

SAVE OUR HERITAGE ORGANISATION PRESENTS



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Mid-Century Island Escape on Mission Bay



PARADISE POINT
A SELF-GUIDED TOUR
1404 VACATION ROAD, SAN DIEGO, CA 92109

Financial support is provided by the City of San Diego
Commission for Arts and Culture.



“Like ice stacked in a tall glass, they realize their fullest and happiest potential by complimenting a precise concoction of selected ingredients. And all the ingredients herein assembled are rare ones, even in our resort area.” - Architectural critic James Britton II on the elements of Vacation Village



Mid-Century Island Escape on Mission Bay

An educational publication celebrating the visionary Mid-Century design, landscape, and legacy of San Diego's iconic Vacation Village resort.



ON THE COVER

The observation tower with Polynesian-inspired pavilions at the edge of the lagoon, 1963. Note the raised walkways—all have since been removed. Photo by Julius Shulman

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Sunset "Arabian Nights atmosphere will fascinate you... achieved through highly imaginative architecture and landscaping..."

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Paradise Point, originally known as Vacation Village, where Mid-Century Modern architecture, Polynesian fantasy, and lush landscaping come together to create one of San Diego's most unique and transportive environments. Nestled on its own 44-acre island at the heart of Mission Bay, the resort stands as a vivid time capsule of 1960s California when car culture, pop music, and exotic escapes merged in spectacular fashion.

This walking tour invites you to step back into a time when movie producers like Jack Skirball dreamed of permanent fantasy sets and made them real. Skirball, known for his Hollywood background and a boundless creative energy, envisioned Vacation Village as a family-friendly retreat for executives and vacationers alike. Designed in 1962–63 by architect Eldridge T. Spencer and his team, the village was constructed with innovative flair and some good old improvisation. The designers often engineered solutions as they built, drawing on modernist principles while embracing theatricality and whimsy.

Skirball's Hollywood showmanship permeates the resort. From *Cleopatra's* porpoise fountain to the individual bungalows and a whimsical iron rebar turtle sculpture perched high above Mission Bay, these details enrich the visual storytelling of the site.

Vacation Village debuted on June 16, 1962, with fanfare and flair, promising "101 Kinds of Fun." Guests found themselves in a sumptuous, immersive setting of lagoons, exotic gardens, and tropical pavilions.

The site is also a pop culture touchstone. In 1966, The Mamas & the Papas performed "California Dreaming" for a national audience on the popular TV show *Where the Action Is*, filmed on the site's still-standing bridges and tower around the central lagoon—bringing San Diego's own slice of paradise to living rooms across America. The televised event added to the resort's growing legend. A portion of this performance still exists on YouTube, preserving the magic of that era.

Famed landscape architect Roland Hoyt, along with landscape designer Frank Rich, transformed the once-barren island into a living botanical wonder. More than 600 types of tropical plants from twenty countries were introduced, including imperial bromeliads from Rio, dragon trees from Madagascar, and towering palms that now form a shady canopy over the

bungalows and walkways. Wildlife find a home here, too: ducks, egrets, turtles, koi, hummingbirds, and even the occasional leopard shark in the lagoon.

Vacation Village was, and remains, a vision of laid-back luxury. It offered bungalow lodging with kitchenettes, a dock for boating, Jack's Steak House, a children's day camp led by Chargers quarterback Jack Kemp, and eventually, an 18-hole par-3 golf course. Despite updates over the years, the feeling of the original village endures—its dramatic wave-like rooflines, winding lagoons, playful ironwork, and sense of immersive escape still captivate today.

This walking tour explores the village's remaining original buildings, its sculptural landscape, and its colorful history. Take it all in, and let yourself be transported.



Illustrated map of the proposed development of Mission Bay Recreational Area, 1945. Note the air field listed as #18 and the absence of Sea World. Courtesy Martin Lindsay

HISTORY

In 1962, San Diego's Mission Bay, an emerging aquatic playground, became home to one of the city's most imaginative resort creations. Originally called Vacation Village, it was the brainchild of two film-industry brothers who envisioned a lush, exotic escape—a “poor man's Tahiti”—where Hollywood showmanship met Mid-Century architectural brilliance. Now known as Paradise Point, this island retreat still echoes the vision and spirit of its creators. On this exclusive SOHO tour, we invite you to step into its story.

The Skirball Brothers: From Hollywood to Hospitality

Behind the vision were two brothers, Jack Skirball, a rabbi-turned-film producer, and Bill Skirball. Once entrenched in the world of Hollywood filmmaking and theatre chains, they had worked with industry giants like Alfred Hitchcock, co-producing *Saboteur* and *Shadow of a Doubt*.

After their film careers, the Skirball brothers turned their attention to building family entertainment venues, most notably the Bowlero amusement centers. While planning one of the nation's largest Bowleros in San Diego (recently demolished), they became enamored with the nearby Mission Bay development. The once-marshy area—called *Bahía Falsa* (False Bay) by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo in 1542—was being transformed into Mission Bay Aquatic Park through one of the largest aquatic engineering projects on the West Coast.

When the City of San Diego offered commercial development leases on man-made islands in the bay, the Skirballs jumped at the opportunity. Jack visited the city and was drawn to a sandy, artificial island called Tierra del Fuego. While city planners imagined a typical large hotel, he envisioned something far more imaginative: a family-friendly, low-scale tropical resort that would feel intimate, artful, and adventurous.

Designing a Tropical Fantasy

To bring his vision to life, Jack Skirball enlisted acclaimed Bay Area architect Ted Spencer—often called the “dean of environmental architecture”—along with Spencer's wife, artist and interior designer Jeanette Dyer Spencer. Known for his work on Yosemite's famed Ahwahnee Hotel and for seamlessly integrating buildings with their natural surroundings, Spencer was a perfect match for Skirball's imaginative concept. He assembled a team of young protégés, including Daniel R. Osborne, Zach Redington Stewart, Valentino Agnoli, and William Allen Kibby. Builder Bob Golden helped realize the unique structures, while Kibby commuted from San Francisco on early PSA flights to oversee construction.

When the city pressed Spencer for specifics early in the planning process, he

jokingly said they were building a cable-driven dinosaur ride over the bay—an idea that momentarily alarmed commissioners. What they did build, however, was no less fantastical.

Building the Dream

Designed as a village rather than a traditional hotel, Vacation Village featured low-slung structures on stilts, inspired by the stilt houses of Papua New Guinea, prehistoric Swiss lake dwellings, and South Pacific architecture. The pole construction was both practical and aesthetic: built on soft, dredged land, the resort required deep support structures. Chemonite-treated telephone poles driven to bedrock served as the sturdy foundation beneath its sandy surface. The architects favored natural materials like concrete block, redwood siding, and iron, creating a rustic modern environment that blended easily with the coastal setting.

Color and texture played a central role in expressing the resort's playful, tropical spirit. Shake shingles were paired with a vivid palette of sea green, turquoise, persimmon, marigold, charcoal, and white—tones that echoed the water, sky, and surrounding flora. Jeanette Dyer Spencer's interiors extended this connection to nature with designs that emphasized organic forms and lighthearted hues.

Architectural surprises delighted guests throughout the property. Undulating iron latticework—modeled after the wooden rollercoaster at nearby Belmont Park—added whimsy and movement. Perhaps the most iconic feature was the 70-foot-tall observation tower, crowned with a red-eared slider turtle sculpture crafted from steel rebar by Val Agnoli.

Rather than a multi-story guestroom tower or imposing hotel block, the resort unfolded in a series of scattered bungalow clusters nestled among subtropical gardens, meandering lagoons, and secluded coves. Guests discovered the grounds via hidden pathways and wooden footbridges in a layout that invited curiosity and quiet discovery. A golf course originally formed part of the resort's offerings, but was later replaced by additional bungalows; a small putting green remains today as a subtle nod to the original plan.

Vacation Village was more than a destination—it was an experience, a magical blend of architecture and artifice on Mission Bay that stoked the imagination.

