

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S PREMIER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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HOLIDAY/WINTER
2011-2012

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Cover Photography by MaryBurroughsStudio.com

Carmel Valley Ranch Resort

An Adult Luxury Playground That's Family-Friendly & Pet-Friendly!

BY BOBBI STEWART

A jewel that could be described as an adult playground, but with luxury service and design, lies in the secluded Carmel Valley about six miles inland from the fairytale village of Carmel-by-the-Sea. The 500 acre Carmel Valley Ranch Resort is nestled into a wooded preserve where all-suite accommodations blend into the hillside like tree houses and natural Spanish moss and lavender mesh with a pristine Pete Dye designed golf course.

With an average temperature of 75-80 degrees, the weather is usually 10 degrees warmer than the coastal village where most tourists and vacationers flock.

In 2010, the Ranch went through a 40 million dollar remodel when new owners Geolo Capital from San Francisco and John



Photo: Mary Burroughs

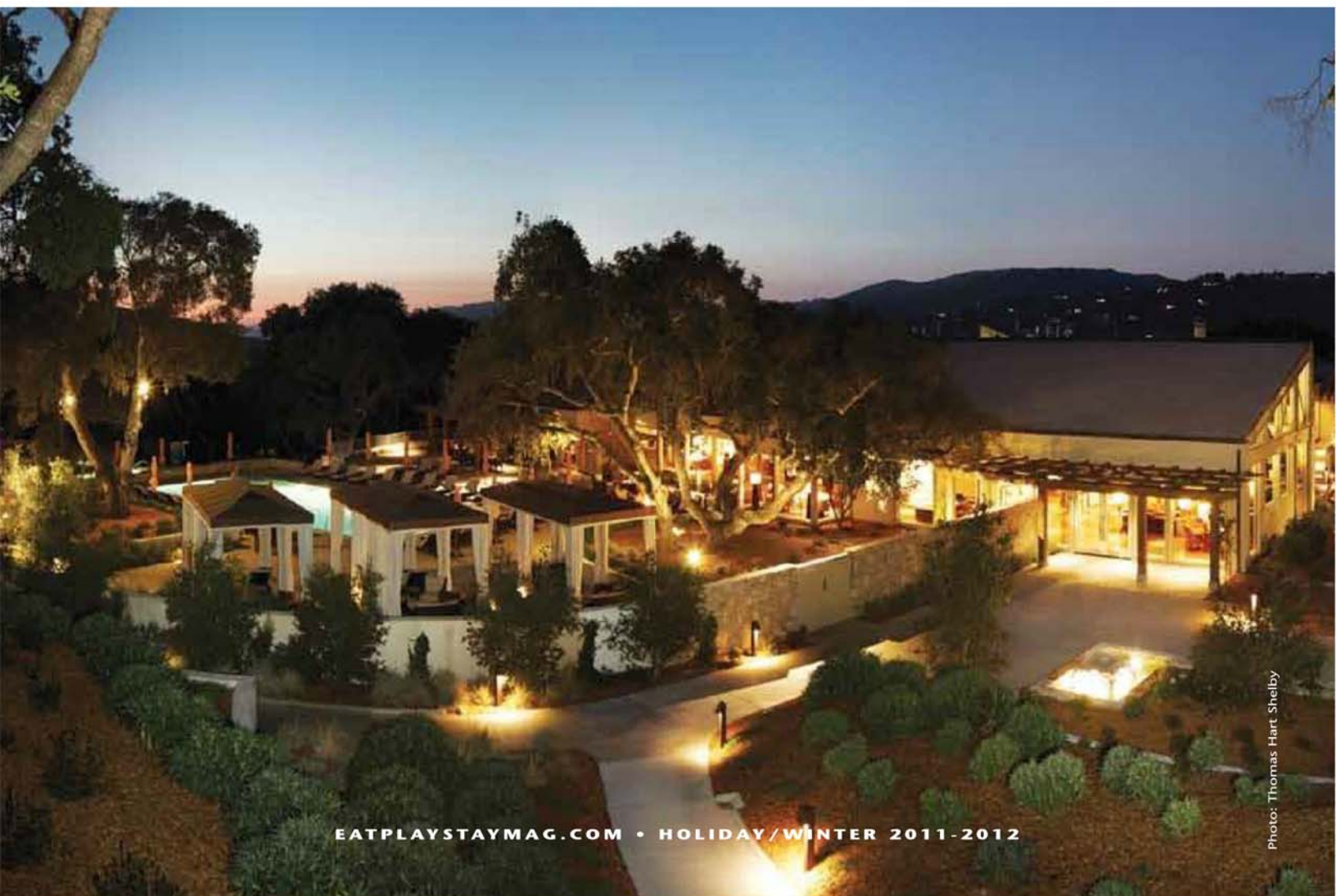


Photo: Thomas Hart Shelby

Pritzker of the Hyatt family purchased this gorgeous property. Reminiscent of summer camps he enjoyed while growing up in upstate New York, Pritzker set out to make Carmel Valley Ranch a camp-like atmosphere complete with tree swings, fire pits and complimentary nightly s'more ingredients located throughout the property.

We toured the resort with Senior Group Sales Manager Serena Wellman who stated that working there was more about the experience than a job. "It feels like a calling. Every one of your senses is touched when you're working here. We try to allow the resort to be all it can be for each individual guest." During our stay at the Ranch, we experienced this "love for their work" firsthand with all of the very attentive and helpful staff. The focus on detail begins with check in, as guests are welcomed to sit in a comfortable chair while the agent on the other side of the desk checks them into their suite. The remodeled lobby area looks more like a warm living room with leather chairs, couches and a grand fireplace. There are two event rooms in the main lodge: the Oak Room, which is home to an Adventure Kitchen where cooking classes, demonstrations and

competitions are held, and the Redwood Room – a 3200 square foot banquet space with an outdoor terrace.

