REVIEW: The Pasea Huntington Beach – A Pacific Coast Getaway

Lets start by saying that I can almost give this place a 100% recommendation. It's almost there, but like my experience at the Seattle Thompson, everything is in place, except for excellent staff. At first glance, everything about this hotel makes me want to recommend it. The lobby and public spaces are gorgeous. The pool is large, with plenty of seating, and faces the Ocean. The restaurant downstairs, Tanners, is a stunning establishment with a cherry-wood burning fire in the kitchen, and dishes worthy of a Michelin mention.



The lobby is graced by enormous windows and a tall ceiling, beautiful furniture, and the instant feel of a coastal vacation



The Pool is gorgeous, and located directly facing the Ocean, making it feel somewhat like a Miami-esque hotel. Not a bad thing!

The rooms have unique touches, like free water, complimentary bottles of wine in the suites, and guitars tuned and ready for your plucking pleasure. You can tell thought went into the decor. It's timeless, yet modern, clean, and fits in perfectly with the vibe of Surfer-centric Huntington Beach. Location is also superb, with the new Pacific City mall next door. There's a cool co-op space in the Pacific City Mall with eclectic choices for food and drink.



The bathrooms are some of the nicest i've seen…

Where the hotel falls behind its facade, however, is in service. The Concierge was barely helpful (and I happened to meet two of them), and seemed flustered. This is one of my first tests of a hotel, asking what should be the equivalent of a well-versed local (the concierge), what to do, where to eat, or what to see. If they cannot respond with answers appropriate to the season, the guest's preference, or provide a gamut of variety in their suggestions, then they are not a top-notch concierge. I also find that the quality of the concierge most often matches with that of the quality of the other staff. The hotel is new (As of December 2016), and it it showing some teething problems. I do expect, however, that over time there will be a level of quality that hopefully reaches that of some of the larger luxury chains.



Great Restaurant, check. Great Pool, check.

PROS:

- Stunning property
- Great Location
- Amazing restaurant on property (Tanners)

CONS:

- Concierge and staff are still a bit new and unpolished

SECRETS:

- This hotel is one of the cheapest in the area. It’s a great steal if you want to be near Newport Beach but want something more modern, hip, and fun

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Definitely set some time aside to hang out in the mall next door. There’s a variety of restaurants and bars worth your time.

REVIEW: The Island Hotel in Newport Beach – The Best spot for 4th of July Fireworks in Orange County

So for those who haven't been to the Orange County coast of California, you may not be familiar with the swathe of land that covers approximately 60 miles from Northern tip to Southern tip. This swathe of land also happens to have an incredible variety of hotels from resorts such as the Rancho Valencia in the south, to the Island Hotel in Newport Beach all the way on the North. My preference has always been for the resorts on the Southern end of Orange County (Including the Ritz-Carlton in Laguna, the Monarch Beach in Laguna, or the Montage also in Laguna).

However, sometimes you need to be in a particular place and don't feel like driving an hour just to get to somewhere you need to be. If it so happens that you need to be spending time in Huntington Beach or Newport Beach – then your best option, in my opinion, is the Island Hotel.

This property isn't particularly new, nor is it particularly flashy, but what it does have it does very well. The tone of the property is muted and beach-reminiscent. Pastel tones carry the property and make it feel light and airy and even though it is still a few miles from the Ocean one would think they were right on the beach when entering the lobby.



Check out those pastel beachy tones

The rooms themselves have great expansive views, as the building is exceptionally tall and although they’re not as updated as I would personally prefer, they still have a well-built luxurious quality to them and the mattresses are comfortable, the entertainment systems are updated, and bathrooms are kept exquisitely clean.



The rooms aren’t the most modern, but they’re comfy and luxurious still

My favorite features at the hotel are the poolside fireplace – a great place to have a glass of wine and unwind for the night, and the rooftop lounge – replete with awesome views all the way to Los Angeles and of course towards the Ocean.



This is where you want to spend your time when you're here



Oh yea, spend some time up top as well. It's on the 12th floor

PROS:

- This hotel has excellent service, and even though its not the newest property it has been very well maintained
- The fireplace and rooftop lounge really are excellent features that you don't find in many hotels in the area
- They have an incredible room service menu and it's 24/7

CONS:

- The hotel could use a slight update, things are wearing well but it wouldn't hurt to refresh the colors or furniture to something more modern