A Mid-Century Marvel in Mission Bay

Vacation Village represented the high point of Mid-Century Modern resort design on the West Coast. More than a collection of buildings, it was a carefully choreographed environment that blurred the lines between built and natural space. The resort captured the era's fascination with exoticism

and escape, channeling a playful "South Seas" aesthetic through modernist materials and design. It was Jack Skirball's dream realized: a lush, family-friendly retreat that offered drama and delight—without the cost of an overseas vacation.

Though the property has since evolved into today's Paradise Point, much of Spencer's and Skirball's original vision remains visible in the layout, materials, and atmosphere. The resort has grown and changed, but many original elements survive: curving roofs, natural wood siding, whimsical artistic touches, and the creative use of natural light and shadow.

This walking tour will guide you through the most distinctive features and surviving components of Vacation Village. Each stop tells a story—from the architectural ingenuity and handcrafted details to the landscape design.

This timeline traces the evolution of Vacation Village to Paradise Point from its founding in 1962 through decades of expansion, reinvention, and ownership changes.

1962 - Initial build

- Vacation Village / The Grotto (1962)
- Vacation Village / Barefoot Bar (1962-1980)

Summer 1969

- 17' waterfall added to Barefoot Bar

1974 - Two-year major \$4 million expansion project included:

- 100 new units, including 28 bayside suites
- New swimming pool and tennis courts
- Vacation Village Conference Center, designed by Mosher, Drew & Watson. M.H. Golden Construction contractor.
- Bayview Restaurant built just south of the Barefoot Bar.

1980 - Another major expansion and renovation of the resort

- Don the Beachcomber (1980-1983)

1983 - Skirball sells Vacation Village to P&O Enterprises (Peninsulas and Orient Steam Navigation Company of England), operator of The Love Boat, and resort name changes to San Diego Princess Resort.

- San Diego Princess Resort / Polynesian Princess (1984-1998)

1998 - Property is sold and renamed Paradise Point

- Paradise Point / Barefoot Bar & Grill (1998-now)

SPENCER & LEE ARCHITECTS

The architecture of Vacation Village is the inspired work of the San Francisco-based firm Spencer & Lee, best known for projects in the Bay Area, serving here as the architect of record. Specialists in national park and resort architecture, Spencer & Lee were also renowned for their work at Yosemite and Grand Teton National Parks, and for several commissions with Stanford University, where Spencer also taught architecture.

At the heart of the Vacation Village effort was the dynamic husband-and-wife team of architect Eldridge T. Spencer, whose bold, nature-infused vision shaped the resort's overall form, and Jeannette Dyer Spencer, whose refined interior sensibility brought elegance and cohesion to the spaces. Under Eldridge's supervision, the design team also included Daniel R. Osborne, Zach Redington Stewart (of Osborne & Stewart and students of Spencer), along with Valentino Agnoli and William Allen Kibby. Together, they crafted a resort experience that combined modernist ideals with ancient architectural inspiration and a deep respect for the natural world, drawing on a lifetime of experience shaping spaces of harmony and human scale in some of the country's most cherished landscapes.

From its elevated pole construction said to evoke prehistoric lake dwellings and stilt houses from the South Pacific to its sculptural use of common materials like steel rebar and Chemonite-treated telephone poles, Vacation



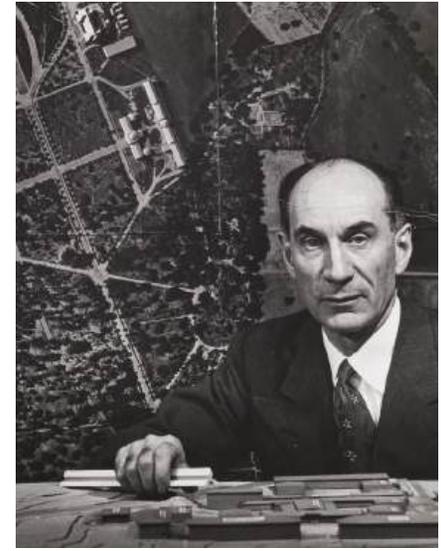
A rare view of Vacation Village under construction, 1962. Courtesy Dan Osborne family collection

Village is an exuberant celebration of elemental building vocabulary. As Eldridge described it, their design philosophy was to “exalt” the humble and the everyday into forms of beauty and meaning.

Eldridge explained his choice of materials, “One point is that we like to employ materials in common usage. This is not practiced by our office alone but there is a trend with creative people everywhere to go back to the fundamentals. To the public mind the symbol of lumber is a 2x4. We exalt it. (Vacation Village utilizes 2x4's and 2x6's.) We exalt reinforcing steel into sculpture. For this pole-type construction throughout Vacation Village we have imported telephone poles just as they are stockpiled, treated with Chemonite, a metallic sulfur that is slightly toxic to the things that destroy wood [ammoniacal copper arsenate], and this chemical gives the poles their unusual greenish color. The lights above the pilings over there, the ones that look to you like a row of tall candles, probably are the cheapest lights you will find on the market. They are of a plastic that will hold up in wind and weather and cost \$4.80 each. They could very well have been \$50 each but we don't consider that something necessarily is better if it is made, say of gold rather than of base material. In lecturing on architecture at Stanford, I continually try to impress students with the fact that one of the most beautiful forms is also one of the most common things with which we are in contact—the hen's egg. But the hen never is given any credit.” - “Vacation Village,” *San Diego and Point Magazine*, July 1962.

Eldridge was inspired by *Pfahlbauten* (German for “pile structures”) built from about 5,000 to 500 BCE and Jeannette's thesis focused on 11th-century stained glass, which used “practically pure colors”—bold, vibrant hues—and a limited range of colors she took from Pacific coastal vegetation. This approach helped root the buildings in place and time. A designer-decorator, Jeannette also designed most of the furniture pieces, working with small artist-fabricators. Together, their use of kiosk forms, water features, artist-made furnishings, and inexpensive yet expressive materials created a setting that was innovative and inviting.

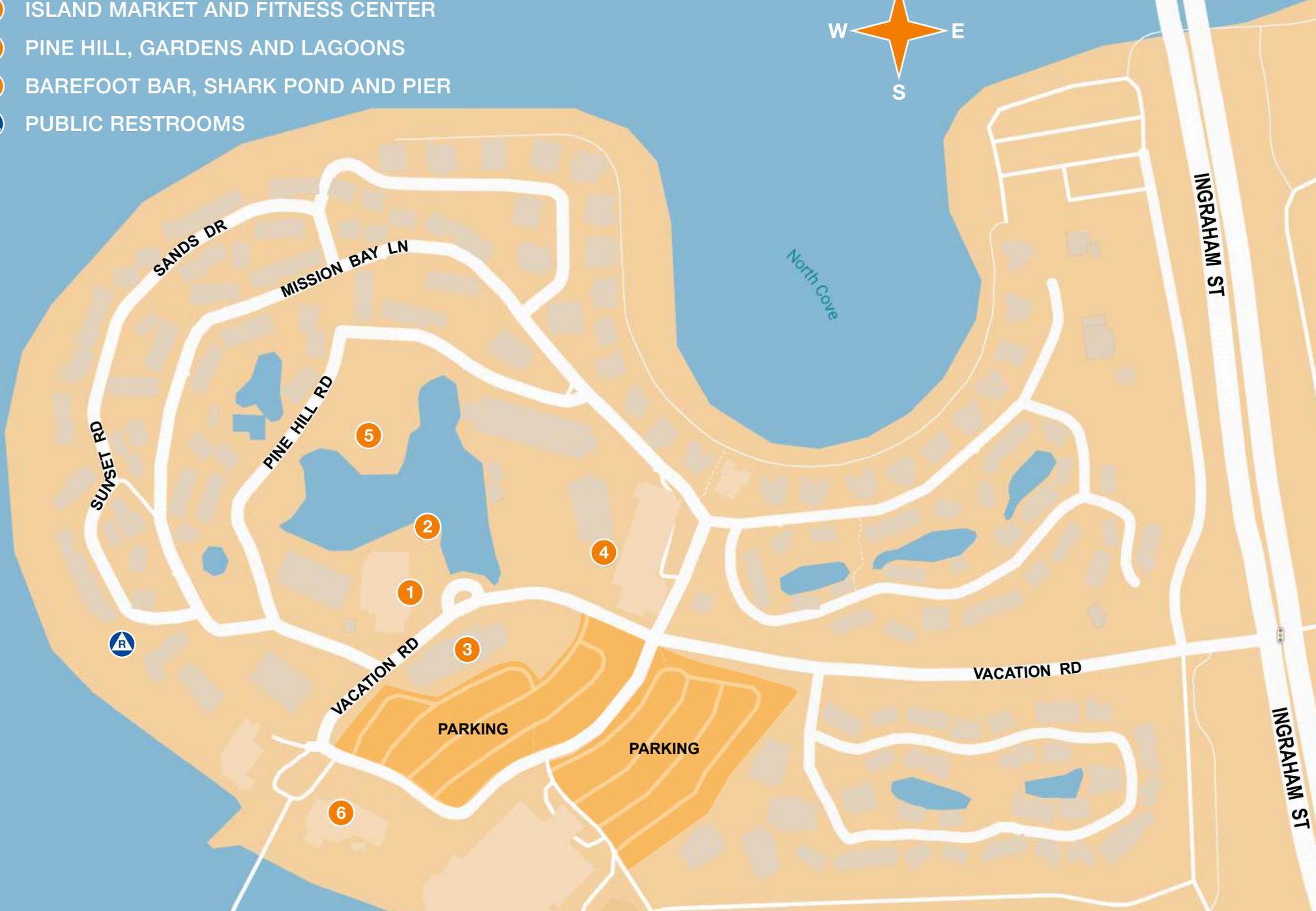
Vacation Village is a triumph in architectural storytelling: a narrative told through pilings, palms, lagoons, and light, where the ordinary became extraordinary.