Directly outside the lodge is an adult only infinity salt-water swimming pool and hot tub overlooking the golf course and Pinot Noir vineyard. The onsite Spa Aiyana is host to a nail studio as well as 11 treatment rooms each inspired by lavender, alchemy and other natural herbs from the valley. There are also luxurious treatment suites which include a fireplace, private bathroom and balcony – perfect for bridal groups, private parties and other group celebrations.

Carmel Valley Ranch is the most family friendly hotel in the area. At the 'resort within a resort' River Ranch Complex there is a family friendly Junior Olympic pool and splash zone area as well as a Kids Camp and Activity Cottage. The Ranch is also part of Western Athletic Clubs so locals can join and be part of the 5200 square foot fitness center equipped with workout and group activity rooms. If that isn't enough for guests to do, there are two Bocce ball courts, basketball courts, nine tennis courts (clay and hard courts) and River Ranch Café located at the complex. Championship golf, tennis, yoga and tai chi are offered as well as unique activities like garden and lavender tours, adventure kitchen demonstrations and their signature bee experience.

Eat: Locally Inspired Cuisine

At the Lodge Restaurant, Executive Chef Tim Wood focuses on local sustainable ingredients. The menu includes tempt-



Photo: Paul Dyer

ing creations like organic heirloom tomato gazpacho, line caught Monterey sea bass with house made gnocchi in fennel tomato broth or rosemary garlic lamb sirloin served with ratatouille. However, when we visited it was National Honey Month, so Chef Wood created a delicious taste of late summer

featuring creations crafted with the fresh honey harvested from the apiary at the Ranch. We began with a hand-shaken Honey Pear Martini, a light and refreshing concoction which infused Grey Goose pear vodka, St. Germaine, fresh lime, honey and champagne. The special menu featured honey-chile chicken wings, a baby lettuce salad with goat cheese and honey-pancetta vinaigrette as well as a honey brined Iowa Farms pork chop. This 2" thick chop cooked to perfection was accompanied with braised greens, light and airy whipped Yukon gold



Photo: Kodiak Greenwood



Photo: Paul Dyer



Photo: Mary Burroughs



Photo: Paul Dyer

potatoes and a cider-honey sauce. The meal finished with a house-made honey lavender ice cream served with a Belgian waffle and warm peaches.

