

# Pelican Hill's vistas, design impress



**Left:** At the Resort at Pelican Hill, the Coliseum pool, one of the largest circular pools in the world, is overlooked by a row of 18 private cabanas and the Coliseum Pool & Grill. **Above:** Andrea Ristorante has its own pasta room, where both kids and adults will enjoy the show.

By Johanna Jainchill

**T**here are many impressive things about Southern California's Resort at Pelican Hill, its size and attention to architectural detail among them, but the memory of its stunning, omnipresent view is what I took home with me.

Blessed with a location along the Newport Coast in Orange County, the resort's designers did what would seem an impossible job of making Pelican Hill's sweeping vistas visible from almost every place on the grounds.

From the balcony of my room, the table at the three restaurants I tried, my lounge chair by the pool and, famously, almost every hole on its two golf courses, the Pacific Ocean, Newport Beach's winding canals and Santa Catalina Island were all on dramatic display.

I visited Pelican Hill over two unseasonably cool days in April, having long been eager to visit a resort nominated every year for a Travel Weekly Readers Choice award for top resort in the world.

Pelican Hill almost fools you with its size. The resort spans 504 acres, of which the golf course takes up approximately 400, and is big enough to have its own streets and traffic lights as well as four restaurants. All this, for only 204 bungalows and 128 multibedroom villas.

What this means is a lot of space and amenities for every guest. Its smallest

rooms, the bungalows, are 850 square feet, and its largest villas are more than 3,500 square feet.

But all of that space per guest doesn't mean Pelican Hill feels underutilized, in part because its spa, golf course and restaurants are all popular with both locals and visitors staying at other properties. Be sure to book a spot at the Spa at Pelican Hill early; it's popular. The menu includes some signature treatments that incorporate local ingredients only available in season — in fact, the Honey Body Gelato scrub I tried is not offered after May. (Summer lavender starts in June.)

Perched on a hill overlooking the sea, the

resort provides shuttles to Crystal Cove State Beach and Newport Beach's Fashion Island shopping center, but I didn't see any reason to leave the property during my short stay.

Every bungalow at Pelican Hill has a private entrance and parking spot in front of it, as well as a spacious balcony with either ocean or garden views. It's worth getting the ocean view and having room service on your balcony at least once. Every room has gas fireplaces made of Italian limestone, and the 15-foot wood-beam ceilings make the spacious rooms feel even larger than they are.

The Palladian look of the rooms carries through the resort at large, which was de-

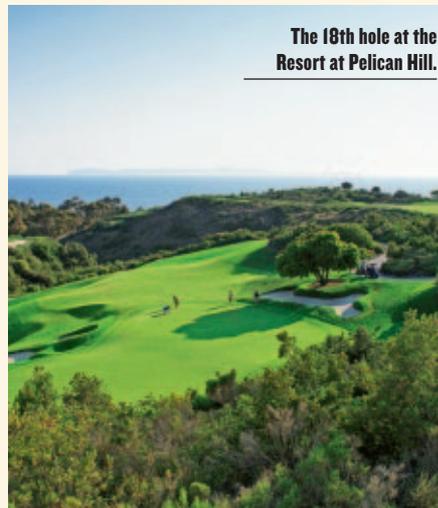
## Water conservation lauded

It's not easy being a golf-centric resort in California these days, which is in the midst of its worst drought in decades.

But instead of criticism, the Resort at Pelican Hill has been receiving accolades for its water conservation efforts on its 400 acres of golf course; specifically, that the resort uses reclaimed water to keep its greens green and its sophisticated system to catch, store and reuse any rainfall.

Pelican Hill employs a full-time water quality manager who monitors and maintains the system, which the resort says has conserved more than 50 million gallons of water per year. Staying at the resort, one does not necessarily feel that there is a drought going on, but the resort is going to bring water conservation ideas to its guests by encouraging greater reuse of bed linens and bath towels.

The 18th hole at the Resort at Pelican Hill.



—J.J.

signed to look and feel like an Italian seaside village. The designers seemed to overlook nothing in trying to make the resort a Mediterranean oasis in the middle of "the O.C." From the 750 olive trees that dot the property, to arched porticos and domed ceiling columns, to the roof tiles, the designers had Italian architect Andrea Palladio, and Italy, in mind throughout.

They took it back a little further in Italian history with the pool area, called the Coliseum, designed with the Rome landmark in mind. The 136-foot-diameter pool, which the resort says is one of the largest circular pools in the world, is surrounded by arches and columns, and with a row of 18 private cabanas and the Coliseum Pool & Grill on the terrace above it, is meant to feel like a Roman amphitheater.

As for dining, it makes sense that the main restaurant here, Andrea Ristorante, named after Palladio, would be Italian. And it's worth a stop to try its pasta, as the place has its own pasta room (Cucina della Pasta), where both kids and adults will enjoy the show. Piccolo is one of its lesser-known restaurants because it's available only to resort guests; it is located in the Villas, which except for eating is exclusively for the villa guests to use the pool and lounge. Piccolo's menu is fun, incorporating small Asian and Italian plates, enabling guests to assemble a meal of sushi rolls, lamb meatballs and Korean ribs.

Gardenview bungalows start at \$495 per night. Guests at Pelican Hill will enjoy that the resort does not nickel-and-dime: there is no resort fee for use of its fitness center and pool. WiFi; an array of fitness classes, including yoga and beach hikes; and both valet and self-parking are all included. The resort pays minimum 10% commission with "added value" amenities for guests who book through travel agents. Visit [www.pelicanhill.com](http://www.pelicanhill.com).