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Near the Stanford Campus

Silicon Valley: A Noteworthy New Rosewood Resort

APART FROM THE FOUR SEASONS SILICON VALLEY, a mediocre property that has provoked grumbles in our Members' Forum, the eastern corridor of the San Francisco Peninsula has long lacked a hotel of distinction. Fortunately, Stanford University has remedied this omission with the 121-room Rosewood Sand Hill, set amid 16 acres just off Interstate 280 in Menlo Park.

No doubt the university had meetings and alumni reunions in mind when it licensed the property to the Rosewood group, but the hotel's superlative facilities and flowing design make it perfectly suitable for a relaxing weekend. The only drawback is the nearby freeway traffic, which is far from invasive but nevertheless present.

The property's unassuming exterior belies a series of airy and inviting interior spaces stylishly appointed with modern art and eclectic décor. After a prompt check-in in the cool confines of the front-desk lobby, we lingered on the hotel terrace, where a casual happy hour was in full swing on a sparkling afternoon. A smart, stylish crowd drank white wine above a swimming pool surrounded by riots of colorful wildflowers.

Our elegant and spacious Premier Room, with its vaulted ceiling and sweeping views of the Santa Cruz Mountains, proved to be an instantly relaxing space that felt much larger than its 550-square feet. The unassuming furniture and maroon and amber color scheme were obviously intended to soothe harried souls rather than to make a splashy impression, and the cream-tiled bath with a marble tub and separate rainfall shower was a similar exercise in understated comfort. The small porch was perfect for an early-morning coffee and the paper.

We would have appreciated a simple reading chair rather than the unnecessary chaise longue, and our only other quibble was that the king-size bed, with its fine Italian linens and goose-down pillows, was so soft that it nearly swallowed us whole. If you prefer firmer beds, be sure to make arrangements with the concierge before checking in. Also note that rooms in buildings 10, 11 and 12 have the best views, as they sit above most of the others in the complex.

After a long day of battling the freeways, the hotel spa was a haven of soothing neutral tones, and that evening,

we enjoyed an excellent dinner in the hotel's warm and inviting *Madera* restaurant, which has attracted chefs and diners from across the Bay Area. A refreshing artichoke and burrata salad was followed by a singular main course of squab and summer truffles that we paired with a Sonoma Pinot Noir. We enjoyed beignets and coffee out on the terrace as a bright crescent moon hung over the distant ridge. Breakfast in the restaurant the next morning had a decidedly more businesslike tone, as the venture capital set chatted earnestly over their granola.

We spent the next morning strolling through the magnificent quadrangle of the Stanford campus, roughly a mile away. (The university is renowned for its success in technology and the sciences, but much of its wealth derives from prime Silicon Valley real estate purchased in the late 19th century). At the café in the university's

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Cantor Arts Center, we had a quiet patio lunch of chicken curry salad and a chilled glass of Mendocino Sauvignon Blanc amid the largest collection of Rodins outside of Paris. Later that afternoon, we enjoyed a few hours of reading by the hotel pool before taking a peaceful early-evening hike through a canopy of live oaks in nearby Wunderlich County Park, the former Folger Estate. All in all, a near-perfect West Coast day.

To achieve a numerical score in the low 90s or higher, a Harper-recommended property should be worth making a considerable effort to visit. We don't think that the Rosewood quite merits this distinction. (It also sits within a 60-mile radius of some of the finest hotels in the country, including Big Sur's Post Ranch Inn, San Martin's CordeValle [also a Rosewood property] and Napa's Auberge du Soleil.) Nevertheless, Rosewood Sand Hill is undoubtedly the best bet in an area that has given us much of the technology that makes life easier, when it's not driving us mad. 89 Premier Room, \$435; Rosewood Junior Suite, \$585. 2825 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, California 94025. Tel (650) 561-1500. www.rosewoodsandhill.com