

GOLF VACATIONS

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Life Luxuriated

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Pelican Hill
A PAIR OF TOM FAZIO GREATNESS



THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL

A Fazio bit of paradise on Californian shores. BY PATRICK LIM

OPENING PICTURE
(PREVIOUS PAGE):
Resort Horizontal -
Promenade, Pool &
Pacific View.

THIS PAGE
CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP: Golf Academy
Plateau. Pelican
Hill Ocean South
Hole 7. Pelican Hill
Clubhouse Practice
Tees. Pelican Hill
Panoramic. Pelican
Hill Ocean South
Hole 13.



“There are many amazing golf courses in the American west coast but few carry two delightful designs by Tom Fazio, noted for having the most courses in America’s Top 100 list including Pebble Beach Golf Links. The Ocean North Course and The Ocean South Course at Pelican Hill offers even more drama and fun after two years of what Fazio and his team calls, “Re-perfecting” his original creation.

The weather is absolutely perfect in southern California. Quite phenomenal actually, with over 300 sunshine days per annum making it such a desirable destination. Newport Beach, just south of Long Beach and halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego is that place to die for. Although, one would truly rather live and enjoy the amenities of golf and easy living here. With temperatures around 15 to 20 Celsius throughout the year and that early morning coastal mist to add to the allure, there are few places on earth to be enjoying a vacation than in this Italian styled coastal retreat.

Upon arrival, the valet that parks your car for you (self parking is not even allowed) are your first steps towards a memorable stay at Pelican Hill, coupled with very pleasant ambassadors who will greet and welcome you into their doors. As mentioned, the Italian architecture influences structures outside and within with columns and cupolas mixed with modern fireplaces to give out a cozy, relaxed atmosphere that pervades throughout the entire property.

It didn't take long for me to find my favourite spot, which is the verandah right next to the café off the main lobby area. Fresh brewed cappuccino with a view, made even better with cookies. Or home-style gelato that is so good. A few steps ahead and one can watch golfers finishing up on the 18 green at The Ocean North Course, which, I shall soon discover, is a tough par 4 of 430 yards.

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The undulating terrain and views of the Pacific makes for some great photo opportunity, and for those with an early teetime, a morning mist to add to that charm and romance of golfing in this region as well.

Steve Friedlander, vice-president of golf at Pelican Hill puts things in perspective, "Tom Fazio originally designed the courses in the early 1990s and then returned in 2005 to oversee a series of thoughtful enhancements to the aesthetics, turf quality and playing conditions of the courses."

Part of the enhancement work begins from ground up, re-turfing the fairways and tees with Tifway II hybrid Bermuda to achieve a consistent look, texture and playing surface all year round, while also eliminating the need for annual overseeding. They also converted the roughs to a cool-season blend of tall fescue and rye to contrast with the Tifway II in colour and texture, adding definition for that aesthetically pleasing contour across the course but also becomes less tolerant to stray shots heading their way.



With 25 new bunkers, moving some of the existing bunkers and adopting lower growing and native plants, the vistas framed by the natural environment of ocean views and cliff-top sights is better enhanced. Add to the mix, new tee boxes and re-contouring of the fairways makes up an extra 200 yards and more challenges for better golfers to enjoy.

"Since re-opening Pelican Hill Golf Club in 2007 and the resort a year later, golfers have come from around the world to challenge their skills and have great fun playing our two ocean-view courses."

The Ocean South course is a Par 70 layout at 6,580 yards with back-to-back par 3's (Holes 12 and 13) tucked on a ledge above The Pacific Ocean. There are beautiful views that make you wonder and ask, "Is this for real?" The 13th is particularly unique, especially in this modern era of golf where there are two greens. So check which green is in play for the day. The ocean breeze is a factor and both greens are heavily guarded by bunkers. Perhaps one of the most picturesque holes on the California coast, you would probably want to take your time and enjoy the scenery as well as the golf shots. The 18th is perhaps my favourite (hard to pick just one hole when the entire course is so much fun) and a good test of golfing skills. The variety of vegetation here at the South provide for all kinds of flora and fauna, with the sounds and sights of seabirds and sailboats interrupting your round in the most pleasant way possible.

