

The Sweet Sounds and Tastes at the Park Hyatt

Aviara

BY KAREN VILLALPANDO

Just north of San Diego on the bluffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean is the Park Hyatt Aviara Resort. Perched just above Batiquitos Lagoon, a protected wildlife sanctuary, Aviara Resort is an extraordinary destination for relaxation, fine dining, and smooth jazz.

On Saturdays in the month of July, the resort is hosting “Jazz in the Park”, an outdoor concert series featuring acclaimed jazz musicians, culinary offerings from the hotel’s restaurants and wine, beer and cocktails. The concert is free for hotel guests, with food and beverages available for purchase. We were happy to be a part of the Jazz in the Park’s opening night last Saturday, with the cool sounds of “Euge Groove” entertaining the nearly sold-out crowd. A limited number of tickets are made available to the local community as well for \$65 each. We sat with a nice group from Carlsbad and Oceanside who attend the event every summer. The concerts are from 6 – 8 p.m. with the gates opening at 5 p.m.

Looking for a nice family getaway, we booked a weekend at the Park Hyatt Aviara Resort and arrived last Friday. It had been a few years since we had experienced the resort, and since then, the management company for the property changed from the Four Seasons to the Park Hyatt, the luxury hotel brand under the Hyatt Corporation. The prop-



photo courtesy of Park Hyatt Aviara Resort

The Park Hyatt Aviara Resort was named a AAA Five Diamond Resort for the 12th year in a row. The resort has been operated by the luxury brand under the Hyatt Corp. for the last year.

erty was amazing four years ago, and now, as the Park Hyatt, it’s even better. Aviara is still visually stunning, with incredible ocean views, impeccable style and their world-class golf club. What’s better is the relaxed and personable service we received from each and every staff member. Many of them have been at the hotel for a few years, yet they seem a little more at ease, now that the

hotel is out of its transition.

As a family of four with two teenaged daughters, we gladly accepted an upgrade to a luxurious and spacious suite for our stay. The extra bathroom was a definite stress reducer, as well as having our own private bedroom. Plush beds, plasma TVs, and turndown service are all amenities, which have resulted in the resort’s AAA Five Diamond

Award for the 12th year in a row. Our patios overlooked the pool and had ocean views as well.

After checking in, we popped into the lobby bar where we enjoyed a light snack and a cold drink on the deck. Michael was anxious to check out the 18-hole golf course, and the girls and I made our way to the tranquility pool – a quieter location than the main pool, open to 16 year olds and up. The underwater music was something we remembered from before, and the soothing sounds can still be heard. Cocktail servers attentively wait on guests, while complimentary towel service and sunscreen are provided.

While lounging poolside, we anxiously discussed our dinner that evening at Vivace, the hotel’s signature restaurant. I had a dish there that I so enjoyed, I called the chef for the recipe and prepared it for a dinner party. Would it still be on the menu?

Chef Jesse Paul was a sous chef at that time, and is now the Chef de Cuisine at Vivace, serving regional Italian cuisine. I was gratified to see “Brodetto Siciliano” listed under Antipasti, a calamari and tomato “brodo” – a rich and thick broth – with pine

nuts, dried currants and caper berries. It was as delicious as I remembered. However, Chef Jesse has added new dishes, and created a chef’s tasting menu, all of which were intriguing and most divine.

Our server, Heath, was very knowledgeable about the food and the perfect pairings of wine. He led us down a culinary path that included octopus, pickled strawberries, lamb gnocchi, lobster risotto, and New York steak. The grilled octopus appetizer shows the chef’s creativity and patience, as the dish requires hours to prepare. Large octopus is cooked sous vide, then pressed into a terrine, chilled, then delicately sliced ultra thin as carpaccio. Grilled baby octopus with roasted peppers, Marcona almonds, olives and mint are dressed atop the carpaccio, for an outstanding dish, serving octopus two ways with many layers of flavor.

Lobster risotto arrives with an entire tail cut into large pieces with a rich and tangy broth. My daughter Emily and I shared it as a second course, and it could easily be a terrific main course with the generous portion size.

Decadent lamb gnocchi was intensely flavored with braised lamb, fava beans, and cherry



photo courtesy of Park Hyatt Aviara Resort

The Golf Club at Aviara caters to the resort player, offering wide-open fairways, easy-to-read greens and friendly bunkers. The course was rate number one in Southern California by *Conde Naste Traveler* magazine.

tomatoes. Rebecca highly enjoyed it, barely sharing a taste with the table.

