

# SEDONA

## MAGAZINE

SPRING 2006

Rouge, Reds  
& Romance



Celebrating 20 Years!



*Travel + Leisure* selected Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa as the recommended “escape” in this renowned tourism Mecca.

# Rouge, Reds and Romance



by Hoyt Johnson

From the very beginning, I wondered how this so-called founder/columnist – obviously, I’m in the twilight of my career – could credibly comment on the myriad charms of an impressive, new boutique hotel and spa in small-town Sedona, Ariz. I mean, this magnetic property is located in the center of Sedona’s business district, on a state highway – not tucked creek-side in a quaint canyon, and not out of town adjacent to the borders of an immense national forest.

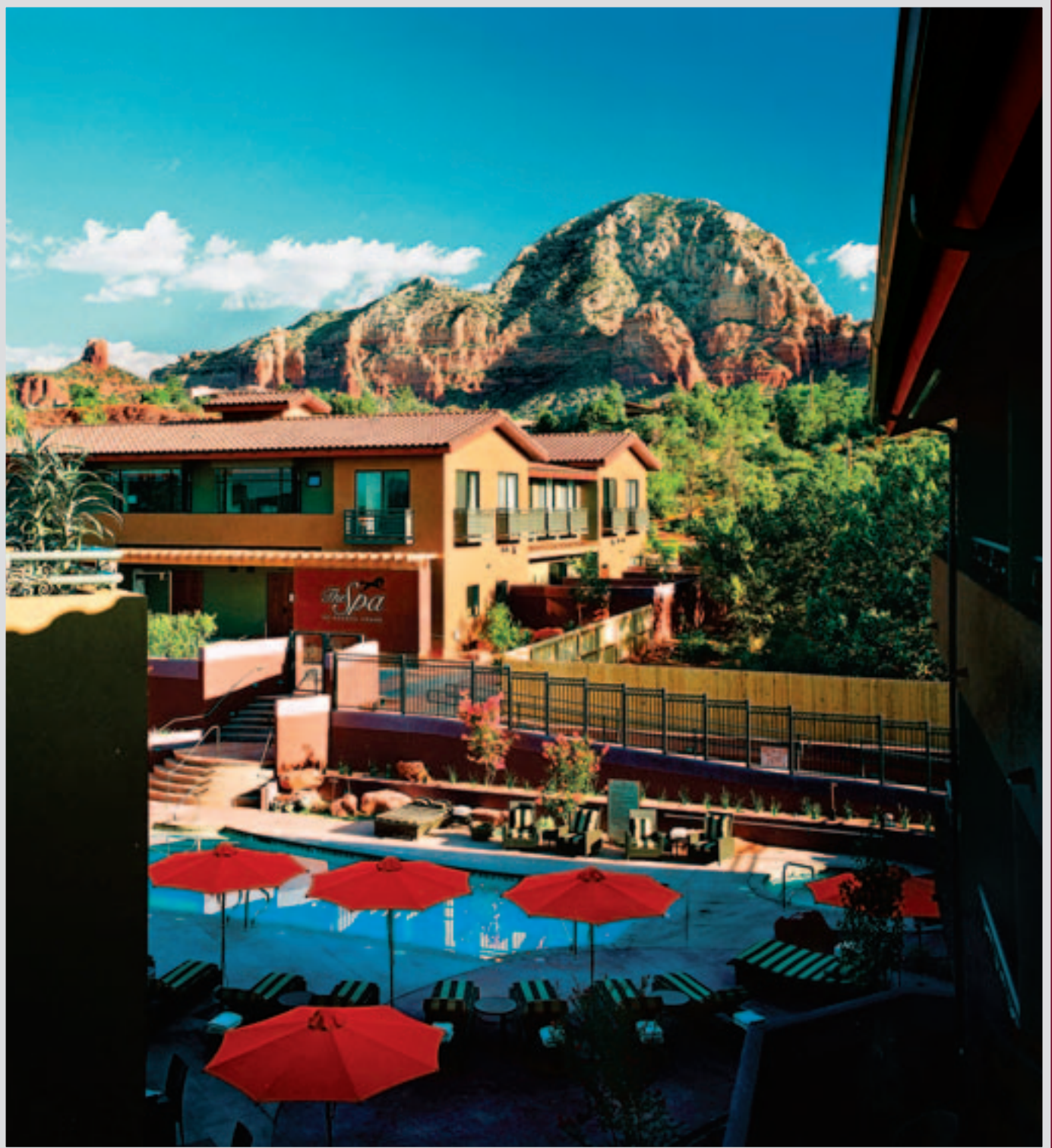
Originally, I thought of using the old “trade-off” rationale – it does have merit! – but the attractive amenities of this new hotel don’t need to be rationalized. Really, all I wanted was a highly authoritative, respected “second” to what was going to be my enthusiastic, robust nomination of uniquely different Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa to a high-ranking spot alongside this state’s internationally renowned resorts, inns and acclaimed spas.