We toured the Ranch's seasonal organic garden, located a short distance from the restaurant, and were lucky enough to meet farmer Mark Marino who described his role at the Ranch as "making art supplies for the artist", Chef Tim Wood. Besides the regular herbs, potatoes, various greens and Heirloom tomatoes (he's harvested 500 lbs for the restaurant this season), Marino's garden included various peppers including an Islander purple pepper, hops for making beer and also used in savory desserts, as well as artichokes that he'd let go to flower to be pollinated by honey bees. Stressing the importance of a garden to have texture, height and dimensions, he also included snapdragons, sunflowers and dahlias-which were made into bouquets for guests on Mother's Day.

A Different Type of Play - Beekeeper for the Day

Carmel Valley Ranch is one of the select hotels in the world that has an apiary on site. 60,000 organic Italian honey bees live in 3 hives with laid-back, informative beekeeper John Russo monitoring their actions. There are also over 7,000 lavender plants on the property for the bees to pollinate. Russo cultivates, harvests and distills the lavender to make essential oils and bath products for the hotel. Guests at the hotel are able to take a free class in beekeeping or experience the honey and lavender harvests throughout the year.

Beginning the beekeeper class, soft-spoken Russo stressed the positive experiences we all have had with honey bees, as many were ready to relate their stinging negative experiences. He reminded the class that we all probably had eaten fruits and nuts which have been pollinated by bees. He also related that we may have mistaken the vegetarian honey bees for the more aggressive yellow jackets which are carnivores and prey on the honey bees.

We watched as Forager bees alit amongst the lavender collecting nectar. They stored pollen balls in their hind legs then made a "bee line" straight back to the hive. We arrived at the hives, donned our beekeeper suits and entered the hive area. We learned about how the colonies operate; how the bees communicate and performed a variety of jobs to keep the hive humming. The first thing Russo pointed out was that each hive contains 10,000-20,000 bees, each representing a different colony. The chaos appeared random, but as he pointed out various aspects of the swarms, the high level of organization was apparent. We witnessed a variety of jobs being performed: the Foragers returning home with pollen, Undertakers carrying away dead carcasses, Guards fighting off enemy yellow jackets and also checking incoming honey bees to ensure their scent was from their Queen before allowing them in.



Photo: Thomas Hart Shelby



Photo: Thomas Hart Shelby



Photo: Thomas Hart Shelby



Photo: Mary Burroughs



Photo: Mary Burroughs



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After ensuring we had no “hitch-hiking” bees on our suits, we left the hives to taste fresh honey from different harvests. The honeys varied from the floral light-colored first harvest in June to the latest harvest in September which was less floral and had a very dark amber color with heavy sugars. All in all, this was one of the most interesting and informative classes we’ve experienced at a resort. We highly recommend it for all ages.

Stay: Pet-Friendly Luxury Suites

Each of the newly renovated suites features cathedral ceilings, travertine fireplaces, comfortable custom-made furnishings, limestone bathrooms and private decks that complement the resort’s surroundings. Suites range from the 650 square foot Santa Lucia Suite to the 1200 square foot two bedroom two bath Carmel Suite. On arrival, we were delighted to find ourselves in the generously sized Ranch King Suite, featuring a tree-top view, a bedroom with a king-size bed and a separate living room with a queen-size sofa bed. Two flat-screen high-definition televisions, iPod docking station, and oversized bathroom with separate shower and soaking tub were some of the deluxe amenities. Our Golden Retriever Montana was pleased to find a plush dog pillow, food bowls and most importantly, some homemade doggie treats. The resort also is not just dog-tolerant but very dog-friendly. Montana was welcomed in the lobby (by resident English Bulldog Roxy), in the outdoor dining and fire pit areas, as well as on the 5 miles of hiking trails throughout the property. If we wanted to leave her in the room while

we participated in the many activities, dined inside or lounged in the spa, we simply put the “Pet at Play” notice on the door to alert housekeeping as we left.

So plan your next getaway to Carmel Valley Ranch’s 500 acre playground, where children at heart and children at play coexist like no other resort. And remember, they always welcome your four-legged family members with open arms.

Carmel Valley Ranch is located at One Old Ranch Road, Carmel Valley. Call 1-831-625-9500 or Toll Free Reservations: 855-OUR-RANCH. Visit www.carmelvalleyranch.com. ●

Cozy Carmel Complimentary Night Offer Available from 10/01/2011 to 01/31/2012

Carmel Valley Ranch is perfect for a cozy escape during those cooler months. Take time to relax and unwind by your private fireplace, take a refreshing hike and enjoy that crisp morning air, or just share some time with those you love. Relax in our spacious suites featuring fireplaces and private decks.

