

# GENTRY DESTINATIONS

RESORTS | HOMES | TRAVEL | ADVENTURE

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2016

## THIRST FOR ADVENTURE

Henry Miller once said, “One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.” As I travel more and more over the years, I realize just how true Miller’s statement rings. The gift of travel and the quest to experience new places and cultures constantly informs thinking and perspective.

The trips and adventures showcased on the pages of this issue of *Gentry Destinations* push the traveller to be open to wonderfully new experiences whether it’s fly fishing, off-roading, hiking over lava fields or succumbing to a coconut scrub. Fredric Hamber takes us to New Mexico and Ted Turner’s exciting Vermejo Park Ranch (*Lions and Turners and Bears . . . Oh, my!*, page 54). Amalia McGibbon heads to the rugged Mendocino coast and discovers a charming inn worth savoring (*The Inn at Newport Ranch*, page 72) and she goes globetrotting in search of the perfect “tot” (*Spirited Away*, page 42). *Gentry* photographer Jack Hutcheson ventures to the Island of Kauai and captures Kuku’i’ula’s resident chief adventurer Robert Miguel. Miguel shares his secrets for making the most of a trip to the Garden Isle (*Local Expert*, Page 52). Our *Gentry Destinations* team also reports on some of the best spas in Hawaii (*The Essence of Aloha*, page 62). Enjoy!



*Stefanie Lingle Beasley*

Stefanie Lingle Beasley // Editorial Director // [edit@18media.com](mailto:edit@18media.com)



### FREDRIC HAMBER

*Contributing Writer*

A visit to Ted Turner’s Vermejo Park Ranch was a perfect getaway for traveler and history buff Fredric Hamber. “Shooting sporting clays gave me a new respect for the 19th century trappers of the area whose sustenance depended on their skill,” he says. “No matter how bad a shot I was, I knew there would be a hot meal waiting for me back at the lodge.” Hamber was raised in Napa and San Francisco; his work has appeared in *Cigar Aficionado* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among others.

asm, their attention to detail, and—oh yes—their food!! The Smiths have more than 35 years of experience in the hospitality industry, and say they’ve been preparing most of their lives for this particular opportunity. That would put us Bay Area locals in the right place at the right time.



### JESSICA CANFIELD

*Contributing Writer*

Being an avid photographer, most of my travel experiences involve capturing the unique essence of each destination from behind a lens. While recent trips to China, Hong Kong, Belize, Fiji, and Iceland stand out as being particularly one of a kind, European favorites are all places I hope to return to for the culinary and architectural wonder. While Belize was a remote tropical getaway spent waking at sunrise with departing fishermen and spending the day exploring mazes of rivers, Iceland was the exact opposite. The short layover there was perfect for adventuring to monumental geysers and geothermal pools that appear to be from another planet while meeting extremely friendly and proud people.

This month I was excited to highlight the newly reimagined Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point—talk about a marvelous makeover!



### CORRINE E. COOK

*Senior Editor*

It was a dream to finally see The Edgewater Hotel—a beloved Seattle landmark. In 1964, during their first world tour, the Beatles stayed at the hotel, newly completed for the World’s Fair. At the time, no other hotel in the city would accept the wild and handsome Beatles as guests; however, The Edgewater happily welcomed them. Good call!!



### AMALIA MCGIBBON

*Contributing Editor*

It’s a rare and wonderful thing when you find a property that manages to combine the professionalism and thoroughness of a five-star hotel with the warmth and humanity of a small B&B. And that’s what the Inn at Newport Ranch does, thanks in large part to Innkeepers Cindi and Creighton Smith. I enjoyed the couple tremendously—their kindness, their enthusi-



### BRIAN DOUGLAS

*Automotive Editor*

Will car ownership be part of your future? Most of us will want the security of our own transportation device for the foreseeable future, but more alternatives are cropping up in our hotbed of technology. Douglas picks a bright sunny weekend to test Audi’s new On Demand service.

# LIONS AND TURNERS AND BEARS... OH, MY!

The newly renovated Casa Grande estate on Ted Turner's Vermejo Park Ranch in New Mexico.





STORY BY FREDRIC HAMBER





PHOTO: AMANDA HOWELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Vermejo Park Ranch is an adventurer's paradise. Guests can enjoy everything from hiking rugged mountain terrain or riding horses through the property's spectacular canyons, to observing incredible and diverse wildlife and snapping photos of the stunning Sangre de Cristo sunsets. Vermejo's seasoned guides are well-versed in Vermejo's land, as well as its creatures, and will tailor expeditions based on skill level, ability, and desire to optimize the guest's stay and outdoor experience.

I've barely stepped 10 paces into Casa Grande but need a moment to take it in. Italian marble columns support a balcony from which a string quartet once serenaded guests, including Herbert Hoover, Douglas Fairbanks, and Cecil DeMille. There's a chunky Remington sculpture, fragile etched glass goblets, and at the end of the room (next to a portion of Ted Turner's private library), a taxidermied lion. Brian the butler is helping me make sense of it all. "I consider my job half butler, half tour guide, and half curator," he chuckles. "If someone leaves without a sense of the history of this place, I'd feel I had failed to do my job."