As I pondered my dilemma, I intuitively perused my latest edition of *Travel + Leisure* magazine, and there it was! – the powerful endorsement I was looking for. In a full-page photograph, “she” was pressed against “he,” and their arms were entwined as they posed in the entryway of

an old, paint-scarred building. Indeed, the massive entryway’s faded wood was remindful of the antique accents that adorn Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa. On the opposite page, “50 Romantic Escapes” headed a subtitle that read: “From the serpentine canals of Venice to the untamed savanna of South Africa, we’ve found dozens of destinations where you can steal some time together.”

Following another full-page photo, a second subtitle stated: “It could happen on a barefoot beach in the South Pacific. On a cobblestoned street in *a crowded city* (italics are mine). Over lobster in a turn-of-the-century baronial estate. That’s when it hits you; you can’t imagine being anywhere else, with anyone else. Here are 50 places that inspire those kinds of moments.”

Further perusal of this feature revealed that among the 50 “romantic escapes” throughout the entire world cited by *T+L* – in countries like Italy, India, Argentina, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, Scotland, England, France, Switzerland and many more – only six properties are in the United States. These destinations are located in San Francisco; Miami; Savannah, Ga.; Honolulu; Greenough, Mo.; and – bingo! – Sedona. And by now, of course, you’ve



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guessed that *T+L* selected Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa – eureka! – as the recommended “escape” in this renowned tourism Mecca.

So, what is it about Rouge – naturally, the cocktail lounge and restaurant is called Reds – that caught the attention of *Travel + Leisure*, as well as *Sedona Magazine*? First, know that the she/he photo in *T+L* is only almost-as-romantic as the picture in a Rouge brochure, which portrays a man, comfortably relaxed with his feet propped up and a wine glass in hand, observing the silhouette of a shapely lady through the translucent glass of a shower wall. Of course, red roses are strewn on a huge, very stylish bed. Also know that one-third of the massages booked at The Spa at Sedona Rouge are for Pas de Deux – a signature, candlelit treatment for couples that includes a sensuous bathing ritual between yin and yang, which it is said, “synergizes the feminine and masculine energies.”

But enough about romance; let’s establish what Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa – conceived and developed by a team of entrepreneurs led by personable and energetic Jim Apple – is and isn’t. *Travel + Leisure* put it this way: “In a break from typical Southwestern architecture, this 77-room hotel takes its design inspiration from 11<sup>th</sup> century Andalusia. The Moorish fantasy plays out in the pool area, with its 500-year-old Tunisian wrought-iron gates, and in the guest rooms where Syrian chests and jewel-toned curtains make for a seductive contrast with the red-rock landscape.”

So much for stunning, innovative style. *T+L* describes Sedona Rouge as a hotel, and I also intentionally and consistently refer to this unique property as a hotel because that precisely is what it is – complemented by a wonderful, intimately sized, full-service spa. Apple and friends simply speak of their handsome boutique facility as a hotel because delusion is not part of this respected facility’s marketing plan. “Nonetheless, our property is no ordinary hotel,” cautioned Apple. “Our goal was to develop a truly exceptional lodging facility, spa and restaurant – a place that unquestionably established a new paradigm for experiencing the beauty of Sedona,” he stated. “Ultimately, what we created is a romantic getaway, a sophisticated retreat, where guests can enjoy outstanding amenities and services, as well as the charm and intimacy of boutique-style accommodations.”

Indeed, Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa is not a resort in the conventional sense of providing recreational activities throughout expansive, lushly landscaped grounds. Nonetheless, its very attractive, extremely convenient location offers myriad advantages for in-town guests, and this hotel literally is surrounded by a variety of recreational opportunities – even nearby hiking trails that thread through red rocks in the Coconino National Forest and along Oak Creek.

As for observing Sedona’s beloved, red-rock formations, some rooms feature spectacular views of Chimney Rock, Thunder Mountain, Coffeepot Rock and Sugarloaf – even virtually unknown Little Coffeepot, a favorite of early residents, if you know where to look.

