



HOME+DESIGN



LIVING IN COLOR



Breathing New Life

Post Ranch Inn undergoes a renovation that enhances the beauty and safety of the coastal retreat

by **LINDSEY SHOOK** photography courtesy of **POST RANCH INN**

NESTLED ATOP the peaks of Big Sur sits the iconic Post Ranch Inn, where one can escape the world below to find solitude and serenity. Pioneers of sustainable architecture and farm-to-table dining, their dedication to the environment and overall guest experience is unparalleled.

When the pandemic began, managing partner Mike Freed and team took advantage of the downtime to upgrade the property, starting with a renovation of their acclaimed Ocean Houses. Originally designed by legendary Big Sur architect Mickey Muennig as the first earth-sheltered hotel rooms in the U.S., each cliffside unit is tucked directly into the earth and topped with a curved, beamed roof that is covered in native grasses and flora. “You have to recognize that we have been open for over 30 years,” says Freed. “Part of what inspired the renovation to an extent was the preferences of guests who are now staying longer and traveling

clockwise: Post Ranch Inn features the first earth-sheltered hotel rooms in the U.S.; three of the newly renovated Ocean Houses features steel soaking tubs that sit on the exterior deck; the wood-clad rooms further the design intention of bringing the outdoors in.

from farther away. We started by simply enlarging the closets and then one change lead to another.”

Led by the current architect Mike Niemann, the most significant changes happened in the North Ocean Houses, which now have fully remodeled bathrooms featuring new walk-in showers with vast ocean views, dual-vanity sinks and stone floors with radiant heating. Guests can take full immersion with nature to the next level when staying in one of the three homes that boast stainless steel custom two-person soaking tubs on stone patios that float above the Pacific Ocean.

Remaining true to the property’s signature organic aesthetic, rich hardwood details and furniture were handcrafted for each space out of reclaimed North African bubinga and reclaimed local lumber materials, including daybeds with cushions made by Ted Boerner, cabinetry, and coffee tables accented by custom-fabricated lamps from craftsman Jim Misner. Artwork by local artists Greg Hawthorne, Shelby Hawthorne and woodworker Joaquin Sullivan enhance the regional character.

“The project has authentically woven past with present, as showcased by two generations of woodworkers and artists,” notes Niemann. “Joaquin Sullivan’s father, Mark, made furniture for the original rooms, and Shelby Hawthorne’s artisan glasswork is featured in the custom sliding doors, while her father Greg’s paintings adorn the walls.”

By far the most innovative and thoughtful addition to the property that was created to reduce the risk of exposure to Covid 19 in a restaurant setting is the robust air-quality monitoring system. Developed in collaboration with healthy building coach Bill Hayward and University of Colorado professor Dr. Mark Hernandez, one of the leading experts on Covid and the indoor environment, the system tracks the ventilation performance and aerosol exposure to airborne particulate matter in the hotel’s restaurant, Sierra Mar, via a website that all guests have access to. “From the outset of the pandemic, the Post Ranch Inn team has prioritized guest and staff safety, first with a nontoxic cleaning protocol and now by



installing affordable ventilation and HEPA filtration measures that help determine the number of guests who should be allowed to dine indoors. By monitoring indoor air quality in real time, it has verifiable data that indoor air quality is comparable to outdoor air quality,” explained Hayward.

The magic of Post Ranch Inn lies not only in the magnetic location but in the gracious design details, thoughtful safety measures and the community behind the prolific property. Freed notes, “We have an amazing staff of people who have worked for us for over 30 years, which is another reason it is so special.”



ABOVE: Guests can feel protected from COVID due to the air quality systems that monitor the viral air quality inside Sierra Mar. **BELOW:** Views of the Pacific are the main focal point in Sierra Mar.