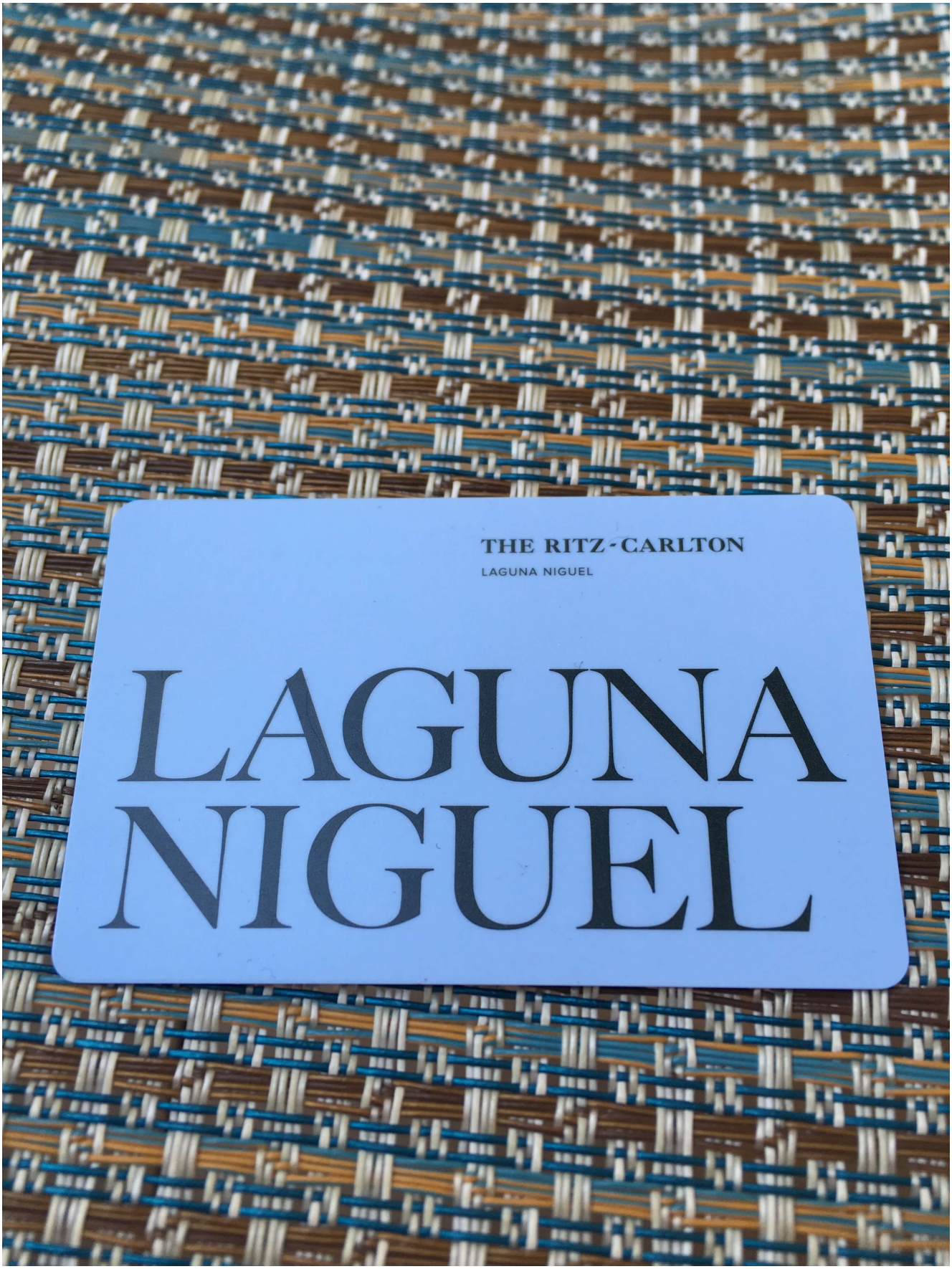
SECRETS:

- I highly recommend checking last minute rates at this hotel, they are often pretty cheap. Also, you can often get a good room upgrade once you get to the hotel, the suites are pretty great bargains and are very nice – a step up from the standard accommodations and worth the extra $$.

THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA:

- Check out Balboa Island – rent a Duffy and cruise the harbor, eat frozen dipped bananas at the original Banana Stand
- This is the best place to spend 4th of July, but book early, as the Island Hotel is the BEST place to watch fireworks down in Orange County (the height of the building really lends itself to this)

REVIEW: The Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel



This one’s a keeper – as they say. The Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel is a mixture of old-world elegance and contemporary flair. The hotel is large but the intimate spaces hidden

within it make it feel homey and comforting rather than barren and excessive.



The Spanish villa look of the Ritz in Laguna gives it some old-world charm

The minute you walk in you're wowed by the depth of the hallway. It has a very similar feel to the Monarch Beach Resort in this respect, but with slightly lower ceilings which makes this hotel the perfect accessory for a romantic getaway.

The service here is impeccable, at the top of its class for Ritz-Carlton's, and the lobby bar here is a cool place to hang out. I had a chance to check out two of the restaurants here, EnoSteak and Raya and highly recommend both of them. Raya's floor to ceiling glass portals overlook the Pacific Coast and it's a dazzling place to have breakfast at a leisurely pace. Enosteak is the quintessential martini and ribeye spot which serves its purpose in this type of resort.

The rooms themselves are on the smaller side, and are not as new as the The Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point but they are definitely still clean and luxurious. This is yet another hotel built with weddings in mind and as such there are

breathtaking vistas throughout.

I recommend checking out The Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point and doing a spot compare between the two when booking to see which one is priced better during your stay as they both are comparable hotels, with the Ritz possibly edging on service, but slightly older in room quality.

PROS:

- Feels intimate yet maintains that large resort feel
- The pool area is well thought out to include private secludes so that not everyone is staring at each other when you're laying out
- The service is impeccable and the dining establishments at this hotel are above average

CONS:

- It could use some room refreshes

SECRETS:

- Check out the view at 180 Blu while enjoying a drink. It's easy to miss this part of the hotel

OTHER THINGS TO DO:

- Officially the second smallest church in the world, St Francis By the Sea is a pretty cool place to visit. Plus it's on the Guinness Book of World Records!
- This one's been written about but if you want to get around and you don't want to hire an uber. Check out the Laguna Beach Trolley. It's fun to use it as a method of hopping around town and checking out the sights.