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GOLF VACATIONS

JANUARY 2016

GOLF WITH GRACE

**TURKS AND
CAICOS**



RESORT REPORT
OMNI BARTON CREEK
RESORT AND SPA

Plus: LUXURY AT THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL

The Resort at Pelican Hill

When Five Stars Should Be Ten Stars!



I gave this resort a 5 rating, however, honestly it deserves a 10. If one item in particular stands out above all the exemplary traits found at the resort, it is that service is supreme.

The Resort at Pelican Hill is not simply a golf destination. It seeks to compete with nearby jewels like the Ritz Carlton, Montage and Terranea, for guests who come for spa services, poolside lounging, beaches, and nearby attractions, or to live the chic Southern California lifestyle. Golf is just one of the resort's most prominent amenities, and what a lure for people who love the game.

Located between the toney towns of Laguna Beach and Newport Beach, abutting Crystal Cove State Park (a resort shuttle ushers guests to the park's beach), Pelican Hill Resort is so "un-hotel". There are no elevator lobbies to the guest's rooms in the main building. The 332 guest accommodations are set apart and in two distinct areas – the Villas (128) and the Bungalows (204), both reachable via personal automobile, or hotel transportation.

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The architecture of the main building, inspired by the design principles of the 16th Century Italian Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio, is a residential-style luxury retreat resembling a Mediterranean village. And, with the design genius of Tom Fazio, the two golf courses attached to the resort, are simply marvelous to play and the views offered are outstanding.

The setting, together with the well-manicured grounds and Olive trees, is reminiscent of a Tuscany village.

Over 750 hand-picked mature olive trees help complete the Mediterranean patina of Pelican Hill.

Arriving at the resort, you first see this grand herringbone-bricked square, one of the largest of its kind in the US. Then, at the porte cochère you are met by the valets, and that's when the impeccable detail to service begins and continues throughout your stay at the resort.

The spacious lobby vestibule and the Great Room at the Resort have been transformed recently from an elegant, formal lounge area

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Each Villa features a full gourmet kitchen with state-of-the-art appliances, full living room, limestone fireplace, one- or two-car garage, and private butlers to tend to your needs. Villa guests enjoy exclusive use of a private clubhouse with a pool and fitness center.

Nightly rates, depending on how one books, season and availability, range from \$495 per night for the bungalows, green fees are \$315 per round for the public (guests not staying overnight at the Resort), \$295 for Resort guests and spa services are about equally priced. The Resort also offers special packages such as the Golf & Spa Family Hideaway for \$795.00 per night. Book a one-night Bungalow or Villa stay with one golf round and one spa treatment, and get complimentary full-day access to Camp Pelican for one child or Latitude for one teen. The rate excludes tax and service charge and is based on double occupancy. This package is available through January 31, 2016 only

Also, the Fazio Unlimited Package offers select Bungalow or Villa accommodations with a two-night minimum stay. With this particular package, you can enjoy unlimited golf rounds for one guest on three of Tom Fazio's designed and re-perfected courses, the Ocean North, Ocean South, and Oak Creek. The package includes complimentary forecaddie (at Pelican Hill Ocean courses), golf cart and golf club rentals.

Starting from \$795 per night, excluding tax and service charge and is based on double occupancy (updated pricing for 2016).

Pelican Hill's two golf courses, the Ocean North and Ocean South courses, both boast of their spectacular setting. The hillside property incorporates 350 feet of elevation change and permits ocean views from every hole.

Ridges, ravines, and uneven slopes define the golfing grounds, yet the two contrasting playing fields aren't extreme.

Located higher up on the hill, the longer, links-style Ocean North Course (Rating: A-), which measures 6,945 yards from the tips (135 slope) and 6,563 yards from the blue markers (130 slope), is Pelican Hill's more challenging track thanks to its length, exposure to the wind, numerous forced carries, and the tall, throttling grasses that frame most holes. The Ocean South Course demands accurate shot-making, but not as challenging as the North Course.

What stands out on both courses are the fashioned, closely mown collars around the greens to give players a plethora of short-game shot-making options.

