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Visit A Luxurious, Living Masterpiece- The Resort At Pelican Hill

BY DENNIS MILLER

There are many aspects that go into the making of a resort. The lodging, dining, spa, recreation and, of course, the golf. All come together to form the overall experience for the guest. Seldom do all the pieces come together in a perfect blend to create a masterpiece. But that is the case with *The Resort at Pelican Hill*, a golf resort on the coast of Newport Beach in Southern California.

The resort design was heavily influenced by the Italian Renaissance architect, Andrea Palladio. It takes up about one mile of coastline and is 504 acres overall--400 of which are taken up by the two golf courses. *Pelican Hill* is different from most resorts with world-class golf courses--the courses are just part of the equation, not the specific reason for the visit.

“We have a multi-faceted group who plays here,” said Director of Golf Steve Friedlander. “The resort guests are not a majority of the play. We have a lot of people who come here and don’t play golf. We are a kind of property where golf is not the only the only thing to do.”

Whether it is the spa, dining, a wedding or just a relaxing visit to the Southern California beach area, *Pelican Hill* has everything needed to build a memorable vacation. *The Resort at Pelican Hill* is a destination resort for those seeking to escape either the heat or the cold of their respective home.

GOLF: *Pelican Hill* features 36 incredible holes of Tom Fazio design and they are not your standard resort courses. In the mid-2000’s, both courses were shut down so that Fazio could come in and re-perfect the courses. Re-opened in November of 2007, the Southern California courses are known as elite tracks, earning top rankings from several publications and ranked among the best in not just all of California, but the United States, as well. Neither is your typical resort course--wide open and accommodating--but they are as good as it gets, and tough to boot.

Friedlander has seen a number of world-class courses in his career, working at both *Doral* and *Whistling Straights* before coming to *Pelican Hill* six and half years ago. At *Whistling Straights*, he was the host professional for the 2004 *PGA Championships*.

“They are not what you call resort courses,” explained Friedlander of his two courses. “They can be very playable if you play the right set of tees. But if your ego gets in the way with all the forced carries ...”

The ego can be soothed by the expert assistance from the forecaddie program. All of the forecaddies are highly skilled and have the nuances of the 36 holes down to a science. I would highly recommend Kirk Mashburn to guide you through your rounds on the two courses, as he blends local knowledge with great stories of his caddying experiences. When compared to the multitude of caddies I have had over the years, Mashburn is right at the top of the list.

The *Ocean South Course* is only 6,580 yards from the tips, but it makes for a daunting round with all the forced carries, the par of 70, the slope of 133 and the feeling you get of narrow fairways when you are standing on the tee.

“It’s an illusion how tight it looks,” said Friedlander. “But it is a tough course from the back tees.”

Some of the highlights are No. 12 and 13, back-to-back par 3’s right on the bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. No. 13 has two greens, with both being protected by a number of bunkers. The finishing hole is a classic, as well--with one of the big forced carries over a canyon facing the golfer off the tee. How much you want to try to cut off will influence how difficult the tee shot becomes. The hole is rated as the second toughest hole on the

course and features three pages of help in the yardage guide.

The *Ocean North Course* plays longer at 6,945 yards, also has a 133 slope and carries a par of 71. The course has incredible views of the Pacific Ocean throughout.

“There are a lot more panoramic views from the North Course,” said Friedlander. “I love being able to tell people when we are out on the course to aim at the sailboat on the ocean. But I have to say hurry up, it’s moving. You don’t get to say that too often.”

There is no shortage of incredible vistas throughout the *North Course*, starting as early as the tee box on No. 3 and continuing through No. 17, the signature hole on the course. The 558-yard, par 5 features a dogleg right, with the second shot offering a huge risk-and-reward option. Opting to challenge the bordering canyon and bunkers can shorten the hole, but can also make you pay.

The finishing hole on the *North* is also a beauty. There are two forced carries on this 430-yard, par 4. The tee shot comes from an elevated tee box and requires almost a 200-yard carry off the tee. The approach is no bargain either, as another downhill shot to the green is made more difficult, depending on the length of your tee shot. A poor shot off the tee leaves a lengthy approach over the canyon.

Given the beauty of the two courses, as well as the reputation they have garnered in such a short time, it seems to be a given that a professional event will grace the complex at some point. Neither course is walker-friendly, which will cause some problems, but given Friedlander’s pedigree, it is not a matter of if *Pelican Hill* will get a professional event, but when.

“I’ve had conversations with the PGA, USGA and the PGA Tour,” said Friedlander regarding an event at *Pelican Hill*. “Hosting a full field event might be difficult, but a limited field event would be doable. At some point we will have something.”

The practice facility and learning center are befitting the rest of the resort. Under the guidance of top-ranked teaching professional Glenn Deck, the *Pelican Hill Golf Academy* offers a number of programs, ranging from 2-day sessions to half-day, to even custom programs.

LODGING: For starters, the registration building is kept separate from the lodging areas to provide more privacy and less hustle and bustle. The ranges of accommodations are plentiful and all sensational.

VILLAS: There are 128 villas on the property, ranging from 2-4 bedrooms at 2,193 square feet up to 3,581 square feet. They are the ultimate in luxury, as the villas offer top-flight living with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean. There is a villa staff at your disposal including a concierge and butler--and personal chef, upon request. Each unit also has a washer and dryer in the private garage.

