

AUGUST £2.70



ALLY
McBEA
HO
GOSS

WOULD Y
BE JEAL
OF A MO
DAUGHT

HOLLYWO
KNIV

CHECK IN
A FIVE-S
FACE

SEXY & WILD
FASHION TO BE PASSIONATE ABOUT

HOLLYWOOD'S SECRET SERVICE

GUESTS ARRIVE BRUISED, SWATHED IN BANDAGES AND PRONE TO PANIC ATTACKS. BUT AFTER A SHORT STAY IN LUXURY SURROUNDINGS, THEIR EVERY NEED CATERED TO BY TEAMS OF SPECIALIST STAFF, THEY EMERGE REJUVENATED. ANTHEA GERRIE TAKES A PEEK BEHIND THE CLOSED DOORS OF HOTELS IN CALIFORNIA THAT OFFER COSMETIC-SURGERY AFTERCARE. PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRUCE HEMMING

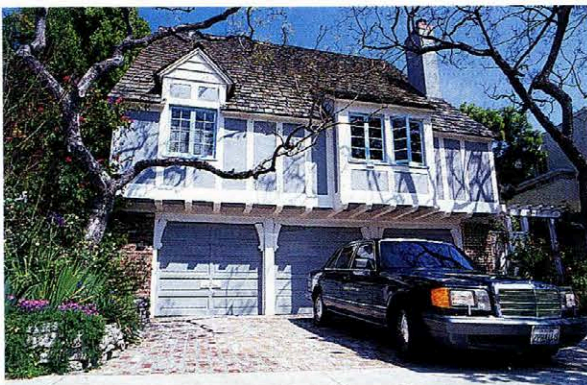
here is a discreet and extremely expensive Californian holiday currently available that you won't find in any brochure. The secret of ladies who lunch, and of the nip-and-tuck set in particular, it's a pamper-fest associated with the most pleasurable form of pain – the pain you inflict on yourself in the name of beauty.

Women who can afford an LA facelift (and LA facelifts are rated among the best in the world) are being urged by their surgeons to invest in a Hollywood-style recovery in one of the city's most exclusive retreats – for cosmetic-surgery patients only. These are luxury lodgings with a difference, where staff are trained to minister to panic attacks and post-op depression, while changing dressings and serving steamed sea bass with a single rose on a silver tray.

The unique selling proposition of these retreats, costing more than £400 per night, is personal experience. The nurses and beauticians have had the surgery themselves and know what it is to feel like Frankenstein during the bruised and swollen God-what-have-I-done-to-myself? recovery period... they soothe raw egos as expertly as they bathe their owners' wounds.

'There are so many reasons why you'd rather come here than go home after a facelift,' explains the thrice-lifted Maggie Lockridge, whose service for the surgically enhanced at Shanteque (the name comes from the Balinese word for beauty) has grown over seven years into a multi-million-dollar industry. 'Home alone, you don't feel like getting up to refresh your ice packs or risk going to the bathroom and, God forbid, fall and have to go back to get your nose repaired. You don't feel like blending fresh food to make sure you get the proper nutrition – and being propped up on cushions is no substitute for being properly elevated by an electric bed.'

One satisfied customer, Marie Louise Brewer, couldn't agree more. 'When I had my face done



JUST BEFORE THE ACADEMY AWARDS GUESTS HERE ARE BIG-NAME STARS WHO HAVE TO LOOK GOOD' NOLA ROCCO, OWNER OF THE HIDDEN GARDEN, ABOVE

last year, my girlfriends bought me a couple of nights at Shanteque. They know from their own experience that trying to nurse yourself at home is the pits. I couldn't have had a more loving gift.'

Maggie – forehead lift and eyelids at 40, lower facelift at 50, cheekbones enhanced and eyes redone at 55 – is a registered nurse who has made her fortune from carving a niche in the lucrative international top end of the cosmetic-surgery market. She started Shanteque in 1993 with nothing, yet the business has already earned her an apartment on the edge of Beverly Hills, a property in the desert, a farm in Vermont and the obligatory Mercedes – all from helping several thousand patients survive what she believes is the kindest cut, the one that takes years and inches off their imperfect selves.