"This place" is the house of native stone designed and built in the first decade of the 20th century by Joseph Silsbee, the prominent Chicago architect who was Frank Lloyd Wright's mentor. It serves as the grand main residence of Vermejo Park Ranch, a parcel of nearly 600,000 acres in northern New Mexico that, since 1996, has been owned by Ted Turner.

A major multi-year renovation was recently completed and the seven-bedroom house is now available for bookings by families, hunters, fishermen, mountain bikers, or anyone who would appreciate the amenities and activities to be enjoyed on this property that, as locals like to explain, is three-quarters the size of Rhode Island.

For much of its history, Vermejo Park Ranch was beloved by partiers from Hollywood and Southern California. *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harry Chandler was an officer of the Vermejo Club, a hunting and fishing organization that owned the property in the late 1920s. In the 1970s, John Wayne put in a bid on the property, but was aced out by the Pennzoil Corporation. So deep are the associations that Brian feels the need to dispel a persistent myth that the stuffed lion is the famous MGM lion; in fact, it was shot by Ted Turner on safari.

The feel of a private residence remains. Framed photos of Turner and his family adorn tabletops and bookshelves. Most of the bathrooms retain vintage fixtures. A curious feature is the doorknobs, which are either crystal or metal (bronze or chrome), a remnant of a quirky but sensible decree by the house's original owner, Chicago grain dealer William H. Bartlett, that family and guest rooms should be easily distinguished from household staff rooms by their doorknobs to avoid awkward moments.

The upstairs sitting room is a peaceful and beguiling spot in white wicker and toile. Windows look out toward the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and an area that in summertime is the favored grazing range for Vermejo's 2,000 head of bison.

Activities are guided by Ted Turner Expeditions, a newly formed eco-adventure



company that oversees excursions on several of Turner's properties (Vermejo is one of his three New Mexico ranches). Professionally guided photography tours are scheduled at times when the flora or fauna are at their peak. There is abundant fishing all spring and summer; if you get your catch back to the fish house by 3PM, it will be cleaned and ready for your dinner in Vermejo's main lodge dining room.

Most of Vermejo's guests are repeat visitors, many from Texas. To page through the photo albums and signed guest books from the last couple of decades is to have the sense that a sizeable portion of the Lone Star State must have passed through the storied gates of the property at some point. Hunting season is the popular time, when elk and black bears are among the prey, just as they were in the 1800s when Jedidiah Smith was hunting this terrain.

Visiting with my cousin, we opted to try our hand at shooting sporting clays, a variant of skeet shooting where one hikes from station to station, each designed to simulate the experience of shooting different types of targets: a low-flying bird, one flying high overhead from a cliff, a rabbit scurrying on the ground, etc. Our guide taught us the commands ("Trapper ready? Pull!") and just as in golf or tennis we tried to remember to "follow through" with the motion after hitting the flying target.

Meals are taken in the property's main lodge, just steps away from Casa Grande, on a spot where a larger lodge with multiple ballrooms had stood for decades until destroyed by a fire in the 1950s. Roasted rack of lamb, grilled bison rib eye, and elk loin are among the offerings, and the elk is served with potato hash, shallots, and a currant demi-glace.

A 25,000-square-foot Spanish-inspired stone estate, Ted Turner's Casa Grande was originally constructed by prominent American architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee between 1907 and 1909 as a private home for previous Vermejo Park Ranch owner William Bartlett. This magnificent, historic estate boasts seven bedrooms, including two well-appointed master bedrooms, a stunning remodeled kitchen, billiard room, greenhouse, and more. In addition to its luxurious accommodations, Casa Grande delivers the ultimate customized vacation experience.





One thing missing was the “guest ranch” tradition of families and couples happily sharing stories of their day’s adventures at large tables of newfound friends—an experience my cousin and I had enjoyed at Brush Creek Ranch in Wyoming. Instead, assigned tables of two or four kept everyone in their place. Hospitality is overseen by Wonny Rengersen, a veteran of Disney Cruise Line.

Some fresh landscaping, including newly planted aspen trees, completed the renovation of Casa Grande. A deep sensitivity to the place’s history is evident throughout. Redoing the walls of the main stairway, the team was ecstatic to discover that the Chicago manufacturer of the silk wallpaper was not only still in business but somehow miraculously had a few panels of the original 1909 pattern left in storage.

A push-button bell in the hallway was replaced by a gong on a stand, and Brian, the butler, says guests find it irresistible. Encountering it, nearly everyone smacks the thing to let out a deep chime.

Upon which Brian, playing his part to perfection, will enter and inquire, “You rang?”♦



PHOTO: FRED HAMBER

PHOTO: AMANDA HOWELL PHOTOGRAPHY

For nearly 15 years, Vermejo Park Ranch ownership and management have committed themselves to enhancing and preserving the Ranch's natural resources. In partnership on various projects with the Turner Endangered Species Fund, New Mexico Game and Fish, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Vermejo Park Ranch may well be one of the best models of private land conservation efforts for threatened or imperiled species.



PHOTO: AMANDA HOWELL PHOTOGRAPHY