

GLAMPING

Glamour camping, an alternative staycation by the sea.

JEANNE FERRIS



For some, “camping” may evoke images of mosquitoes, cooking drudgery and an aching back. But what if it involves a yurt with a skylight under the mega stars, a real bed and an electric lamp, with a whale watching deck and breathtaking views of the magnificent Pacific Ocean? What if, near by, a four-star restaurant serves a hot meal to the home cook looking for a little respite? After all, shouldn’t vacation be a relief from the routine and the daily grind? That’s where glamping—or glamour, camping, a luxury form of camping—comes in. This style allows for a natural experience of outdoor camping coupled with the glamorous amenities of a hotel. It’s truly the best of both worlds.

Treebones Resort, Big Sur

Nestled on a bluff 400 feet above the Pacific Ocean and surrounded by Los Padres National Forest, Treebones Resort practices alternative energy and has run on its own generator since 2004. There are 16 yurts—round, fabric-covered tents with wood lattice frames used by Mongolian nomads—available. Their interiors offer polished, knotty pine floors, queen-sized beds with colorful quilts, a clear sky dome and portable heaters—a warm surprise for the not-so-enthused camper. There is running hot and cold water available, but the restroom and showers are a short stroll nearby.



Treebones Resort

Location: 71895 Hwy. 1, Big Sur

Cost: From \$85

Travel Time: Six hours by automobile

Contact:

Web: treebonesresort.com

Corinne and John Handy own, run and live on the resort with their now-grown children.

“We, like our guests, are adventure seekers. We choose places to vacation that provide us experiences we haven’t had. As Emerson said, “What is vacation: change.”

On the premises at Treebones is a heated ocean-view pool with hot tub, a 65-foot ocean-view bar, a sushi bar (closed in January and February), a gift shop and a convenience store, as well as the Wild Coast restaurant, which serves up farm-to-table organic cuisine, sourcing vegetables grown within 40 miles and feeding all food scraps to its 24 resident chickens.

El Capitan Canyon, Santa Barbara

If traveling that far isn’t appealing, there is the very civilized El Capitan Canyon, about 15 minutes north of Santa Barbara. With hiking access to 3,500 acres of nature preserve, the Canyon property has 350 acres of rolling hills and creek canyons with California oaks and sycamore trees, as well as a five-minute walk to El Capitan State Beach.

For the luxury-minded camper, classic canvas safari tents, which are built on raised wooden decks with screened windows and doors with zip-down flaps, are available. For the intrepid camper, Six Adventure Yurts have been built as recently as 2013.



El Capitan Canyon
 Location: 11560 Calle Real, Santa Barbara
 Cost: From \$155
 Travel Time: Three hours by automobile
 Contact:
 Web: elcapitancanyon.com

The Café offers an organic menu for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The s'mores kits are a popular item for fireside evenings and BBQ kits can be ordered in advance, with main entrees such as marinated steak or fresh fish, served with side dishes. And for a little extra, a "Camp Butler" will grill and serve your outdoor meal. Now that's glamping.

Complimentary bikes are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Numerous recreational activities such as horseback riding, wine tours, golfing, guided hikes and kayaking are available, as are Thursday outdoor movie nights, a Summer Concert Series on Saturdays and a heated swimming pool. Spa treatments are available in the privacy of guest accommodations, in the cedar spa cabin or alfresco in a canvas spa tent.

Crystal Cove Beach Cottages, Newport Beach

Forty minutes from San Diego, the stunning 735 miles of California's golden Highway 1 begins in Laguna Beach and turns into Pacific Coast Highway. Nearby is Crystal Cove Beach Cottages, a well-known secret that received the California Historical Landmark designation just this year.

Reservations are only through Reserve America online, at a base rate of \$88 a night for a dorm-style room that sleeps up to four. As founder and president of the non-profit Crystal Cove Alliance (CCA) Laura Davick said, "It is a magical, word-class experience that literally takes you back in time."



