxury Toy Club (858-456-0555; luxurytoyclub.com), which grants access to a collection of luxury cars, yachts and personal aircraft.

"Our members could own their own jet or high-performance car, but they choose not to deal with the burdens of private ownership, such as maintenance and depreciation," says vice president Kariff Lizarraga.

Platinum members pay a one-time joining fee that ranges \$20,000-\$35,000 depending on package, plus annual dues of \$15,000 (there's also a monthly option). Membership buys access to cars like an Aston Martin DB9 Volante, Maserati GT Spyder, Rolls-Royce Phantom and Lamborghini Gallardo Spyder. New vehicles are added to the collection as additional memberships are sold, to maintain a low car-to-member ratio. There are currently 40 members, mostly hailing from Rancho Santa Fe and La Jolla. Others have vacation homes in San Diego and want to ride in style during visits.

"Our club is ideal for people who want to add some luxury to their lifestyle, whether it's taking a weekend drive for pleasure or entertaining business clients," says Lizarraga. Make the most of your membership: Book a private jet to Cabo San Lucas, where the club's 70-foot yacht awaits your arrival. Then again, if you're behind the wheel of a Maserati, you might opt to drive there.

BEHIND THE VELVET ROPE

"Nothing is off limits; as long as it's legal, we'll do it." Perhaps it's Patrick Flettman's die-hard approach to customer service that makes the Ivy Hotel (619-814-1000; ivyhotel.com) the in-demand spot on the local nightlife scene. Flettman is director of VIP service for the Gaslamp Quarter's hotel's nightclub, Envy, where Hollywood hipsters like Gwyneth Paltrow, Nick Lachey, Vanessa Minnillo and Meryl Streep flock for luxury-imbued nightlife south of L.A. While the celebrity presence keeps the buzz mill humming, Flettman says local regulars are his top concern.



"Guests who come in once or twice a week and spend \$700 to \$800—that's the normal check—are the VIPs we want to make sure are taken care of more than anyone else." He recalls recent guests from Las Vegas, two guys who dropped nearly \$20,000 on Cristal champagne and the hotel's \$4,000-a-night suite.

Envy's VIP guests are greeted at a separate entrance by a host, who escorts them to a choice table where their preferred cocktails await. "It's all about anticipating every VIP's needs and making sure we deliver," says Flettman. "We know what's going on in the city and use our contacts to make sure guests have access to whatever they need—whether it's concert tickets or a party at another venue."

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Actress Jessica Biel lends A-list status to The Ivy.

PONY UP

Fancy hats, luxury suites, Thoroughbred racehorses. Few San Diego landmarks capture the spirit of the lavish life better than the Del Mar Racetrack.

"This is the track that Hollywood built," says Joe Harper, head of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club (858-755-1141; dmtc.com). "We inherited that energy and ambience, and it's still the best place to be." Harper has hosted many a VIP, from a Saudi prince to Katie Couric ("She got the best reception I've ever seen"). But he tells all of his customer-service employees to treat everyone like a VIP, because "you never know who you're talking to"—like the guy in shorts and tank top who walked up to the betting window and put down \$20,000 on a race.

Betsy Christmas, the track's VIP concierge, keeps the big players and horse owners happy. "She'll handle private jet travel, make sure their name is known around town, get them into the best restaurants even if they're full, call local real estate brokers to find rentals for their stay and, of course, get them the best seats at the track," says Harper. She also might get their kids into surf camp, or plan a trip to the zoo. "Like any good concierge," she says, "we always have something in our hip pocket to take care of people."

The continued interest by Hollywood only boosts the track's luxurious image. HBO filmed an episode of its hit series *Entourage* at the track, reinforcing its reputation as a playground for the glitterati.



The cast of *Entourage* filmed an episode at the Del Mar Racetrack.