

“WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CORI BRETT?”

September 2011

“GOLF AT PELICAN HILL”



Ocean South 18th Hole

My mother traveled to Italy many years ago and discovered a mysterious relative. She was the town beauty, adored by the ruler of the land. He set her up in a magnificent hillside villa by the sea and bestowed lavish gifts upon her. Memories of that old family story came rushing back when I saw the Resort at Pelican Hill.

The Mediterranean-style resort lies on the coast of Newport Beach, California. I felt the Italian influence in stately Roman columns, graceful arches and high vaulted ceilings. Grand buildings spill down the hillside in artfully arranged tiers, so every level has unobstructed ocean views. Pelican Hill is all about ocean views, classic Italian architecture, authentic Italian cuisine, and making its guests deliriously happy. It worked for me. The golf experience took my breath away.

Golf dominates at Pelican Hill. Ocean North and Ocean South cover nearly 400 acres of the 500-acre resort. Tom Fazio designed both courses in the early 1990's and returned in 2005 to "re-perfect" his work. Now every gorgeous hole has an ocean view. My favorites were the infinity greens on North Course No. 14 and No. 17. They stand tall and appear to merge seamlessly into the vast ocean beyond.



Ocean North 17th Hole

Based on yardage alone, I probably would have played from the red tees on both South (5,393 yards) and North (5,810 yards). But the slope ratings of more than 130 sent me forward to the yellow tees. Still no pushover, but I managed to avoid most of the forced carries. I like to get acquainted with a new course from easier tees – it makes for a more enjoyable game. A lesson before the round helps too. Director of Instruction Glenn Deck is one of *Golf Magazine's* "Top 100 Teachers." He tweaked my wayward stance and saved me several strokes.

The shorter South Course is a more forgiving, resort-style course. Three holes - No. 11 through 13 - sit right on the bluff along the ocean. Both courses rate several tees for women. Narrow fairways on the North Course require accuracy, as in the 20-foot-wide approach area to the uphill green on No. 9. There's no way around the gnarly canyon ahead of the green on No. 18. It measured a 132-yard carry the day I played. Not quite so intimidating looking back from the green.

North and South are impeccably maintained and provide every amenity you would expect for a \$250.00 green fee— a professional forecaddie, custom golf car with Laser Link range finder, and wonderful practice facility. Not to mention the clubhouse. Its luxurious locker rooms are so well-equipped, you could move right in. The Pelican Grill is the perfect 19th hole, with indoor and outdoor seating, yummy California Cuisine and two huge 9' by 6' HD TV's for watching sports.

Honestly, I don't think they left anything out. No wonder *Conde Nast Traveler* readers named Pelican Hill "Top California Golf Resort" in the 2011 Readers' Choice Awards.



The Clubhouse at Pelican Hill

The level of excellence displayed by the golf experience was reflected in all areas of the resort. Dining, for instance – gelato, pasta, and baked goods are made in-house daily. Fresh produce comes from nearby Irvine Ranch, exclusive to Pelican Hill chefs. Menus vary with the seasons.

Even spa treatments are seasonally-inspired. Scrumptious body wraps add fig for fall, lavender for summer. And yes, the spa is incredible. Better than any Roman spa those ancient senators enjoyed. At Pelican Hill the Coliseum is a perfectly round swimming pool, 136 feet in diameter. It's lined with more than one million tiny blue glass tiles that were cut and laid by hand.

Dinner at the signature restaurant, Andrea, was one of the best meals I've ever had. This one dish says it all: mushroom risotto prepared tableside. We watched as creamy risotto with chanterelle mushrooms was poured into the carved-out center of a 50-pound wheel of aged parmesan cheese imported from Italy. Delicate parmesan slivers were mixed into the risotto, melting instantly. Thin pieces of black truffle that looked like chocolate shavings decorated the top when the dish was served. Heavenly.

Guests check in at the huge main building but stay in spacious bungalow guest rooms (204) with ocean-view terraces and fireplaces. The Villas is a resort-within-the-resort, offering 128 luxurious homes and 24-hour butler service. We strolled back from dinner down a quiet street lined with vine-covered stone walls. Our car was parked across the street from the bungalow. The residential component truly sets it apart. No noisy hotel hallways or busy lobby with lots of people.

Pelican Hill has the atmosphere of a European resort, like the Villa d'Este on Lake Como or somewhere on the Italian Riviera. It's probably obvious by now that it falls into the pricey category. Very pricey. But very worth it. It deserves a spot on that "Bucket List" we're all keeping for someday.
www.pelicanhill.com

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