



shop GIRL

by Kateri Wozny Kateri is an award-winning journalist with a background in print, online, radio and TV news. A native of Minneapolis, MN, she has written for the Chicago Sun-Times Media Group, Pepperdine University and Acorn Newspapers. She works full time as a public relations manager locally and loves exploring the Santa Barbara fashion scene. Follow her on Twitter @kikatwozny.

Relax and Rejuvenate at Salt Cave Santa Barbara



Mike McCaskey and wife Pamela are proud owners of the nation's largest underground salt cave.

A-a-achoo! With the springtime officially here, everything is in full bloom, literally. My allergies had been acting up and with medication failing, which called for an alternative to relieve my respiratory system. After a friend mentioned how Salt Cave Santa Barbara could help, I gave this a try. On *First Thursday*, I was greeted by Spa and event director **Jenny Prince**, who immediately shared a glass of her delicious Sangria and led the way to one of the two salt caves.

While in the pull-out chair, I started feeling relief from the micro particles of salt traveling through the air. This is also used during a Cave Session, where the salt is absorbed through the skin and lungs while soft music plays for 45 minutes. For \$25 a session, this is something that one's system can benefit from over time.

"Salt releases negative ions and raises serotonin in people," Prince explained. "It's also a great respiratory treatment."

Salt to the rescue! With two crystal cave rooms that contain a combined 45 tons of 250-million-year-old of Himalayan salt, the mineral is sourced from the Himalayan Mountain foothills located in the Khewra Salt Range in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

"There are many benefits to salt," said owner **Mike McCaskey**. "Salt is 100 percent anti-bacterial, and has 84 minerals that detoxify the skin and open up pores."

According to Mike, there are about 20 salt caves in the U.S. and Salt Cave Santa

Barbara is the only one underground – quite impressive.

"It's what sets us apart and makes us unique," he said. "We want to be a place where people can come and relax."

Business of Life

The idea to open a salt cave happened after co-owner and Mike's wife, **Pamela**, visited a Vermont holistic spa in 2010 that featured a similar cave. With a background in health and fitness and Mike having experience with geology, the two opened their soothing business in November 2012.

"We thought it would be a great idea to bring a salt cave to Santa Barbara because the locals are so comfortable," Mike explained. "It has been a great business for the community."

Mike and Pamela also opened up a second location at 32 West Anapamu called Salt Lab, where the oils and soaps are created and more products are sold.

"All of our products are made right here in Santa Barbara," Mike said. "We also just launched an online store."

Just Breathe

The store features a variety of products that all contain the magical mineral, including gourmet bath salts with different seasonings, masks, cooking slabs, salt for cooking (it tasted light), lip balms, hair sprays, skin care, salt lamps, and soaps and scrubs, the most popular sellers. Prices range from \$3.95 for lip balm to \$38 for a mask.

"Customers always tell us how great



Tranquility awaits in the main salt cave.

the products are and that they work well," Mike said.

Mike says that the store has heavy traffic, with 3,000 customers a month. The store also gives back by complimentary cave sessions for nonprofit events and raffles.

"We are successful because of the community faith in our business, and we are happy to give back," Mike said. As our business grows, our goal is to return five percent of proceeds to the community and charities."

Salt Healing

With all the salt benefits I learned, the store offers affordable classes such as yoga, movement, workshops, Tai Chi, and meditation.

"Sound Healing is our most popular class because the instructor brings in crystal bowls inside crystal cave, and it sounds like a communal sound therapy," Prince said.

Salt Cave also offers treatments such as a salt stone and therapeutic massages, and a Nexneuro Vibration Treatment, where vibrations from the soothing music relax the body.

"Our signature treatment is salt scrub massage," Prince said. "A lot of clients

who receive the treatment also take it home with them to use."

Events can also be held in the caves, ranging from birthday and bachelorette parties to business meetings and weddings.

"Our underground caves are a very unique environment for a variety our events," Pamela told me later. "The experience taps into all of the five human senses."

At the end of the day, Mike and Pamela's goal is to make Salt Cave Santa Barbara the ultimate hot spot for locals and tourists.

"With everything we provide, we want to be downtown's number-one spot where people can come and relax," Mike said.

Ultimately, I felt light as a feather, sinuses cleared. Now when people say to take life with a grain of salt, I know where to go.

Salt Cave Santa Barbara

740 State Street
(805) 963-7258

Hours: Monday-Saturday: 10 am - 7 pm,
Sunday: 12 pm - 7 pm

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