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***OFFBEAT & OUTBACK – FROM MONGOLIAN YURTS TO EXOTIC ANIMAL CAMPS, MONTEREY COUNTY SPORTS A VARIETY OF UNIQUE DIGS FOR THE INTREPID TRAVELER***  
*Ideal Escapes for Families, Adventure Hounds & Romantics*

**MONTEREY COUNTY, CALIF.** — Pachyderms delivering breakfast to your safari suite, elephant seals serenading the stars above your yurt, Buddhist monks adding the final touches to your tatami cabin... Monterey County sets the stage for a variety of outback adventures with a cache of creative inns awaiting exploration. Whether fanning the flames, tapping off steam or recharging with nature, romantics, families and the out-of-touch urbanite will find solace by slipping away along coastal and inland Monterey.

**WAKE ME WHEN THE ELEPHANTS ARRIVE**

For a true romantic walk on the wild side, bed down in one of four safari tents at **Vision Quest Ranch**, a one-of-a-kind bed & breakfast where resident elephants deliver breakfast. This magical site, tucked deep in Steinbeck Country on 50 acres, is also home to **Wild Things**, an exotic animal training facility with 100+ critters. The upscale canvas-walled suites include a full bathroom, TV and expansive wooden decks to watch the sizzling sky fire up behind the Gabilan Mountains. Step out of the Big Cat House or Zebra Zone African-print suites and a grassy savanna unfolds with Lisa, Butch and Buffy vying for your attention in an enormous elephant play yard. In the distance lions, tigers and bears (and a few oddball reptiles, servals, sloths and zebras) wrangle for attention. For the ultimate turn-down, clock out to the sounds of roaring lions and trumpeting elephants against the sweeping grass.

Ideal for sparking romance (accommodations are for adults only); Vision Quest Ranch also offers special programs for kids. The kids' Roar & Snore overnight camp offers nocturnal safaris, a campfire dinner and wake-up call from the animals (seasonal). Guests and visitors can also enjoy daily guided tours (\$10/adults; \$8/kids) V.I.P. tours for adults including full contact with the animals, or the Pachyderm Package where kids can bath the African Elephants.

**SIDETRIP**

New and definitely tasty is the **River Road** wine trek beginning a few miles south of Vision Quest Ranch. Meandering along the Salinas River, nearly a dozen wineries are on tap including award-winning Hahn Estates, Paraiso Vineyards, Pessagno Winery, Marilyn Remark Wines, Wrath Vineyards and Richard Boyer Wines. Check in to **Barlocker's Rustling Oaks Ranch Bed & Breakfast** located along the River Road with a bunkhouse for

cowboy wannabes, two-bedroom cottage and three interior rooms. The Ranch farms its own beef and pork; settle in for an awesome country breakfast with fresh-cured bacon.

### **POINT ME TO THE PINNACLES**

In the distance it looks like poured sandcastles gone wild, sharp conical crimson-colored spires shooting skyward. In truth, it's the remnants of an ancient volcano and movement along the San Andreas Rift Zone some 23 million years ago called the Pinnacles National Monument. Tap into its treasures with a visit to **Inn at the Pinnacles**, perched on 30 acres of sprawling vineyards with prime access to the park's west gate.

Just nine miles from Highway 101 at Soledad the view of the Pinnacles comes full circle. Dry rolling hills build into the Gabilan Mountains and then the surreal backdrop. Venture another half mile via dirt road and glances of the Inn begin to surface. The Spanish Mediterranean-style structure imbued in lavender boasts resident coyotes, wild turkeys and world-class Chalone AVA wines. Opened in 2002, the six-room inn is an immaculate retreat certain to shrink city stress. There are no televisions or telephones...just the low whirr of whirlpool tubs and crackling fireplaces. Dinner is first-rate, including proprietors' Jan and Jon's herb-crusted lamb, grilled salmon or Cornish game hens complete with all the sidekicks. A hearty breakfast is also included to gear up for a day of *haute* hiking.

### **SIDETRIP**

Kick off the day with a visit to the **Pinnacles National Monument**, a quick three-minute drive from the Inn. The West Entrance offers instant access to hiking trails and a variety of mid- and advanced-level rock climbing sites. Caving under giant boulders (or talus passages) that have stacked up over the centuries is the main attraction. Hit it to the Balconies Caves Trail which meanders through low chaparral to a moss-covered forest evolving into a tumble zone of enormous rocks. Flashlights are required to descend underground. Quench your thirst with a velvety estate syrah on the way out at **Chalone Vineyard**, the only winery in the Chalone AVA.