Eldridge T. Spencer. Photo by Ansel Adams. Courtesy Martin Lindsay

- 1 REGISTRATION - TOUR BEGINS HERE
- 2 OBSERVATION TOWER
- 3 MISSION BAY ROOM
- 4 ISLAND MARKET AND FITNESS CENTER
- 5 PINE HILL, GARDENS AND LAGOONS
- 6 BAREFOOT BAR, SHARK POND AND PIER
-  PUBLIC RESTROOMS

YOU MAY VIEW THE TOUR IN ANY SEQUENCE YOU WISH





The Tavern Restaurant in 1963 before it became the Carousel Room, now the main lobby. Note the octopus-shaped ceiling lights. Photo by Julius Shulman

MAIN REGISTRATION BUILDING AND LOBBY

In 1963, what is now the main registration building became the social heart of Vacation Village, home to three distinct dining venues: the Carousel Room, the Cleopatra Room, and the resort's flagship restaurant, Jack's Steak House. Unfortunately, little survives in the way of interior photographs.

Designed by Spencer & Lee's team of architects, the structure features an undulating roofline inspired by Mission Beach's 1925 wooden roller coaster, the Giant Dipper. Inside, exposed laminated wood beams, wood poles, iron latticework trusses, and natural materials still echo the whimsical and modernist design sensibility that defined the original Vacation Village.

Named for resort founder Jack Skirball, Jack's Steak House was known for its hearty fare, attentive service, and Mid-Century flair. Guests dined on sizzling steaks and fresh local seafood served on custom-logoed serviceware—plates, flatware, and glassware marked with the Vacation Village insignia.





Dining was casual but polished, echoing the resort's overall atmosphere of relaxed luxury.

The Cleopatra Room paid homage to Skirball's Hollywood roots and his rumored connection to the 1963 film *Cleopatra*, whose opulent aesthetic may have inspired the room's name and decor. The Carousel Room struck a more playful, Mid-Century note and was housed in what is now the most architecturally striking building on the property.

Though no longer serving meals, this building continues to welcome guests as the resort's lobby and registration area. It now stands as a visual centerpiece and an architectural time capsule.



The Carousel Room with the Cleopatra Room in the foreground on the right, 1963. Photo by Julius Shulman



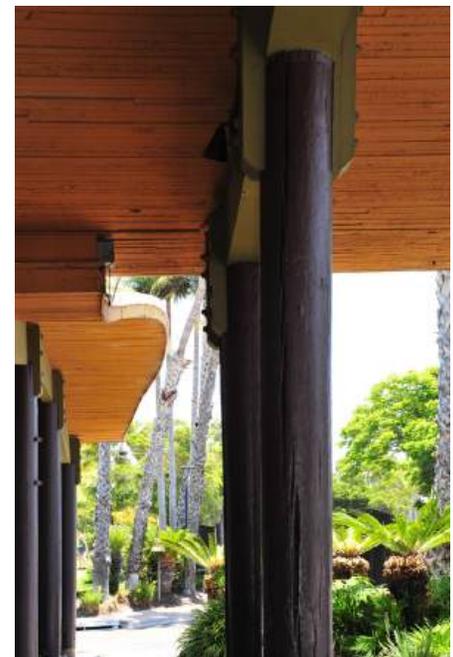
ISLAND MARKET

What began in 1962 as the porte cochere of the original hotel registration building was later enclosed to form a new structure, eventually transformed into the Island Market. A second building was added to the right, expanding the interior footprint and giving the space new purpose.

The curving glulam beams, high clerestory windows, and unpainted arched wood ceilings supported by rustic wood poles all reflect the character of the original design. In the historic photo at right, you can see the porte cochere in its original, open form—offering a contrast to the current view above showing the completed building.



Photo by Julius Shulman





FITNESS CENTER

Briefly known as the Aztec Room before being renamed the Cove Room, this building originally served as the entrance to the 300- to 450-seat amphitheater. In the photo at right, note the covered walkway that began at the registration building (visible in the background), branched off to the Cove Room and amphitheater, and continued on to the Carousel Room, the Persian Room, and finally the Bayview Bar.

Today, the building has been repurposed for exercise activities and is located within an area accessible only to day guests. During the 1970s and '80s, it housed an arcade filled with pinball machines, air hockey, and other games. Its swooping roofline and deep overhangs visually connect it to the registration building across the lagoon.



Photos by Julius Shulman, 1963



MISSION BAY ROOM

Originally named the Village Assembly in 1962, the building served as a lively venue for dinners, banquets, and other special events. As seen in the interior photo at right, the space featured a high ceiling crowned with a ribbon of skylights, creating a bright, open, and flexible space free of interior columns.

Seen in the top photo, the main lagoon once extended directly in front of the building, with a covered walkway running alongside the water from the registration building to the Bayview Bar. At some point—though exactly when remains unknown—this portion of the lagoon was filled in, and Vacation Road was extended to reach what was then the Carousel Room, now repurposed as hotel registration. The covered walkways have since been removed as well.



Photos by Julius Shulman, 1963



THE OBSERVATION TOWER

The most iconic structure at Vacation Village, the Observation Tower, was conceived as a counterpoint to the resort’s otherwise low-profile design. Rising above the flat horizon of Mission Bay, it added a sense of drama and verticality to a landscape defined by water, sand, and wide-open skies.

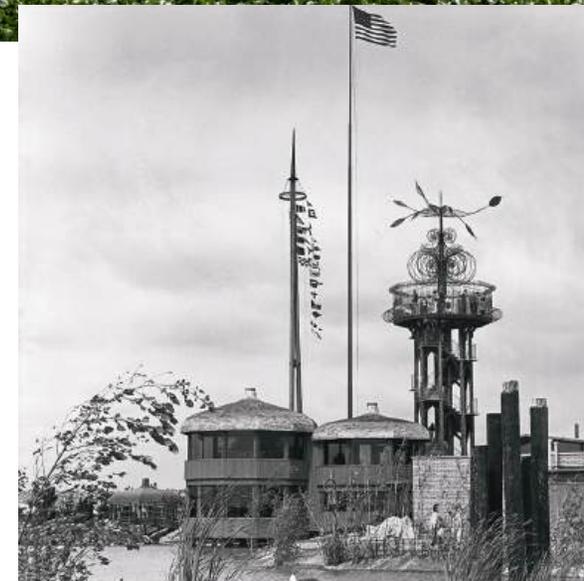
At its crown sits a whimsical, iron rebar sculpture of a red-eared slider turtle, designed and hand-forged by artist-fabricator Valentino “Val” Agnoli. Known for his expressive, hands-on approach, Agnoli worked side by side with welders to shape raw materials into living form. As architect Bill Kibby later noted, “Young artist-craftsmen of that kind take great pride in being able to handle both design and workmanship—and their work is very vital and very strong.”

