



AROUND THE WORLD OR ACROSS THE STREET™

## PALO ALTO: ART AND CUISINE IN THE HEART OF SILICON VALLEY

 LAURIE JO MILLER FARR × JULY 6, 2017

Palo Alto, California, is renowned for two key connections—as the home of [Stanford University](#) and as home of Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple. When I received an invitation from the Garden Court Hotel, I was eager to return to check out the Palo Alto art scene.



*An exterior staircase leads to the Garden Court Hotel lobby. Photo by Laurie Jo Miller Farr*

I took a peek down a side street in the heart of downtown. How did I ever miss this charming staircase up to the hotel entrance? There you'll discover the pretty Mediterranean-style [Garden Court Hotel](#), where our small group gathered to experience a hosted chef's table dinner and an overnight stay.

## Elegant Private Dining in Palo Alto

Even if you're not headed to Palo Alto for a graduation ceremony, a big Cardinal game, or Silicon Valley business, the Garden Court Hotel beckons as a deserving destination in itself. Executive Chef Enrique Michel and his culinary team create special regionally-themed multi-course dinners with wine pairings each month throughout the year, stylishly served by candlelight in an elegant private dining room.



*Dining by candlelight at Garden Court Hotel Photo by Laurie Jo Miller Farr*

## A Mediterranean Feel at Garden Court Hotel in Palo Alto

With a Spanish family owner and Spanish interior designer, the distinctive look is apparent at the Garden Court Hotel. That perfectly suits the laid back vibe of this university town. Not only is Palo Alto a university town, but it's the heart of Silicon Valley. As a result, hotels have been refreshed, beloved San Francisco and Los Angeles restaurants are opening Palo Alto outposts, (Tacolicious, Pizzeria Delfina, Lemonade, Nobu), and the new Pace Gallery is bringing world-class artists to Silicon Valley.

Even though you are only thirty miles south of San Francisco, you become acutely aware that the Peninsula has a completely different vibe than the city. Although this is part of the Bay Area, be prepared to shed layers of clothing, as it's practically guaranteed to be sunnier and much warmer than the city. Once the sun goes down, pop a layer back on because that's the way Northern California rolls.



## Getting to Palo Alto

I took Caltrain from San Francisco's SOMA Station at King Street and 4th Street, disembarking at Palo Alto, only a 10-minute walk from the hotel along the tree-lined University Avenue main shopping street. Drivers will find the 30-mile trip is a straightforward one on either Interstate 280 or US Highway 101 south from the city.



*Downtown Palo Alto, CA. Photo courtesy Garden Court Hotel*

## Inside Garden Court Hotel in Palo Alto

There's a good reason why even shopaholics should resist the temptation to browse at (the very first ever) [Apple Store](#), [Restoration Hardware](#), and other attractive, if addictive, brand names while making their way along University Avenue to the Garden Court Hotel. That reason? The Garden Court's welcoming lobby with fireplace awaits.



*Welcoming fireplace in this cozy corner of the Garden Court Hotel at check-in. Photo by Laurie Jo Miller Farr*

Beyond the lobby, there are lovely, light-filled, spacious, and immaculately appointed guest rooms with a private balcony or terrace awaiting.



*Deluxe queen with private balcony and marble bath at Garden Court Hotel. Photo courtesy Garden Court Hotel*

If you're partial to a cozy fireplace for romantic in-room dining, by all means put in a request.

Marble baths with an overhead rain shower are generously stocked with quality [Molton Brown](#) amenities from England, bearer of a Royal Warrant and known as a London luxury bath and body connoisseur brand since 1973.

Why not take cocktails under a heat lamp on the terrace? The property embraces California climate with Spanish-influenced architecture lending itself to an indoor/outdoor flow built around a central open air courtyard enhanced by strands of white fairy lights after sundown.



*Courtyard at night, Garden Court Hotel. Photo by Laurie Jo Miller Farr*

## **Museums on Stanford University Campus in Palo Alto**

You don't need to be a student at [Stanford University](#) to visit two excellent museums on the university's gorgeous campus. Both are top notch institutions, both are free and open to the public (closed on Tuesdays).



The [Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for the Visual Arts at Stanford University](#) is best known simply as The Cantor. While packed with global art treasures representing 5,000 years, the standout here is the Rodin Collection, one of the sculptor's largest number of works assembled outside of Paris, including *The Thinker* and 20 more on display outdoors in the museum garden.

The [Anderson Collection](#) opened a striking new building in 2014 to house a large private collection of outstanding postwar American contemporary art. Works by artists such as Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, Ellsworth Kelly, and Willem de Kooning are among those on view.

The two Stanford University museums are open to the public, always free, both offer docent tours, and both are open six days a week (closed Tuesdays).

## Concert Hall on Stanford's Campus in Palo Alto

An innovative vineyard design is behind the magic of [Bing Concert Hall](#) and its outstanding acoustics; no one is more than 75 feet from the performance stage, despite a capacity of 842.

Since its opening in 2013 on the Stanford campus in Palo Alto, the ultra contemporary venue has attracted sell out crowds for top name international artists, ensembles, symphonies. The *New York Times* called it "the envy of any big city." If you can't swing a performance, stop by for a free docent tour for a look inside.

My visit to Palo Alto and Garden Court Hotel showed me that this laid back university town has great art and culture, making it a destination all its own.

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*Note: As is common in the travel industry, the writer was provided with accommodations, meals and other compensation for the purpose of review. While it has not influenced this review, the writer believes in full disclosure of all potential conflicts of interest.*

