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A Summer Night at Andaz San Diego Hotel



BY GREG ARAGON

I love being in the heart of the action. But I can also appreciate a casual evening with wine and wonderful views. I got both and much more, when I recently discovered Andaz San Diego, a fascinating boutique hotel located in the heart of the historic Gaslamp Quarter in downtown San Diego.

"The concept behind Andaz was born out of the belief that today's travelers are in search of hotels that offer warm and friendly service and have a unique design aesthetic," says Rusty Middleton, general manager of Andaz San Diego. "We are excited to offer them that experience here in San Diego, one of the most appealing destinations in Southern California."

My Andaz getaway began when a friend and I checked into a beautiful 4th-floor suite overlooking the ocean, the San Diego Coronado Bridge, and Petco Park (home to the San Diego Padres). The modern-designed room offered

two queen beds, large flat screen TV, a sleek bathroom with hardwood floor, glossy brick-shaped tile and large glass shower, and a stocked fridge / mini-bar area with top-notch beers and potent potables, and lots of free snacks and beverages, free Internet, and 24-hour room service available.

My favorite aspect of the room was the sweeping city views, afforded by three huge windows looking to the water, the Gaslamp District, and East San Diego. The windows were so big they came with gigantic, couch-like window seals.

After getting to know the suite, we explored the rest of the historic, 159-room hotel. Our first stop was the rooftop pool area, where a wine bar, a nightclub and gorgeous city views attract visitors from all over - especially at night when DJ's spin music, while sea breezes surround the open-air environment. While on the roof, we sipped cold beers and relaxed poolside admiring the San Diego Skyline.

From the roof, I changed for a workout in the Andaz fitness center, taking advantage of the treadmill and various state-of-the-art weightlifting machines. I then rested before meeting my friend

in the lobby for the daily Andaz wine reception, where guests are treated to complimentary wine. After mingling with other hotel guests and staff members, we strolled across the lobby and entered the hotel's signature Quarter Kitchen.

Featuring eclectic American cuisine, created by Executive Chef Nathan Coulon, the Quarter Kitchen is visually pleasing as it sits on a busy corner of the Gaslamp District and is surrounded by windows.

Our dinner began with a baby green salad, followed by a line caught ahi tuna and crab appetizer with avocado and lemon, and "charcuterie plate," an appetizer with mixed meats and pickled veggies.

For a main course I devoured a memorable grilled ahi tuna with celery root puree, watercress, savoy cabbage, and scalion. My friend enjoyed a succulent pan seared duck breast, with soft polenta. We accompanied our meals with red wine. After dinner we explored the lively Gaslamp District, bar-hopping and listening to live music.

For more information about Andaz San Diego and current specials, visit www.andazsandiego.com or call 619-849-1234.