The downstairs of the 4-bedroom has a pair of bedrooms,



The 18th hole, Ocean South Course

a gourmet kitchen, featuring granite counters, a Sub-Zero refrigerator and a refrigerated wine rack. There is also a dining area and a great room with a 60-inch flat screen TV and a limestone fireplace.

The upstairs has other 2 bedrooms, including the master suite that features a bathroom with a marble walk-in shower and a deep soaking tub. There are 42-inch flat screen televisions in every bedroom, along with a DVD player.

Finally, there is a spacious patio with both a covered table and reclining loungers that allow you to relax and see the sun set into the Pacific Ocean.

Bungalows: There are 204 on the property, ranging from 800 square feet up to 1,600 square feet for the suites. All the bungalows feature a fireplace, as well as a terrace.

While the bungalows are markedly smaller than the villas, the attention to detail is the same, as is the elegance. Plasma televisions, high quality sound systems, spacious bathrooms and private terraces with ocean views are the highlights of the

bungalows, which are located within walking distance of the main section of the resort.

DINING: There are five quality dining options, all with either golf course or ocean views.

Andrea is not fine dining, but signature dining. Casually sleek, the terrace area features heated flooring and heated ceilings. Featuring Northern Italian fare, *Andrea* exemplifies the quality dining experience associated with one of the top resorts in the country.

The *Pelican Grill and Lounge* is located in the golf clubhouse, featuring California-inspired cuisine.

The *Coliseum Pool and Grill* offers casual poolside dining, with both inside and outside tables available.

SPA: The spa facilities alone would make for a fulfilling trip for a couple.

There are maybe two dozen 5-star spas in the world and one

resides at *Pelican Hill* in *The Spa*. With 22 treatment rooms and a fully-equipped fitness center that is open to all guests, there are no resort fees for guests to use the spa area or fitness center.

There is also a full salon on-site, offering a variety of options, including styling, haircutting and shampoo and conditioning treatments.

The *Acqua Colonnade*--with separate men's and women's facilities--features an herbal steam room, sauna and whirlpool. Usage is complimentary to resort guests receiving treatments and it is the perfect way to wrap up a day of relaxation.

OTHER AMENITIES: Easily one of the top selling points regarding *The Resort at Pelican Hill* is the multitude of other options.

Wedding Facilities: When someone chooses to get married at *Pelican Hill*, they literally have the day to themselves, as the property only allows one wedding at a time. *Mar Vista* is designed to offer total privacy, standing separate from the hotel and its guests. Ideally located, it consists of the elegant *Mar Vista Ballroom*, *La Cappella* and the Event Lawn with a palladian-inspired rotunda. A separate entrance and dedicated valet staff ensure complete exclusivity. The outdoor ceremony takes place on a manicured oval lawn that spills out to the end of the ridge, where a timeless, iconic Italian rotunda is perched 300 feet above the ocean. If the weather mandates, the ceremony takes place indoors. *La Cappella* captures the drama of its setting with two picture windows that look onto the Pacific Ocean. The fireplace and wood-beam ceiling sets the tone of warmth and intimacy in the room and offers the couple a flexible, indoor space. There are plenty of additional amenities for the wedding group, including complimentary accommodations for the bridal couple the night of the wedding.

Coliseum Pool: The pool is the largest circular pool in the world, measuring 136 feet in diameter. There are more than one million glass tiles that were cut and laid by hand to line the pool. It is a visually striking pool, with the golf course and the ocean providing the backdrop as you relax in your personalized cabana during the day. Spending a day lounging in your cabana, staring at both the pool and the ocean, is guaranteed to send you back to your bungalow or villa in a relaxed mood.

Camp Pelican Kids Club: The resort offers two programs, one for kids ages 4-12 and another for teens ages 13-17. There is a lounge area with bean bags, tables and chairs available. There are also two 60" plasma televisions for interactive games or movie watching. Along with the televisions, there are *Nintendo Wii* and *Sony PlayStation 3* systems, with over 40 games available. A kids pool with lounge chairs, umbrellas and a bubble jet fountain are on site for the younger kids, with a shaded heated patio, chairs, foosball and ping pong also available.

Meeting/Event Space: There are 20,000 square feet of meeting

space available, with indoor/outdoor space and ocean views. Meeting rooms range from 880 square feet up to the *Mar Vista Ballroom* at 5,421 square feet.

OVERALL: I have travelled all over North America, have stayed at some very nice properties and it is tough to find a more sensational property overall than *The Resort at Pelican Hill*.

From the time we arrived at the villa check-in until the time we departed, we felt pampered and spoiled. The ultimate compliment I can pay *Pelican Hill* is to say you never feel like you want to leave. It is the ideal vacation spot for all your needs. Bring the family, stay in a villa and enjoy all the comforts of home in luxury and style. If you want a romantic getaway for you and your significant other, stay in one of the bungalows and escape from the grind of day-to-day life.

The golf, lodging, spa, dining and other amenities are all world-class. In a short time, *The Resort at Pelican Hill* has gained world-wide acclaim from a number of publications and ranking services. It is "5-Plus Stars" across the board and a trip you will never regret taking.

For more information on *The Resort at Pelican Hill*, visit their website. ○

 www.pelicanhill.com

Dennis Miller is Editor of *ACES* Magazine.

