

TRUCKS

May 28, 2019 by Ryan ZumMallen, @Zoomy575M [↗](#)



The Hotel Joaquin's 25-year-old Defender 90 is ready for any and all adventures. (Photo: Ryan ZumMallen/Trucks.com)



The key feature at Hotel Joaquin in coastal Laguna Beach, Calif., isn't its soothing décor, sun-drenched swimming pool or luxurious king bed. It's the 25-year-old Land Rover Defender 90 with a roof rack, protective armor and mud tires.

The rugged, dusty, white SUV serves as Hotel Joaquin's mascot. It also unlocks a world of possibilities for adventurous guests who come to explore the bountiful parks, trails and waters of Southern California.

"We try to pick vehicles that give the resort a unique personality," said Reinhard Neubert, the hotel's vice president of hospitality.



Amid the flashy sports cars and luxury sedans in this part of Orange County, the Defender drives home the point that Hotel Joaquin isn't a resort for weekend couch potatoes. Guests go there to experience outdoor activities. Hiking, biking, surfing and scuba diving are all on the menu. There are no televisions. Children are not allowed.

FULL-TIME ADVENTURE CONSULTANT

The hotel has a full-time adventure consultant and staff available to guests at any time of day. There is an "Adventure Room" that could be described as an adult toy store. It offers plastic discs, volleyballs, yoga mats and Yeti coolers. Surfboards and stand-up paddleboards rest on hooks. A half-dozen sparkling Linus cruiser bikes are available for riding. Guests can check out any equipment, and all rental costs are included in the room rate.



The Hotel Joaquin's "Adventure Room" features all kinds of toys for adventurers. (Photo: Ryan ZumMallen/Trucks.com)

Once they choose their adventure, guests and a guide pile into the Defender and head off. Adventure guides are well-versed and able to point out choice coves and lookout points throughout the area.

The truck, famous for its go-anywhere attitude, is equipped for serious business. It has a shovel affixed to the hood and a hi-lift jack on the rooftop. A Warn winch is attached to its steel ARB front bumper. It carries the original 3.9-liter V8 engine and five-speed manual transmission. Four beefy BFGoodrich KO tires are fitted at the corners with another mounted to the tailgate.

The Defender only has two doors, but its rear cargo area has fold-down cushions on either side that sit two passengers each.



The 25-year-old Land Rover Defender "mascot" of the Hotel Joaquin is ready for any adventure. (All photos: Ryan ZumMallen/Trucks.com)

'ABSOLUTELY COOL'

"When you put people in the back they think it's absolutely cool," Neubert said. "It's about getting people out of their comfort zone and creating experiences they will always remember."

There hasn't been a need to winch the Defender out of deep sand or jack it up to fix flats on a rocky trail, he said. But it's still early. Hotel Joaquin opened in October 2018, and guests are always thinking up new places to visit. Neubert makes sure the guides are prepared for anything.



The view from the Hotel Joaquin's lobby. (All photos: Ryan ZumMallen/Trucks.com)

Hotel Joaquin is part of the Auric Road group that also counts resorts in the expanse of Montana and the desert of Palm Springs, Calif. – each with unique adventure vehicles of their own. Auric Road plans to launch another location in Tucson, Ariz., soon and may send the Defender there when it opens.

In that case, Hotel Joaquin will need to find another tough truck. But it isn't cause for sadness, Neubert said. He can't wait to hunt for the next rugged mascot.

<https://www.trucks.com/2019/05/28/dusty-defender-gives-beachside-resort-adventure-cred/>