The tower was a true collaboration. Bob Golden of M.H. Golden Construction Company joined the team as builder-partner and helped solve the challenge of how to construct such a daring form. Architect Eldridge T. Spencer admitted that they were “engineering as they built”—an improvisational spirit

that gives the tower its kinetic energy and sculptural confidence.

“The bay was so smooth everywhere that we felt we should exaggerate heights,” Spencer explained. “In any composition, you have to maintain vitality, or it becomes soft, uninteresting.”

Agnoli’s steel crown was completed in just one month, aided by a skilled concrete worker who shaped



View of the back side of the Persian Room and Bayview Bar, which were destroyed in a fire in 1975. Courtesy Gregory May



the exposed steel rebar—typically hidden within concrete—into a striking ornamental feature. The use of Chemonite-treated telephone poles as both structural support and architectural motif further grounded the design in the resort's raw-material ethos.

The tower's bold and inventive use of welded steel earned national recognition. In 1966, it received the prestigious Design in Steel Award (DISA) for its exceptional ornamental use of reinforcing bar. The team behind the project included structural engineer Robert Fogg of Lawrence, Fogg, Florer & Smith, and contractor M.H. Golden.

Today, the Observation Tower remains a rare and exhilarating example of sculptural mid-century design, transforming utilitarian materials into something truly extraordinary, and provides unmatched views of the resort and Mission Bay.

Above left to right Atop the tower sits the award-winning curved and welded rebar sculpture. From the tower, a view of the bridges and pathways winding through the gardens, and the lagoon with its bird-filled islands. *Right* A vintage view of the lagoons and rooms from the tower, with the bay in the distance, 1980. Courtesy Paradise Point





PINE HILL AND GARDENS

Marked on early site maps simply as “Arboretum,” this area is known today as Pine Hill. Though only a few pines remain from what was once a more densely pine-filled landscape, the historic name endures. Nestled among meandering lagoons and garden paths that weave through towering Washingtonia fan palms and bordered by ceremonial spaces, Pine Hill serves as the resort’s green sanctuary—a quiet refuge and elegant setting often reserved for weddings and special gatherings.

This is no manicured formality; the landscaping philosophy here was said to be conceived more like music than a blueprint. Architect Eldridge T. Spencer explained, “Composition-wise, we like to run a whole gamut, like a musical composition that takes the full keyboard of the piano and plays one part against the other.”

As Spencer put it, “Mission Bay suggests water, sand, and natural materials. How you put them together makes the creative thing.” In the case of Pine

Hill and the surrounding gardens, the creative thing was a landscape that blurred the boundary between the built and the natural, the ceremonial and the casual.

Once the largest installation of original Forbes El Camino Real mission bells in the nation, the site’s remarkable collection is thoughtfully placed throughout the gardens and along the lagoon paths. These historic markers add a note of California history to the resort’s layered visual story.





Clockwise from above Seen from the Observation Tower, an isolated bridge crosses the water; a bell from the series of seven El Camino Real mission bells is displayed nearby; and one of the many winding paths enters a forested area.



FRESHWATER LAGOONS

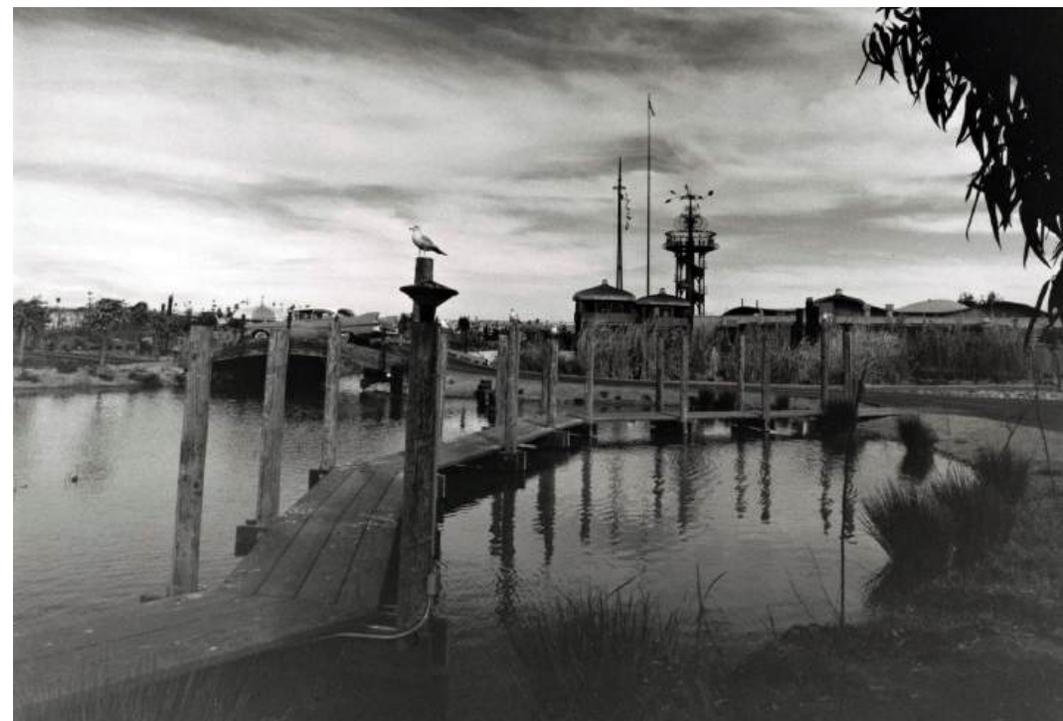
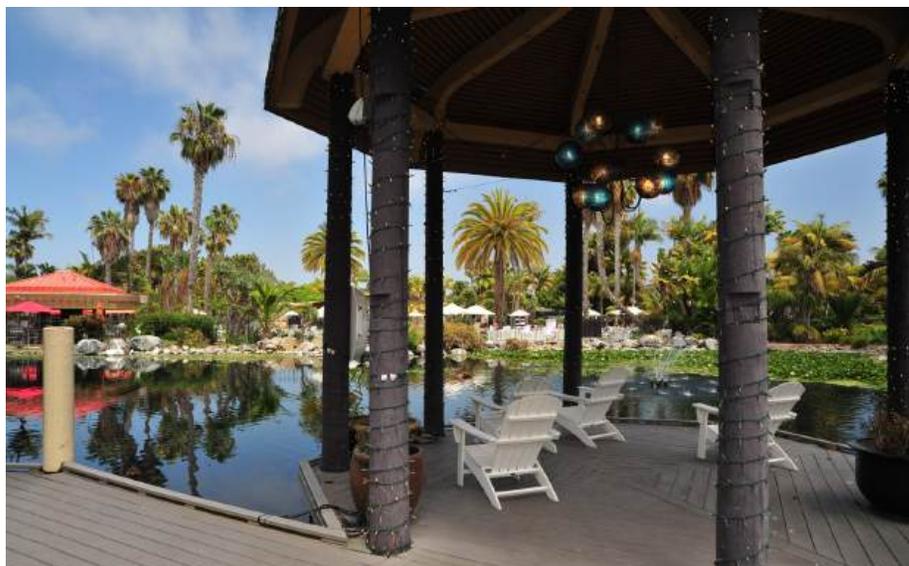
At the heart of the resort's design are freshwater lagoons that branch off and wind through guest bungalow areas, crossed by pedestrian bridges linking public buildings and amenities. Fed from internal sources and distinct from the surrounding saltwater of Mission Bay, these lagoons form a calm counterpoint to the tidal waters beyond.

Architect Eldridge T. Spencer and builder Bob Golden envisioned a South Seas atmosphere, where cascading waterfalls and tranquil lagoons flowed through tropical gardens. Though many of the smaller tributaries have since been removed, the central lagoon still offers guests scenic views and meandering walkways that blend structure and nature in seamless harmony.

