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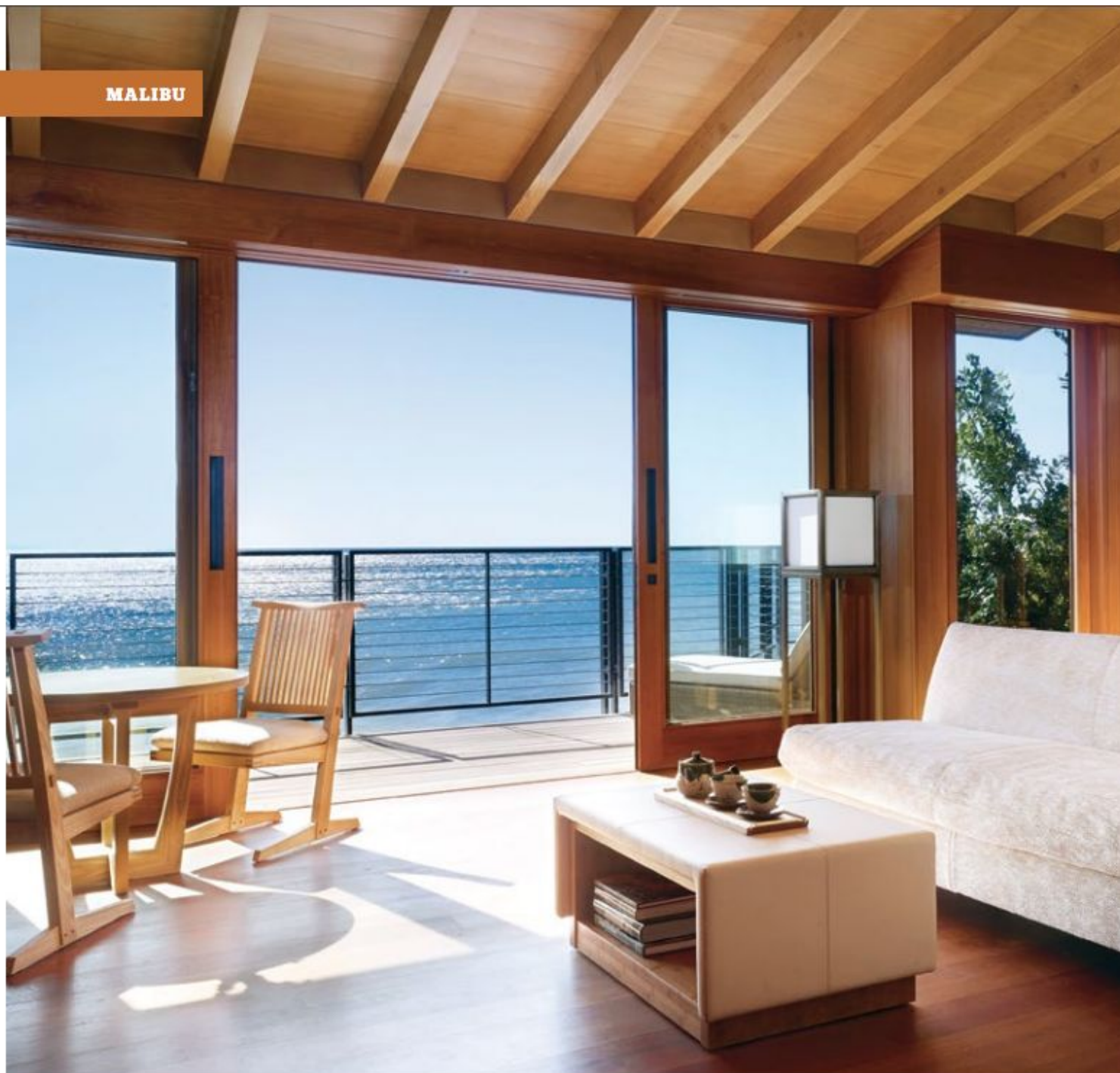
MALIBU Nobu Ryokan Malibu

MALIBU

NOBU RYOKAN MALIBU

Malibu's anti-scene.





SINCE ITS INITIAL opening in 1950, the low-rent beach motel called Casa Malibu didn't offer much in the way of design. Still, the property was a known haunt of those of a certain ilk who preferred to coast in for a night or two with privacy and discretion.

The surrounding property was purchased by Larry Ellison in 2007, and subsequently saw the 2012 opening of Nobu Malibu and in 2016, the opening of Little Beach House, a members-only outpost of Soho House.

The motel continued to operate until 2012 before it was closed for extensive renovations, reopening in 2017 as Nobu Ryokan Malibu.

The entrance to the property couldn't be more discreet. Upon first approach, we weren't sure exactly how to enter. Once we were close enough to the gate, it swung open and a team of pros was there to welcome us. In no time, someone took our vehicle into care while another individual took us immediately to our room for check-in. The room orientation included a tea ceremony.



Renovations here reduced the number of keys from 21 to 16, offered in three different types—Beachfront, Ocean, and Garden. Beachfront keys are on the first floor and face directly to the ocean, with the surf crashing right below an outdoor terrace furnished with chairs and lounges. It's lovely, even if perhaps a little bit noisy through the night. The Ocean category also directly faces the water, but is located on the second floor and features a skylight in the bath. Garden Rooms have a semi-private outdoor living room with a fireplace, and are the quietest rooms



However, since the transition, one thing remains very much the same at this property—a focus on guest privacy and discretion.

facing the side of the property with its lush palms, stag ferns, and waterfall.

Bedrooms are decorated primarily with rich Japanese simplicity. There is an emphasis on beige and teak, with padded walls reminiscent of traditional shoji panels and gargantuan 80-inch televisions. There is no dedicated workspace, but there are plenty of places to plug in including bedside charging for phones. In the open Japanese-style bath, a muted tone marble sets the tone with a square tub and drainage floor both composed of teak.

Included in the rate, the room is fully stocked with an assortment of goodies from Dean & DeLuca. There is also a fabulous breakfast service, and room service available throughout the day.

We made only a couple of requests during our stay, one for ice and another for a reservation at the adjacent Nobu Malibu. The ice arrived within 60 seconds, and the reservation was secured easily, with a coveted outdoor table no less.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF NOBU RYOKAN MALIBU

In transferring from motel to ryokan, rates multiplied many times over, with rooms at Nobu Ryokan Malibu fluctuating upwards from \$2,000 per night

with a two-night minimum. However, since the transition, one thing remains very much the same at this property—a focus on guest privacy and discretion. Rooms cannot be booked online, and reservations must be requested. This way, the property makes every effort possible to ensure that guests of a certain ilk will never be disturbed by lookie-loos seeking a brush with the stars.

All things considered, Nobu Ryokan offered a lovely beachfront escape with a casual but elegant, truly Californian service style, and is absolutely worthy for a few days' getaway. One can't ignore the price tag, of course, but the vibe here is simply not suited for anyone who would balk. ●●●●

DOS & DON'TS

DO be aware that Beachfront rooms can be quite noisy during high tide, but of course many may find the sounds of the ocean to be quite lovely.

DO phone the concierge for priority access to the adjacent Nobu Malibu. We were able to secure an outdoor table on short notice.

DO ask about guest access to Malibu Racquet Club, which features eight championship tennis courts, a gym, and dry sauna.

DON'T expect a wide range of amenities on property. Just as it was during the old Casa Malibu days, the main amenities here aside from a beachfront location are still privacy and discretion.

Nobu Ryokan Malibu

Malibu, California

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