



## THE CELEBRATED HISTORY OF A SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ICON

*The Ojai Valley Inn & Spa Established Roots in Ojai 90 Years Ago*

### **Location**

The Ojai Valley Inn & Spa is located on 220 acres in the oak-covered Ojai Valley. Ojai (pronounced "oh hi") is a Native American name generally accepted as meaning "the nest," although some experts also interpret it as "the moon." The valley was home to the Chumash Native Americans who found sanctuary in its canyons and mountains.

During the late 1700s Ojai was settled by the Spanish and Mission societies, followed by Don Fernando Tico who established Rancho Ojai in 1837 with a Mexican land grant. In 1874, the valley's first settlement was named Nordhoff in honor of an east coast journalist who had publicized this special area. Not until 1917 did this little town become known as "Ojai."

Today, Ojai is an inspiring retreat with a surprising blend of cosmopolitan style and small-town charm. Home to an eclectic mix of writers, artists and philosophers as well as agricultural growers, the town also hosts a nationally acclaimed tennis tournament ("The Ojai"), and a music festival of international renown.

The town, located in one of the last unspoiled areas in Southern California, is just 90 minutes northwest of Los Angeles, and 45 minutes southeast of Santa Barbara.

### **History & Character**

The history of the Ojai Valley Inn began in 1923, when wealthy Ohio glass manufacturer Edward Drummond Libbey commissioned architect Wallace Neff to build a clubhouse for his private golf course. This became his personal winter retreat in Ojai. Today, the original clubhouse, known as the Neff Lounge, is still the welcoming focal point of the Inn. Libbey was also responsible for building downtown Ojai's post office, arcade business district and the park that bears his name.

Since its beginning in 1923, the Inn has welcomed generations of discriminating travelers to relax in an atmosphere of casual elegance. Many notable guests, from heads of state to movie stars, have sought the peace and quiet of the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa. Notable frequenters of years past include Clark Gable, Judy Garland, former co-owner Loretta Young, Walt Disney and many more.

The lure of Ojai Valley's beauty was so compelling that Frank Capra used the valley to depict Shangri-La in his classic film, *Lost Horizon*. Untold stories steeped in Hollywood's illustrious past lie just beneath the surface. Films such as Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn's *Pat and Mike* and the sequel to *Chinatown*, *The Two Jakes*, all found the perfect setting on the property.

A different kind of glory distinguished the Inn in 1942, when it was transformed into Camp Oak and used as a military training center for a battalion of 1,000 army troops. In 1944, the Army turned the base over to the Navy for a rest and recuperation facility.

In 1946, after World War II, the Inn was purchased by Don Burger along with notable Hollywood investors, and the property was returned to private ownership and reopened as the Ojai Valley Inn & Country Club. This marked a return to the golden era of the Inn's reputation as a Hollywood escape.

After several changes of ownership, the Inn was purchased by the Crown family of Chicago in 1985. They undertook a major renovation and expansion of the property in 1986. New rooms were added, the golf course was completely redesigned, a second swimming pool and fitness center were added and eight new tennis courts opened. At the same time, a 4,800 square foot conference center was built and the dining rooms were modernized.

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A 35,000-square foot luxury spa in the classic Spanish Colonial style opened in December 1997. Bill Mahan, an architect in Santa Barbara, designed the “spa village.” He is also the architect for the most recent expansion project.

### 2006

Now a AAA Five-Diamond property, the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa completed a \$90 million renovation. All areas of the property were upgraded and the infrastructure was improved, while preserving the resort’s original Spanish Colonial architecture and design by noted California architect Wallace Neff. The Inn debuted 308 rooms and suites, new restaurants and lounges, a new ballroom and conference center, renovated golf clubhouse, redesigned pool and an improved entrance and lobby. Meeting and function space tripled, high-speed internet access became available in all rooms and wireless internet access became available throughout the property. **Casa Elar**, an exquisite private estate overlooking the golf course, was built. The Tuscan Villa-style property with more than 10,000 sq. ft. of indoor and 44,000 sq. ft. of outdoor space has become a favorite spot for luxurious celebrity escapes, destination weddings and family reunions.

### 2013

In 2013, the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary and completion of a \$5.5 million refreshment of all guest rooms. The new look pays homage to the resort’s location in the heart of Ojai Valley, the unofficial “Zen capital” of Southern California.

### 2015

In summer 2015, the property will introduce a refined lobby design with tablet check-in, an upgraded adult pool, a new signature restaurant and a refreshed parlor concept at the Neff Lounge. A second renovation phase will begin in early 2016.

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### About Ojai Valley Inn & Spa

Since 1923, vacationing guests have sought the tranquil pleasures of Ojai Valley Inn & Spa, a AAA Five-Diamond property located on 220-tree shaded acres, just an hour and a half north of Los Angeles and half-hour inland of the Santa Barbara coastline. Award-winning features include a classic, George C. Thomas-designed golf course, a sprawling Spa Village that is home to Spa Ojai, the 31,000 square foot luxury oasis offering treatments that encourage creative consciousness and nourish both body and soul, and four restaurants serving cuisine inspired by the bounty of the Ojai Valley. Noted as one of the “Top 100 Hotels in the World” by the editors of *Condé Nast Traveler* on the coveted 2015 Gold List and by the readers of *Travel + Leisure* as one the “T+L 500 World’s Best Hotels” for 2015, the legendary Inn continues to be affirmed by its many prestigious awards as one of the nation’s unique hidden treasures. For reservations call 1-800-422-6524 or visit [www.ojairesort.com](http://www.ojairesort.com)

### MEDIA CONTACTS:

Wendi Shapiro | Ashley King | Melissa Ward  
Murphy O’Brien Public Relations  
[ojai@murphyobrien.com](mailto:ojai@murphyobrien.com)  
(310) 453-2539