### **CATAMARAN BED PLEASE, SLOUGH SAFARI TO GO**

Cozy up in a quaint catamaran-cum-bed complete with keel and tiller headboard as the expansive arms of Monterey Bay and Elkhorn Slough unravel in the panoramic view. Kicking up the nautical theme a notch, the **Captain's Inn** in the seaside fishing village of Moss Landing is the ideal respite for adventure seekers who love scouting off-the-beaten path. Built in 1906, the 10-room inn exudes all the charm of a bed and breakfast without grandma's lace and chintz. Rooms are open and airy with private baths, dual showers and whimsical seaside themes. The boathouse, which sits along the bay, features six rooms with expansive bay views and beds crafted from boats owners Melanie and Yohn have acquired.

The High Seas Room delivers the ultimate chill pill. Kick back with freshly-baked chocolate chip cookies, a roaring fire and deep soaking tub for two overlooking the vibrant line-up of wildlife. Other great bets include the Sanctuary Room's bed complete with a boat trailer and working taillights. Breakfast is a serious affair with Melanie driving the stoves. The Inn also offers Birder Challenge Weekends given the area's rich diversity of local and migrating fowl.

Nearby Moss Landing offers a variety of antiquing options. Hunker down for a tasty lunch at the Haute Enchilada or pop into the Red Caboose Gallery (bus-turned-gallery) bedecked with plants and all things odd. Hot Tip: Track down Stella Page Designs for the ultimate decoupage purses. By appointment.

#### **SIDETRIP**

All aboard the **Elkhorn Slough Safari** for a must-see nature adventure. Spreading 1,400 acres and reaching inland nearly seven miles from the coast, the Elkhorn Slough Reserve steps up with some 400 plant species, 80 kinds of fish, 340 types of birds, including such rare species as the Peregrine Falcon and Snowy Plover, sea otters and sea lions. Safari-goers grab a life vest, binoculars and board a classic pontoon which delivers a vivid postcard of this region's ecosystem and wealth of wildlife. Photo Safaris, Birding Workshops and Sunset Hot Chocolate tours are also available. Kayaking the slough is another option.

#### **BIG SUR'S NEW SURPRISE: YURTS & YODELING ELEPHANT SEALS**

Check into Yurt #16 and your dreams are realized, Big Sur style. The Pacific unfolds all the way to Japan, a small waft of morning fog dissipates as the coffee perks. The arms of the Los Padres National Forest surround the senses with the snapping scent of pine backed with a slap of salt air for good measure. Welcome to **Treebones Resort**.

Prime property on 10 acres, this hideaway located on Highway 1 just north of Gorda is a stunning statement to serenity. Named after the remnants of naked tree trunks from a working wood mill in the 1960s, Treebones offers 16 classic yurts on 10 acres bedecked with insulated walls, wooden-framed doors, polished pine floors, plush patchwork comforters, electricity, hot and cold running water and a wood-burning stove to stoke the flames. Semi-private showers are located within walking distance.

At night, elephant seals steal the stage with a choir of ocean-friendly tunes. Mornings deliver a whip-up-your-own waffle bar and coffee in the main lobby and a variety of hiking trails to kick your heels up. Set in a unique micro-climate, the resort is warmer than most spots along the coast, and migrating whales seem a bit closer given its location off Cape St. Martin. This is not a stop for city folk, given the lack of cell service, television or in-room telephones.

#### **SIDETRIP**

Locals bank out at the **Big Sur River Inn** during the summer for a rousing line-up of live entertainment set along a grassy expanse overlooking the Big Sur River. Pop in for lunch and a free concert or hit the literary trail to **Henry Miller Memorial Library** for an impromptu poetry session in the sculpture garden. Hikers seeking a quick rush can tap into **Salmon Creek Waterfall**, just 10 minutes south of Treebones.

#### **MRS. CROCKER'S CHATEAU CALLS (Currently Closed)**

Talk about escape. Hidden behind a series of private gates sits a 330-acre statement to the golden years of excessive wealth and privilege. Originally the home of Mrs. Crocker Russell (Crocker Bank heiress), **Stonepine Chateau** recently reopened serving up an intoxicating lifestyle that is easy to get used to. Tucked deep within Carmel Valley, formal gardens framed by box hedges, vistas overlooking the Santa Lucia mountains, a

Renaissance-style swimming pool, tennis court and newly-created executive practice golf course share space with what was the oldest thoroughbred farm West of the Mississippi.