The new clubhouse, a lavish companion to the resort, is now adjacent to the practice ground. Service reigns supreme, thanks to a new caddie program that produces knowledgeable and well-trained caddies.

The Ocean South Course features holes



The South course back nine offers great views of the ocean.

with tree-lined fairways, forced carries over canyons, some friendly containment contouring, and a four-hole stretch across Pacific Coast Highway that runs right out to the bluff and dunes above the beach at Crystal Cove State Park.

Unless otherwise requested, a forecaddie will be assigned to your group. Although carts are mandatory, you should definitely walk the ocean view courses. Your forecaddie will be happy to drive the cart. A \$50 tip per player is adequate.

Their two consecutive par-3 holes on the back nine will immerse golfers in sand and coastal scrub vegetation as they showcase the mesmerizing Pacific shoreline.

The aerification schedules take place in April and September each year. During the recovery period, a discounted green fee is in effect. Check with the Resort as these dates may change yearly.

So what is there to do for a non-golfer and children?

The Resort at Pelican Hill has a top-of-the-line spa with exceptionally well trained staff.

Their spa treatments utilize local seasonal herbal and botanical ingredients; such as wild jasmine, rosemary, sage, and thyme. The spa also provides guided nature walks and a special yoga golf clinic is offered by Pelican Hill Golf Academy that includes videotaped swing analysis, followed by yoga exercises designed to address one's swing limitations. The Spa does offer more than 25 weekly fitness classes, including yoga in its movement studio.

In addition to the gorgeous coliseum pool with private cabanas with televisions, there's an extensive workout facility.

"Camp Pelican" offers children's ac-

tivities. Even though there's no beach at the resort, resort shuttle will take you to Crystal Cove State Park, which has a beach, hiking trails, and a beachfront bar/restaurant.

And, Newport Beach and Laguna Beach offer chic boutique shopping, shopping malls, art galleries, beaches, deep-sea fishing, and sailing.

As for dining options, expect great service in the restaurants.

The Andrea, the resort's signature restaurant, offers Italian Cuisine, marvelous pasta dishes and a great wine list, but is somewhat pricey, in my opinion.

The Coliseum Grill has a great setting and a wonderful view and a very reasonably priced menu.

The Pelican Grill at the golf clubhouse specializes in contemporary Californian cuisine. Their Cobb salad and short ribs, a house specialty, are great either for lunch or dinner. A gigantic television and nice bar make this a great spot for watching sports.

I have yet to experience a resort that surpasses The Resort at Pelican Hill's combination of aesthetic beauty, comfort, opulence, and dedicated service. Pelican Hill's devoted, personal service sets it apart from other resorts. You can expect both emails and phone calls from concierges eager to help plan your visit. You will also receive a personalized check-in and, thereafter, staff members will call you by name. During my wife's and my stay, everyone seemed to make an extra concerted effort to see that we enjoyed ourselves. What more can you ask for?

22701 Pelican Hill South,
Newport Coast, CA 92657
855-467-6800. www.pelicanhill.com

Hill

By **Barry Lotz**



Pelican Hill's links-style Ocean North Course features glorious Pacific panoramas from every hole.

into an upbeat gathering spot, called a social lounge. The Lobby terrace offers great views of the ocean, golf course and the Coliseum pool.

The very inviting Coliseum Pool is the largest circular pool in the world, 136 square feet — and enjoys a coliseum setting. Its water is incredibly blue, thanks to more than a million iridescent glass mosaic tiles on the pool bottom. Poolside cabanas are available as well.

The luxurious low rise guest bungalows and the 2 to 4-bedroom villas are on little lanes terraced into the hillside. Each one-bedroomed bungalow consists of no less than 847 square feet, is a single story with 15-foot wood-beam ceilings, and has a lime stone fireplace and some bungalows offer a private terrace overlooking the ocean.

What also makes the bungalows so inviting are the luxurious beds, Kings or Queens, the large flat-screen television, Bose sound system, granite wet bar, refrigerator, coffee grinder (and coffee beans), with a marvelous bathroom consisting of a separate soaking tub and oversized shower. Bath robes are available.

The Villa Program offers an entirely personalized, ultimate residential experience, right down to magazine preferences and favorite foods.

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