Sounding slightly more guidelike, perhaps, Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa features 77 uniquely appointed guest rooms, suites and spa rooms; Reds, a contemporary bistro and

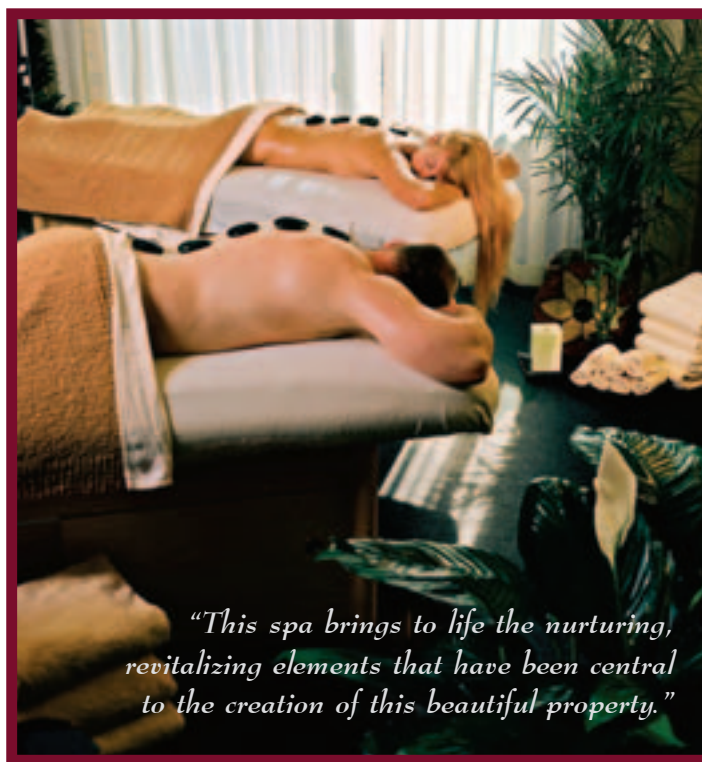
bar that according to Jim Apple’s plan has become one of Sedona’s best “places to be” and also features a 150-seat restaurant for fine-but-casual dining; a 50-seat outdoor observation deck with fire pit; extensive meeting and conference facilities with adjoining suites; a 700-square-foot, state-of-the-art fitness center adjacent to a large, outdoor pool and Jacuzzi area; special rooms and suites in the separate spa building; and various courtyards throughout the entire hotel.

The Spa at Sedona Rouge – open to Sedona residents who are not required to be hotel guests – is operated by veteran spa director Toni Nurnberg, who possesses

a long list of impressive credentials. For example, she has been spa director at prestigious Franz Klammer Lodge in Telluride, Colo.; nationally acclaimed Mii amo at Enchantment Resort in Sedona; and Shanah Spa at Bishop’s Lodge in Santa Fe, N.M. More recently, she developed and managed the activities center at Hyatt Piñon Pointe Resort in Sedona.

“This spa brings to life the nurturing, revitalizing elements that have been central to the creation of this beautiful property,” said Nurnberg. “Though our facility is positioned in an urban location, a distinct advantage in many ways, our clients experience a sense of tranquility and serenity because of this facility’s unique design, dramatic architecture and stunning views.”

Specializing in providing individually crafted treatments, The Spa at Sedona Rouge offers a variety of massages, body





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treatments and facials. Examples of unique treatments include Shea Butter Cocoon Wrap, Desert Clay Body Mask and an Ayurvedic Samadhi Treatment based on traditional Eastern Indian theory, as well as a 27-point Energy Balancing Treatment. Massages range from traditional Swedish Massage to Cranial Sacral Massage, plus Reiki Energy Work and Reflexology.

According to Nurnberg, signature amenities include “indoor and outdoor whirlpools and showers; innovative, seasonally themed treatments; and the serene delights of the Tranquility Room and Garden.” Also, spa clients can purchase exclusive lines of products, including Shankara, based on the Ayurveda “science of life” philosophy; True, which embodies “the best in ancient, current and future technologies”; and Idebenone, “a new, multifunctional compound that is gentle to almost any skin.”

Additionally, it is interesting to note that The Spa at Sedona Rouge has multiday packages available, a sure sign that this readily accepted, popular facility is a destination in itself. As for General Manager Ed Conway, when asked what was his favorite part of Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa, he readily answered, “The spa!” I guess he knows where the butter on his bread comes from – but more seriously, he obviously appreciates the glamorous prestige his hotel enjoys because it provides high-quality spa services.

On the night that my wife, Marcia, and I stayed at Sedona Rouge Hotel & Spa, we enjoyed dinner at Reds with Armor Todd, longtime owner and operator of Sedona Trolley, which he bills as “the best first thing to do in Sedona,” and his wife, Patti, who provides public relations services for Sedona Rouge. Marcia and I checked in early, however, which was a good idea because there was much to see and do before clinking glasses of wine at one of the long, tall tables at Reds.