Today, the lagoons are home to red-eared slider turtles, giant koi, and a variety of fish, as well as numerous bird species—including ducks, geese, snowy egrets, great blue herons, and even parrots.



Top A vast floating field of waterlilies graces the main lagoon. *Bottom left* A solitary bloom. *Bottom right* Often referred to as a porpoise fountain from *Cleopatra*, it is actually a carp—a fish native to Egyptian waters, unlike a porpoise or dolphin. Misidentified in promotional lore, the sculpture even made a splash in the Dolphin Room at Skirball's Bowlero. Proof that sometimes, Hollywood history gets a little...off-script.



Counterclockwise from right View of the main lagoon and plank walkway crossing it, 1963. Photo by Julius Shulman. Garden Suites line the lagoon, where an island filled with birds rises from the water. A great blue heron wades and fishes along the shoreline. Original kiosk juts out over the water.



BAREFOOT BAR AND GRILL

Originally known as The Grotto, this legendary spot on the island's southern shore may be the only tiki bar in America that could also serve as a bomb shelter. Built in 1962 as part of the original Vacation Village resort, the Barefoot Bar was constructed low to the ground, embedded in a large berm, and fortified with concrete vaults and salvaged telephone poles.

"The joke was you could get bombed at the bar but not bombed from the sky," wrote historian Martin Lindsay.

Inside, a whimsical board-formed concrete ceiling featured embedded fish and footprints, floating overhead like the ghosts of beachgoers past.

Above Photo postcard of the Barefoot Bar, 1962. *Courtesy* Martin Lindsay. *Right* Interior view looking to the bay, 1963. *Photo* by Julius Shulman.



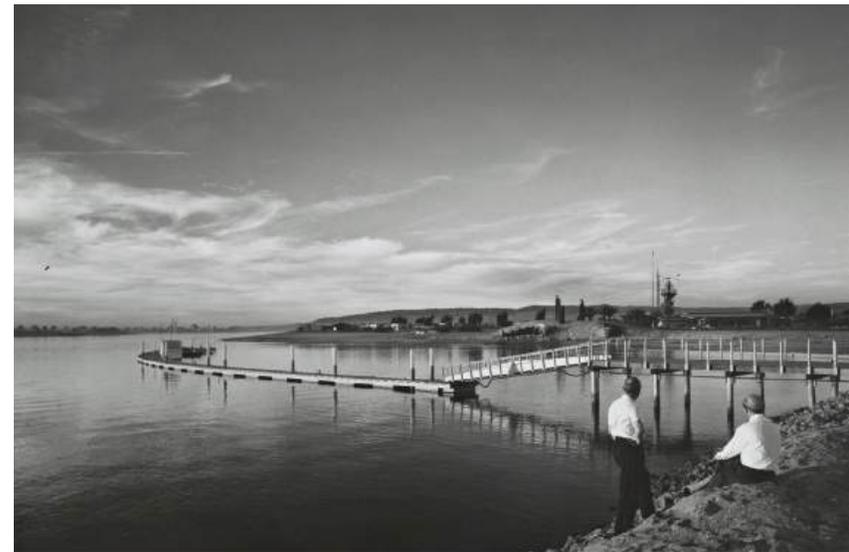


Newspaperman Alan Page described it as “a lush South Seas atmosphere complete with wicker furniture, hanging baskets of plants, and bayside view.”

The Barefoot Bar quickly became a favorite San Diego hideaway. Guests arrived barefoot, sipped zombies, fog cutters, scorpions, and mai tais, and dined on Polynesian cuisine while calypso bands played and exotic belly dancers swayed. By the late 1970s, the young palms planted in the early days had grown into a mature tropical canopy, and the bar took on a new identity as a local branch of Don the Beachcomber, one of the original purveyors of mid-century Polynesian pop culture.

Decades later, the tiki torch flames still flicker. When LaSalle Hotel Properties purchased the resort in 1998 and reimagined it as Paradise Point, they wisely revived the beloved Barefoot Bar, modernizing the venue while keeping its unique identity intact.

Above The salt water lagoon in front of the Barefoot Bar supports a wide array of marine life. *Top right* Although now located alongside the Barefoot Bar, a marina offering small boat rentals has been part of the resort since the beginning—originally in a location farther south. *Bottom right* Two men, possibly partners Jack Skirball and Bob Golden, look out over the bay toward the center of Vacation Village, with the Barefoot Bar and the Observation Tower visible in the distance. Photos by Julius Shulman, 1963



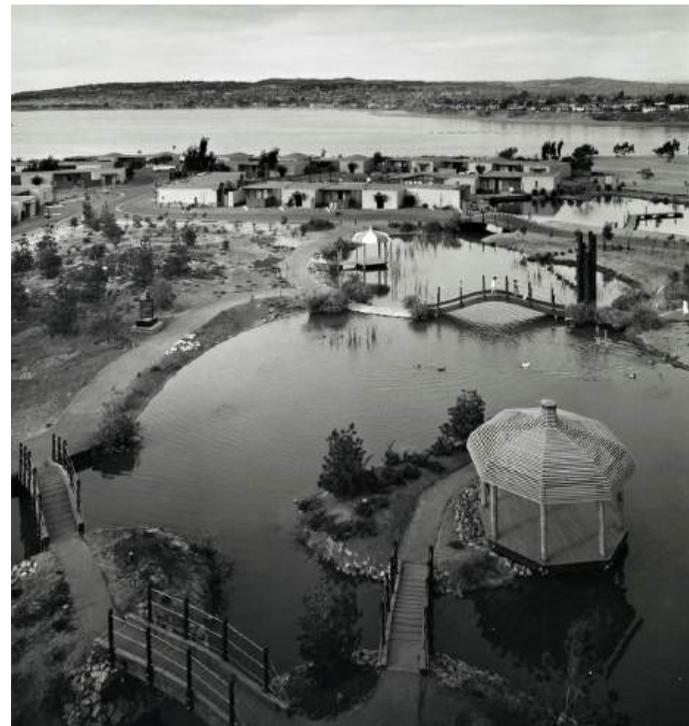


BUNGALOW SUITES

Architect William A. Kibby explained how the faux adobe block guest bungalows were designed for comfort, seclusion, and a touch of the theatrical: "I called the Guest Rooms caves because three walls were adobe block walls without windows and the fourth was windows. The guest would get a feeling of security inside the room. ...The site plan reveals the 'cave' guest rooms distributed at random, but with careful attention to the outlook from the cave mouths."

The bungalow suites, scattered with thoughtful irregularity throughout the resort, included garden- and bay-facing options, private patios, kitchenettes, and even beachfront terraces. Guests could enjoy breakfast delivered by bicycle, with tropical gardens just outside their door.

Above Garden Suite bungalows situated along the shoreline of the freshwater lagoon.



Top Note the view of the shoreline from this bayside Terrace Suite bungalow and the distinctive rooflines seen throughout the resort. *Middle* Patio Room bungalow with a private outdoor area. Note how the exterior faux adobe block flows into the interior, blending together the indoor and outdoor spaces. *Left* Observation Tower view of the lagoons and rows of bungalows, with Mission Bay in the distance. Photos by Julius Shulman, 1963

