

Hotel Check: Fashion Island Hotel, Newport Beach, California

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HOW MANY ROOMS? 295 rooms and suites

PROPERTY HIGHLIGHTS On the doorstep of Fashion Island's massive sprawl of shops, restaurants and boutiques, this hotel has become a destination in itself. It's not just a hotel for the corporate traveler working in office buildings nearby, but it is now a spot for local social functions and "ladies who brunch" lunches. It could also be the elegant pool and popular spa that draw travelers.

PRICE Internet rates for a traditional room on the random dates we checked start at \$259

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VERDICT There's no question that the food here is worth the drive from anywhere in Orange County, but the same can be said for the spa and pool facilities. This is the kind of place where people come to be seen, and the staff perform toward that, but no one could ever say that anyone here is pretentious. How could a city resort strike such a perfect balance? Well, one has.

BACKGROUND This was once a Four Seasons and was infamous with big time shoppers hitting up Fashion Island. The same clientele continues, but the environment has matured with new office buildings and upmarket residences filling the spaces around this highrise with views of the Pacific Ocean.

WHERE IS IT? In Newport Beach, this hotel is perfectly reached via Orange County John Wayne Airport, which is less than 20 minutes' drive away. Many still arrive into LAX, and as long as they plan accordingly, they can make the journey within an hour if they can avoid traffic.

The boutique environment is both chic and casual at the same time. When you walk into the bright space, you'll immediately notice the special scent that was crafted for the hotel and is piped into the air waves through discreet diffusers. There is zero pretension here, which is a pleasant surprise (as are the glass jars of saltwater taffy that are addictively awaiting arriving guests).



ROOM FACILITIES Carpeted hallways lead to the panoramic guest rooms overlooking Newport Beach, Fashion Island, and the Pacific Ocean shoreline including the hotel company's owned Bayside Marina. All rooms have been redone with light fabrics and cabana-style appointments. Beds face the windows with thick duvets atop them and bedside power and USB outlets. Cabinets or countertops hold Keurig coffeemakers, free bottled water, and flat-screen cable TVs facing the beds. Bathrooms have specially curated Lather toiletries with mint scents designed for the hotel plus robes hairdryers and makeup mirrors. There is a variety of room types from twin to king rooms, but each floor has corner kings that are very special junior suites divided between two rooms with a separated living room. Views of the beautiful pool and Fashion Island are highlights, but the higher the floor, the better the view of the Pacific Ocean. The top-floor Island Club lounge is a favorite of repeat guests with its breakfast and evening meal presentations. "Wine Down Hour" comes with complimentary wine and beer plus hot appetizers while the daytime features a range of light snacks and references. What most people love about the club lounge is that it is not a special perk for only certain guests. Instead, it is the kind of perk that any traveler can tack onto their rate for a flat fee. If you want a fine breakfast, evening cocktails, and all-day refreshments from a panoramic terrace, and all-day drinks and snacks (yes, those candy jars at the front desk are maximized here with more choices like Tootsie Rolls and Starburst) are on offer.

RESTAURANTS AND BARS EATS Aqua Lounge keeps the lobby lively and happening with a happening happy hour that draws crowds from neighboring venues. The Market Place store does the same with everything from fresh berries to artisan potato chips sold at local prices. This is what helps keep the food and beverage venues so busy here. That continues to Oak Grill, which offers everything from an active bar with sports games drawing crowds to the bar to the al fresco dining area popular with locals wanting flatbread pizza, tasty black bean and guacamole burritos, and a spread of tasty burgers, grilled meats and fresh salads. Live entertainment stops in from time to time by the pool, and the guest list stays busy with a heavy list of locals at lunch.



LEISURE FACILITIES Bayside Marina can supply eager guests with fully equipped Duffy boats to explore Newport Harbor. Drivers can be supplied if needed, but the special experience is only amplified when guests get to drive the boats themselves. An impressive fitness center features the latest workout equipment including cardio, weight, and even stretch and yoga options. A gorgeous swimming pool is ringed with fabric umbrellas, lounge chairs, and doting servers delivering nice cocktails and snacks. The whirlpool is shrouded in the palm trees, but the entire vibe here (tucked within the city palms) is impressive and completely resortlike. Go one floor deeper to discover the hotel's spa that has made a name for itself in Newport Beach. It's the kind of place where you need to book an appointment from weeks in advance to get in before the locals although it's been said that hotel guests can receive special treatment when it comes to finding a massage or beauty treatment appointment. No matter who you are, you will end up in the classy relaxation lounge post-treatment with frozen grapes and Champagne.

BUSINESS AND MEETING FACILITIES Free wireless Internet is a hotel hallmark, but so is the exceptional service from the audiovisual team for meetings that book into the high-tech meeting rooms. It is not uncommon to find major brand names holding day or overnight functions here thanks to the super-casual attitude of the staff that are more agile in terms of responding to guest requests than larger hotel chain companies.



(Pictures by Fashion Island Hotel)
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