Stay 2 nights and get the 3rd night free (room and tax only). Minimum 3 night consecutive stay required.

Complimentary 3rd night will be reflected at the time of booking. Daily \$25 resort fee applies to all nights (including complimentary night) and is not included in the room rate.

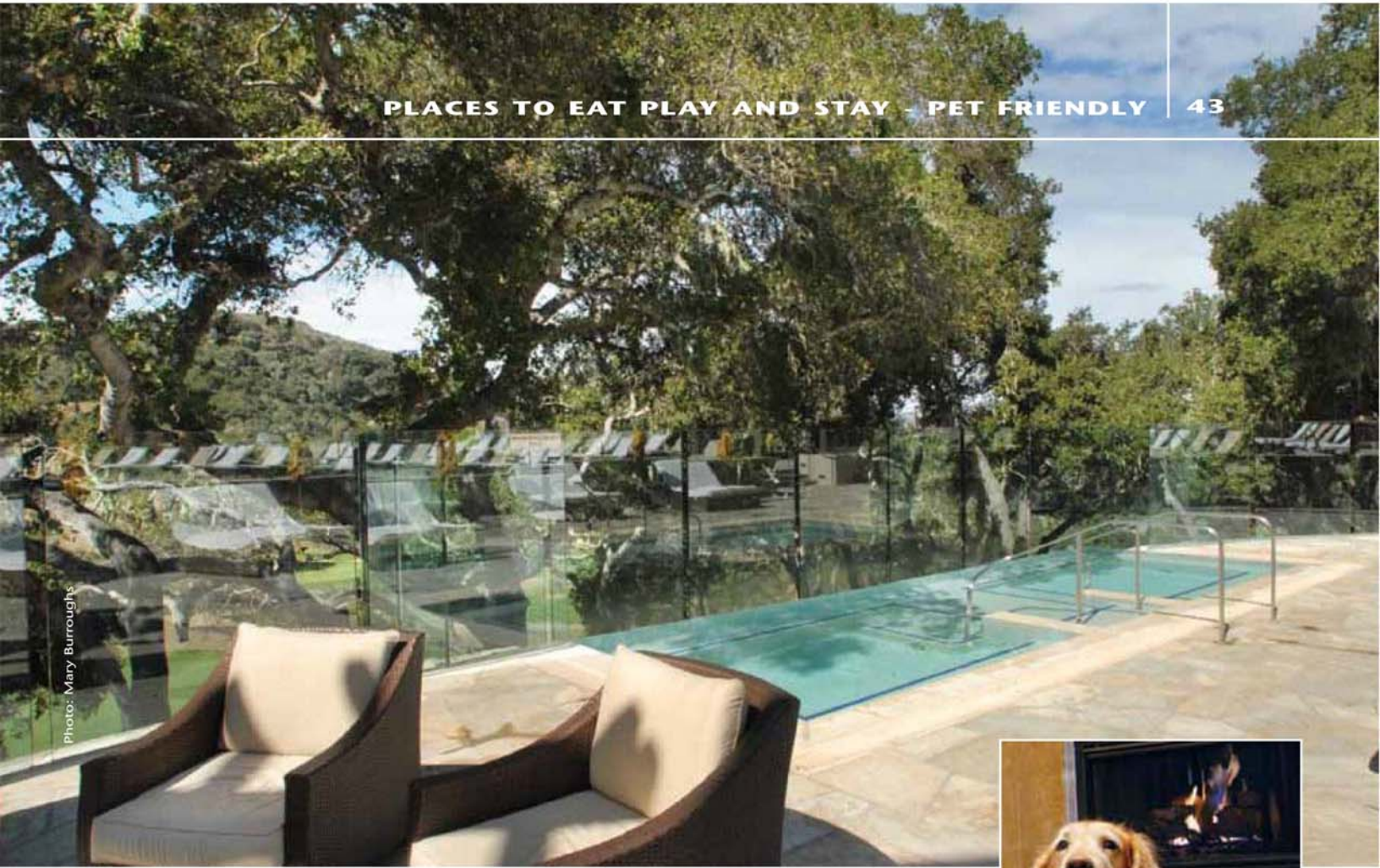


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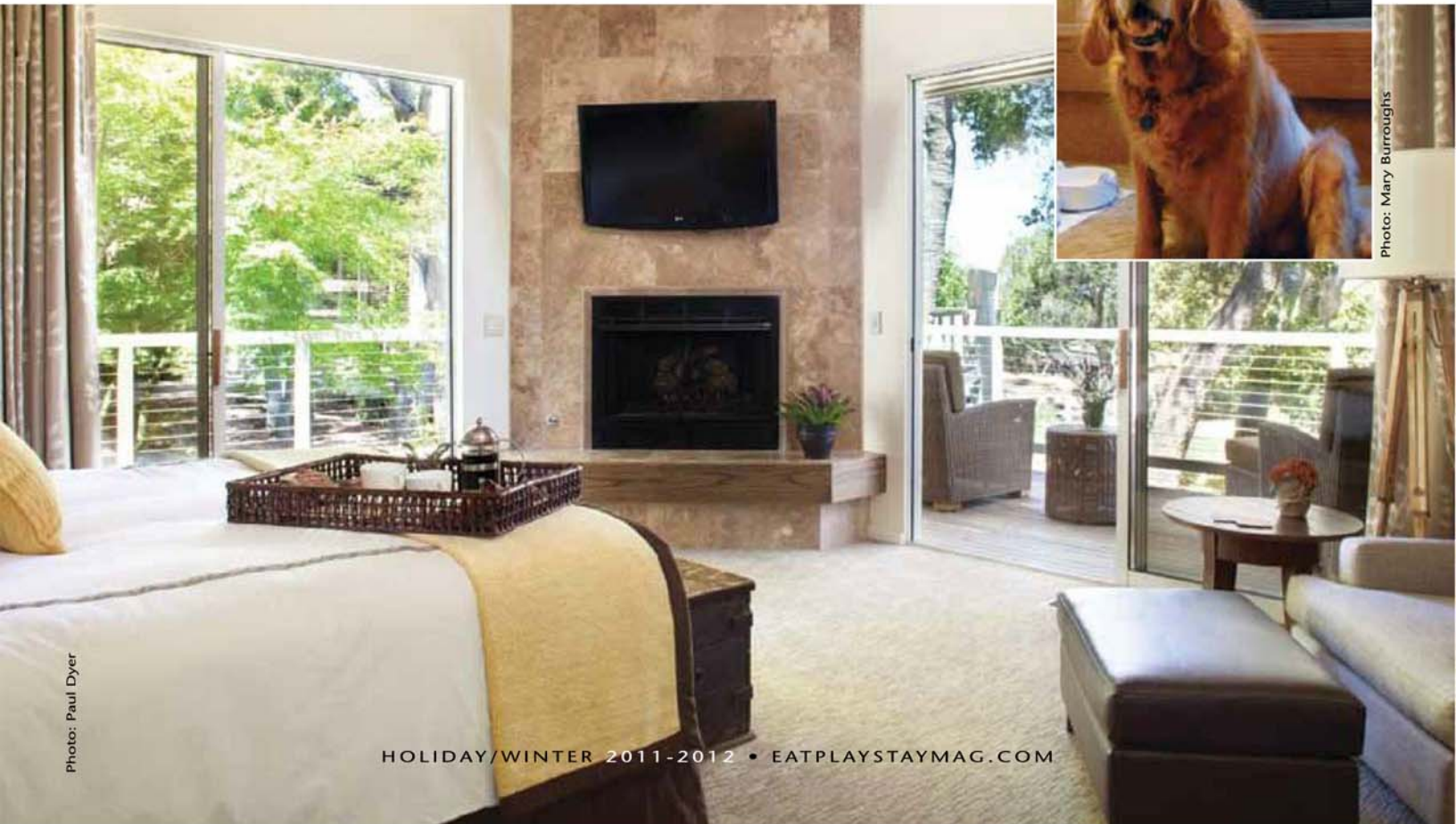


Photo: Paul Dyer