

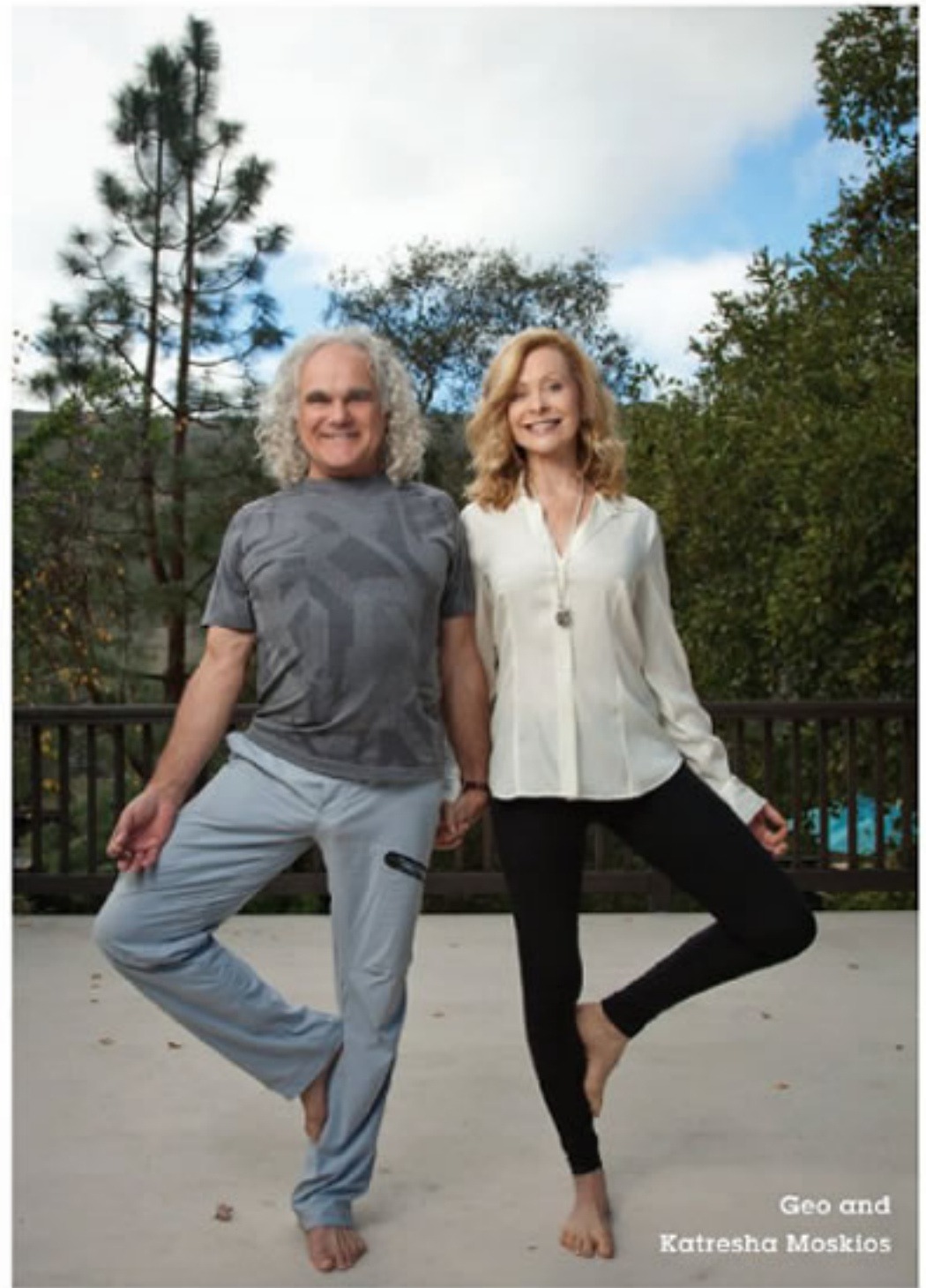
A photograph of a person meditating on a beach at sunset. The person is in a lotus position, with their hands in a mudra. The background shows the ocean and a colorful sky. The title 'namastaycation' is overlaid on the image in a white, cursive font. The author's name 'BY JUSTINE AMODEO' is in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font to the right of the title.

namastaycation

BY JUSTINE AMODEO

Spring is a time of jumps starts, fresh growth and self-improvement. It's the season to slough off old habits and begin anew. For many (including this mother of two), that's a task best accomplished with a little help.

If the idea – just the very notion – of spring is enough to get you plotting the best way to activate your own SELF 2.0 relaunch, look no further than your own backyard, Orange County, where the weather is balmy and the retreat options are world renowned.



Geo and
Katresha Moskios

Balance at The Pearl Laguna

Nestled in the scrub-covered hills of Laguna Canyon, the four-year-old Pearl Laguna is a retreat in the truest sense of the word. To write about it without using the word "tranquil" would be a nearly impossible task.

The brainchild of Geo and Katresha Moskios, The Pearl Laguna's week-long retreats hit the sweet spot between meditative calm and invigorating activity. Its founders exude this same balance – they are at once mindful and jubilant, contemplative and full of verve. "We teach people to teach themselves," Katresha Moskios explains over a breakfast of organic food lovingly prepared by her hand-picked staff of cooks. "We are just the instrument."



"Our guests discover that the spiritual life is a natural process. When they're here, they exercise, rest and eat well. We want them to leave feeling great and loving themselves more than ever."

Each day at this 12-bedroom, 12-bath ashram begins with Geo's power yoga (and perhaps a little dream therapy), organic foods and juices and vegetable broths, and a hike. It winds down with spa treatments and a second, gentler yoga session, with workshops in tai chi, energy work, massage, quiet time, infrared saunas or one of Katresha's hand-made masks from her organic skin care line (see page 70) completing the day. Many guests are surprised to discover how much they look forward to the hikes. The Laguna Canyon trails that guests of the Pearl venture into are a severely underrated Orange County gem – visit in April and they look like Oahu's North Shore, in June the fog settles in smoky tendrils reminiscent of the Scottish Highlands.

The afternoons are reserved for relaxation with daily massages and the option for a stroll around the grounds, a dip in the Jacuzzi, or time spent in the infrared sauna. As much as I loved the hikes and the massages, it was the meditation practice that really rejuvenated me. It's so easy amidst work and family, to feel flooded, overwhelmed, and ultimately drained. When I'm feeling buried, spa treatments help me restore a sense of wellness – but it's in mindfulness practice where the magic happens. The nice thing about a live-in and relatively compact retreat is that there's a certain flow to the day. One thing leads to the next without a jolting return to the "real" world. It's low-impact living – with calming teas, healing broths and magical vegetarian meals for fuel. After the first day, I was sold; the rest of the week just served to elevate my euphoria. I left feeling...yes, there's that word: *tranquil*.

"Our guests discover that the spiritual life is a natural process," Geo explains. "When they're here, they exercise, rest and eat well. We want them to leave feeling great – physically, mentally and spiritually – and loving themselves more than ever."

:: thepearllaguna.com



The Pearl's holistic daily menu:

The yoga and meditation room is warmed up for a morning class.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Herbs from the vertical garden; organic bounty for a day's meal; the cozy living room for fireside chats; the property's relaxation pool.

