

REVIEW: Rancho Valencia Resort



This is by far one of my favorite resorts in California. It's a large property, the type that requires you to get around by golf cart (don't worry – they supply them). It's got

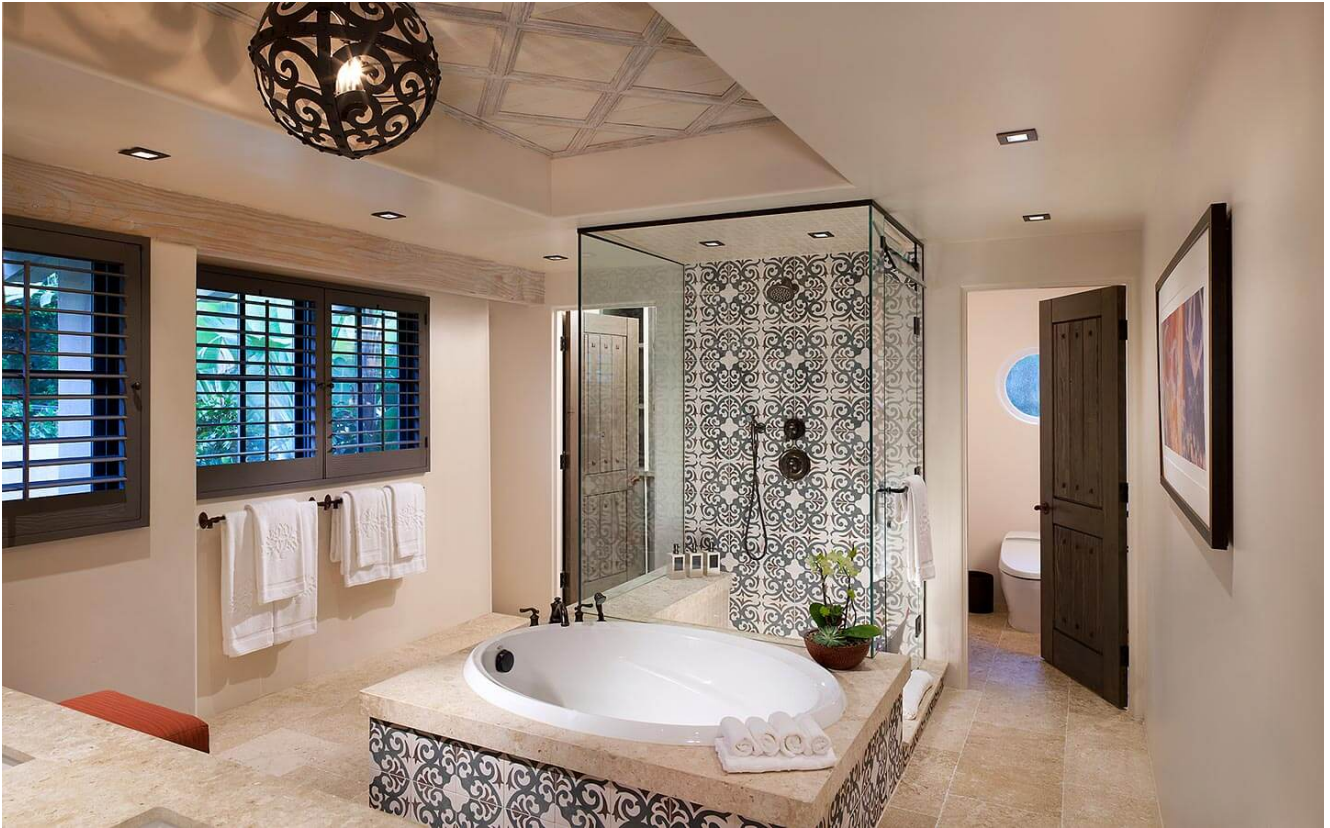
beautiful rooms – each one is considered a mini casa or “Casita” as they call them.



The not-so-mini Casita complete with sunken living room and a jacuzzi and fireplace inside AND out

The hotel has impeccable service, they know you by name and deliver some really cool fine touches, such as some really expensive bath products, a jacuzzi and fireplace in each individual outdoor patio, not just any espresso machine but world-class espresso machines, and my favorite part – the fresh orange juice service that is left at your room every morning (from the on-site orange grove). The property is exquisite and has some really great things going for it including an impeccably decorated restaurant and bar.

This is a resort you go to when you want to get away and relax for a few days – it’s not very close to much other than the Del Mar Racetrack, but the property itself has enough to keep one relatively busy – and by busy I mean relaxed.



Stunning spa-like bathrooms with views of the gardens will make you take extra long baths and showers. The toilet is even electronic and opens and closes its lid with a wave of your hand!



If you come here you'll be spending a lot of time at this bar and restaurant in the lobby area

PROS:

- Rooms don't get much better than this. Fireplaces, private jacuzzis, beautifully appointed top of the line materials in the bathrooms. All with a modern-meets-rustic theme
- The food on this property is great, you won't want to leave
- The feeling of privacy makes this the perfect retreat

CONS:

- It books up quite far ahead of time, so make sure to put in your reservations early

SECRETS:

- You can actually go and pick oranges in the grove

OTHER STUFF IN THE AREA:

- Check out the Del Mar racetrack schedule to see if you can go to the races at the same time you're staying here. There's also a local fair that happens a few times a year next door.

REVIEW: The Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point

The Monarch Beach Resort was formerly a SPG St Regis property, one of the top ones in the portfolio, but as of mid 2016 was purchased by KSL group after a lengthy renovation. I went to

stay at the hotel shortly after the renovation so this review reflects what the hotel currently is like (as of Q3 2016).