




THE PRIVILEGED POOCH

Luxury TRAVEL WITH YOUR PET
IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



MAGGIE ESPINOSA

OJAI VALLEY INN AND SPA

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The peaceful valley of Ojai (pronounced “oh hi”) rests in the cupped hands of the Topa Topa Mountains. Its name is credited to the original inhabitants, the Chumash Indians, and translates as “moons nest” in their native language. Located 35 miles southeast of Santa Barbara, the artsy village is home to roughly 10,000 people, as

well as its namesake Five Diamond Inn and Spa.

A \$90 million renovation enlarged 308 guestrooms and introduced a 33,000-square-foot spa, catapulting the 220-acre retreat onto Conde Nast Travelers’ Gold List. Pets of any size stay in the Shangri-La building, with a charge of \$100 or \$150, depending on whether it’s a suite or room. A pet brochure given at check-in provides phone numbers of walkers and sitters, an in-room mutt menu, and a mobile groomer.

Activities play a leading role at the Inn. The par-70 golf course stacks up as a worthy challenge for the best of players. During the tough 6,292 yards, redemption enters the links in the form of a snack cart supplying brewskis and munchies.

Spa Ojai’s Artist Cottage and Apothecary classes are a must. Gifted Artist in Residence Renate Collins and her team are truly emblematic of Ojai’s unique offerings. Collins’ masterpieces hang throughout the 1,200-foot sunlit studio beneath a centuries-old oak tree. The calming atmosphere coaxes guests’ creative juices to alter a piece of silk into a vibrant scarf. Create a Personal Mandala, which

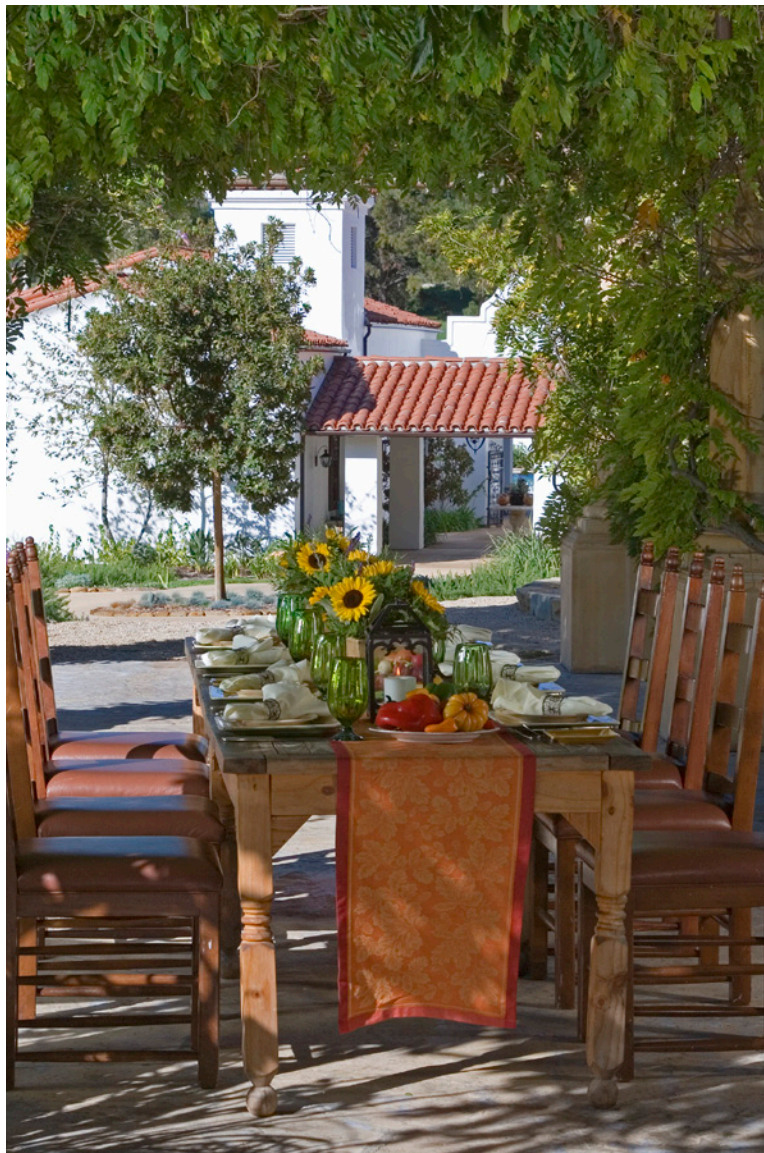


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purpose and direction. Another pursuit is custom blending with essential oils. A quick sniff of a dozen or so scents lets intuition choose a personal perfume.

The cottage and spa are Freedom Zones, meaning free from smoking, pets, cell phones and young children, so keep the sitter on speed-dial. Make amends by taking the pooch on an organized 50 minute morning fitness hike, afternoon nature walk, or a game of “fetch” on Recreation Field beside the Inn’s veggie garden.

The recipient of those fresh edibles is the Oak Grill, where Chef Jamie West works his magic. Savory lunches and dinners are served to pups and people on the upper terrace. Adjacent Jimmy’s Pub serves brick oven pizzas, boutique beers and California wines, reserving one outside table for canines.



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