

# Los Angeles Times | LOCAL

LOCAL U.S. WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT HEALTH LIVING TRAVEL OPINION DEALS

L.A. NOW POLITICS CRIME EDUCATION O.C. WESTSIDE NEIGHBORHOODS ENVIRONMENT OBITUARIES FINDLOCAL

## Marines get new barracks at Camp Pendleton

The two-person rooms could pass for college dormitories. And the common areas have pool tables, a computer room, laundry facilities, a large kitchen, fireplaces and 60-inch TVs with theater seating.



Marine Cpl. Araceli Correa, 21, of Long Beach hauls gear into her room in the new bachelor enlisted barracks at Camp Pendleton. "I love the walk-in closets," she said of the two-person room, which has a wet-bar sink, refrigerator and microwave oven. (Don Bartletti, Los Angeles Times / October 2, 2011)

By Tony Perry, Los Angeles Times

*October 2, 2011*

Reporting from Camp Pendleton— Navy Corpsman Peter Ruggiero, who spent months living in the dust and dirt of Afghanistan, looked at his new barracks room and was impressed.

"I feel like I've just checked into a Comfort Inn," said Ruggiero, 21.

Marine Lance Cpl. Vincent Shafer, 19, wanted to be succinct in his description of his new digs, with the private bath, walk-in closet, microwave, refrigerator and space for a television and computer.

"It's so, so ... contemporary," he said.

Marines from the fabled "Old Corps" might grumble at the comforts being provided with the new enlisted barracks. But officers are unmoved by any such complaining.

"After 10 long years of war, you have certainly earned the right to live in these facilities," Col. James Clark, commander of Marine Logistics Regiment 17, told Marines at a recent ribbon-cutting ceremony.

In 2006, the Marine Corps decided it needed to replace the enlisted barracks at all of its bases. Most of the buildings dated from the 1950s and '60s — some back to World War II.

"We had young Marines returning from war to the barracks and telling us they had better housing when they were in Iraq," said Brian Sanders, head of military construction for the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps Barracks Board, composed of officers, senior enlisted and senior civilian officials, convened to design a modern barracks. The group's design bore little resemblance to the past.

The days of Marine Corps barracks life as shown on the television show "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C." are over, Clark said.

"Nobody wants to go back to living in a big room with 40 other guys," he said as Marines nodded in agreement.

Larry Bangert, a former Marine who served in Vietnam and now lives in Encinitas, remembers those days at Camp Pendleton and Camp Lejeune, N.C.: one large room per squad, bunk beds, gang showers, foot lockers, one television for 120 or so guys, constant arguments over what to watch, daily inspections, no privacy.

He likes the new push for better housing. "These guys do three and four tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. They deserve a little comfort when they come home," he said.

On a recent move-in day, the Marines were lugging seabags, rucksacks and boxes of clothes and other belongings. It could have passed for the beginning of fall semester at your local college — except there were no parents to supervise them.

Cpl. Carlos Valle, who has deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, scanned his room and declared himself pleased — and a bit surprised. "Everything is so new," said Valle, 24. "This is not what we're used to."

The two-person rooms, at 220 square feet, could pass for college dormitories. If a Marine has too much stuff for his closet, there is more space beneath his lift-up mattress — giving rise to the appellation "coffin rack" to describe the bed.

In the common areas are pool tables, a computer room (with Wi-Fi), laundry facilities, a large kitchen, fireplaces, and 60-inch high-definition televisions (with theater seating with drink holders).

Outside: horseshoe pits, tennis courts, a nine-hole disc golf course, roller-hockey court, sand volleyball court, basketball courts, putting green, barbecue grills, shaded picnic area, amphitheater, bicycle storage rack and a "boot wash" where Marines can clean their gear so they don't track mud into their rooms.

In the spirit of "green," solar panels are on the roof; toilets and landscaping use recycled water; a monitoring system turns off lights when rooms are not in use.

Plans for Camp Pendleton call for six housing "packages," each of three or four buildings, all located near training and shopping areas. Five of the packages have been completed; construction is rapidly underway on the sixth.

By the end of 2012, the Marine Corps figures to have spent \$2.5 billion on barracks buildings to accommodate 25,000 enlisted Marines at 11 bases in the U.S. — from the biggest bases at Twentynine Palms, Calif.; Camp Pendleton; Camp Lejeune, N.C.; and New River, N.C.; to the smallest at Barstow; Yuma, Ariz.; and Albany, Ga.

At Camp Pendleton, the barracks are for unmarried Marines from private to sergeant. Married Marines or single enlisted Marines of higher rank get housing allowances to rent off-base. There is on-base housing for families, based on rank.

At the ribbon-cutting, Brig. Gen. John Broadmeadow, commander of the 1st Marine Logistics Group, was asked if the new barracks won't undercut the ethos that says Marines bond together as a fighting unit through shared hardship and danger.

"They get enough of that when they're forward," he said, a reference to Afghanistan where many of the Marines and corpsmen have already done one or more deployments and will soon return.

# New bachelor enlisted barracks open at Camp Pendleton

Photos and Captions From LA Times Article



**The reception area**  
( Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times )

Marine Cpl. Michael Bright, left, helps Pfc. Joseph Blatter with his room assignment in the new bachelor enlisted barracks at Camp Pendleton. The reception area features a curved glass counter, 30-foot ceilings and super-graphics on the walls.



**A Marine moves his gear**  
( Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times )

A Marine moves his gear into new barracks. Inside the lofty entrance is a reception desk, game rooms, a common area with modern kitchen, pool tables, lounge with huge flat-screen TVs and laundry facilities.



**Pfc. Gabriel Hernandez**  
( Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times )

Pfc. Gabriel Hernandez, 21, of Auburn, Wash., arranges his gear in his quarters in the new bachelor enlisted barracks at Camp Pendleton. Rooms feature ceiling fan, individual walk-in closets, refrigerator, microwave oven and a throw rug on the wood grained floor. He said, "This is better than most hotels!"



**Pfc. Gabriel Hernandez uniform**  
( Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times )

Pfc. Gabriel Hernandez hangs up his uniform in his new walk-in closet. His room also has a refrigerator and microwave oven.



**Marine Corps workout equipment**  
( Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times )

Outside the new barracks is serious, Marine Corps-style exercise equipment, along with horseshoe pits, tennis courts, a nine-hole disc golf course, roller-hockey court, sand volleyball court, basketball courts, putting green and barbecue grills.



**A Marine walks his bicycle and gear**  
( Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times )

A Marine walks his bicycle and gear past a volleyball court at the new bachelor enlisted barracks at Camp Pendleton.



**Entertainment room**  
( Don Bartletti / Los Angeles Times )

The barracks' plush entertainment rooms feature oversize chairs with cup holders and flat-screen TVs with theater sound systems.