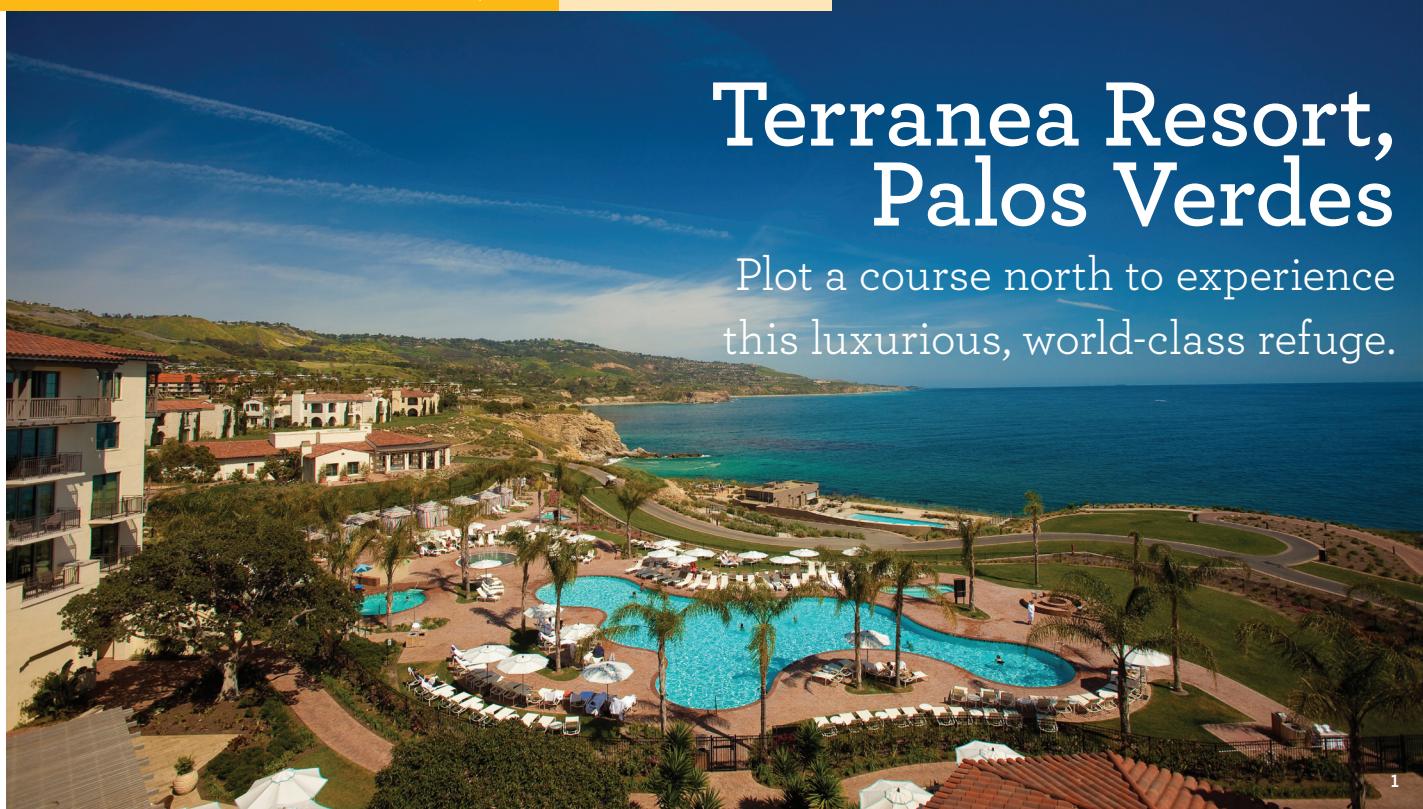




Terranea Resort, Palos Verdes

Plot a course north to experience this luxurious, world-class refuge.



Our resort retreat started in an unusual way: driving *north* for a change. It was such a strange sensation to not have the sweeping blue Pacific on my right-hand side, as we always seem to head south for our escapes. This time, our getaway surroundings were that of the industrial, urban 405 freeway.

The promise of resort life finally appeared as we exited the concrete jungle and were welcomed by the lush, rolling hillsides of Palos Verdes. As the terrain changed, so did my mindset. I was ready to embrace this exclusive luxury nook I'd heard few speak of. After just over an hour of driving, my family and I arrived at Terranea. The sprawling 102-acre resort located at the Palos Verdes Peninsula is artfully sculpted above the ocean, and has only existed since June of '09.

