

Cupcakes, castles and more at Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in Riverside

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Delight in history, summer savings and Casey's cupcakes at The Mission Inn this summer. / Peter Cooper, Casey's Cupcakes

Written by
Kathy Strong
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Sun

The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa in Riverside magically combines the beauty of medieval castles and ornate cathedrals. It is an art gallery, a fine hotel, a spa and a museum. Now, it is also the original home of award-winning magical cupcakes.

Food Network's "Cupcake Wars" recently declared Casey's Cupcakes created by the daughter of Mission Inn's owners as the best cupcakes around. For the remainder of the summer, take advantage of some great summer packages — even a few with cupcakes included.

Glitter and magic

Actress and model Casey Reinhardt, the daughter of Mission Inn owners Kelly and Duane Roberts, was inspired by her great-grandmother's recipes to go into the cupcake business. She now brings the delicious flavors of her childhood to two communities which she holds dear: her hometown of Laguna Beach and Riverside's Mission Inn. Flavors include lavender, chili chocolate and white chocolate cherry. With some advance notice, Casey's Cupcakes at the Mission Inn will prepare cupcake cakes. Information: www.caseyscupcake.com.

Summer savings at the inn

Walking through the lobby doors of the hotel, which takes up a full downtown block in Riverside, is a journey into another world and time. Guests at the resort are treated to accommodations hard to find this side of the Atlantic with one-of-a-kind rooms that echo "castle" and graceful longevity. Capture a creative summer package that lets you experience the stay in style for less. Some of these packages are offered for a short period of time, so check with the hotel.

'History Under the Stars'

You really won't experience the whole Mission Inn mystique until you indulge in the docent-led history tour that gives you access to the areas and the stories of the hostelry. The "History Under the Stars" stay package includes a deluxe overnight stay, valet parking, dinner for two at the Mission Inn Restaurant and an evening history tour. The tour guides visitors through the events and personalities that comprise the resort's history, from its beginnings as a 12-room adobe boarding house to a prestigious 239-room resort.

As you explore, certain areas of the resort may look familiar — probably because they have been used for a long list of television and movies, from the 1913 film "The Crooked Road" to the NBC mini-series, "Kingpin." Highlights include the two-story Anton Clock Tower with revolving figures; the collection of 400 bells that grace the grounds; the Court of the Orient with 8-foot-high Buddha; the gold-leafed 18th-century altar and Tiffany art glass windows in the St. Francis of Assisi Chapel; and the Spanish Art Gallery. The package price is \$229, but add another night for \$99.

Celebration cupcakes

It doesn't necessarily have to be anyone's birthday to stay over with "Casey's Birthday Celebration" package. The stay includes deluxe accommodations, complimentary parking, birthday cupcakes for two and a balloon bouquet. Also, a \$25 resort gift card is included that can be spent at the inn's restaurants, spa or, of course, on more cupcakes. The package is \$189, with an additional night for \$99.

Summer Splendor

Take full advantage of the romance of the Mission Inn with the "Couple's Summer Splendor" package. The two-night stay includes deluxe accommodations, breakfast for two in your room, valet parking and a couple's massage in a private villa in Kelly's Tuscan-inspired Spa. The two-night package is \$489, but you can continue the romance with a third night for \$99.

If you go

The Mission Inn Hotel & Spa, 3649 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside; www.missioninn.com, (951) 784-0300 or (800) 843-7755 (reservations)