

Pick your palace — luxury awaits

By VALLI HERMAN
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Low before the mortgage meltdown or the gasoline price flare-up, hotel developers laid plans for grand resorts and hotels that would elevate the concept of luxury. Some of the biggest, boldest players in the hotel industry are debuting properties in — uh — California and Las Vegas beginning this fall and through 2013 year. Hold on to your wallets; none of these comes cheap. Here's a roundup of what's going up and going to be the big industry.

ANDAZ WEST HOLLYWOOD

Where: 8401 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood.
Inside look: When the scaffolding finally comes down on this Sunset Strip icon, Hyatt will debut a new brand in North America, Andaz. The former Hyatt West Hollywood will transform into a more upscale hotel guided by the motto "Sophistication made simple." The former "Riot House,"

renowned for the antics of the rock stars who stayed there, aims to embrace its reputation and history, but details aren't yet confirmed. The décor won't be the only modern element. In a break with tradition, the room rate at this luxury hotel will include local phone calls, Wi-Fi, breakfast, some laundry services, movies and the minibar.

Rates: Not yet available.
Opening date: Later this year.

Info: www.encyclopediasof.com
Ayoof.com

ENCORE AT WYNN LAS VEGAS

Where: 3131 Las Vegas Blvd., adjacent to the Wynn Las Vegas on the Strip.

Inside look: Through the Encore hotel and casino are next door to the Wynn flagship, at 2,034 rooms this luxury newcomer is about 700 rooms smaller than its sister. Developer Steve Wynn plans to include five restaurants, 11 retail offerings, the XS nightclub, spa, salon and pool to make the \$1.9-billion Encore a distinct resort, not just a second tower. The smallest rooms are 700 square feet; the largest, 5,800.

Rates: As low as \$230. Based on availability and occupancy.
Opening date: December.

Though room reservations are not available until January.
Info: (888) 220-7125.
www.encyclopediasof.com

MONTAGE BEVERLY HILLS

Where: 225 N. Canon Drive, between Canon and Beverly drives, north of Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills.

Inside look: The eight-story hotel, a sister to the Laguna Beach property, is built in the Spanish colonial revival style on the exterior, but recalls 1920s and '30s California with Spanish, Italian and Moroccan aesthetics in the interior and courtyard. The 201 guest rooms and suites range from 500 to 2,000 square feet. With a two-level spa with a cool mineral pool, five dining restaurants, a rooftop bar and grill and lobby lounge, the hotel adds another luxury contender to the Beverly Hills market.
Rates: \$295 to \$6,500.

Opening date: November.
Info: (888) 860-0788.
www.montagebeverlyhills.com

THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL

Where: 22781 Pelican Hill Road South, Newport Coast, between Newport Beach and Laguna Beach across the road from the rustic Crystal Cove State Park.

Inside look: Mega-developer Irvine Co. Resort Properties spent two years and untold millions building a mega-luxury resort made to look as though it sprouted from a



RESORT AT PELICAN HILL: This resort on the Newport Coast follows the classical influences of Palladian architecture.



RIVIERA RESORT: The landmark Palm Springs resort underwent a \$70-million renovation that retains its 1950s vibe.

northern Italian hills in the 1500s. Palladian-inspired architecture and 21st century luxury define the 204 bungalow suites (847 to 2,486 square feet) and 128 villas (2,193 to 3,581 square feet) that include private garages, kitchens and ocean-view terraces. Tom Fazio returned to fine-tune his two championship golf courses, and artisans have been installing glass tiles in a 136-foot-diameter saltwater pool, planting 750 mature olive trees, finishing the 22-treatment-room spa, and hand-cutting ceiling beams for La Cappella, the wedding venue with ocean views.

Opening date: Nov. 26.

Rates: \$695 to \$1,750 a night for the bungalow suites; \$1,450 to \$2,700 a night for the villas.