Maggie took her cue from LA's colourful and astute property developer, Severin Ashkenazi, who, 10 years earlier, had become aware that many guests at his Beverly Hills boutique hotel, L'Ermitage, were arriving in wheelchairs and bandages, accompanied by a nurse. The reason, he discovered, was that its private underground entrance was unique among LA hotels in protecting arrivals from the scrutiny of the

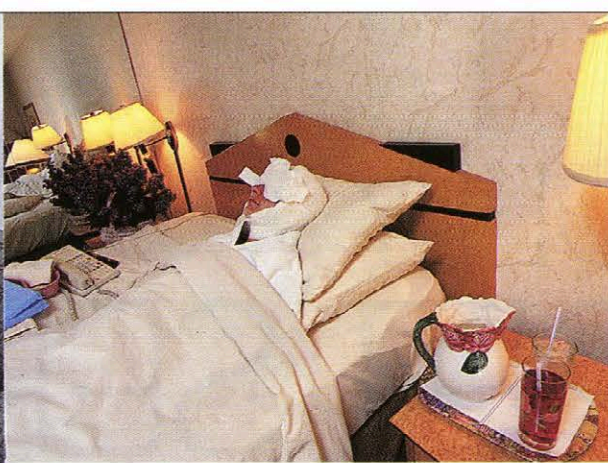
streets. A new concept in hospitality was born – Ashkenazi bought the building next door, made it gorgeous, installed specialist nurses, and in 1983 Le P'tit Ermitage, the first hostelry dedicated exclusively to the sliced-face-and-body brigade, opened its doors on chic Burton Way.

Maggie had previously worked as a nurse, then in real estate. Emotionally raw and poor from a divorce, she joined Le P'tit Ermitage in 1986 as a night nurse, later putting her business expertise to use by managing the hugely successful operation. In 1993, when Ashkenazi went broke through overextending his property empire and had to sell Le P'tit Ermitage to clear his debts, Maggie raised the money to create

Shanteque. 'There was a huge demand,' she says. 'I had no hesitation in going after the quarter of a million dollars I knew it would take to start the business properly.'

Maggie started by taking over an entire floor at the Beverly Prescott Hotel in Beverly Hills, followed by 24 rooms at the Century Plaza, in Century City, the only LA hotel considered fit for visiting presidents. There, the operation became a victim of its own success. The Plaza got fed up with a whole floor of its five-star tower being blocked by wheelchair cases, and last year Maggie had to go on the move once again. But not, as you might expect, to another Beverly Hills location, domain of the ritziest surgeons and the movement for cosmetic-surgery aftercare. Instead, she moved her business to LA and now occupies a private wing on the second floor of Le Montrose, a hip hostelry off Sunset Strip. 'The city didn't want cosmetic-surgery patients recuperating in its hotels with private nurses – they felt there was a risk of being sued if patients died when they were not in hospital,' explains Maggie.

The other residents at Le Montrose are blissfully unaware of the bruised arrivals swathed



Age cannot wither them... Shanteque's staff, clockwise from front row, far left: Marion Heisner, 58; Diane Merfeld, 56; Barbara McKeon, 63; Kathryn Ellison, 44; Joy Edwards, 48; Maggie Lockridge, 59. The patients' comfort at aftercare hotels is assured – from electrically operated beds, above, to manicures, right

in bandages who pass directly from the operating room via a Lincoln Town Car (America's equivalent of a Rolls-Royce) to their luxury suites. Here they spend, typically, three days in five-star-hotel comfort – sofas, fireplaces, spa treatments, 24-hour room service – combined with vital facilities such as electric beds, expert nursing care and transportation to and from the surgery in a blacked-out limo.

The food – fresh, appetising and tenderly prepared – 'has to be blended, chopped and puréed,' explains Maggie. Every patient gets Jewish penicillin (home-made chicken noodle soup) on the first night, followed by ice cream and jello. Next day, guests can tuck into steamed salmon, tropical fruit and protein-packed smoothies. Speaker-phones keep sore chins from coping with the discomfort of a receiver, and beauty therapists can be summoned to the bedside for a manicure, pedicure or massage.

For this they pay \$625 (about £400) a night –

'IT'S SO MUCH BETTER FOR PATIENTS TO BE IN A WARM ENVIRONMENT RECEIVING CARE FROM ANOTHER FEMALE WHO UNDERSTANDS WHAT SHE'S GONE THROUGH'

BARBARA MCKEON, ASSISTANT MANAGER, SHANTEQUE

roughly a third of what they'd be charged in an LA hospital for a lower level of comfort – and for the very wealthy, there's a special package for three times that price, featuring a king-sized electric bed, private one-to-one nursing, hot-house flowers replenished every day, and daily treatments such as reflexology, manicures and massages, helping vulnerable patients feel good about themselves again.

