

SANTA BARBARA

THE AMERICAN RIVIERA®

CONFERENCE + VISITORS BUREAU + FILM COMMISSION

OFF-BEAT ACCOMMODATIONS:

From Mongolian Yurts to Conestoga Wagons, Santa Barbara Abounds With Unique Lodging Options

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Bed down in a Mongolian yurt, cuddle up in a traditional Conestoga-style wagon or pack your bags for a sleepover at a mountain-top retreat with Benedictine monks. Santa Barbara — the American Riviera® — offers an eclectic lineup of unique accommodations. Throughout the region, Wild West outposts and heavenly retreats set the stage for off-beat adventures.

MT. CALVARY RETREAT HOUSE

Serenity seekers will find a haven at Mt. Calvary Retreat House, a spiritual retreat perched on a ridge high above the clouds. The monastery boasts 25 acres of sheer solitude. Red tile roofs, Montecito stone walls and plenty of “Monk’s Blend” java keep things rolling at this non-denominational guest house. Originally built in 1928 as a private Spanish-style residence, the site was purchased in 1947 by the Order of the Holy Cross. Six Benedictine monks reside on the premises, which offers 19 rooms, stunning views, direct links to area hiking paths and three delicious meals a day (their fresh-baked bread is legendary).

Peace is a powerful word here. The property with a 360° view is free of telephones, televisions or newspapers; however, Internet junkies can log-on via the office computer. A variety of courtyards, gardens and moderate to advanced hiking trails, such as the Rattlesnake Trail, make for a blissful day atop remote Gibraltar Road. The central courtyard is marked with a robust 25-foot wrought-iron cross in memory of Amy E. duPont. The garden is dense with fig, lemon, orange and kumquat trees, which make for a mean house-blend jelly. A small cactus garden adorns the chapel courtyard, which leads to two small art studios for the resident watercolorist and calligrapher. A labyrinth offers further opportunity for reflection.

Flanked with murals of Mary and St. John, the entrance’s steps lead to an enormous wooden door reminiscent of a grand guest house. Inside, hardwood flooring and small, cozy sitting rooms, including three libraries, dot the residence. The refectory, a large east-facing room with a broad window and inviting round tables, is set just off the kitchen. Bedrooms are sparse and clean with twin beds, a desk and window. Some rooms share bathrooms and two are handicap accessible.

WHITE LOTUS FOUNDATION

Slip away from town and commune with nature at this 40-acre oasis, complete with spring-fed creeks, waterfalls and swimming holes. Tucked along scenic San Marcos Pass (Highway 154), which leads to Santa Barbara's lush wine country, the White Lotus Foundation is a find for anyone with a passion for yoga or the great outdoors. Built on land that was once sacred to the Chumash Indians, the pristine canyon and mountain setting offer prime Santa Barbara views and plenty of earthly pleasures. Strewn throughout the forest are six Mongolian yurts — simple domed structures with wooden floors, canvass walls and built-in heaters. A bay laurel forest sets the stage for one alfresco compound that also offers two tents set creekside and an inviting hammock. Camping without the cargo is the best way to describe these lodgings, which offer optional Hatha Yoga programs. Owner Ganga White, an honored Yogaraj ("king of yogis"), presents a synthesis of classical and contemporary teachings sure to stretch both body and mind.

A long paved road leads guests through the main entrance, marked by two sandstone rocks with white lotus sculptures. Guests must part with their shoes to enter the main building which houses a large shared kitchen for vegetarian cooking, separate loft lodgings, a casual room for reading or lounging and a large, airy room with hardwood floors for daily yoga classes.

EL CAPITAN CANYON

El Capitan Canyon, a 45-acre privately-owned enclave, exemplifies the "resort camping" concept. Located just 20 miles north of Santa Barbara at the base of the rugged Santa Ynez Mountains, this gem is the ideal respite for city slickers not quite ready to get horizontal with Mother Nature. On tap are a variety of lodgings including the Deluxe Safari Tent, a comfortable and spacious (12 x 14 ft.) white canvas tent complete with a queen bed, linens, table and chairs. A scaled-down Adventure Safari Tent, *sans le bed*, is also available.

For the true urban adventurer, 100 luxury cedar Canyon Cabins offer comfy beds, linens, electricity and a private low-impact bathroom and shower, many with a large Jacuzzi tub and expansive window. Sybarites can soothe their souls with a licensed massage therapist on call to dole out full body and barefoot therapy to keep those hiking treks in order. Planners are available to arrange group activities ranging from ocean kayaking to mountain biking, backcountry hiking, horseback riding, team building and wilderness survival training.

COYOTE RIDGE RANCH

Seeking the ultimate hideaway to savor those stellar Santa Barbara syrahs? Tap into Coyote Ridge Ranch, a small inn tucked five miles off the main artery in Santa Ynez. This secluded guest residence offers only three rooms for travelers seeking true solitude. For years, the ranch has laid claim to a bevy of industry A-listers seeking an infusion of nature and world-class Santa Barbara wines.