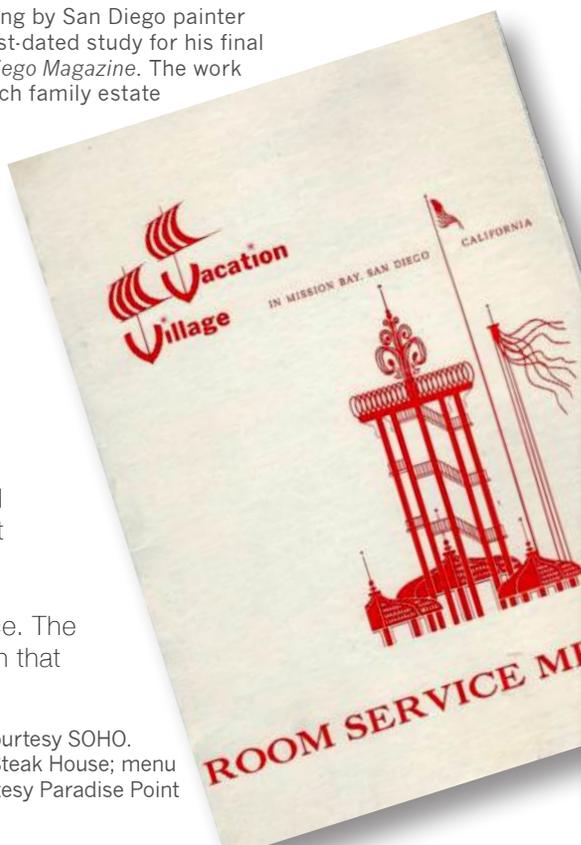


Vacation Village, a monumental (4' x 9') oil painting by San Diego painter Bruce Roy McCracken (1926-1991), is likely a post-dated study for his final illustration used on the July 1962 cover of *San Diego Magazine*. The work is signed and dated 1963. Courtesy Robert Crouch family estate

EPHEMERA AND SOUVENIRS

Menus, postcards, brochures, matchbooks, room keys, and small keepsakes—once considered disposable or merely sentimental—now offer vivid glimpses into the culture, design, and daily rhythms of the past. Whether printed for promotion or collected as personal mementos, these items reflect the spirit and identity of Vacation Village. Though never meant to endure, they have become lasting records of a time and place. The following pages highlight a visual collection that brings this vanished time back into focus.

Right Room service menu cover and inside page. Courtesy SOHO.
Facing page top to bottom Advertisement for Jack's Steak House; menu covers for the Carousel Room and restaurant. Courtesy Paradise Point



ROOM SERVICE			
- Breakfast Menu - SERVED FROM 7:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.			
Fruit Juice	Small .40	Large .60	Melon or Berries in Season .60
Sliced Oranges	.50		Half Grapefruit .50
Two Eggs, any style	1.10	With Ham, Bacon or Sausage	1.75
One Egg, any style	.75	With Ham, Bacon or Sausage	1.35
Golden Omelette (Plain, Jelly, Ham or Spanish)	Served with Sliced Tomato		1.50
- Egg orders served with Hashed Brown Potatoes, Toast, Butter and Jelly -			
French Toast with Butter, Maple Syrup or Jelly			1.10
Grittle Cakes with Butter, Maple Syrup or Jelly			.95
All Cereals	With Milk .45	With Half-and-Half	.65
Danish Pastry	.40	Cinnamon Toast .35	Three Slices Toast .35
- a la Carte -			
APPETIZERS			
Assorted Relishes on Ice (per person)	1.00	Shrimp Cocktail Supreme	1.50
Marinated Herring on Sour Cream	1.25	Lobster Cocktail Supreme	1.75
Fresh Fruit Compote Supreme	.95	Crab Cocktail Supreme	1.50
Soup du Jour	.50		
Cold Hors d'Oeuvres (minimum order for two)	per person		1.50
Hot Hors d'Oeuvres - Shrimp, Chicken Livers in Bacon (minimum order for two)	per person		2.00
Assorted Cheese Tray with Toasted Walnuts (for two)			1.50
SANDWICHES			
Baked Virginia Ham			1.45
With Imported Swiss Cheese, Thousand Island Dressing, Chef's Goni			
Baked Virginia Ham and Sliced Breast of Turkey			1.90
With Imported Swiss Cheese, Thousand Island Dressing, Chef's Goni			
Hamburger - On a Bun, French Fried Potatoes, Goni			.95
- Room Service Charge -			
Breakfast and Lunch	25¢ per person		
Dinner	50¢ per person		

Jack's

"THE PLACE FOR STEAK"

ONLY PRIME STEAK SERVED
(SHIPPED ESPECIALLY FOR JACK'S FROM OMAHA)

LOBSTER also served

OPEN TUES., WED., THURS.
6 P.M. TO 10 P.M.
FRI. & SAT. — 5:30 P.M. TO 11 P.M.
DIAL EXT. 7317

Reservations
Suggested

Vacation
Village HOTEL (714) 274-4630
MISSION BAY, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92109

CAROUSEL ROOM

Your Invitation to Fine Dining

To Enhance the Enjoyment of a King Sized Cocktail

Our Spinning Appetizer Tray

CRISP CHILLED MIXED GARDEN SALAD
CHOPPED ANCHOVIES - JALAPENO CRUSTED
BREAD CRUMBS
GIVE ME YOUR VACATION WILLAGE DRESSING

Menu

Vacation Village

Saturday, June 16, 1962

The Board of Directors
and the Management of Vacation Village
extend a warm welcome to you, our honored guests
at this Inaugural Dinner Reception.

This evening marks the beginning of what we hope
will be a constant program of development
for this unique self-contained resort area
in San Diego's beautiful Mission Bay.
We believe that this development will depend on
what the people who visit Vacation Village
want of us; and in that regard we would very much
appreciate any suggestions
and comments you care to make.

May we express our sincere thanks
to all of you who have helped
make Vacation Village a reality.

BONNES BOUCHEES de fois gras
Goose liver ragout filled in puff pastry patties

BISQUE de HOMARD PARISIENNE
Creamed Lobster Soup

FILET de BOEUF Grand Veneur
Beef Tenderloin Filet marinated in wine and roasted;
garnished with French Beans, sauce Moscovite

CHATEAU POTATOES
ASPERGES, Sauce Mouseline
SALADE D'ENDIVES, Hearts of Palm, Sauce Vinaigrette
CHERRIES JUBILÉ PETIT FOURS
CAFÉ NOIR

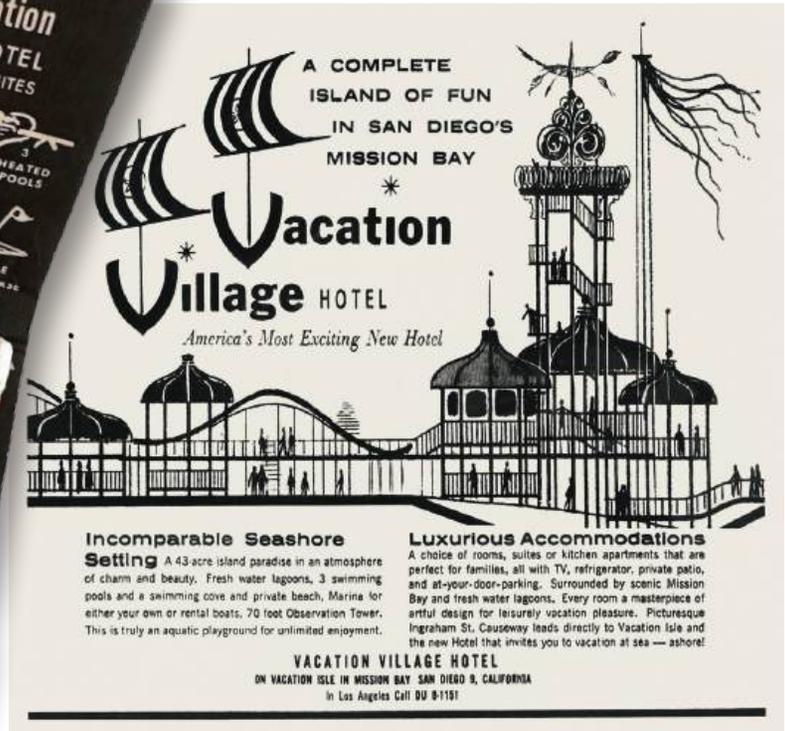
WINES

Le Petit Blanc 1959
Beaujolais, A.M. Dubois 1959
Champagne



Opening day wait staff. Courtesy Paradise Point

Above Opening day menu with welcome message. Courtesy Paradise Point
Below Various resort souvenirs. Courtesy SOHO



Advertisement in the *Los Angeles Times*. Courtesy Martin Lindsay



This page top to bottom 1962 menu cover; souvenir pennant and shot glasses. Facing page top 1960s Barefoot Bar menu. Courtesy Martin Lindsay. Bottom two 1963 rate card; 1976 room plans card. Courtesy Paradise Point