The waiting list – six to eight weeks long – and the repeat business proves there's no shortage of takers. 'Maybe at 35 they had their eyes done, at 50 their face, then maybe they get a little liposuction, and five years after the facelift they might come back for a revision,' says Maggie.

Many visitors come from overseas. 'I see at least two women a month from Britain, and they say they wish there was something like Shanteque

back home,' says Maggie, whose approaching 60th birthday is boiled from the neck up by her firm jaw, unwrinkled eyes and furrowless brow (cosmetic surgery is a perk of the job for Maggie and her nurses).

It is hard to believe that just a facelift could be responsible for making Barbara McKeon, Maggie's right-hand woman, look half her 63 years. Barbara knows what it is that Brits value about her soothing hand on their brow – and it's more than the fact she's a registered nurse, as well as a qualified beautician.

'It's being able to psych out a patient before she has a panic attack and tries to rip her dressings off. We offer 90 per cent emotional support, sensing when a problem may be developing. I'm a big hand-holder. Everything may look all right on the surface until you take hold of the patient's hand and she dissolves in tears, pouring out her life story.

'Psychologically it is so much better for

cosmetic-surgery patients to be in a warm, caring, environment receiving care from another female who understands what she's gone through – and can see the end when the patient cannot. After all, what brought her to the surgeon was the hope of looking on the outside the age she feels inside – and none of us is over 25 in our hearts. But in those first few days she looks in the mirror and says, "Oh my God, what have I done?" However positive your reasons for surgery, you are going to experience loss. You've lived with that face for a long time, and what's looking back at you from the mirror is someone totally different.

'In many ways you have to be a better nurse to work here, because you're working blind. This isn't a hospital, so if you have a client with a problem, you'd better know your stuff.'


Shanteque may be booming, but it is not the only – or even the most rarefied – business in town. The truly moneyed shell out £3,000 for a week at The Hidden Garden, a cluster of cottages in a residential street in Westwood, an affluent area of LA. In discretion overdrive, the only clue to its existence is a small brass plaque that reads 'Whisper – the Princess is sleeping'.

Nola Rocco, who runs the show, may be California's best advertisement for cosmetic surgery, with her unlined, make-up-free face, enhanced only by permanently tattooed lip liner. 'You should have whispered through the intercom,' she hisses when she comes to the door. 'This garden carries sound like a canyon, and there are people here who would be very unhappy to see a reporter and a photographer.'

We are obliged to tiptoe around and shoot in secrecy, lest we dispel the carefully nurtured atmosphere of seclusion. It's almost impossible to believe Nola is a 60-year-old grandmother and that such a softly spoken, girly blonde, a teacher with no prior business experience, could have so effortlessly penetrated the world of Hollywood movers and shakers, who are the Garden's most regular guests. But she herself is the 20-year-old veteran of a boggling number of plastic surgery 'procedures'. 'My philosophy is to start very young, before anyone but you notices a change to do little things all the time, like going to the dentist. That way your look never changes.

'I started at 40, when I was doing some modelling. A photographer noticed my smile lines in my pictures and suggested a mini-facelift. No one was doing them then; those were the days when you began to think about a facelift at 60 or 65, and here was I, coming in so young, just wanting to maintain my look. I found a doctor to take away my shadow line, then two years later I had my eyes done. A few years on I had a brow lift, my chin taken care of with a mini-tuck, then my right eye done again – about every three or four years a little something,' explains Nola.

Even if you have great skin, 'horrible things still happen to your features that give your age ➤

A photograph of a woman in a wheelchair being assisted by a man in a vest and suspenders in a hallway. The woman is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt, a dark floral patterned shawl, white pants, and white loafers. She has a concerned expression. The man is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a dark vest, and dark suspenders. He is holding a brown suitcase. The hallway has a tiled floor and a large, ornate archway in the background.

'WHEN I HAD MY FACE DONE LAST YEAR, MY GIRLFRIENDS BOUGHT ME A COUPLE OF NIGHTS AT THE HOTEL SHANTEQUE. THEY KNOW FROM THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE THAT TRYING TO NURSE YOURSELF AT HOME IS THE PITS'

MARIE LOUISE BREWER, EX-PATIENT

Guests at the Shanteque, above, arrive directly from the operating theatre, while at The Hidden Garden, opposite, a black Mercedes drives into a garage before releasing the occupants into the hotel through an interior door