

California elegance, re-done rooms, Einstein slept here!

The Athenaeum Club, Pasadena, California



SUMMARY

We stayed at the Athenaeum, had breakfast, but did not eat dinner or lunch there, in November 2010. The building is done primarily in Italian Renaissance style, is quite beautiful, and the bedrooms have been re-done in the last two years. Standard rooms are modest sized, about 13 x 14 feet, but very attractive. Staff are knowledgeable and helpful. The Club is a Platinum Club of America.

CLUB HISTORY AND FACILITIES

The Club was founded in 1929 by alumni and trustees of Caltech (the private California Institute of Technology). The major donors gave \$500,000 in stock to build the club, and this was converted to cash just before the stock market crash. Thus Caltech was able to build a magnificent new building, filled with antiques, with tennis courts and lovely landscaping, while many other clubs were struggling. The opening dinner in February 1931 celebrated the arrival of Albert Einstein for a two month sojourn at Caltech. He and his wife Elsa visited Caltech three times and on some occasions stayed in the suite in the southwest corner of the building that is now named for him. Caltech wooed Einstein vigorously, and is still irked that Princeton landed him. The Einstein Suite is rentable by reciprocal members.

The building is H-shaped, with an Italian Renaissance porte-cochere, Mediterranean patio, loggia, red tiled roof, and various Greek and Andalusian touches. The main courtyard is open to the sky in summer, but a temporary roof with a large chandelier is installed in winter, so the space can be used year-round. Various public rooms include the main lounge, the Hall of Associates with ceilings painted by Giovanni Smeraldi, the Rathskeller, an informal bar and recreation room in the basement, and the



Hayman Lounge, a small bar lined with pictures of the Nobel prize-winning members. A tour of the club can be provided by staff upon request.

The club is located in Pasadena, on the southeast corner of Caltech. A short walk around the attractive campus is a nice way to walk off breakfast. The club is about a mile from downtown Pasadena and 2.5 miles from downtown LA, so its location is not very convenient, although the neighborhood is quite attractive.

The Athenaeum has a reciprocal network of about 60 clubs around the world, plus various clubs associated with Club Quarters, International Associate Clubs, and the Association of College and University Clubs.

Dining facilities are open for breakfast, lunch and dinner Monday through Friday, but on weekends only continental breakfast is served. The continental breakfast is very good, with fresh squeezed orange juice, and a broader selection of items than is often found.

On weekends the public rooms of the club are often rented out for weddings, birthday parties and other functions. These can be loud, but are cut off at 10 pm sharp.

Four tennis courts are available from 7 am to 11 pm, seven days a week.

MEMBERSHIP

The Athenaeum has over 3,500 members including Caltech faculty, trustees, alumni, senior administrators, researchers, graduate students, and the Associates of the California Institute of Technology. Membership also includes representatives of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (founded by Caltech and now managed for NASA by Caltech), the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, and the Palomar Observatory as well as local community, academic, and civic leaders. Faculty and alumni of Caltech have won 32 Nobel prizes, many of these winners were members of the Athenaeum.

DRESS CODE AND RULES

Men should wear at least a collared shirt with dress slacks and a sport coat. Women should wear at least a dress, dressy skirt or pants with a blouse, or a suit. However, for outdoor dining at the club, and in the Hayman Lounge, "clean, campus-appropriate casual dress in good condition that is not excessively revealing" is acceptable. Tennis attire is acceptable in these locations.

FOOD

Since we ate only a continental breakfast at the Club (on weekends no dinner service is offered), we did not rate the food. Our continental breakfast was very good.

BED ROOM DESCRIPTION

We stayed in standard room 22, right beside the Einstein Suite. Our room was about 13 x 14 feet, with a 10 x 10 en suite bath with shower but no tub. The room had two twin beds, desk with wired and wireless Wi-Fi and a power strip, flat screen TV, individual



AC, bureau, and oriental style wall-to-wall carpeting. The room was decorated in taupe and brown and had been re-done in the last two years. It was very attractive. Our room rate was \$168 for a Saturday night, with \$20 tax, for a total of \$188.

We visited the Einstein Suite, which extends the width of the wing. It has its own large covered porch, sizeable bedroom, and moderate sized sitting room with fireplace. Einstein and his wife stayed there for several months on various occasions.

Although our room adjoined the Einstein Suite, alas, no genius rubbed off. Perhaps if you stay in the Suite itself, you will have better luck.