Choice Resorts

The North Course is slightly longer at 6,825 yards but on higher ground and a little bit inland. But the elevation allows for even greater views along the Newport Coast towards the Pacific Ocean. I particularly enjoyed the 8th, which is a 540-yard downhill par 5. Some of the greatest golf holes are downhill par 5's (like Oakmont's 12th) and this one is reachable with a good drive, giving you a feel good factor when you actually do so. Most of what Tom Fazio and his team have created here is pleasant and I also thoroughly enjoyed the 16th, a medium length par 3 of 168 yards, aided by the ocean breeze, so a mid-iron often will suffice where a two tier green awaits your par attempt. Perhaps there are a few more forced carries here than the South and a tough finish with the 17th par 5 and 18th par 4 providing for a majestic round of golf for the better golfer.

Water conservation is a huge issue in California nowadays and the use of treated water for irrigation purposes is now part of the agronomy practice here at Pelican Hill, supervised by Steve Thomas and his very capable team with no real issue of invasive and naturally occurring grasses invading the Tifway II hybrid and in fact adds to the colour and feel all around. One cannot help feel that these two golf courses have been here forever instead, they have only been in existence for about 20 years so it's best to simply let nature take its course.

A golf academy run under the watchful and experienced eyes of Golf Magazine Top 100 Teacher Glenn Deck at Pelican Hill Golf Club offers instruction for kids as well as adults and there are even clinics on Golf Flexibility and Stability to help you with the physical aspects of the game and not just playing lessons. One and Two-day programs are available or even just half day sessions for those pressed for time, which you shouldn't when you take a vacation here anyway. I'd recommend sending your kids to The Junior Golf Clinics but just call ahead and the helpful staff will gladly assist.

Forecaddies are compulsory at Pelican Hill and certainly helpful as they go ahead and help spot your little white dimpled ball around the course. Like many resorts, carts are compulsory - you'll be thankful to ride them here as well because of the elevation changes on the courses.

Back at the resort, there is alfresco dining under the sun or stars at either Pelican Grill or Andrea (the pasta is made fresh daily). As you might expect, the selection of wines is stunning. Andrea at Pelican Hill is particularly enticing with classic Italian cuisine (made with Californian produce) offered at lunch and dinner. Enjoy your favourite pasta with a glass of pinot noir sitting by the terrace overlooking the Pacific Ocean makes for a fine end to a golfing day.

If you're by the pool, and a large pool at that; one inspired by the Roman Coliseum, there's the usual favourites to much as well - pizza, seafood and salads in a relaxed setting. As Pelican Hill Golf Club and Pelican Hill Resort sit on a 504-acre site with one of the most serene coastal settings in Southern California, you might also



choose to have your own space as there are areas that allow for privacy. Even when you're by the pool, there are little areas for you to relax in seclusion while you watch your kids waddling in the pool.

Also, there is a bar with huge flat-screen TVs in case you don't want to miss a ball game and of course the children's menu is always a big hit with the young uns when they are not at Camp Pelican where you can leave your kids or teenagers under watchful eyes and careful guidance here. Activities are organized each day of the week to keep both adults and children alike occupied and engaged.

There are 204 private and spacious bungalow rooms and suites; 128 two-three and four bedroom villas, a 23,000 square foot spa with 22 private treatment rooms, a detached function space with an array of indoor and outdoor venues and an ocean view lawn with gazebo and wedding chapel for that very special occasion.

Just an hour away from Los Angeles International Airport, if you don't want to self-drive, there are luxury transfers available from the resort if you book them. Then there's Fashion Island, Newport Beach, San Diego, Disneyland, or more golf at Oak Creek Golf Club (sister club to Pelican Hill) also designed by Tom Fazio, or Torrey Pines, La Costa Resort and Aviara Resort all within an earshot distance from Pelican Hill.

Heck, you might like it so much you'll want to live here. I know I would. 

www.pelicanhill.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Golf Ocean North 17th Hole.
Golfers Tee Off Pelican Hill Ocean South Course.
Golf Ocean South 18th Hole.