Vacation Village HOTEL

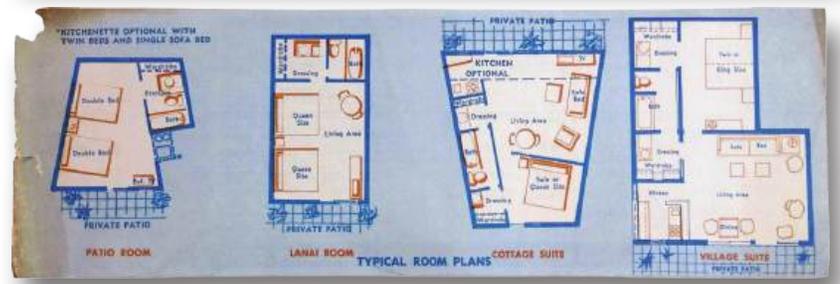
PANTHER'S FANG	1.75
<i>Sheep Jungle Madness</i>	
<i>Drink One and Our Barefoot Glass Becomes Yours</i>	
BAREFOOT PUNCH	1.75
<i>Silent, Brooding, Volcano</i>	
MAI TAI	1.75
<i>Polynesian Fantasy</i>	
NAVY GROG	1.75
<i>Fit For The Saltiest Sailor</i>	
FOG CUTTER	1.75
<i>A Beacon On The Bay</i>	
BIG BAMBOO	2.25
<i>Drink With Caution</i>	
HURRICANE	3.50
<i>Only For The Brave</i>	
PLANTER'S PUNCH	1.50
<i>Next Best Thing To A Lei</i>	
SINGAPORE SLING	1.25
<i>Oriental Magic</i>	
PINK PELICAN	1.25
<i>Our Barefoot Virgin</i>	
CALYPSO COFFEE	1.25
<i>Jamaica's Answer To Ireland</i>	

WINTER RATE SCHEDULE
September 16 to May 24, 1963

MISSION BAY, SAN DIEGO 9, CALIFORNIA
Telephone 274-4630, Area Code 714

	Number of Persons			
	1	2	3	4
PATIO ROOMS (2 Double Beds) (Queen and Studio Double) Deluxe (Queen or Twins and Studio) With Kitchenette (Queen and Studio) (This rate includes \$4.00 charge for kitchenette) <i>All have a dressing room, refrigerator and private patio.</i>	8.00 9.00 10.00 16.00	13.00 12.00 12.00 16.00	13.50 14.50 14.50 18.50	15.00 17.00 17.00
GARDEN SUITES (Twins or Queen—Studio and Chaise) (Twins or Queen—Studio and Chaise) <i>All are large spacious rooms, two dressing rooms, refrigerator, and private patio.</i>	17.00 20.00	17.00 20.00	20.00 23.00	23.00 26.00
TERRACE SUITES (Twins or Queen—Studio & Chaise) (Twins or Queen—Studio & Chaise) <i>Extra large suite type rooms, two dressing rooms, completely furnished kitchen, private patio, 1 to 6 persons.</i>	24.00 26.00	24.00 26.00	27.00 29.00	30.00 32.00

Reservations held until 6:00 P.M. unless other arrangements are confirmed. If the rate requested is not available, next higher rate will be assigned.
All rooms have combination tub and shower bath, complimentary coffee maker, refrigerator, morning newspaper, television, and direct dial telephone.
FOR RESERVATIONS IN LOS ANGELES PHONE 388-3151 OR 627-4949
FOR RESERVATIONS IN SAN FRANCISCO PHONE 397-2717 OR 982-9870



THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

To understand the vision and experience of Vacation Village, we look at not only the buildings and hardscapes but to the extraordinary landscape that surrounds them. The lush subtropical grounds, still thriving six decades after their inception are more than ornamental. They are essential to the original design concept, a carefully orchestrated horticultural stage that supports and elevates the resort's architectural forms and tropical paradise.



This singular landscape was born in 1962 when the island was transformed from barren dredge fill into a verdant, curated environment. The project was led by renowned San Diego landscape architect Roland S. Hoyt, one of the most influential practitioners in California and a veteran of the Olmsted Brothers' office. Hoyt was the creative mind behind San Diego's Presidio Park landscape, early planning for Mission Bay Park, as well as for the Salk Institute. This was among Hoyt's last works, and remarkably, it appears to be unrecorded in any other documentation of his career.

In an integral collaboration with Frank Rich, a specialist who would source, negotiate, and procure the exotic plants from across the globe, over 600 species of tropical and subtropical plants brought from more than twenty

countries were introduced to the 44-acre site. Towering palms and broad-leafed exotics now form shady canopies over bungalow paths. Imperial bromeliads from Rio de Janeiro, dragon trees from Madagascar, and silk trees from Asia add drama and rarity. More than a thousand bird of paradise plants punctuate the grounds with their flamboyant color.

Today, guests can wander across quaint footbridges and along jungle-like paths, past sleepy lagoons dotted with water lilies, historic fountains, and secret gardens. Red-eared slider turtles sunbathe on warm rocks, egrets wade silently through still water, and hummingbirds flit among hibiscus and heliconia. A one-mile white sand beach frames the property, giving way to an ever-changing display of coastal and aquatic life.

The horticultural artistry here has been recognized nationally for its beauty and stewardship. Generations of skilled gardeners have lovingly tended this botanical showcase, protecting its plantings and maintaining its charm. To honor this legacy, today's guests are invited to take a botanical walk, a "tour within the tour," guided by a plant list and keyed map on the following pages, highlighting one hundred of the resort's most interesting botanical specimens.

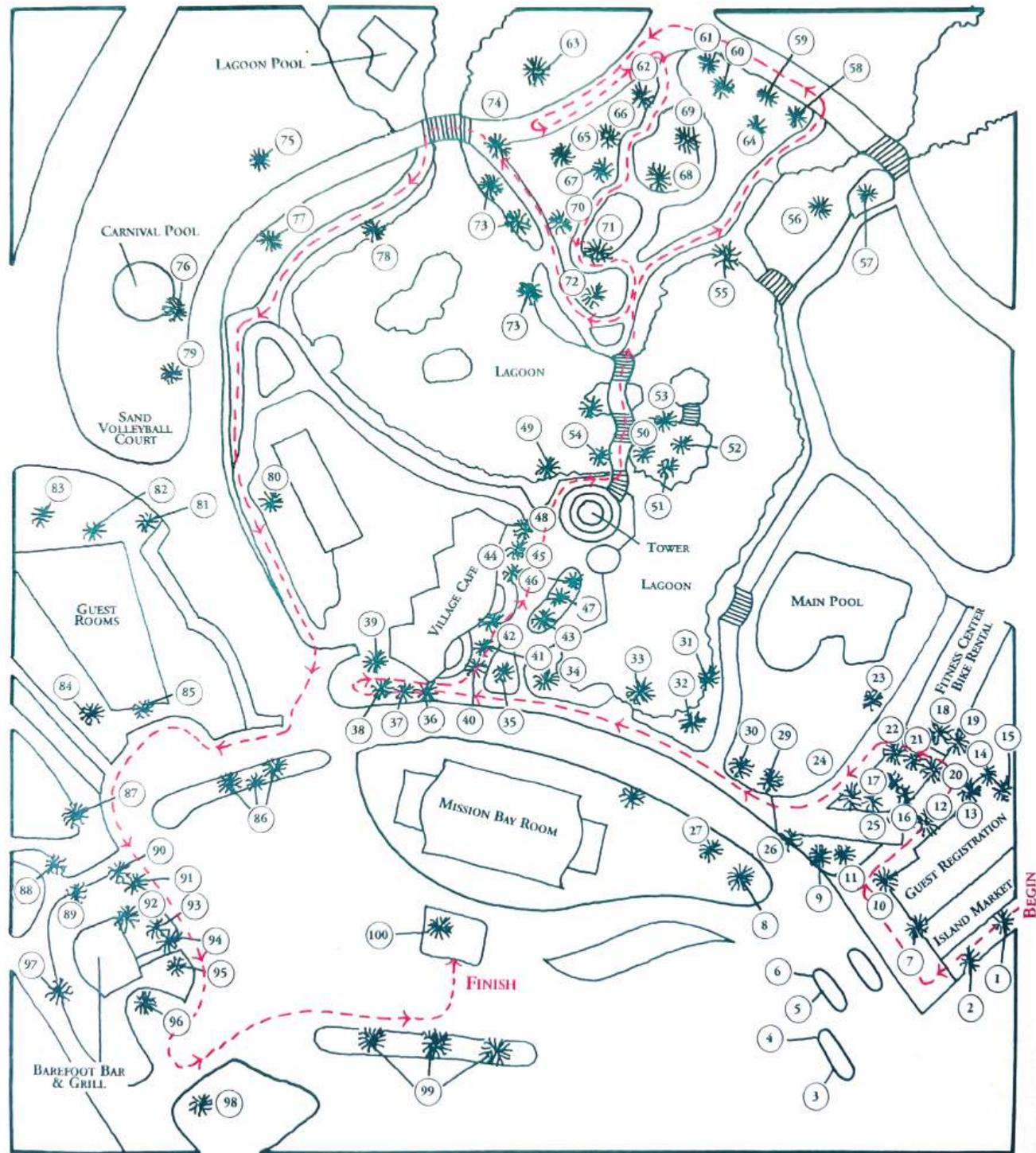
The landscape at Vacation Village is one of the rare places in the region where the public can explore such a large, diverse, and intentionally designed botanical collection. As one of the city's few surviving examples of immersive, residential-scale tropical landscape design from the mid-20th century, it offers a rare and irreplaceable window into both horticultural and cultural history. The scale and scope of plantings, combined with their integration into the architecture and site planning, make it a living museum of landscape design, hidden in plain sight.

