

HORIZON

& BEYOND
Middle East

The Ultimate Art of Travel

California
DREAMIN'

*The wonderful
culinary world
of Alain Ducasse*

**DAVID COPPERFIELD'S
PRIVATE ISLAND**

Arabian Luxury
الترف العربي

The most amazing
**WINTER
CHALETs**
شاليهات الشتاء
الأكثر إذهالاً

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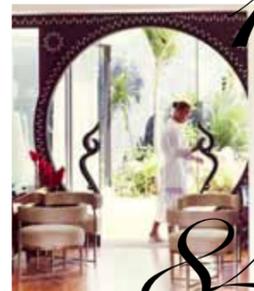
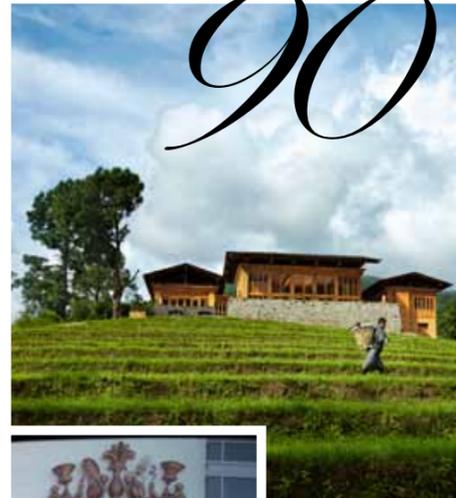


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The POSSIBILITY of PERFECTION

KARINE LACKNER SPREADS HER WINGS AND LANDS IN THE LAP OF LUXURY AT THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL IN NEWPORT BEACH.



Pictures courtesy of Pelican Hill Resort

Pelican Hill may be in sun-drenched Southern California, but I quite easily imagine I am in Italy as I arrive at the resort, with its hundreds of olive and pine trees and beautiful architecture so clearly inspired by Andrea Palladio.

Just an hour's drive from Los Angeles, the five hundred-acre resort is a sanctuary of beauty and sophistication, with over one hundred private villas - complete with round-the-clock butler service - and over two hundred bungalow guest rooms and suites with secluded terraces and hand-carved limestone fireplaces. The privacy, stunning surroundings and meticulous attention to guests' every need are just a few of the many reasons why celebrities flock to this magical hideaway. Pelican Hill was inspired by the Renaissance belief that aspiring to perfection uplifts humanity. Underpinning this quest for perfection is the one aspect of Pelican Hill that sets it apart: the personalized travel designer.

With a level of pre-planning unrivalled in the luxury resort world, the service experience begins before I've even arrived. Every aspect and detail of my upcoming visit has already been arranged - my suite has even been scented with a fragrance of my choice. The most highly trained, round-the-clock staff - from butlers to concierges to personal chefs - attend to my every need, completely customizing the experience. The bungalow guest rooms and suites offer an intimate ambiance, making me instantly feel right at home. Each has a fireplace framed by Italian limestone, deep soaking marble baths, forty-inch flat screen televisions, wet bar, Bose sound systems, MP3 ports, wireless internet, five hundred-thread-count sheets and private terraces with unobstructed ocean panoramas.

Villa guests enjoy every imaginable luxury and the most thoughtful, comprehensive and personalised service, pampering and individual attention of any resort in the world.

The exceptionally spacious villas offer expansive terraces with dramatic ocean views, gourmet kitchens and dining areas, personal butlers and staff available twenty-four hours a day to fulfil each guest's every need and desire.

An exclusive privilege, enjoyed by villa guests only, is the Villa Clubhouse, a genteel and serene escape from the everyday world. With its understated, relaxed elegance and light-bathed living room, it provides personally tailored service, private gourmet dining, a radiant blue pool created by 300,000 hand-cut glass mosaic tiles, luxurious cabanas and stunning vistas of the Pacific. I feel comfortable in an instant and I really have to drag myself away.

