Observer & Eccentric | Sunday, January 19, 2003

A spa that's not just for the rich and famous

Nestled high in the Sierra Madres and II; hours from Mexico City is a spt hat offers the ultimate in relaxation. This reasonably priced retreat, Hotel Spa Ixtapan, has 200 comfortable rooms and 50 villas surrounded by 35 acres of lush gardens. The surroundings, as it

The surroundings, as it turned out, were refreshing. Colorful blossoms filled the trees and bushes, and the grounds were littered with

Colorial Ecosoms failed the grounds were littered with bright orange, fuchsia, lavender and white petals. A Las Vegas pool with a tiered waterfall, a second pool, large outdoor whirlpool, multicolored fountains, and mosaic murals portraying McGoo's history are comfortably situated in round. A contract of the state o

Flights are offered to Mexico City from most major cities, some with a change of

planes. Call Spa World

Reservations at 800-321-4622,

go to www. spagetaway.com.

arrange with the hotel for car

transportation from Mexico

City to Ixtapan. Ask the hotel

to arrange for you to share a



The swimmling pool, with villas in the background, includes a small replica of a Mayan pyramid with star-shaped fountains of water. Water frickies down the steps. A dome has painted representations of the signs of the the zodiac.

nerobics, golf and tennis lessons. A sauna, steamroom, whirlpool and a fully equipped gymnasium are available to all

gymnasium are available to all guests.

The spa diet dining room offers a 900-calorie per day diet; the sparse meals are devoid of spices and herbs.

Veteran guests bring a selection of seasonings from home to spice up the food. The main dining room offers more mean choices, including guacomole, salsa, fruit, great rolls and desserts. Visitors can choose either a four-day or seven-day stay ranging from \$535 to \$1075 per person, double occupancy depending on cloice of program and season (tax, tips, and airport transfers are extra). Selecting the plan with activities that best suits your inter-

ests, then select the dining room with a menu appeals to

you.

Istapan offers the same programs as the "fancier" spas at about one fifth the cost, including airfare from any major U.S. city. Although golf, tennis and spa activities are offered for men, this is a place for women to bond and let their hair down, little of the cost.

to bond and let their hair down, literally, literally. This is a spa for the veteran spa gore and the uninitiated alike, Don't worry about wardrobe and lack of proper spa etiquette. The dress code is very casual. In fact, much of the time is spent in thick terrycloth robes (provided by the spa), bathing suits, shorts and swinsuits, is acceptable in the evening.

Here are some tips if you plan to go car with other guests arriving least 30 \$1 bills.
at the same time, so you can Take in the Roman baths for

share the cost. ■ Go to Taxco for silver lewelry bargains; just a one-hour car trip.

Bring sunglasses, sunscreen and Immodium or Pepto Rismol.

■ Tipping: Although cumbersome, bring \$5 bills and at

around \$8 (no charge on the Relax plan).

■ Go the second half of the week for four days, if time and budget are concerns. On weekends there are more activities, including dinner music, lighted fountains and more shops at the flea market.

WALKING AND MORE

In a typical spa day, you might take advantage of the hour-long guided walks that start promptly at 7 am. The symphony of singing birds is enough to lift anyone's spirits. We walked through nearby villages, passing ancient and heavy chert of the start of the sparse of the control of the sparse of the control of the sparse of the sparse

taln two cots, a large marble-lined pool with bubbling hot water, a shower in the bathroom and pleasant music.

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Guests are mostly from all
parts of the U.S. who have
heard about the spa by word of
mouth. Some arrange to have
an annual reunion with friends.
The atmosphere is friendly;
guests and staff are most conzenial.

gental.
There's a shop on the grounds plus several shops adjacent to the Roman baths and stalls just outside the walls of the spa. The

WALK INTO TOWN

Had enough relaxing? Take the short pleasant walk into Istapan de la Sal. R is clean, safe and a journey hack in time. The locals Istapan is down the hill from the big church courtyard. Seeing the farmers' market early on Saturday morning is a refreshing reminder of how a tight-knit community looks and sounds.

stalls are most active on week-ends. Prices are very reasonable, but shoppers can bargain to save a few dollars.

Farmacia Madrid, near the big 16th century church, is a must-see. Be sure to go inside to see the side altar decorated with see. Be sure to go transe costs the side altar decorated with stunning murals, gold-decorated walls and statin glass seenes. On Sunday, there's a flea market with pottery, silver jewelry, baskets, clothes and other wares. Evening activities include movies, bings, bowling and on weekends, live dinner music, folklorie ballet and a disco. Side trips to Cuernawaca and Piocucan be arranged by the boat desk, if your stress level and/or your wastiline need reducing, then this is the place for you,



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Red Wing game

Entries must be received by Friday, January 24, 2003 Entrants must be 19 years old Entries must be 100 words or less Entries must hed 100 words or less Entries must hedude name, age, address, phone, e-mail Employees of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

and Olympia Entertainment are Ineligible

SEND YOUR ENTRY TO:

Lessons in Love Contest' Cathy Young Promotion Manager Phone: 734-953-2155 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150

e-mail: cyoung@oe.homecomm.net

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Winning couples will be announced in your hometown newspaper Thursday, January 30