You could write a book here, but with 80+ wineries crying for a trying, Coyote Ridge Ranch is the perfect wine enthusiast's getaway. Arriving by night is an adventurer's dream. Set in the rural foothills off Highway 154, visitors traverse five miles of winding road, much of it dirt or gravel, lit only by moonlight. Guests are greeted by three Great Pyrenees who vie for attention. Owners Cassandra and Philip Grant have personally built the two residences (one their own) from scratch; many of the furnishings, including a quirky cactus wood lamp, dressers, headboards — even one bed — have been handmade by the eclectic couple.

The spacious rooms sport saltillo tiles or hardwood floors and fireplaces. Each room is dedicated to a female artist, showcasing prints of original art. Check into the Georgia O'Keefe Room, which overlooks the fountain courtyard, or Mary Cassatt Room, a sunny ochre-toned abode with a brass bed, free-standing cast iron Vermont fireplace, wooden deck and panorama of the San Raphael foothills. Rooms are oriented to maximize views of the sunrise or sunset.

Outside, guests are free to call the gated 20 acres home. A 50-foot heated lap pool and barbecue keep things rolling year round. Also on property is a guest entertainment den, complete with fireplace, a billiard table and plenty of arts and travel literature. Breakfast is served daily in the main residence.

RANCHO OSO STABLES & GUEST RANCH

Pack your spurs and bed down in a traditional Conestoga-style wagon or colorful tongue and groove pine cabin at this Wild West outpost just 30 minutes from downtown Santa Barbara. Surrounded by the Las Padres National Forest with vistas of the Santa Ynez River and rolling foothills, Rancho Oso serves up the Old West in multiple flavors. The secluded 310-acre site was once a primary settlement of the Chumash Indians. Throughout the years, when Santa Barbara was "Hollywood West," Rancho Oso hosted many a silent film star. Today it hosts hiking enthusiasts, horseback riders and recreational vehicle owners as part of the Thousand Trails network.

At the Western Village guests can bed down in a Conestoga covered wagon with hardwood floors, white canvass covers and four Army-style cots. Electricity is available for nighttime readers. There are 10 wagons to choose from, set in two circular groups around campfire rings where guests can mingle after dinner at the nearby Chuck Wagon.

A round-up of five colorfully-painted cabins rests at the edge of the Village, each bearing a wooden sign: "Livery," "Assay Office," "Saloon." The small rooms feature single or bunk beds, a coffee maker and small refrigerator. Nearby, hot showers, bathrooms, charcoal pits and picnic tables abound. On weekends, the Chuck Wagon and nearby Stone Lodge Kitchen serve up a hearty round of fare.

THE UNION HOTEL

Step on up and slip back in time at this turn-of-the-century stagecoach stop where the telephone sports a true-to-life partyline and chandeliers from *Gone with the Wind* survey the genteel diners. In 1880, the hotel was a hot stop for travelers plying the California route. Tucked deep in Santa Barbara Wine Country in a one-street town called Los Alamos, The Union Hotel offers 12 rooms — all packed with period furniture — a requisite saloon, dining room, parlor and plenty of character.

Tie up your ride and poke inside the two-story distressed wooden facade. The interior is draped in plush red velvet amidst Victorian Western furniture, a stone carved mantle and hutches packed with relics and personal artifacts. The original Wells Fargo wall-safes are still intact as is a Victrola that sits silently in the corner. Any minute, Miss Kitty seems certain to swoop down the stairs that lead up to the circular guest quarters.

A separate seating area upstairs sports a red billiard table, over-stuffed armchairs and a variety of Persian throw rugs in muted red designs. Rooms feature rich floral wallpaper and prints; some have claw-foot bathtubs. Four rooms offer shared toilets, which require a tug of the chain. Out back, a meandering hedge maze, climbing morning glory, a reflecting pool and heart-shape gazebo make for a perfect end to a Wild West stay.

ACCOMMODATION INFO

Visit www.santabarbaraCA.com for special hotel offers and to book accommodation online.

Mt. Calvary Retreat House (Spiritual Retreat)

2500 Gibraltar Road, Santa Barbara, 93102
805.962.9855, mtcalvary1@aol.com
www.mount-calvary.org
Singles \$70.00/night donation including meals

White Lotus Yoga Foundation

2500 San Marcos Pass, Santa Barbara, 93105
805.964.1944, info@whitelotus.org
www.whitelotus.org
Singles \$75.00/night single, \$140.00/couple including lodging and facilities

El Capitan Canyon

11560 Calle Real, Santa Barbara, 93117
805.685.3887
www.elcapitancanyon.com
Safari Tents \$135.00; Cabins \$185.00 - \$305.00/night

Coyote Ridge Ranch

4385 Oak View Road, Santa Ynez, CA 93441
805.688.0271
www.coyoteridgeranch.com
Doubles \$125.00/night, including breakfast

Rancho Oso Thousand Trails

3750 Paradise Road, Santa Barbara, 93105

805.683.5686

www.rancho-oso.com

Cabins \$79.00/night, Conestoga Wagons \$54.00/night

The Union Hotel

362 Bell Street, Los Alamos, 93440

800.230.2744

www.unionhotelvictmansion.com

Doubles \$135.00 - \$235.00/night, including wine and breakfast