



ANDREW HARPER'S  
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online

APRIL 2011

TRAVELS THROUGH  
**POLAND**  
*plus Chicago and Southern California*

{ CANDID REVIEWS BY A WRITER WHO TRAVELS INCOGNITO AND ALWAYS PAYS HIS OWN WAY }

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**COVER** MALBORK CASTLE ON THE VISTULA RIVER, POLAND

**OPPOSITE PAGE** *clockwise from top left* TOWNHOUSES IN GDANSK, POLAND; OCEAN NORTH HOLE 17 AT THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL, NEWPORT, CALIFORNIA; MANGO AT *ALINEA* RESTAURANT IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS; CHICAGO RIVER AND SKYLINE IN SPRINGTIME.

# TUSCANY COMES TO NEWPORT



# BEACH

THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL >>



# THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL

SEQUESTERED SOUTH OF LOS ANGELES IN the verdant hills between Newport Beach and Laguna Beach, **The Resort at Pelican Hill** takes its inspiration from Italy, specifically the architecture of Andrea Palladio, and looks, from a distance, like a slice of Tuscany transplanted beside the Pacific. The hotel opened in November 2008, and its 504 acres of grounds have been landscaped with groves of olive, cypress and fig trees. Unlike those at many new properties, they are mature plantings.

A beautifully paved circular courtyard and a main building with ochre-hued walls, graceful arches and a tiled roof combine to create a strong initial impression. A valet parking attendant appeared within seconds of our arrival, and a second polite and efficient staff member escorted us to check-in.

Pelican Hill is actually two hotels in one. There are 204 Bungalow rooms and suites south of the main building, set at different

levels to ensure privacy and memorable views. (The Pacific is visible from about half of the accommodations.) Then there are 128 Villas to the north, in two-, three-, or four-bedroom configurations with full kitchens and butler service, plus a dedicated pool and clubhouse. These are separately gated and have become popular with Hollywood notables in search of discreet getaways. They are also ideal for family stays, as there is a children's area, Camp Pelican, with its own pool and daily activities. Villa guests have full access to all of the facilities of the resort.

The bungalows come as single rooms (unusually spacious at 847 square feet) or as one- or two-bedroom suites with combined living and dining areas. Our single room proved airy and bright, with a gas fireplace set in a handsome limestone chimney, and a comfortable sitting area adjacent to an expansive terrace. In addition to the expected amenities, it provided a sophisticated Bose sound system and a wet bar. The spacious bath had vanities set in



BUNGALOW

# THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL

continued

granite counters, a walk-in shower with a stone bench, and a soaking tub. The care and thought that went into the design and execution of the rooms is evident in the craftsmanship of the woodwork (especially the sliding shuttered doors leading to the

IT IS CLAIMED TO BE THE **LARGEST SUCH POOL IN THE WORLD**, MADE ALL THE MORE EYE-CATCHING BY THE **1 MILLION HAND-SET BLUE GLASS TILES**.

terrace), the detailed stonework in the baths, and a sophisticated lighting scheme. Sumptuous materials have been employed in a pleasant, if rather bland, palette of light browns, creams and olives.

The centerpiece of the resort is the stunning Coliseum Pool. A perfect circle 136 feet in diameter, it is claimed to be the largest such pool in the world, made all the more eye-catching by the 1 million hand-set blue glass tiles. (The pool is only three and a half feet deep, however, which

may be shallow enough to keep the lawyers occupied.) Poolside cabanas come with refrigerators, flat-panel TVs and service from the adjacent *Coliseum Grill*. There, casual fare is complemented by more substantial dishes such as grilled Angus skirt steak and sesame-crusted ahi tuna.

Pelican Hill's formal restaurant is *Andrea*, in the main building, where the focus is on Northern

Italian cuisine. The ingredients are pristine, the preparations delicious, and overall, the cooking is sophisticated yet unpretentious. Standout dishes from our dinner included a superb pasta of pumpkin ravioli with parsley pesto — pastas are made in a special room with controlled temperature and humidity — and a roasted pork loin with seasoned sliced potatoes. At the suggestion of our engaging and competent waiter, we dined on the lovely colonnaded terrace. This has unusually efficient ceiling heaters



that make for a pleasant outdoor meal even in cool weather.

Tom Fazio designed the 36 holes at Pelican Hill's two championship golf courses, as well as the 18-hole **Oak Creek Golf Club** nearby, which means golf heaven for enthusiasts. Also notable is the resort's 20,000-square-foot spa with 22 treatment

rooms plus sauna, steam and a Roman-style whirlpool bath.

Overall, Pelican Hill is a lavish, carefully planned and well-managed resort in a lovely setting. **AH**

**THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL 95** Bungalow Room, from \$495; Bungalow Suite, from \$955; Two-Bedroom Villa, from \$695. 22701 Pelican Hill Road South, Newport Coast, CA 92657. Tel. (800) 315-8214 or (949) 467-6800. [www.pelicanhill.com](http://www.pelicanhill.com)