



HOTELS

Montage Resort & Spa

THE CRAFTSMAN IDEAL
LIVES ON IN LAGUNA BEACH

Architecture by Hill Glazier

Interior Design by Wilson & Associates

Text by Peter Haldeman/Photography by Mary E. Nichols

Top: John Hill and Robert Glazier, of Hill Glazier Architects, designed the 262-room Montage Resort & Spa in Laguna Beach, California. "The varied façade creates a more intimate experience," notes Hill. ABOVE: Whales and seals are sometimes visible from the point.



With its reverence for nature and its emphasis on raw materials, individual craftsmanship and organic designs, the English-spawned Arts and Crafts Movement found a welcome second home in turn-of-the-last-century California. The bungalows of Greene and Greene (and their imitators), the woodwork and metalwork produced up north and the pottery and ceramic tiles out of Southern California harmoniously coincided with a flowering of plein air art celebrating the mountains and deserts and beaches of the Golden State.

Artists' colonies sprang up in aesthetically congenial settings such as Laguna Beach, whose rocky coves and eucalyptus-shaded canyon inspired painters like Edgar Payne and William Wendt. In 1920 Payne became president of the newly incorporated Laguna Beach Art Association, which would promote the

work of his peers and generations of future artists with events like the Festival of Arts and Pageant of the Masters. These events still draw thousands to the coastal town every summer—and if some of Laguna's natural charms have faded over time, the place has aged more gracefully than many of its neighbors along the California coast.

For many years one of Laguna's hidden jewels was a 30-acre oceanside bluff known as Treasure Island. The name derives from the movie (itself based on the Robert Louis Stevenson novel), which was filmed there in 1934. Privately owned since the late 1800s, Treasure Island had, by the time of the movie, become the domain of mobile homes and trailers. It remained a trailer park until quite recently. In 1988 the property was acquired by a group of developers who planned to transform its dramatic cliffs and beaches into a sprawling guard-

Tea is served in the book-lined lobby lounge, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean and is decorated with Craftsman pottery pieces. Fire surround and hearth from Ann Sacks. Low table, Niermann Weeks. Kravet lounge chair fabric. Couristan carpet. Sofa fabric, Scalamandré.

gated community of houses and condominiums. Laguna's city planners had other ideas, however—namely, a hotel. After 15 years of wrangling, Laguna has won—for the most part. A small residential enclave will eventually adjoin the just-opened Montage Resort & Spa Laguna Beach.

Montage is, first and last, a luxury resort, a self-contained Shangri-la encompassing 262 ocean-view rooms, three swimming pools, one 20,000-square-foot spa and countless khaki-clad employees discreetly murmuring into walkie-talkies.





ABOVE: The Catalina Suite has a double-sided fireplace that connects the living area with the bedroom. Floral chair and ottoman fabric, Pierre Frey. Drapery stripe, Clarence House. Niermann Weeks sconce. Carpet, Stanton. BELOW: The suite's porch features stone the color of the local cliffs. Brown Jordan furniture.

But it is a resort that a populist could love. A public park borders the property, and the cove beaches below are fully accessible for the first time in decades. The hotel sits lightly on the land, its profile along Pacific Coast Highway no more imposing than one of the Greene brothers' more substantial commissions. From the beach side, one gets the hotel's full measure, as it descends five stories down the broad bluff. But its neo-Craftsman style successfully reconciles structure and setting: Montage's cedar shingles and low-slope roofs and wisteria-draped arbors (conceived by John Hill and Robert Glazier, of Palo Alto's Hill Glazier Architects) might

even evoke the days of Edgar Payne and William Wendt.

Inside, cherrywood floors, tile fireplaces and beam ceilings sustain the mood. The sometimes drab Craftsman palette yields here to sandy hues illuminated by floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the peacock-blue Pacific. Just as dazzling as the scenes out the windows are the ones on the walls: pristine pre-trailer park landscapes courtesy of Payne, Wendt and other notable California Impressionists. Original works by Arts and Crafts pioneer William Morris and vintage photographs of classic California architecture and beach scenes round out the collection.

"The Arts and Crafts Movement melded nature into design and architecture," says Alan Fuerstman, founder, president and CEO of Montage Hotels & Resorts. "That's precisely what we planned to achieve here." Unlike some of its loftier neighbors (The Ritz-Carlton, the St. Regis), the Laguna Beach Montage is fully oriented to outdoor pleasures.

OPPOSITE: The restaurant Studio features a tongue-and-groove ceiling in the bungalow style. Interior designers Wilson & Associates used warm beiges to evoke sand, and sea green and teal accents to mimic the ocean. The barstools are finished in Edelman leather.





LEFT: In the guest rooms, the designers sought to combine luxury with the comfort appropriate to a beach setting. "It's an artful blend of elegance, tradition and simple detailing, all within the vocabulary of the Arts and Crafts Movement," says Cheryl Neumann, of Wilson & Associates.

OPPOSITE: The mosaic tile pattern of the main pool, with its radiating sun, was inspired by the architecture of George Washington Smith. From the lobby, guests survey the pool, the ocean and Burton Landscape Architecture Studio's border of boxwood hedges set before roses.

There's a pool for swimmers, a pool for loungers and a pool for toddlers. A bluff-top trail rambles through the park, past silvery coastal gardens and ocean look-outs. And plenty of bypaths loop down to the beach itself, a sequence of white-sand coves as sexy as Deborah Kerr and Burt Lancaster themselves.

Still, the place is a resort, and it doesn't stint on the creature comforts. Rooms are spacious—the very smallest measures 500 square feet—and all of them, whether luxury suites perched high above the main pool or discrete bungalows down by the beach, survey the Pacific from broad Craftsman-style porches. The designers (Dallas-based Wilson & Associates) finished the guest

rooms with the same mingling of dark woods, light fabrics and luminous paintings that characterize the public rooms. Beds are feather-top and swaddled in down; TVs are 27-inch flat screens and are accompanied by DVD players; and the sound system is high-end. The baths impress without showing off—oversize soaking tubs, showers with water pressure you wouldn't mind having at home.

When the room-service menu palls, there are three restaurants. The dress-up one is Studio, a clubby maple-paneled venue that sits on its own view-intensive point. Take a window table or cozy up to the tasting table—or reserve the private dining room off the spectacular country-style kitchen headed up by

James Boyce. Boyce, who trained with Daniel Boulud, leans toward clean Mediterranean-flavored combinations that make the most of Laguna's farmers' market and the daily catch (spiny-tail lobster is a local specialty).

The spa presents a sybaritic fantasy. The stacked-fieldstone facility is an indoor-outdoor pleasure dome concealing marble saunas, Niagara-force open-air whirlpools and fitness rooms opening onto the beach. The rituals performed inside 21 treatment rooms—algae cellulite massage, clay body sculpting, California citrus polish—put a decidedly homegrown spin on self-improvement.

On one fog-shrouded morning in March, the spa, like the rest of the resort, was quiet. Gardeners filled in a few bare spots in the flower beds outside. A couple of looky-loos tried, without success, to penetrate the spa's Oz-like reception lounge. In a workout room inside, a lone woman pounded one of the treadmills. Her hair was pulled up in a bun, and she wore no makeup—but she still looked for all the world exactly like Heather Locklear. How California is *that*? □

RIGHT: The spa, accented with rose and cream marble, offers a range of amenities, including saunas and a cold plunge pool. In the women's outdoor lounge area, water cascades from a bronze tray into a whirlpool.



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