

THE BIGGEST LOCAL hotel opening of the year is the splashy September 1 reboot of Carmel Valley Ranch. You probably think of it as that golf-y, tennis-y, clubby spread trailing across the hillside on your right as you cruise up Carmel Valley Road. But with a fresh \$35 million poured into the place, it's now got a swinging style and a playful side that just won't quit.

INFO From \$350; carmelvalleyranch.com



Hike a half-mile into the tawny hills to do yoga under ancient oaks.

Help harvest a few of the 6,000 lavender plants to be distilled into essential oils.

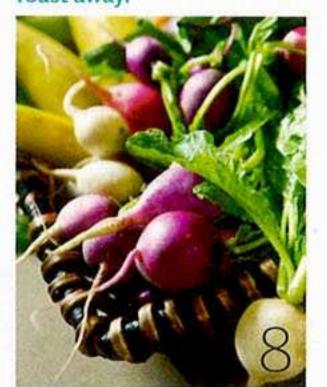
3 Steep in the hot pool with peekaboo views through the oak branches down to the just-planted vineyard.

Peer at the stars through telescopes set up on the 19th green.

Zip on a thick suit to help the beekeeper pull slats of honeycomb dripping with honeybees from the hive. 6 Play a round of bocce with friends.

Gather around a fire to hear sea stories from a local who's a former Navy admiral, or tribal tales from a member of the Ohlone Costanoan people.

Pick veggies and herbs in the organic garden, then cook them up for dinner in the made-for-guests Adventure Kitchen, where chef Tim Woods will offer handy prep and cooking tips as you chop, sauté, and roast away.



Drop off the kids to stage a play or go on a bug hunt while you have a civilized meal of Angus strip with chimichurri sauce or Sonoma duck in the

Not checking in? Stop by anyway for a massage, swim, and a poolside cocktail or two.