

805 Boasts North America's Largest Himalayan Salt Cave



Santa Barbara resident Pam McCaskey is clear on one thing: salt changed her life. During a particularly hard time, McCaskey was introduced to her first salt cave while visiting her mother on the East Coast. After stepping in she felt a bond to the elements that surrounded her, reminding her of a deep connection to the earth and simultaneously melting her temporal burdens away. For McCaskey, salt aroused a natural spirituality that allowed her clarity, peace and ultimately, the ability to change her life for the better. Helping others to physically and mentally empower themselves became her mission, so she opened up North America's largest Himalayan salt cave right here in Santa Barbara.

Follow a Spanish-style staircase down to a small store filled with all-things pink crystal, and you have arrived at the Salt Cave in Santa Barbara. Pam welcomed me in to her beautiful space, where rows and rows of products made locally from pink Himalayan sea salt line the walls and tables. From cooking blocks to shot glasses, massage bars to body scrubs, and salt lamps to candle holders, I learned that salt can be used for almost anything. When salt is consumed or 84 minerals and trace elements present in sea salt catalyze the body's absorption of other vital elements, such as potassium, calcium and magnesium. Natural sea salt also promotes healthy internal functions, such as regulating water levels and preventing muscular cramps.

A large wooden door in one of the shop's walls leads to an entirely different space - one that is even saltier. This is the Salt Cave. Pam treated me to a cave session where I could experience the benefits of breathing in salt-infused air. Himalayan salt has healing properties that help skin conditions, such as psoriasis and eczema, as well as respiratory problems like chronic asthma. I stepped into a large wooden room and noticed that I was completely surrounded by pink salt. From walls made of natural salt blocks and a ceiling covered in small stalactites to crunching over a sandbox-like floor of small salt crystals, I was completely immersed as I walked towards my designated lounge chair. I spent the next half-hour laying down on the floor and deeply breathing in a cleansing, subtle aroma that left me completely rejuvenated.

The salt that coats the walls and covers the floor is mined from ancient salt beds in the Khewra Salt Range of northern Pakistan, part of the Himalayan Mountain Range that was formerly a Paleolithic ocean. Over the years, the rock formations have exposed the dried ocean bed's salt whose creation dates back over 200 million years. These rock beds are made of the purest salt on Earth, isolated from any modern pollutants and cleansed by millennia of underground tectonic activity. McCaskey built her cave entirely from scratch, shipping in tons of this salt from a supplier in Pakistan.

"I love what I do," says McCaskey. "I have seen grown men cry when they step inside the cave. Everyone has a different experience, and I'm glad I can provide that."