I meander from one gorgeous pool to another, the Coliseum Pool, inspired by Rome's famous landmark. One of the world's largest circular pools, with tiered decks and luxurious cabanas, it dazzles with a radiant blue surface created by over a million hand-cut glass mosaic tiles, and I cannot resist plunging in.



If you're a regular golfer at home, the resort will arrange to have your clubs shipped over to make your golfing experience as seamless as possible, so there really is no excuse not to get swinging.

The cocooned, sophisticated atmosphere of the spa is place for me to work off my culinary indulgence, or rather, let the highly qualified and experienced staff work it off for me with their range of traditional treatments and therapies. The spa has received the Forbes five-star award consistently each year since opening. With its dramatic Palladian rotunda, wall of flowing water, twenty-two private treatment rooms, steam rooms, saunas and saltwater Roman baths, it offers an unmatched experience.

After perfecting my putting, I've worked up an appetite and am kindly directed to Andrea Ristorante. It offers the unprecedented attention to detail I've already come to expect at Pelican Hill, and I am not let down by the menu which harks back to the culinary traditions and classic dishes of Italy.

But it's so much more than a place to enjoy a good massage. Spa guests can participate in daily beach walks, wellness retreats and more than twenty-five complimentary fitness classes weekly. The spa also features a full-service salon, fitness centre, boutique and a mindful spa cuisine menu. With all this on offer, it's a real joy to get healthy.

For a change of pace, the Coliseum Grill is an incomparably fun and intriguing place to dine. It overlooks the striking Coliseum Pool, with the beautiful backdrop of the Pacific Ocean, and I luxuriate in the food as much as I do in the water.

If you're taking little ones with you, don't worry that it's only grown-up fun. Camp Pelican is an ocean-view children's retreat with a clubhouse, terrace, children's pool and bubble jet fountain, all designed for the little resort guests aged four to twelve. Led by energetic and experienced activities specialists, themed half-day and full-day sessions offer fun that leaves unforgettable memories with your children, which gives you the time to make some of your own. Although, I must admit that playing in the bubble jet fountain looks like a memory I wouldn't mind making myself!

Pelican Hill isn't all about being pampered. It neighbours more than 50,000 acres of permanently protected natural open space, parks and trails, where hiking and mountain biking through neighbouring Irvine Ranch offer something more to discover.



At this rate, I'll be wrinkled like a prune, but it's located at the heart of Pelican Hill and guests gather here to see and be seen, while relaxing and taking in the seemingly endless vistas of the Pacific Ocean.

Eventually I decide that I must return to dry land. Even if you don't know your five-iron from your elbow, Pelican Hill Golf Club is enough to tempt you out on to the greens and fairways. The two eighteen-hole courses, Ocean North and Ocean South, designed by Tom Fazio, are ranked among Golf Digest's America's 100 Greatest Public Golf Courses.

Pelican Hill Golf Academy offers dedicated teaching facilities, including two greens, bunkers and driving tees. The director of instruction, Glenn Deck, is one of Golf Magazine's Top 100 teachers in America and one of Golf Tips magazine's Top 25 US instructors. He offers monthly golf schools, special guest instructor programmes, private lessons and a seasonal Junior Golfers' Academy.



A naughty little treat awaits the Caffé guests, as they are presented with an irresistible array of traditional gelato, and I must indulge myself and have one...or two. I am immersed in la dolce vita in this true Italian coffee bar. As well as the rich aromas of coffee, light breakfasts, smoothies, homemade breads and pastries and more are available, further sweetened by panoramic ocean views and a truly Italian atmosphere of relaxed decadence. I begin to fear all those calories burned in the pools and on the golf course will creep back in ten-fold...

Nearby Crystal Cove stretches along three and a half miles of exquisite coastline framed by sandy beaches, tide pools and a marine park. Ocean activities include surfing, kayaking and paddle boarding along the coast, as well as yachting, sailing, sunset cruises and whale-watching excursions from Newport Harbor.

A stay at the Resort at Pelican Hill can be what you want it to be. If you're just in the mood for lounging by the pool, then you're free tovection, but the probability when you visit Pelican Hill. ■