Crystal Cove Beach Cottages

Location: 35 Crystal Cove, Newport Beach

Cost: From \$162

Travel Time: 2 Hours by automobile

Contact:

Web: crystalcovebeachcottages.com

Davick grew up in Cottage #2 and spearheaded the campaign to stop the 12.3 acres of the rustic 46 cottages from demolition for a luxury resort. Being within Crystal Cove State Park ensures its permanent natural setting, which once served as a set for the Hollywood silent film boom and a drop-off spot for Prohibition-era rumrunners. Postwar tiki parties and luaus made it a popular gathering spot, according to Davick.

Each cottage has been painstakingly restored to its former 1930-to-1955 glory, with themed authentic furnishings including a kitchen with a vintage refrigerator and modern microwave. A Future Restoration Project includes 17 North Beach cottages that are slated for an approximate \$20 million restoration, which includes an active fundraising invitation to become a member at crystalcovealliance.org and a chance to win a coveted overnight stay. Limited ADA-disabled guest units with parking are available.

Time travel into the past at Crystal Cove with extended family...or not, but forget the telephone or television—it's board games or books only for this sandy staycation. If you need the urban life, plenty of modern conveniences in the historic shopping district are within walking distance.

The Bungalows, Laguna Beach

Does time traveling sound like jet lag? Maybe, even glamping is too much effort...how about a daycation at the luxurious Bungalows—literally three steps from the beach?

Housed within the Pacific Edge Hotel, The Bungalows are located on 280 feet of beach property in downtown Laguna Beach. Completely private indoor/outdoor units, these surf cabanas have keyed access and are reserved for day use

from 11 a.m. until 8 p.m. This allows guests to have a base of operation, with a full kitchen with fully stocked refrigerator and snack bar, full bath, a studio great room with flat-screen televisions, CD/MP3 sound system and air-conditioning.



The Bungalows

Location: 647 S. Coast Hwy., Laguna Beach

Cost: From \$550

Travel Time: Six hours by automobile

Contact:

Web: pacifedgehotel.com

If the sand is simply too much nature, designated lounge chairs and day beds are also available in front of each unit on a private cabana deck. Also steps from the cabanas is The Deck, a casual eatery and the only open-air, beachside restaurant in Laguna.

Also offered with The Bungalows is your personal VIP Cabana Host to help with any planned activities such as private massage services, mobile airbrush spray tanning, manicure/pedicure services, photography and video services, and stand-up paddle and surf rentals and lessons. Nine hours of stress-free living qualifies as a luxury daycation, wouldn't you agree?

Crystal Pier Hotel and Cottages, Pacific Beach

If sleeping directly over the fathomless rumbling Pacific Ocean soothes you like a warm bubble bath, or if you miss the sound and feeling of crashing surf shaking the pilings under a Malibu abode—how about the historic Crystal Pier Hotel and Cottages, right here in Pacific Beach and just 15 minutes from downtown San Diego?

Nine decades of out-of-state and local owners, storms, reconstruction, restorations of the pier and cottages, Hollywood celebrity guests, and filming have finally settled down to a sweet modern glamping above the sea. One car can drive and park in front of the suite or cottage, making it too cozy to venture back out. Fortunately, each unit comes fully equipped with a kitchenette, separate bedroom and living room, and a private deck over the beach.



Crystal Pier Hotel and Cottages

Location: 4500 Ocean Blvd., San Diego

Cost: From \$175

Travel Time: 30 minutes

Contact:

Web: crystalpier.com

Crystal Pier provides a gated key entry and night security for those night owls choosing to stay out and play. Leave the cigars and pooch at home—this is not just a vacation from same old, but also from vices and canine. It is suggested to reserve four to six months in advance.

Spoiler alert: because the ocean tide changes throughout the day, not all of the cottages stand above the surf below. Oh well—herein lies glamping by the Sea.