Entryways at stylish hotels, resorts and inns almost always are described as “inviting” – but often they are not, because of enclosed, traplike and oppressive lobbies. Even when such a property is described as “a casual place,” the design and the décor of the lobby is not always welcoming. Quite in contrast, the unusual glass porte cochère at three-story Rouge leads directly into an expansive courtyard marked by the previously cited 500-year-old Tunisian gates – and imagine, the courtyard’s clay pots and wrought-iron accents in this courtyard were recovered from centuries-old mansions in North Africa by antiquities expert Raouf Benfarhat.

The unpretentious entrance to Reds is on the left and it takes just a minute to realize that the comfortably furnished, glass-enclosed room on the right is the concierge and registration area. It definitely is an inviting entryway, and its gracefulness is synergistically enhanced by “GlassScape,” an impressive artwork conceived and constructed by Joanne Hiscox and David Haskell of Sedona. Indeed, this unique creation is composed of free-standing glass monoliths – red, of course – that mimic the fabled red rocks that surround this city.

Our guest room at Sedona Rouge was impressive, “wonderfully appointed with textiles and ceramics that reflect the cultures of Northern Africa and Southern Spain.” OK, so I copied that from a brochure in the room, but it

really was beautifully decorated, and it was outfitted with every possible need – in our case, even a bottle of champagne, undoubtedly because Ed Conway, Rooms Manager Jeff Marquardt and Patti Todd knew we were “sampling” their heralded facility.

Even though we hadn’t had dinner, Marcia already was anticipating a visit to the spa in the morning; as for me, I was trying to decide what I wanted to take home – the absolutely fabulous bed or the very large shower, which had a glass wall with no door and two giant shower heads, one so big and mounted so high it generated a springlike rainstorm. I thought about the poor guy in the brochure picture, too, because our glass shower wall was clear, not translucent. I even thought about running out to buy roses.

I must confess that I did take something home, a couple of little bars of Sedona Rouge lemon- and mint-spiked olive oil soap, because they are so refreshingly fragrant.

Having inspected our room, found the fitness center, explored the pool area and located the spa, Marcia and I met Armor and Patti at one of the very large, popular tables at Reds, where as many as 12 people can enjoy gathering on stools. And after a few rounds of excellent house wine, which is produced by vintner Eric Glomski at nearby Page Springs Vineyards & Cellars, we adjourned to the dining room, where we quit ordering glasses of wine and started ordering bottles.

Needless to say, our affair was very cordial and only semisophisticated at best, but that’s the way it is at Reds. In fact, executive chef Kyle Evans, himself, describes his restaurant as “a lively, casually comfortable gathering spot, a place to enjoy dining with simple sophistication and stylish décor.”

Evans’ description is born from extensive experience and obvious authority, too; his knowledge stems from time in the kitchen at some of Napa Valley’s most renowned restaurants, including Domaine Chandon, and a stint at L’Essential in Chambéry, France. He also has embraced Southwestern dining at Desert Highlands Golf Club in Scottsdale, and most recently, he served as chef de cuisine at Squaw Peak Pointe Hilton’s Lantana Grille under executive chef Lenard Rubin.

On the night we dined, however, well-known Sedona chef Shawn Murphy prepared Seared Salmon, Lemon Risotto and Asparagus for Patti and Marcia; a Butternut Squash Tart appetizer followed by Sea Bass Tacos for Armor; and Caesar Salad before a wonderful serving of Reds Meat Loaf, bacon-wrapped beef and veal, for me. Obviously, we all enjoyed our entrées very much, almost as much as the Molten Chocolate Cake – dark chocolate cake, hazelnut tuile, caramel ice cream, espresso anglaise – and Banana Crepe, which we shared for desert.

Soon, it was time to get lost in our very large, king-size bed, which was fitted with 250-thread-count linens and goose-down duvets, as well as five – yes, five – chamber pillows. First, I had to ignite the fireplace and locate the remote for our large-screen, mounted television, of course. And I was going to call somebody, anybody, just to tell him or her how comfortable we were – but we almost immediately fell asleep.

So much for the glass-walled shower – but the bed was better. Who says this place isn’t romantic? 🏡



*“To make people  
smile, to give them  
a moment when  
they stop thinking and  
just eat is amazing.”*

Kyle Evans



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***[www.SedonaRouge.com](http://www.SedonaRouge.com)***