

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

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# Pelican Hill

A NEW RESORT  
TAKES ITS CUE FROM  
ANDREA PALLADIO

Architecture by Robert Hidey, AIA,  
and Altevors Associates

Interior Architecture by Andrew Skurman, AIA

Interior Design by Darrell Schmitt, ASID

Landscape Architecture by

Burton Landscape Architecture Studio

Text by Patricia Leigh Brown

Photography by Barbara Kraft



For the style of Pelican Hill, on California's Newport Coast, Donald Bren, chairman of the Irvine Company, which owns the hotel, looked to Andrea Palladio. For its realization, he turned to Robert Hidey, Altevors Associates, Andrew Skurman and Darrell Schmitt, as well as his own team of architects and designers. ABOVE: Roses and specimen trees frame a cluster of villas. RIGHT: The light-filled living room of a four-bedroom villa. Tufenkian carpet.





**W**ere he to time-travel to Orange County, California, the great Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio might be astonished by Pelican Hill in Newport Beach, a golf resort where guests have been known to purchase Bentleys ahead of their arrival (which then fetch them from the airport) and where professional forecaddies await players on two Tom Fazio-designed courses. But he'd recognize the resort's symmetry and proportion, the peaceful harmony of which quiets the glitter.

It is here, on this stretch of the Pacific long nicknamed the American Riviera, that Donald Bren, chairman of the Irvine Company, decided to build a Mediterranean-style resort. It was a monumental undertaking but one eased by a felicitous collaboration between the Los Angeles interior designer Darrell Schmitt, the Irvine architect Robert Hidey, the San Francisco architect Andrew Skurman, the San Diego architectural firm Altevers Associates, Burton Landscape Architectural Studio of Solana Beach and the Irvine Company, which developed the 504-acre property.

"During the design process we shared many images, books, sketches and, of course, dialogue about Palladian principles and appropriate classical forms and precedents," says Bren, who became interested in the architect's work when traveling in northern Italy in the early 1980s. "A one-of-a-kind site in a magnificent community deserved a very special building," he continues. "In addition to being unique, the resort had to relate to the surrounding homes, which incorporate a range of Mediterranean architectural styles." "Palladio is appropriate for California,"

An air of Michael Taylor, creator of the California Look, imbues all 128 villas, each of which affords relaxed interiors and stunning views of the Pacific Ocean. ABOVE: A villa living room. Seating, A. Rudin. Cabinet, Drexel Heritage. Tufenkian carpet.

ABOVE RIGHT: A master bedroom. Walters Wicker chair and ottoman. Desk chair, A. Rudin. RIGHT: Each villa enjoys a private terrace. Flame trees and bougainvillea provide color, while glass wind screens ensure guests' comfort. Sunbrella fabric.



*"We wanted a welcoming residential feel, a domestic scale more like a Tuscan cottage."*





LEFT: A portico of the Tuscan order identifies the entrance to the Villa Clubhouse, whose amenities are reserved for villa guests. The hotel's grounds were planned by Burton Landscape Architecture Studio. BELOW: The clubhouse pool.

echoes Andrew Skurman, a proud classicist who was responsible for the resort's interior architecture. "Palladian villas were built with thick walls that retained heat in the winter and kept interiors cool in the summer. They work extremely well in the California climate."

One of Palladio's enduring precepts is that beauty is derived from the relationship of the whole to its parts. At Pelican Hill, the villas are the most exclusive part of the whole—a resort-within-resort with its own gated entrance, pool, concierge and flotilla of beige-suited butlers tending to the 128 two-, three- and four-bedroom ocean-view villas, the largest of which is a spacious 3,600 square feet. Guests are greeted by the concierge and once at their villas, find private garages, gourmet kitchens, wine cabinets, custom furnishings and deep soaking tubs. (And a four-star chef, too, should they wish it.)

At the villas' heart is the Villa Clubhouse—a somewhat modest term for an ambitious 10,000-square-foot structure sheathed in hand-applied Italian plaster. The great room within has a baronial disposition, presided over by a 24-foot-high barrel-vaulted ceiling and a tapered limestone chimney breast inspired by those in 16th-century Italian ducal palaces. But the formal interior detailing is softened by Darrell Schmitt's design, which evokes a California casualness.

The designer employed a subtle tawny palette and a tactile approach to materials throughout—hand-hewn alder ceilings,



Furnished with comfortable seating and antiques, the clubhouse great room feels like a private home. Its firebox brickwork is based on the 14th-century chevron paving of the Piazza del Campo in Siena, Italy.

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The westerly view from the clubhouse pool takes in not only the lower terraces and golf courses of the hotel but the whole of Newport Harbor. Lining the pool are 300,000 hand-cut blue glass tiles. Chaise and umbrella fabrics, Sunbrella.

woven rattan armchairs, overscale sofas upholstered in chenille, and iron table bases and lamps. “We wanted a welcoming residential feel, a domestic scale more like a Tuscan cottage,” he explains. “After correctness comes comfort,” he continues. And with that, a new maxim is created.

“It was a unified vision,” observes Steven Susnir, a principal architect at Altevors Associates. “The company didn’t want anything too precious or trendy. They wanted a timeless signature.” From porticoes built to ancient mathematical ratios to the hotel’s main pool modeled on Greek and Roman amphitheaters, the resort boasts a hefty pedigree. “I simply expressed a desire to achieve an elegant and refined architecture distinct from the more generic Mediterranean styles found in most California coastal resorts,” offers Bren. But it’s not without humor: In an homage to perhaps the *true* principal architect of the hotel, the much-lauded culinary centerpiece (which even has a temperature-controlled pasta room) has fittingly been christened Andrea.

The Palladian ideal of harmony with nature may be most directly experienced by the resort’s golfers, who have the run of two of the country’s finest—and most ecologically minded—courses, with magnificent ocean views from every hole. Recently “reperfected” by Fazio and approached via a sweeping bridge inspired by a Roman aqueduct, they are among the few places in the world where you can tell a playing partner to “aim at the yacht” for his or her tee shot line.

Nestled into terraced hillsides that slope to the sea, Pelican Hill feels simultaneously rooted in the Mediterranean past and living-in-the-present-moment California. “Palladian architecture forms a great fit with the ancient arcadian tradition that has brought many people to California,” Bren says, “people seeking the dream of contentment and the good life in an idyllic landscape.” □

## Pelican Hill

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