Today, the fully-restored chateau (circa 1927-29) offers eight luxurious suites and four private houses and cottages. Straight out of the Loire Valley, the Chateau features a formal Living Room - where cocktails and dressed-for-dinner guests meet and mingle – Dining Room complete with white linen service and a stunning overhead Murano chandelier, and requisite Library. Top picks include the Venetian Suite with a private entrance and balcony overlooking the pool and stately gardens, and Wedgwood Suite decorated in pale blue shades with a romantic *Recamier* chaise lounge and fireplace. The Taittinger Suite (formerly Mrs. Crocker’s bunk) steps up with his/hers dressing and bathrooms, private loft, marble bath with Jacuzzi and two fireplaces – all set in warm cream tones. For the ultimate long-lasting impression opt for a full night buy-out of the entire estate for just \$15,000.

A full service Equestrian Center dating back to the 1930s offers Dressage, a Hunter-Jumper and Sulky Track, horseback rides, Victorian carriage rides and group hayrides. A well-maintained 3.5 mile hiking and biking trail surrounds the property.

#### **SIDETRIP**

In for a bit of rugged reflection? Four-wheel it to **Tassajara Zen Mountain Center**, a solid hour and a half drive southeast of Stonepine, the last hour churning up tires on a windy dirt road. Check in and truly check out as resident Buddhist monks manage guests on their path to enlightenment. Established in 1966 as the first Soto Zen monastery outside of Asia, Tassajara straddles the rugged Santa Lucia highlands on ancient turf combining hot springs, forested mountains and creekside trails.

Even the jaded traveler will revel in the variety of lodging from the classic Redwood Yurts to the Tatami Cabins, turn-of-the-century Stone Rooms and a host of new cabins built in winter 2004. Most rooms have wood-burning fireplaces and decks overlooking the creek. Kid-friendly, telephone- television- and electricity-free, Tassajara’s tariff includes three delicious meals per day, including the monks’ signature freshly-baked breads. Seasonal (May – early September).

#### **VISITOR INFO.**

Monterey County is located 120 miles/192 km south of San Francisco and 345 miles/552 km north of Los Angeles along the classic California corridor. The region boasts 99 miles of prime Pacific Coastline, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, three historic missions, 40,000 acres of premium vineyards, 24 golf courses and over 250 lodging properties. Monterey County includes the Monterey Peninsula, Big Sur, North County and the Salinas Valley. The Monterey Peninsula Airport (MRY), just three miles from historic downtown Monterey and minutes from the area’s major attractions, is served by non-stop flights to and from Denver (DEN), Las Vegas (LAS), Phoenix (PHX), Los Angeles (LAX), San Diego (SAN) and San Francisco (SFO). [www.SeeMonterey.com](http://www.SeeMonterey.com).

<b>Hotel Property</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Website</b>
Parkfield Inn	805.463.2323	<a href="http://www.Parkfield.com">www.Parkfield.com</a>

V-6 Ranch	805.463.2371	<a href="http://www.Parkfield.com">www.Parkfield.com</a>
USGS Information	805.463.2382	<a href="http://www.quake.usgs.gov/research/parkfield">www.quake.usgs.gov/research/parkfield</a>
Vision Quest Ranch/Wild Things Inc.	800.228.7382	<a href="http://www.wildthingsinc.com">www.wildthingsinc.com</a>
Inn at the Pinnacles	831.678.2400	<a href="http://www.innatthepinnacles.com">www.innatthepinnacles.com</a>
Pinnacles National Monument	831.389.4485	<a href="http://www.nps.gov/pinn">www.nps.gov/pinn</a>
Treebones Resort	877.424.4787	<a href="http://www.TreebonesResort.com">www.TreebonesResort.com</a>
Captain's Inn	831.633.5550	<a href="http://www.captainsinn.com">www.captainsinn.com</a>
Elkhorn Slough Safari	831.633.5555	<a href="http://www.elkhornslough.com">www.elkhornslough.com</a>
Stonepine Chateau	831.659.2245	<a href="http://www.stonepinecalifornia.com">www.stonepinecalifornia.com</a>
Tassajara Zen Mountain Center Seasonal (May – early Sept.)	415.865.1899	<a href="http://www.sfzc.com/tassajara">www.sfzc.com/tassajara</a>

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