Mediterranean sea bass, or branzino, with clams, mussels and shrimp is perfectly pan seared with a crisp skin and juicy fish in a tomato and olive broth. Chef Jesse finishes each dish with a subtle hand resulting in superbly seasoned, mouthwatering entrées.

His chef's tasting menu is four courses, paired with wines for \$130 per person. The wine list is extensive, and Heath is very qualified to suggest wines that will marry well with your food.

While dining is one of my favorite indulgences at Aviara, experiencing the Spa is equally pleasurable. While waiting for my massage treatment, I relaxed in the opaque roofed lounge with a trickling fountain, and refreshing cucumber water and fresh fruit.

I selected a reviving massage with essential oils of red grapefruit, juniper and rosemary. Other choices of the "Bespoke" massage include a lavender based relaxing massage and a citrus based de-stressing massage. There are an abundance of choices so one can tailor their massage to fit specific needs. After 50 minutes of deep tissue massage, I was reinvigorated and ready to spend the day enjoying the many activities available at the resort.

Golf is one of the main attractions at Aviara, with a 7,000 yard Arnold Palmer designed course. Named the number one golf course in Southern California by Conde Nast Traveler magazine, the Aviara Golf Club overlooks the beautiful Batiquitos Lagoon ecological reserve, which is home to more than 130 species of shorebirds, waterfowl and a variety of natural vegetation. As a resort course, players will find wide-open fairways, easy-to-read greens and friendly bunkers making for a fun and enjoyable round.

One can also lounge the day away at the aforementioned Tranquility pool, and if you have kids in tow, the Family Pool offers fun in the sun swimming and playing all day long.

For the more active kids, the Camp Hyatt program entertains children, ages 4-12 years old, while giving parents time to take advantage of the many fabulous activities and amenities offered at the resort.

Check-in begins at 9 a.m. in the Camp Hyatt Playroom, where kids are introduced to their new friends and counselors and review the day's activities that can include, half-court basketball, a sand volleyball court and six tennis courts, croquet, bocce ball and badminton. Walks to the Batiquitos Lagoon, kite flying, soccer, kickball, Frisbee and scavenger hunts are all part of the fun.

A getaway to the Park Hyatt Aviara Resort, be it for the weekend, or better yet, a week-long stay, is the perfect vacation for Southern California families. While only 95 miles south of Los Angeles, you feel a world away, experiencing sun, fun, and fine cuisine in beautiful, natural surroundings. With many points of interests located nearby, like Del Mar racetrack, SeaWorld, the San Diego Zoo and the Wild Animal Park, Aviara is an idyllically situated resort – close by, yet far enough away to feel like you're definitely on vacation.

The summer Jazz in the Park concert series next headlines Mindi Abair, on July 16, Bobby Caldwell, on July 23, and Richard Elliot on July 30. Call today to make your reservations, or go to their website, www.parkaviara.hyatt.com. Park Hyatt Aviara Resort, 7100 Aviara Resort Drive Carlsbad, California 92011; (760) 448 1234.



photo courtesy of Park Hyatt Aviara Resort

The Tranquility pool is aptly named, where adults (over 16) can see picturesque views of Batiquitos Lagoon and canyons, receive attentive poolside food and beverage service, and enjoy underwater music.

Jazz in the Park

Rebecca Villalpando, left and Emily Villalpando enjoy a night of Jazz in the Park at Park Hyatt Aviara's summer concert series. The complimentary concerts for hotel guests start at 6 p.m. and go til about 8 p.m. with culinary delights prepared by the hotel's restaurants available for purchase.

Cocktails, beer and wine are also available. The acclaimed musicians encourage concertgoers to get up and dance.

photo by Michael Villalpando



photo courtesy of Park Hyatt Aviara Resort

The Jazz in the Park concerts will be held throughout the month of July and are real crowd pleaser for both hotel guests and local residents near Carlsbad.

vivace

The signature restaurant at Aviara serves outstanding regional Italian cuisine in a plush setting, right. The kitchen is helmed by Chef de Cuisine, Jesse Paul, who creates visual and culinary masterpieces, such as the branzino, a Mediterranean sea bass with crispy skin, and shrimp, clams and mussels in a tomato and olive based sauce.

photos courtesy of Park Hyatt Aviara

