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# Luxury Landmark

The Irvine Company's new **Resort at Pelican Hill** is poised to change the landscape of relaxation in California forever. BY VICTORIA NAMKUNG

Mar Vista, the resort's 20,000-square-foot event space, overlooking lush fairways and the Pacific Ocean.





Mediterranean bungalows offer unobstructed ocean views, wood-beamed ceilings, Italian limestone fireplaces and private terraces.

turning ocean views? Check. Private villas with butlers and concierge services? Check. The epitome of luxury? Double-check. But is there such a thing as super-luxury? With a goal of creating the finest resort in the world, the Irvine Company has set a new industry standard with the 504-acre Resort at Pelican Hill. Rather than merely creating a hot spot or a sprawling resort that could garner attention for

a year or two before going out of fashion, the Resort at Pelican Hill is designed to feel timeless and is intended to attract visitors for the next 100 years. The resort's motto is "The Possibility of Perfection," and after this month's grand opening (the revamped golf course and Pelican Grill opened in November, 2007), the world will get a chance to judge for itself.

In Orange County, the Irvine Company is known for creating much of the area's Italian and Mediterranean architecture and design—from upscale apartment communities to Fashion Island, a luxury coastal shopping destination. While the Irvine Company's portfolio includes 400 office buildings, 37 retail centers, 90 apartment communities, three hotels (the company manages two of the three), five marinas and two golf clubs across Orange County, Los Angeles, San Diego and Silicon Valley, the new resort is its biggest undertaking yet. The idea that started more than a decade ago finally broke ground in Newport Coast in September of 2005.

It sits on 504 acres of exquisite land, nestled between Laguna Beach and Newport Beach. There's a 36-hole Tom Fazio-designed golf course, a 23,000-square-foot spa featuring Roman soaking tubs and a 28-foot Palladian rotunda, five restaurants and cafes and a 136-foot coliseum pool made with 1.3 million hand-laid and hand-polished tiles. "All of the tiles are custom made and no two the same," says Managing Director Giuseppe Lama. "We had 25 people in the pool for a few months because it is the most complex pool to put together. It's also the most remarkable." Furnished cabanas and chic umbrellas surround the perfectly circular pool.

Then there are the 128 appointed villas and 204 bungalows with marble baths, fireplaces, terraces and wood beam ceilings. Hillsides are strewn with 100-year-old olive trees, each residence has framed flatscreen televisions and even the sunken bathtubs have ocean views. The executive team hails from the



Villas inspired by Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio; the lounge at Pelican Grill; One of two Tom Fazio-designed courses on the property.







Between Newport Beach and Laguna Beach, Resort at Pelican Hill stretches along 3.5 miles of coastline framed by sandy coves, tide pools and a marine park.

finest resorts in the world, and a staff of 1,300 brings the resort to life detail by detail. The architecture and design team did extensive research on Andrea Palladio

and visited his major buildings in Italy for inspiration. You could even say the influential 16th century Italian architect is partly responsible for the resort's vaulted arches, Venetian plaster completed by a staff trained by Italian master artists and gracefully balanced proportions.

"The idea was to create something that was unique and special and truly consistent to the California lifestyle," explains Lama. "It's the closet thing to the Mediterranean or Tuscany you can find." No item has been ignored at the resort, which is poised to be a California landmark in the tradition of San Simeon or the Huntington mansion—a monumental structure propelled by a clear vision and formidable resources. You'll find heated floors by the valet, a 58-degree temperature controlled pasta room at Andrea restaurant, an oculus in the main lobby and ocean views from nearly every spot in the resort. Even the tops of the parking garages look lush with lawns and cone-shaped topiary trees.

With up to 3,000 square feet of space, a garage, outdoor terraces, butlers at your disposal and a gourmet kitchen, the villas are where it's at, whether you're staying for one night or an entire year. Villa guests have a private pool, a clubhouse and private entrance. There's a virtual concierge center for creating itineraries in the main hotel and Camp Pelican to keep kids and teens occupied with numerous excursions and activities. The villa homes and bungalows are built in tiers among cypress trees, creating views of tiled roofs in addition to the Pacific Ocean. "Michelangelo did wonderful things in Europe, and the Irvine Company did a wonderful thing for modern times," says Lama of the resort. "It's truly a gift." 22800 Pelican Hill Rd., South Newport Coast, 949-467-6800; pelicanhill.com. ●



MONTAUK, N.Y.

## ENDLESS SUMMER

Set on Fort Pond in Montauk, at the end of Long Island, **The Surf Lodge** made waves on the East Coast this summer with its sun-bleached opening. It's first in the new Lodge brand—Snow and Sunset are next. 183 Edgemere St., Montauk, 631-668-2632; surf lodge montauk.com. J.M.H.



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