

A Hotel with a Bed-and-Breakfast Feel in Santa Barbara

From Chicago Tribune: *Sleeping Around*

Santa Barbara, CA - January 14, 2007 - Sprawled out on the Santa Barbara beach front, this Spanish colonial complex offers casual California comfort within walking distance of many local attractions. And despite its 122-room capacity, Hotel Oceana's friendly service, charming layout and cozy nooks can make it feel as intimate as a bed-and-breakfast.

Located between the touristy Stearns Wharf and Santa Barbara Harbor and backed by Figueroa Mountain, the two-story hotel offers pretty ocean and mountain views from its outdoor lounging areas, making the pricier ocean-view rooms less of a priority. Two pools and Jacuzzis, a courtyard fountain, a huge garden flanked by perfectly straight columns of palm trees and pretty Spanish tile accents make what could be a pedestrian hotel feel special.

Guests are often European vacationers, wine tourists and families visiting the area.

CHECKING IN: The check-in desk was friendly and prompt, giving us a map of the large grounds to let us know where our room (228) was. There are no elevators, but staff can help take bags up to the second level. The desk clerk let us know that they could arrange parking for us at \$9 per night and might be able to accommodate a later check-out (than 11 a.m.) at no additional charge with advance notice.

ROOMS: Rooms are clean and bright and clearly furnished for hot weather with a white overhead fan and cloth gingham headboards, light curtains and tile bathroom floor. Four pillows, a sheet and comforter clothed the bed without any fancy extra pillows or bed spread. The decor style, as described by the hotel's literature, is beach chic. Our room was decorated in a yellow and white checkered pattern, with a big fluffy white comforter, white sheer curtains, a berber rug and bare tiles in the bathroom. A wicker chair and desk made for a comfy place to write on our laptop. The television with limited cable and pay per view movies was hidden in an armoire as was the fridge with a pay mini-bar.

BATHROOM: The bathroom was bright and basic with a large elegant sink, mirror, toilet and standard bathtub with a sliding glass door. Little things like a nick in the toilet seat made the place seem a little casual but still pleasant. Aveda soap, lotion and refreshing mint rosemary shampoo made up for those little imperfections.

ROOM SERVICE: A limited room service menu is available 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and 6-9 p.m.

FOOD: A European breakfast is included in the rate and served from 7-10 a.m. in a handsome breakfast room just off a little courtyard with a trickling fountain. The selection includes good strong coffee, tea, juices, cereals, bagels, pastries and fruit.

PERKS & PEEVES: The two separate outdoor swimming pool and Jacuzzi areas are great for those who don't want to swim and sun at the beach. It was a bit of an inconvenience,

however, to have to walk half a block down the main road in our bathing suits and towels in order to get back to our room.

The workout room is small but adequate. Beauty and massage services available at the hotel's spa. Free wireless Internet available in rooms.

BOTTOM LINE: This is not a super luxe hotel, but between the ocean and mountain views, the central location, the pretty comfortable rooms, friendly service and the reasonable prices (we could sleep four in two queen beds with a private second bedroom and an ocean view for a \$189 Internet rate), this turned out to be a great find in this pretty mellow California town. Winter to late spring rates run from about \$129 to \$199. Late spring to fall are \$199 to \$450. Often better rates can be found with packages or Internet booking. Second-floor rooms not handicapped accessible.

805-965-4577

www.hoteloceanasantabarbara.com

Credit:

Monica Eng

Tribune Staff Reporter

Contact:

Troy Pade, Oceana Hotel Group

tpade@oceanahotelgroup.com