Info: (800) 820-6800;
www.pelicanhill.com

RITZ-CARLTON, RANCHO MIRAGE

Where: 68-900 Frank Sinatra Drive, Rancho Mirage. Set on a 650-foot bluff and spanning 40 acres overlooking greater Palm Springs.

Inside look: The Ritz-Carlton plans to open after a top-to-bottom, \$500-million renovation that closed the former Lodge at Rancho Mirage in August 2006. The new Ritz will include 260 rooms and 150 luxury residences, a \$25-million, 24,000-square-foot La Prairie spa, and a fleet of dining experiences inspired by Joachim Spilchal of Patina and Pinot fame. The sophisticated rooms are done in a casual but luxurious desert-chic motif, a break from the trademark, old-world Ritz look, which instead features local architecture, design and landscape details.

Rates: Starting at \$395 a night.

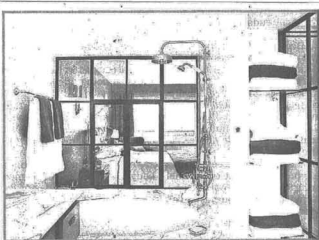
Opening: For stays in early 2009, when the resort opens, reservations will be accepted beginning in October.

Info: (760) 321-8282,
www.ritzcarlton.com

RIVIERA RESORT & SPA

Where: On 24 acres at 1600 N. Indian Canyon Drive, in northern downtown Palm Springs.

Inside look: After closing for nearly two years, the landmark resort is set to quietly reopen after a \$70-million renovation. Its 406 guest rooms and suites are decorated in midcentury Hollywood Regency style. The renovation of the 1959 hotel



Hotel Shangri-La

HOTEL SHANGRI-LA: A \$30-million renovation will add modern touches, ocean views to the 1939 hotel in Santa Monica.

preserves a retro feel, while adding a 12,000-square-foot SpaTerre, the largest in the Noble House Hotels & Resorts collection, and the signature restaurant, Circa 59, and the '50s-inspired Starlight Lounge.

Opening: Mid-October.

Rates: Grand opening preview rates are available from Nov. 1 to Jan. 31, beginning at \$249 a night, a 30% discount on published rates.

Info: (760) 327-8311;
www.psriviera.com

SETAI

Where: 1047 5th Ave., north of the Gaslamp Quarter, between Broadway and C Street, San Diego.

Inside look: Modern décor, accented with Asian touches and original art. The 184-room hotel will include a restaurant, lobby lounge, pool with food and beverage service, a spa, a three-story penthouse and a recording studio.

Opening: December.

Rates: Through March 31, room rates start at a discounted \$300 per night.

Info: (619) 515-3000,
www.setaisandiego.com.

SLS HOTEL AT BEVERLY HILLS

Where: 465 S. La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Hills.

Inside look: A \$230-million renovation and purchase of the former Le Meridien Beverly Hills hotel is the latest entrepreneurial endeavor from SBE Entertainment Group Chief Executive Sam Nazarian, the young developer of hot night-

clubs (Hyde Lounge, Area), restaurants (Katsuya, Foxtail) and now, hotels. The 297-room flagship of his SLS Hotels brand debuts with a renowned assortment of contributors: Philippe Starck designed the look; Spanish chef José Andrés the cuisine; French designer Pascal Humbert the uniforms; and Murray Moss the retail shops. Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide is managing the property, which launches the SLS Hotels brand.

Opening: November.

Rates: Rooms begin in the \$400 range.

Info: (310) 247-0400;
www.slshotels.com

ELSEWHERE AROUND THE REGION:

Santa Monica's **Hotel Shangri-La** is getting a \$30-million, modern upgrade to its Art Deco-meets-the-1980s look. Most of the rooms in the 1939 building will have ocean views.

In time for its 40th anniversary next year, the **Sheraton Universal Hotel** will have received an extensive renovation that includes the 451 remodeled rooms, a new lobby and refreshed cuisine courtesy of a new executive chef.

The **Mondrian Los Angeles** on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood recently finished a \$40-million update to the Starck original. Designer Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz called his new look, "Alice in Wonderland meets Hollywood."

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