

# The Best of Italy in California

**A villa sojourn at The Resort at Pelican Hill often seems like a stay in a seaside Italian town, but with every comfort imaginable for a completely carefree, pampering getaway.**

by Polina Steier



Spectacular pool views

Perched on its namesake between Newport and Laguna beaches, The Resort at Pelican Hill is just an hour away from Los Angeles. Yet while sipping espressos on our villa's balcony, we could easily imagine ourselves in a coastal Italian town and that the Pacific Ocean—visible throughout the resort—was the Adriatic sea.

No details have been overlooked at this Northern Italy-inspired resort, from the Palladian architecture and terra-cotta roof tiles to the olive groves and cypress, fig and Canary palm trees throughout the 504 acres. The careful attention to service and amenities makes it easy for guests to leave cares behind and truly relax.

Our two-bedroom villa felt like our own vacation home, with warm European touches such as an Italian limestone fireplace and exposed wood beam ceilings. (Three- and four-bedroom villas also are available, perfect for family retreats, and the resort also has guest rooms and suites.) We each had our own bathroom, and per our request, several of our favorite magazines and newspapers were available for reading over breakfasts in the great room or on the terrace. The fully equipped gourmet kitchen was stocked with complimentary snacks and beverages.

Villas have a butler service, and the resort takes great care to match your butler to your personality and preferences. The butler can take care of everything from unpacking to putting up family photos for returning guests, and ours was mindful of our schedule and always available, yet never intrusive. The villa coordinator made dinner and spa reservations and arranged for housekeeping and grocery delivery, and the concierge helped us plan excursions. Want to have local friends over for a sunset watching impromptu dessert? Your butler will arrange a table in your villa's dining room filled with fabulous freshly made pastries, fruit, cheese and, of course, Champagne.

Our car stayed in our villa's garage, since we took advantage of the complimentary transportation to Fashion Island, a shopping destination with a movie theater and dining options, and Crystal Cove Beach. Crystal Cove is perfect for swimming and exploring the 17 miles of hiking trails, offering scenic mountain and ocean vistas, wildflowers, tide pools and interesting geological formations.

On the resort grounds, you'll find a newsstand/gift shop and a boutique featuring fashions from top designers, as well as a golf shop in the Pelican Hill Golf Clubhouse. Tom Fazio designed the resort's 54 holes of golf, including nearby Oak Creek Golf Club and the Ocean North and Ocean South courses, with dramatic Pacific Ocean views.



Andrea restaurant terrace

As villa guests, we had access to the Villa Clubhouse, with a comfortable great room, a fitness center and dining on the outdoor terrace and in poolside cabanas. The club pool affords one of the resort's most spectacular views, but we also couldn't resist the lure of the Coliseum pool. The world's largest circular pool has a floor of mosaic glass tiles and is partially framed by terraces and majestic palms.

To help guests sink deeper into relaxation, The Spa at Pelican Hill offers 22 treatment rooms and Acqua Colonnade treatments in herbal steam rooms, saunas and saltwater soaking tubs. Do not miss the 80-minute seasonal Diamond Life Infusion Facial, formulated with 16 anti-aging ingredients. Radiating a post-spa glow. The only fitting complement to the fabulous spa experience is an unforgettable alfresco ocean view Northern Italian meal at Andrea, the resort's signature restaurant. Careful attention elevates each part of the dining experience, from the sophisticated wine list to the pastas made fresh daily in a temperature-controlled room and—our favorite—the tableside presentation of the truffle risotto.

Other dining options include the Pelican Grill, which showcases coastal California cuisine and boasts a large selection of Napa

wines and a heated terrace. Piccolo offers specialty cocktails, desserts and Asian and Italian small plates. An espresso bar serves 12 daily gelato flavors, and the Great Room offers live music, afternoon tea, wine flights and a caviar menu. In-room dining is available 24 hours a day.

For those enjoying a family vacation, Camp Pelican has daily activities for ages 4 to 12, plus there are select movie nights and a yoga program. The camp is equipped with arts and crafts, games (from board to video), digital microscopes, karaoke and a pool with sand play areas. For teens 13 to 17, Latitude seasonal activities include surf and kayak camps, bike trips, hiking and an entertainment lounge.

Whether you're looking for a romantic weekend or family bonding, you'll create treasured memories at the resort. While many retreats promise to be a home away from home, The Resort at Pelican Hill delivers to perfection.

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