

This Luxury Resort Is SoCal's Best-Kept Secret

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The Amalfi Coast? No, it's Terranea in Rancho Palos Verdes, California. JUSTIN KRIEL, VRX STUDIOS

Southern California has no shortage of luxury resorts but there's one that somehow seems to fly mysteriously just under the radar. It's hard to call [Terranea](#) a *hidden* gem because it takes up a whopping 102 acres of highly coveted oceanfront property and stands tall on the bluffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean — but there's no question it's a gem.

My husband and I spent a couple of nights there to celebrate my birthday last month and, now, I get why it's such a secret. Terranea is so special, loyal guests don't want to share it. They, understandably, want it to themselves. Here's why:

Location



Beach cove at Terranea. DANIEL SOLOMON PHOTOGRAPHY

Nestled into the hillside of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, [Terranea](#) takes on a dreamy, Oz-like quality as you approach it. The beautiful drive is reminiscent of traveling along the Amalfi Coast and, once you arrive and receive the warm welcome that makes you feel like you've arrived home, you'll immediately relax. You'll feel like you're far away from your daily life even though the Los Angeles and Long Beach airports are only a half hour away.



Terranea is even more dramatic when it's rainy. LOIS ALTER MARK

We happened to visit during two of SoCal's craziest rainy days last month and, although we definitely want to return to experience the resort in its usual sunshine, I have to admit we wouldn't have traded the weather. I loved the moody atmosphere that just made every beautiful interior even cozier plus I didn't have to feel guilty about spending a whole day in the spa. My husband still managed to play golf and watch the falconry demonstration between downpours, and there was always a shuttle available to pick us up and drive us around the expansive property so we wouldn't get wet.

Our room overlooked the ocean so, even though we didn't get to go hiking, explore the tide pools or bike along the bluffs, we were able to take in the views and feel connected to Terranea's natural beauty. Honestly, to us, the drama of the clouds and the rainfall just added to the magic of the place. You don't need perfect weather to fall in love with this resort.

The Spa at Terranea



The signature spa suite, where the Ocean's Prelude treatment is offered. TERRANEA

As someone who is very fussy about spas, I can't say enough about this one. Terranea's award-winning spa is not just about pampering – although it certainly does that well. With 25 treatment rooms and 50,000 square feet of beautifully-designed space, this is a spa that takes the idea of wellness seriously. Their pros have curated a thoughtful menu of unique treatments designed to make you feel and look great. If I lived closer, I would spend time here on a regular basis.

I highly recommend Ocean's Prelude, which incorporates a dry body brushing, seaweed wrap, saltwater bath and massage in two hours of pure bliss. The treatment takes place in a spa suite overlooking the Pacific and my wonderful therapist, Shadi, kept the balcony door open so I could relax to the sound of the waves crashing below.

I also had the Natura Bisse Inhibit Facial and don't think my skin has looked that healthy in years. Knowing I was celebrating a birthday, my aesthetician, Patty, took the idea of anti-aging literally and worked a miracle or two.



The cozy lounge at The Spa at Terranea. LOIS ALTER MARK

In between treatments, I stretched out in the ocean-facing spa lounges, reading in front of the fireplace while the rain came down outdoors, and only getting up to test the sauna and eucalyptus steam room. Heaven. The whole day was just pure heaven.

Dining



Dinner at Bashi. LOIS ALTER MARK

There are nine eateries at [Terranea](#) and we managed to try five of them. Each one has its own distinct personality and the food is excellent across the board but, if pressed, I'd have to say our favorite was Bashi, with its super fresh sushi. Every roll was a delight and the Shaking Beef was a must-order signature dish that we're still talking about.

Before the weather turned, we were lucky enough to have Sunday brunch outdoors at mar'cel, where we were as enamored with the views as we were with the food. The three-course prix fixe meal features so many impossible-to-choose-from options but I went with the chicken and waffle, which was out of this world. And that was just one course!



Eating outside at Mar'sel is a double treat. JUSTIN KRIEL, VRX STUDIOS

We had breakfasts at the cheery Catalina Kitchen and at sea beans, the resort's artisan coffee shop that's also a great spot to grab a snack or sit with a good book. They have a surprisingly extensive menu and are deservedly renowned for their homemade ice cream sandwiches.

Lunch at Nelson's was also a real treat. With its pub atmosphere, it felt especially cozy on a rainy day and we appropriately feasted on fish and chips, hot Bavarian pretzels and bowls of clam chowder. Comfort food at its best.

I'd like to tell you that we balanced all our indulgences by swimming, taking a class or working out on the state of the art equipment at Terranea's 5,000 square foot Fitness & Wellness Center but, alas, that will have to happen next time.

Service



Even the marine life is excited to chill out at Terranea. BLUE CLOUD PHOTOGRAPHY

As extraordinary as all of this was, what really makes [Terranea](#) stand out is the unparalleled level of service. Every single staff member was genuinely friendly and attentive and went beyond what was expected. They greeted guests by name and said “happy birthday” to me at every meal. I was treated to so many celebrations and special desserts, I was spoiled rotten for future birthdays. In fact, I’m thinking of making this a new annual tradition.