

FIRST LOOK

MALIBU BEACH INN'S QUIET POST-GEFFEN GLITZ

Purchased by the Mani brothers for $80 million from The Operator himself, the town's only luxury hotel (for now) debuts with a refresh by Waldo Fernandez, an ocean view from every room and an ongoing role as the 1-percenters' local guesthouse By Maureen Harrington

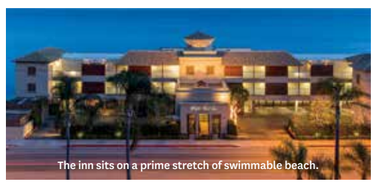
FIRST-TIME MALIBU VISITORS WHO expect a Cali version of the Cote d'Azur are in for a surprise. Where are the chic cafes and "models" parading in bikinis and diamonds? Not on Carbon Beach, that's for sure. Never mind the $20 million price tags on its beachfront and canyon homes: "Malibu is anti-fancy," says **Kelly Meyer**, surfer mom, eco-fundraiser and wife of NBCUniversal vice chairman **Ron Meyer**. "You won't find any bikini bracelets here."

Despite the village's low-glitz ethos, travelers naturally arrive craving luxury and an ocean view. And until the highly anticipated Nobu Ryokan opens a few hundred yards down the beach (with fewer than 20 rooms), the only luxury hotel in town is the 47-room Malibu Beach Inn, just freshened up for summer 2016 by new owners **Simon** and **Daniel Mani**, who also count the Soho House building on Sunset among their portfolio of commercial properties across L.A. **David Geffen**, who purchased the inn in 2005 for $29 million from founders **Marty** and **Vicki Cooper** (they launched it in 1989, when rooms started at $135), gave it his own $10 million upgrade before a 2007 reopening; he sold it to the Mani brothers in March 2015 for $80 million. That comes out to a whopping $1.7 million a room — by that metric, it has the highest valuation of any California hotel.



Says Day, "I tell celebrities that confidentiality comes with the price of the room."

At the far edge of Carbon Beach on the Pacific Coast Highway, the inn caters to the neighbors — even one-percenters run out of guest rooms. (**Steven Spielberg**'s mother, **Leah Adler**, at one time was a regular weekender.) Its Carbon Beach Club restaurant, still led by the chef from the Geffen days, **Victor Morales**, serves three meals a day and seats 34 indoors and another 60 on the oceanfront terrace. **Daryl Hannah** pops in for Sunday breakfast with boyfriend **Neil Young**, and **Bella** and **Gigi Hadid** often stopped by when they lived in the neighborhood. Yeah, that guy on the deck in board shorts and shades might be **Mel Gibson**.



The inn sits on a prime stretch of swimmable beach.

The Mani brothers have been hands-on. They poached **Gregory Day** in August from Shutters, where he'd worked for eight years; he's now their president of hospitality and overseeing operations at the inn. They also hired interior designer **Waldo Fernandez**, who's done rooms for **Elizabeth Taylor**, **Jennifer Aniston** and the **Pitt-Jolie** brood, not to mention Soho House West Hollywood and **Wolfgang Puck**'s Spago. In conceiving one of the inn's public spaces, Cuban-born Fernandez took a design tip from Puck: "He told me that 26 inches high for a cocktail table is best — not too high or too low," says the former film-set designer. "I used that height table in the sitting room."

Those tables, along with upholstered seating and Scandinavian-inspired wooden chairs, surround a fireplace with a cache of woolly blankets for chilly seaside nights. Not so much as a tassel or hint of gilt is to be found. "This hotel is about the ocean," says Fernandez. "Every room has an ocean view, so we made the public rooms simple and calming using blue-gray, dark blue and beige, with teak floors." Guest rooms (starting at $600 a night) are done in the same palette. Not all rooms have yet been redesigned, but each has its own balcony, and the newer rooms are fitted with elaborate remote-control toilets with bidets. "I suppose it will press your clothes and make your dinner, if you asked," jokes Day.

Prints and photographs throughout the space were chosen with the help of the Manis' personal curator (aside from two **Jasper Johns** lithographs in the restaurant, which were included in the purchase from Geffen): The sitting room showcases four of **Donald Sultan**'s iconic poppies. A **Robert Indiana** print near the entrance is a guest favorite, says Day. The Manis' hand also is evident in the wine list. "They love vintage Bordeaux," says sommelier **Laurie Sutton**. "They shared some great wines from their own cellars for our list."

As a college student, top Hollywood real estate agent **Madison Hildebrand** worked at the inn's reservation desk. Now he takes multimillion-dollar deal meetings there. "The hotel fits Malibu. We don't want big or glitzy," he says. "Even my parents like staying here better than my house." THR





1 "They wanted bright and happy [art] to make you feel like you're on vacation," says Day of the Mani brothers' choice of four Sultan poppies for the sitting room.
2 The terrace of the inn's restaurant, the Carbon Beach Club, has seating for 60 with views of the Malibu Pier.
3 Chocolate chip cookies are baked daily.
4 Every room has custom furniture and an ocean view.
5 Bathrooms were custom-fabricated with white oak cabinets, custom Corian and Molton Brown toiletries.





PHOTOGRAPHED BY Noah Webb



Geffen



Fernandez

INN: LISA ROMERIN/COURTESY OF SUBJECT. GEFFEN: IMEH AKPANUDOSEN/GETTY IMAGES FOR UCLA. FERNANDEZ: STEFANIE KEENAN/GETTY IMAGES FOR MOCA. SOHO HEAD: DAVE BUNK/COURTESY OF SOHOHOUSE WEST HOLLYWOOD. SOHO MALIBU: COURTESY OF SOHO HOUSE.

Soho House's Big (Little) Malibu Debut

THE LONG-AWAITED BEACHFRONT OUTPOST OF SOHO HOUSE, LITTLE BEACH House Malibu, has set its soft opening for May 27 on the former site of **Larry Ellison**'s Italian restaurant Nikita (shuttered in December 2014 after just 18 months in operation). Only the club's Malibu Local members will have access to the facility during the Memorial Day weekend; the official launch is June 1. In deference to the close-knit local community, membership structure for LBHM is slightly different than at other Soho House locations: Every House members, who generally have privileges at, well, every club, will have to apply for a $1,500 annual Malibu Plus add-on for access to the beachside spot, which has a bar, restaurant, upstairs sitting area and two outdoor terraces. LBHM summer member programming also will have a distinctly local flavor, with a visit to the vineyards of Saddlerock Ranch and a foraging trip to Point Dume led by Malibu farmer Larry Thorne. LBHM will be the second new club to open in late May: Ludlow House on New York City's Lower East Side bowed May 23.

A rendering of the terrace at Little Beach House Malibu (right) shows how the Soho House aesthetic has evolved from the West Hollywood location (left) for a beachfront setting.

