



FEATURE

By Maria Lenhart

Less is More



UPSCALE AND UNDERSTATED: The Rosewood Sand Hill (below and far left), Allison Inn (top center) and Viceroy Snowmass represent a new trend in resort development.



Boutique resorts appeal to low-profile preferences

BACK IN THE DAYS WHEN EXCESS WAS considered a good thing, splashy mega resorts with over-the-top amenities and architectural features were very much in vogue. But in today's downsized, perception-conscious business environment, it's not surprising to see a new generation of resort hotels coming onto the scene with a smaller footprint and a more subdued image than in years past.

At least that is the case with three high-end properties that have opened in recent months: the Rosewood Sand Hill in Menlo Park, Calif.; the Allison Inn & Spa in Newberg, Ore.; and the Viceroy Snowmass in Snowmass, Colo. While each is boutique in size and low-key in nature, there is nothing diminutive about what they offer in terms of amenities and services.

ROSEWOOD SAND HILL

While just minutes from the high-tech nerve center of Silicon Valley, the Rosewood Sand Hill, which opened in April a mile west of Stanford University, seems a world apart. The 123-room property is spread over 16 acres in clusters of low-rise California Ranch-style buildings with courtyard gardens and views of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

"You really do feel that you've gotten on a plane and gone somewhere, even if you're just coming from San Jose or San Francisco," says Sharon Myer, director of sales and marketing. "Our architecture really melds with the outdoors, so it's a resort environment that you might expect to find in Napa or Pebble Beach."

While the property is low-key from the outside, it is filled with the upscale touches associated with the Rosewood brand. The spacious guest rooms are appointed with espresso makers, Italian linens, entertainment systems and luxurious marble bathrooms.

Rosewood Sand Hill also features a large infinity-edge pool, a 17,000-square-foot spa with 13 treatment rooms and access to the nearby Stanford Golf Course. Madera Restaurant, which has two dining rooms with fireplaces and outdoor terraces, features a menu emphasizing ingredients from Northern California farms and vintners.

With 13,000 square feet of meeting space that includes three boardrooms and a 2,800-square-foot ballroom with an adjoining terrace and lawn, the hotel pursues primarily corporate business, including executive retreats and small incentive groups. Rosewood can block up to 100 rooms for groups and is also available for buy-outs, according to Myers.

"We opened during a difficult year, but we're pleased with our results," she says. "The meeting space is designed with our surroundings in mind, with plenty of natural light, break-out spaces and terraces. This is important to the group market now."