The architecture and landscape are not separate disciplines here, but partners in storytelling. Together, they create an island retreat that's at once whimsical, exotic, and rooted in a deep tradition of California landscape design.

As seen in this aerial photo from 1962, the architectural transformation was complete, but the landscaping had only just begun. It took many years and dedication to grow into the lush garden paradise we see today. Courtesy Martin Lindsay

1. False Aralia - Pacific Islands
2. Giant Bird of Paradise - South Africa
3. Windmill Palm - China
4. Mediterranean Fan Palm - North Africa/Southern Europe
5. Bougainvillea - South America
6. Triangle Palm - Madagascar
7. Lady Palm - South China
8. Kentia Palm - Australia
9. Hollywood Juniper - Hybrid
10. Blood Banana - New Guinea
11. Tree Aloe - South Africa
12. Seiftizii Palm - Baja California, Mexico
13. Wine Palm/Fishtail Palm - Sri Lanka/India
14. Clustered Fishtail Palm - Myanmar/India/Malaya
15. Majesty Palm - Eastern Madagascar
16. Black Tree Fern - New Zealand/SE Australia
17. Tree Fern - Australia/New Zealand
18. Puka Tree - New Zealand
19. Black Banana - Ethiopia
20. Bird's Nest Fern - India/Australia/Japan
21. Sugar Palm - Western Indonesia
22. Jamaica Sagotree - Mexico to Columbia
23. Pygmy Date Palm - Singapore
24. Cuban Royal Palm - Cuba
25. Spiny Licuala Palm - Malawi to Japan
26. Mexican Fan Palm - Baja California, Mexico
27. Velvet Leaf - Madagascar
28. Desert Gum - Australia
29. Hibiscus - The Orient
30. Japanese Black Pine - Japan
31. She-Oak - Australia
32. Blue Dracaena - New Zealand
33. Bird of Paradise - South Africa
34. Foxtail Palm - Australia
35. Fern Palm - India/Madagascar/New Guinea
36. Reed Palm - China
37. Sago Palm - Southern Japan
38. Cabbage Tree - South Africa
39. Spiked Cabbage Tree - South Africa
40. Texas Privet - Japan
41. Pink Plumeria - Singapore
42. Madagascar Palm - Southern Madagascar
43. Areca Palm Butterfly Palm - Madagascar

(continued)



44. Philodendron - The Tropics
45. Teddy Bear Palm - Madagascar
46. King Alexander Palm - Australia
47. Queen Palm - South America
48. Octopus Tree - New Zealand
49. Oreopanax - Central America/Mexico
50. Victorian Box - Eastern Australia
51. Black Willow - Southeastern America
52. Monterey Pine - California, United States
53. Canary Island Pine - Canary Islands
54. Natal Plant - South Africa
55. Umbrella Plant - Africa
56. Papyrus - Africa/SE Europe/Syria
57. Australia Tea Tree- Australia/Tasmania
58. Norfolk Island Pine - Australia/South America
59. Silk Floss Tree - South America
60. Hardy Monkey Puzzle Tree - Northern Chile/Southern Patagonia
61. Tasmanian Tree Fern - Southeastern Australia/Tasmania
62. Peppermint Tree - Australia
63. Shaving Brush Palm - New Zealand
64. Leyland Cypress - Hybrid
65. Heath Melaleuca - Australia
66. Kahili Ginger - India
67. Costaricana Palm - Central America
68. White Gingerlily - India/Indonesia
69. Jacaranda Tree - Brazil
70. Heliconia Plant - South America
71. Feather Palm - New Caledonia
72. Variegated Indian Rubber Tree - India/Malaya
73. Fern Pine - Eastern Africa
74. Pfeitzer's Dwarf Cannas - The Tropics
75. Mexican Guava - Tropical Africa
76. Weeping Fig Tree - India
77. Kafir Plum - South Africa
78. Banana Tree - Southeastern Asia
79. Cherimoya - Tropical America
80. Camphor Tree - China/Japan
81. Aleppo Pine - Mediterranean
82. Purple Leaf Plum - Southeastern Asia
83. Nolina - Mexico
84. Pineapple Guava - South America
85. Copper Leaf - South Pacific Islands
86. Golden Rain Tree - The Orient
87. Arenga Palm - Malaya/Taiwan
88. Fountain Palm - China to Australia

89. Mexican Blue Palm - Baja California, Mexico
90. North Queensland Palm - Australia
91. Pindo Palm - Argentina/Brazil/Uruguay
92. Nikau Palm - New Zealand
93. Senegal Date Palm - Tropical America
94. Guadalupe Palm - Guadalupe Island, Mexico
95. Canary Island Date Palm - Canary Islands
96. Candelabra Tree - Transvaal, South Africa
97. False Ginseng - New Zealand
98. Dragon Tree - Canary Islands
99. Cajeput Tree/Paper Bark Tree - Australia
100. Traveler's Palm - Madagascar



Dense vegetation creates a sense of quiet solitude, reached by bridges across the lagoon and winding paths. Seen here is one of the El Camino Real mission bells placed throughout the gardens.

PRIMARY TYPEFACES

Kabel and Helvetica were both used in a 1976 Vacation Village brochure, and we echo that pairing in this publication. Kabel—a geometric sans-serif first released by Klingspor in the late 1920s and celebrated for its mix of precision and calligraphic charm—appears here in page titles, drop caps, and footers. Helvetica, the iconic Swiss typeface developed in 1957 for clarity and neutrality, is used throughout for the body text.

Used for all captions, News Gothic is a quintessential realist sans-serif typeface designed by Morris Fuller Benton in 1908.

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www.SOHOSandiego.org

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All color photographs are contemporary,
except where otherwise noted

HISTORIC IMAGES

Sources and credits appear in individual captions

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Paradise Point
San Diego's Island Resort

Deneda Young-Carrick, Director of Marketing
Morgan Howitt, Assistant Director of Marketing

RESOURCES

Paradise Point - Vacation Village archives

While our tour highlights the architectural history and cultural landscape, there is much more to discover. For deeper insights into the people involved, their lives, stories, and reflections on this era, visit Classic San Diego at classicsandiego.com

Historic information based on the article *A Bit of Tahiti in San Diego: The Story of Paradise Point and Vacation Village* from Martin S. Lindsay's Classic San Diego blog

Photos by Julius Shulman from Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1935-2009, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)