

Lavish & Laid-back

A PERFECT COMBINATION AT THE
RESORT AT PELICAN HILL, NEWPORT BEACH

*story by Heidi Chackel
photography courtesy of The Resort at Pelican Hill*

Following on the heels of The Lodge at Torrey Pines, which was featured in our summer issue, we bring you our second Editor's Travel Pick—The Resort at Pelican Hill in Newport Beach. This ongoing feature highlights luxurious and often times family friendly travel recommendations, both by air and land. Pelican Hill is a prime example.

Located in Newport Beach, California, Pelican Hill boasts a Forbes Five-Star Award and a #1 U.S. Resort by *Conde Nast Traveler Readers' Choice*. Guests can choose from Bungalow Guest Rooms, Bungalow Suites and Villas and enjoy the comforts of home with spectacular views of the ocean. The Villas are 2, 3 or 4 bedrooms up to 3,500 square feet and boast a private pool in addition to the main resort pool. Italian influence is everywhere, from the cuisine to the Italian Renaissance

architecture. No detail has been overlooked. "To fit into the environment and keep local residents happy we landscaped the roof of the parking garage so no one is looking down onto pavement," says Kate Starr, director of communications and public relations.

Speaking of locals, while Pelican Hill seems like a private world, it is located just a short drive from Newport Beach. During our stay, we ran into numerous locals who were there simply to enjoy dinner, a spa treatment or even just a drink at one of the bars on site. Several tables near us at lunch one day were filled with locals on their lunch break or having a business meeting.

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From the moment you arrive to the moment you leave, the experience that stands out most is service. I can't rave enough about the staff and how happy they are to be working at Pelican Hill. Be it one of the drivers who man a fleet of Escalades to transport you around the property and into Newport Beach or the kitchen staff who serve you an in-room meal on your private patio, they are all kind, knowledgeable and aim to please. "We want everyone to feel at home here," says Starr. "Anyone can walk in and see how beautiful and luxurious our destination is, but it's the home-away-from-home comfort and Five-Star service experience that keeps our guests coming back."

Pelican Hill is an expansive property, covering 504 acres. Thank goodness they offer their fleet of Escalades, which we took advantage of throughout our stay. While our bungalow was walking distance from the main estate, the pool and the spa, it was far enough from the golf course that a coach was welcome.



We also used the coach service to catch a ride into Newport Beach one afternoon where we enjoyed an electric boat ride at Bayside Marina. Courtesy of California Recreation Company at Bayside Marina, my husband captained our stylish Duffy boat as we took in iconic sights with the help of a harbor map. While it was just the two of us, the boat was large enough to hold eight people comfortably. The picnic that Pelican Hill packed for us was delicious and thoroughly enjoyed in the picturesque setting (www.greatslips.com).

Other than our boat ride, we did not venture outside the resort. While there is plenty to do and see around Newport Beach, we simply enjoyed all Pelican Hill had to offer and relaxed in the elegant surroundings enjoying a kid-free vacation.

Golf was great, really great. Now I am a bit biased, as I broke 80 for the first time in my life! We played the Ocean South Course and both courses (Ocean North Course) are well respected and boast truly magnificent ocean views. Perhaps my record round is reflective of my first lesson since I was a kid. Glenn Deck, PGA Member, spent an hour with us just prior to our round, and apparently he worked wonders with my game. Deck's impressive list of accolades includes recognition as one of *Golf*

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Magazine's Top 100 Teachers in America and Southern California's PGA Teacher of the Year. And I can't forget Pink, our awesome forecaddie, who helped me navigate the fairways and get a feel for the greens.

Tom Fazio designed Pelican Hill's 36 championship holes to be unlike any other. The Ocean North Course features ocean views from every tee, and even on our somewhat foggy June day they were fantastic. The Ocean South Course also boasts numerous ocean-side holes as well as eucalyptus and brush gardens. Both courses nestle seamlessly into the natural Southern California environment of the Newport Coast.



Pelican Grill, located in the clubhouse, seemed to be the happening spot around Pelican Hill, filled with resort guests as well as locals, and we thoroughly enjoyed two of our meals here. Ocean views can be enjoyed from nearly every seat inside and out. With fresh cuisine, an open kitchen, fireplaces, a dining room and a backlit onyx bar you can stop by after a round of golf or dress it up for a night out. Live music in the bar tops off this dining option, as well as large screen TVs for the night's game.



At the main clubhouse, Andrea Ristorante is the resort's fine dining experience, boasting ocean views from the dining room and patio tables. While the entire resort focuses on farm-to-table ingredients, this is especially notable at Andrea. Seasonal menus are therefore a must and ingredients often arrive from the resort's parent company's own farm, The Irvine Ranch. In fact, Chef Jean-Pierre Dubray often visits the farm and hand selects produce to create his menu with.

The Spa at Pelican Hill is a destination all on its own with activities ranging from personal training sessions and wellness classes to hair care and a plethora of

massages. During our stay, I visited the hair salon and enjoyed a signature massage. My advice, when planning your visit to the spa, is to give yourself ample time to enjoy the soaking pool, relaxation room and other complimentary amenities.

Planned activities by the resort are abundant and are enjoyed by resort guests and locals alike. During our stay, offerings included an etiquette class, a Father's Day brunch, a mother-daughter wellness experience, an art and wine walk and much more.



“WE CHURN OUR OWN ARTISAN GELATO FOR THOSE DINING WITH US IN OUR RESTAURANTS AND DURING EVENTS, AND WE ALSO MAKE OUR OWN PASTA DAILY—17 DIFFERENT KINDS.”

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If the weather is good during your visit, the Coliseum Pool is a must do. This dramatic piece of art is of course circular and features one million sparkling tiles. It is literally the biggest pool I have ever seen and is situated perfectly with ocean and golf views. Cabanas surround the pool as well as additional seating and a restaurant with outdoor seating above that offers heated ceiling for the cooler days and nights.

Near the pool is Camp Pelican, which kids love and parents love for that very reason! Camp Pelican boasts its own clubhouse and pool for seasonal activities, games, movie nights, crafts, yoga and more. In addition to this children's program the resort also offers fun activities for teens.

The Resort at Pelican Hill is also popular for weddings and events accommodating groups from 10 to 300. They offer a culinary experience for every occasion, again featuring in-house catering from baked goods to fresh pasta and locally grown produce. “We churn our own artisan gelato for those dining with us in our restaurants and during events,” says Starr. “We also make our own pasta daily—17 different kinds.” For the event itself be it a full-scale wedding or business conference, you can be involved as much or as little as you like. The staff can literally handle every detail from start to finish if you choose to just show up! &

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