

Under covers

Flamingo Resort and Spa: Upgrades and modernization usher in new era for Santa Rosa's Vegas-style, 1950s hot spot

The Flamingo Hotel was the place to see and be seen in the Santa Rosa of the late 1950s. Patterned after the horizontal glass and stone design of Las Vegas' Flamingo, wings of rooms fanned out from a resort-size pool and manicured gardens, all topped by a big, pink bird revolving atop a landmark 50-foot tower.

Time took its toll and the Flamingo lost its luster. In 1996, however, the hotel was declared a Historic Landmark. A turnaround began that culminated in a \$4 million recently completed renovation that left the Flamingo's unique, little-bit-of-Las Vegas ambiance firmly in place while bringing the rooms up to 2010 Wine Country snuff.

While guests are unlikely to spot today's equivalent of Jayne Mansfield sunning by the pool, on holidays and during the summer they will note the number of kids paddling about in the shallow area. Glamour and sophistication have moved over to make room for "affordable" and "family friendly." The mood is cast as one walks into the spacious lobby with its furniture upholstered and pillowed in solid, crayon-box colors. In tribute to local cartoon legend Charles Schulz, giant-sized Snoopy and Charlie Brown statues are on hand to welcome guests.

Comfort zone

The hotel's 146 rooms and 14 suites are located in five wings fanning from the pool

Flamingo Resort and Spa:
2777 Fourth St. Santa
Rosa. (707) 545-8530;
www.flamingoresort.com.
160 rooms and suites. Five
wheelchair accessible
rooms; family rooms; pet
rooms with a nonrefund-
able \$50 surcharge per
stay. Rates: \$99-\$199.

area. All are connected via glassed-in pathways paved in polished flagstone. All rooms are decorated virtually alike, with earth-toned wall coverings, wood trim and rustic artwork. Rooms come with ironing boards and irons, a coffee maker and an empty mini-refrigerator.

Room choices, some with patio or balcony pool views, include the double-double or kings; two-room queen-bedded suites; a two-room suite with a sofa bed, rooms with a king-size Murphy bed that folds into the wall, and four family rooms with a small second room attached outfitted with twin dormitory-sized beds. A laundry room is available; the entire facility is nonsmoking; guest parking is free.

Bath and beyond

Small, serviceable and spotlessly clean describes my bathroom. A molded single sink was built into a counter; a curtained, standard-sized tub included a shower. White towels were plentiful but non-plush. Toiletries — shampoo, conditioner and lotion — are Holcombe & Moore certi-



Flamingo Resort and Spa

The Flamingo, set in Sonoma Wine Country, has 146 rooms and 14 suites located in five wings adjacent to the pool area. The pool and gardens give the hotel that Las Vegas ambiance.

fied organic. More deluxe rooms boast granite counters and large soaking tubs. Baths in the Executive Wing are decidedly larger with shower stalls big enough for two.

Gearing up

Most rooms come with a flat-screen TV. Wi-Fi is available for a daily fee, with the exception of the Executive Wing that is Wi-Fi throughout.

In the vicinity

Family-friendly doesn't mean that the Flamingo has turned into a kid's playground. The Lounge — a Las Vegas showroom in miniature — is a popular nightspot with a lineup of entertainment that includes live music on week-

ends. Dining in the Terrace Grille features the agricultural bounty of Sonoma County; a wine list is devoted exclusively to Sonoma County wines.

While all meals are available at the hotel, you'll find two outstanding breakfast spots a moment's walk away: Jeffrey's Hillside Cafe (2901 Fourth St.; (707) 546-6317, www.jeffreyshillsidecafe.com), and Hank's Creekside Cafe (2800 Fourth St.; (707) 575-8839, links.sfgate.com/ZJWU).

A \$12 daily fee provides full access to the Health Club and Spa with its five tennis courts, fitness center outfitted with Cybex machines and hourly classes ranging from yoga to water aerobics. A Child Center cares for youngsters while parents make use

of the facilities or enjoy a full menu of spa treatments.

Good to know

The Flamingo's central location places you at the crossroads of Sonoma County winery exploration.

Highs and lows

If you are looking for a Sonoma country inn sort of place, the Flamingo is not for you. This is a full-service hotel and can be thought of as a destination resort in miniature. A surprise, given the hotel's location at the busy meeting point of Highway 12 and Santa Rosa's Fourth Street, is its secluded atmosphere and quietness.

— Yvonne Horn,
96hours@sfgchronicle.com