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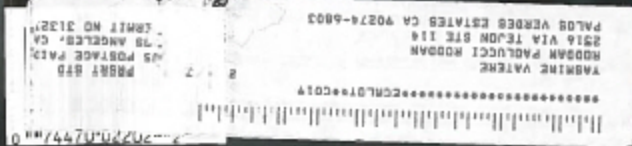
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GUESTS ENJOY A BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF TERRANEA RESORT'S BREATHTAKING FALCON EXPERIENCE.

BIRDS *of* PARADISE

WRITTEN BY DARREN ELMS • PHOTOGRAPHED BY JEFF BERTING

They arrive at the Palos Verdes bluff in a specially outfitted golf cart, tethered securely to a post and wearing small leather hoods that conceal their eyes. The handler, Scott Timmons, accompanied by his loyal hound Blanca, carefully frees a beautiful, white, female falcon and removes her hood, offering the bird its first view of the Terranea Resort on this outing. After a few moments with Timmons, the snowy bird of prey expands her wings to breathtaking length and leaps from her trainer's leather gloved hand. In a ritual that dates back to ancient times, the falcon soars, circles and swoops with the guidance of Timmons, momentarily eclipsing the sun with her impressive wingspan.

Since Terranea introduced its falconry program in May 2009, these majestic birds have become a popular and unique attraction at the resort. Most intriguing, the raptors provide an important service on the coast-line property.

Randi Johnson of Aerial Solutions, one of the primary falcon handlers at Terranea, shares her experience as a manager of the abatement program at the resort.



Where do you get these incredible birds?

RJ: All of our birds are captive-bred birds and are privately bred by licensed breeders. We do not use any birds from the wild or rehabilitated birds in our program. Our raptors are made up of indigenous and non-indigenous species. In our abatement program, some of the species we use are peregrine falcons, peregrine hybrids, gyrfalcon hybrids, as well as the Harris hawks and Eurasian eagle-owls.

Though birds of prey, the birds in your fleet do not actually hunt, correct?

RJ: Our programs are non-lethal and eco-friendly. Although no one has complete control over a raptor, our raptors are specially trained to return to us for food and not to hunt game. The sport of falconry is hunting game with your bird. Bird abatement is just the opposite ... the birds are trained to return to us after a flight.

Why do they wear the hoods when not engaged?

RJ: The birds wear hoods for many reasons. First and foremost, this piece of equipment is for safety. Without it, the birds could get spooked, panic and injure themselves, as well as break feathers or—even more devastating—break a leg. The hood also keeps the birds calm and stress-free during travel, safe when you have multiple birds together—these birds can be aggressive toward each other so to avoid fatal accidents, hooding is essential—and the hood

is also used as a training device to let the birds know it is a signal to fly. During each workday, our birds are un-hooded and weathered on perches in the sun and given breaks throughout the day. When the birds are at home with their falconers, they are without their hoods. Once off to work, the hood is put back on, and a new day begins. This process is started very early in training, and the bird becomes accustomed to wearing the hood as part of its routine.

Terranea guests are fortunate enough to get to experience the falcons for themselves. What should they anticipate from these demonstrations?

RJ: The guests should expect an unbelievable and unique experience meeting and watching our birds work. If you are interested in seeing Aerial Solutions up close and personal, you can make a reservation at Point Discovery for a private falconry experience. This will allow you your own time to learn about these amazing birds, ask questions, take photos and to experience what we do.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

RJ: What we enjoy most about what we do is being able to work and to fly our birds. We also enjoy interacting with guests and sharing our experiences and accomplishments with others. The gorgeous setting at Terranea and the wonderful staff make for a positive and welcoming work environment for all. ●



THE BIRDS WEAR HOODS FOR MANY REASONS. FIRST AND FOREMOST, THIS PIECE OF EQUIPMENT IS FOR SAFETY.



Randi, please tell our readers a little about your background working with birds of prey.

Randi Johnson: Our Aerial Solutions team has more than 20 years of falconry experience working with raptors and more than eight years of abatement experience. This has allowed us to adapt some of our falconry techniques into our successful bird control program here at Terranea.

Bird control? Is that the reason why Terranea brought in the falconry program in the first place?

RJ: The falcons were introduced to Terranea by Matthew Moreau in an eco-friendly, non-lethal attempt to rid the resort of a large, indigenous seagull population. With thanks to Matt and the success of our team and trained raptors, Aerial Solutions has continued to keep the resort and restaurants seagull-free. We continue to maintain the property regularly with our birds in this manner, which ensures a clean and healthy environment.

Have you seen a significant change in the seagull and crow populations since arriving at the resort?

RJ: Absolutely! Once we established dominance on the property with our trained raptors, it then became a maintenance program. Continuing to maintain the property is crucial to keep the pest bird population out.

In addition to the falcons, what other birds make up your fleet?

RJ: Harris hawks and Eurasian eagle-owls play a role in deterring pest birds here at the resort. We also have a number of German shorthaired pointers (bird dogs) that accompany and/or assist us in our program.

Scott Timmons readies his falcon, Fokker, for a flight over the resort.



THE FALCONS WERE INTRODUCED TO TERRANEA BY MATTHEW MOREAU IN AN ECO-FRIENDLY, NON-LETHAL ATTEMPT TO RID THE RESORT OF A LARGE, INDIGENOUS SEAGULL POPULATION.



Pre-flight Fokker sitting pretty on Scott's leather glove.