The region was discovered by Spanish explorers in the 1500s, but those who grew up in Southern California may remember it by one of its more recent incarnations: Marineland of the Pacific, the former ocean theme park.

Located up a steep rise from the water, atop the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the luxurious Mediterranean resort indulges with remarkable 270-degree oceanfront

views. Native, drought-resistant landscaping fills the grounds of Terranea.

After checking in, we dropped our bags at our lovely oceanfront room, which was splashed with beachy, classic California design touches. The choice of accommodations at Terranea is vast, with 582 hotel rooms, 20 two-bedroom bungalows, 50 casitas overlooking the Pacific, and 32 villas.

After settling in, it was time to get the lay of the land, hit the pool and explore all that Terranea has to offer. With kids in tow, though, we first needed food. We headed over to the resort's main pool and checked out the Terranea Grill, which has an open-air Moroccan feel; the Catalina Kitchen, which serves Mediterranean-meets-Southern California fare; and finally considered Nelson's, a scenic, casual eatery just beyond the property's edge. We settled where we started: by the pool for a quick bite.

With bellies full, we picked our poolside spot and began to unwind. Terranea offers three heated swimming pools (one for all ages and one for those 18 and older; the third is the Spa Pool) and a 140-foot waterslide. While I'd love to gush about the slide, it was closed



1. The Terranea resort overlooks the Palos Verdes Peninsula 2. The 140-foot waterslide is very popular with the kids 3. Enjoy sunset around the fire atop a hillside bluff.

Hit the Road



1. Built on the former home of Marineland, the sprawling resort has only been open since June 2009 2. You will feel pampered, yet right at home, on this stunning property.

during our stay for unexpected maintenance, so I can't attest to its wildly entertaining ways. I did, however, hear from others whose kids spent hours the previous day going up and down the slide.

Now comfortable with our surroundings and with a little swimming out of the kids' systems, I did what any sane, stressed mom would do: I checked my kids into the Children's Center at Terranea and then relaxed poolside with my skinny margarita. Ahh – a reward for me, and a fun time of crafting, baking and games for my little people.

A lovely extension of the Children's Center is the Family Painting Class offered to families just before sunset. We sat amongst

picnic tables overlooking the ocean with our blank canvases and a wide selection of paints and brushes. The only thing on our agenda: paint to our heart's content and capture the stunning scenery in front of us.

As the waves crashed and the mist bathed our faces, we filled our canvases. And for almost 60 minutes, I actually put my iPhone down – you can't email, text or tweet while painting. As we worked on our creations, our knowledgeable instructor shed light on our color choices, as well as some resort insight, such as the fact that our exact painting spot was the backdrop for the filming of all three "Pirates of the Caribbean" movies.

We later opted for dinner at the Catalina Kitchen, which was a treat. With a focus on the cuisine elements of Spanish, French Riviera, Greek and Southern Italian dishes, the restaurant offers an array of choices. But I chose an item that wasn't on the menu. The chef there was kind enough to whip me up a delicious vegetarian pasta rich with a creamy Alfredo-like sauce and a host of fresh vegetables – so filling. The children were keen on the kids' menu, too.

The next morning, we stopped by the concierge desk (a definite must-do to get the best scoop on activity options) and made our day's plan of attack. Soon, we headed back out for more Terranea exploring. We walked above the cliff-top trails (which offer a great overview of the

property), and we kept our eyes out for native blue butterflies, great horned owls, gray whales and dolphins – but they eluded us. However, our time together with no electronic devices did not go unnoticed or unappreciated.

A few post-trail fun included croquet and horseshoes on the resort's courtyard grounds and the putting greens at the Links at Terranea. Now, we aren't a golfing family, so practice putting was the extent of our golf. But if you are a golf enthusiast, the resort's oceanfront course is a 9-hole par-3 wonder. Also, Trump National Gold Club, a public course, is just 3 miles south of Terranea's property.

That evening, we hit the lobby for chocolate milk and checkers by the fireplace. Finally, we enjoyed dinner at Nelson's for their fresh California comfort food and a spectacular sunset. Showcasing a view of the Point Vicente Lighthouse and Catalina Island, the restaurant is one of the most scenic locations in Palos Verdes. The kids loved the view and patio fire pits. We kept the meal light, quick and kid-friendly with a simple appetizer of seemingly endless cheese fries, which we couldn't finish.

As we left the resort's rolling hills, I was glad that this time we went north instead of south. Sometimes it's good to go right when you always go left. **OCF**

terranea.com