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Floating on Air



Sisters Stephanie Phelan and Natalie Rowe have opened Float, Santa Barbara's newest day spa

June is a busy month filled with graduations, weddings, and end-of-the-school-year deadlines, so recharging of one's batteries are often in order. Santa Barbara's newest spa oasis, Float, is an excellent place to do just that.

Float, the brainchild of two charming and bright young entrepreneurial sisters, **Stephanie Phelan** and **Natalie Rowe**, is located within easy walking distance to 24-Hour Fitness, the Canary Hotel, myriad restaurants, and all that Santa Barbara has to offer. Taking over the old Spa Medicus building across from the Lobero Theater, Stephanie and Natalie, with the help of the design team Orange 22, have completely remodeled the 3300-square-foot two-story space, which has six designated massage and facial rooms, wet rooms, and a room for couples treatments.

Men and women have their own dressing rooms with all the necessary spa products and amenities and lockers that contain soft white robes with

the Float logo. At the rear of the property is a private garden with a long water pool featuring cobalt blue tile, and a fountain.

On the second floor is the "Sky Room," a designated quiet lounge area replete with a fireplace to sit and enjoy refreshments while waiting for a treatment therapist. Float is open and airy with a contemporary clean feeling and a modern design. The spa has light wood floors, glass-tiled bathrooms and serene tones of aqua and blues throughout. Founder and head designer **Dario Antonioni**, with whom they discussed their visions for the spa, is a longtime friend of Natalie and Stephanie. **Laura Evans** from Orange 22 is the materials queen that selected the flooring and all the colors and textures used throughout the spa.

"We were very adamant about being eco-friendly in our design plan," the sisters said. They used non-toxic paints, recycled content tile, sustainable wood flooring and a body Ritual room that does not waste water. The



Guests can enjoy a light lunch on Float's private garden patio

use of these materials ties in with the eco-friendly vibe of the space; treatment rooms have calming names such as Lilly, Willow, Sea Grass, Sand, Rain Feather and Cloud, all giving you that light as air feeling and peaceful mood.

While they carry several lines such as Epicuren, Juara, MD Skincare, and Mama Mio (a fun skin care line for Moms and Moms-to-be), Natalie and Stephanie developed their own signature private label skin care line, "Float," which is Vegan certified and uses only natural ingredients. Natalie and Stephanie set out to create a line that was gentle, effective and suitable for all skin types. They contain no parabens or unnecessary additives.

A business background

After lunch in the private garden, catered by their neighbor, Grape Vine Fine Food Market (www.GrapeVineFineFoodMarket.com), younger sister Natalie provided me with some background information on her and Stephanie and just how Float came into being. The girls grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut, and Natalie earned a degree from Tulane where she was a pre-med student. Instead of completing medical school, however, she moved to New York and began working for Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, where she worked for 6 years in the marketing side of the business. In December 2008 Natalie and her husband, **Matthew**, and their baby daughter were drawn to the warmer climate and decided with her sister Stephanie to become partners in developing Float Luxury Spa in Santa Barbara.

Stephanie earned a degree at UCSB in the early '90s and had traveled around South East Asia. It was there she said she developed an interest in healing and spas. She visited Ryokans in Japan, experienced Thai massage in Thailand and learned about herbal medicine in Indonesia. In 2001 she founded Kelea Surf Spa in Hawaii and Costa Rica and then in 2004 worked as Spa director at The Balboa Bay Club



Float, which was designed using eco-friendly materials, offers a la carte treatments and day spa packages

& Resort in Newport Beach, where she was honored as Manager of the Year. Through a year of research, she determined that Santa Barbara had the lifestyle, demographic, and need for more spas. Stephanie left her job in Newport Beach and she and her husband moved back to Santa Barbara to partner with her sister in bringing Float to fruition.

After my light lunch I was greeted by **Angie Ruccio** who would perform a Thai massage on me. I wore my comfortable yoga clothes and my massage was performed on a special mat on the floor. Angie originally studied Thai massage in Jackson Hole, then a few years later traveled to Thailand to study with master **Pichest Boonthumme** in Chiang Mai and attended the Massage School of Chiang Mai. Angie gave me an interactive massage because there was no oil involved, just the therapist's quick and firm hand movements.

I was then escorted to the next treatment room to meet esthetician **Rosa Chavez** who performed my facial. Rosa was a skin technician at Bacara Spa and Resort for many years. She used Float's own line for my treatment which began with a sweet almond and Chamomile cleanser, a balancing mineral toner and Kukui nut volcanic scrub, a moisture magnet serum, and then a cranberry antioxidant cream and 23 Karat Eye Repair Cream.

In addition to regular treatments, Float also offers day packages that include a combination of treatments and gift packages, such as The Champagne Treatment, a once-a-month pampering for a year, or an item called Global Goodness, which includes a different body treatment every season.

Float is also available for private parties, and recently hosted a bachelorette party for thirteen ladies on a Sunday; the spa opened just for them. Float is my secret, but I don't think it will remain anyone's secret for long.

For more information about Float Luxury Spa or to see their complete Spa menu visit www.floatluxuryspa.com. Float is located at 18 East Canon Perdido in Santa Barbara. (805-845-7777)

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