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Glam Girl, Wild Girl

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Written by Joni Ravenna

OC Woman

Ask two women what their dream vacation is and you'll most likely get two different answers.

Some of us enjoy sitting poolside, a chilly tropical beverage in hand, while some of us can't wait to put on our sneakers, trek into the great outdoors and get a little dirty.

That's why we've dedicated this month's OC Woman to the ultimate getaway for the OC girl and her posse. Whether you're a thrill-seeking adventurer, itching to release your "wild" side or a glam gal looking to bring out your inner goddess with head-to-toe pampering, we've got two great getaways that will satisfy any desire.

If you're the latter, we found a hotel and spa near Torrey Pines called the Estancia La Jolla and it's offering something new: Women's Wellness Weekends. The hotel's gorgeous, glamorous and it's got an interesting history that will bring out the cowgirl in each of you

And for those of you looking for something off the beaten path, something that might bring out your inner lioness, then an overnight safari adventure at the Shambala Exotic Cat Preserve, home to leopards, lions, tigers and cougars, is awaiting you. But first, let's indulge our... well...more indulgent side.

Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa



When you first enter the Estancia La Jolla Hotel and Spa, you're struck by the architecture of the space. A classic Spanish Hacienda style property, nothing is taller than three stories. It was the original grounds of the Black Horse Farms, which was an equestrian training facility in La Jolla many, many years ago and they've kept a similar look and feel to the architecture. Pamela Devaney, regional director of public relations, says their caretaker's cottage is the exact same footprint of the original caretaker's cottage when it was the Black Horse Farms. "Some of the large doors on the grounds are the actual doors from some of the stables," she tells us pointing one out. We notice there's also an interesting water feature which Devaney calls The Trough. "It emulates the watering trough of the horse stables," she says

Six years old this July, the Hotel and Spa offered its very first Women's Wellness Weekend in late May. Billed as a weekend of "invigorating fun, self-discovery and unabashed indulgence," it's designed as a retreat for women to relax, renew and rejuvenate through fitness, stress reduction, nutrition, spa treatments, light cuisine and sunrise yoga.

My posse and I, however, wonder if we will have to forgo the sunrise yoga in favor of sleeping in, an absolute must if we're going to enjoy an evening of sunset margaritas at Mustangs and Burros, one of the restaurants on the property. We've heard it's a favorite hang out among the locals and we decide we could get into just enough trouble to make the recuperative properties of the Wellness Weekend that much more appreciated

Indeed, Mustangs and Burros is a hot spot. A rustic rancho style bar and lounge with a grand outdoor fireplace and an extraordinary Spanish atmosphere, the signature

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margaritas and tasty appetizers here are a real treat. While there's also a complete dinner menu of hearty comfort foods, if you and your bosom buds are anything like me and mine, sampling southwestern appetizers is better than shoveling down three-course entrees any night, especially when seated outside listening to live music. We each retire to our beautifully appointed rooms.

Upon awakening, we stroll the meandering paths of the intimate garden setting and soon discover that the Estancia La Jolla is just steps from the majestic cliffs of the Pacific Ocean and only a chip shot away from Torrey Pines Golf Course, host of the 2008 U.S. Open. One of my friends, Aniz, is an avid golfer, but we wonder where we'll find the time with all the renewal and rejuvenation we've booked

We each split up for our various spa treatments. I enjoyed a Garden Rain Treatment under a rain bar where I'm told my skin will be exfoliated and hydrated through the 12 showerheads, which massage my entire body. Standing under the pulsating jets, I'm immediately reminded of the old commercial slogan "Calgon Take Me Away." If only this experience could be bottled and sold in my neighborhood grocery store, I'd indulge every day in the privacy of my own small shower. But then I'd miss the entire point of the Spa Girlfriend Getaway: bonding with friends amidst a new environment. The other girls, meanwhile, indulge in a variety of facials, hand and foot treatments along with stone massages. Then we're all off to our private cabana near the pool where some of us kick back, while others work out in the gym.

Recently voted one of Conde Nast Traveler's Gold List winners, "World's Best Places To Stay," Estancia La Jolla is definitely my choice for most indulgent Girls' Getaway Spot and they continually offer different "Girlfriend Getaway Packages" online. The next time I come, though, it will be with my husband to indulge in The Garden of Eden package for two, which includes deluxe accommodations, a full day of spa treatments, breakfast, lunch and plush robes for \$1,079. Heck, maybe I'll even have him treat me to a round of golf.

The Shambala Preserve

Now for those of you who have had it up to your taut chins and micro-massaged scalps with facial treatments and spa indulgences, we've found a Girlfriends Getaway sure to provide a once-in-a-lifetime experience you'll never forget: The Shambala Preserve for a close up look at the Wild Ones.



Located in Acton, east of Santa Clarita, the Shambala Preserve offers an overnight tent stay for private parties during the summer months from May through September.* The adventure begins at 4:00 p.m. when you're greeted by Shambala staff and offered cold drinks; then your bags are taken off to the tent. A staff photographer follows you and your posse to record a Safari adventure that can be likened to what you might find along the plains of the Serengeti.

Servals, tigers and lions; beautiful black leopards, bobcats and lynx in all their feline splendor survey your caravan as it travels along this multi-acre habitat. And just as they study you, you study them.

"Once an animal is brought to Shambala, it remains here for the rest of its life," says founder, Tippi Hedren, who upon filming the movie "Roar" decided to adopt the land to provide a home for abused wild cats.



"As a true sanctuary, we do not buy, breed, sell, trade or subject our animals to commercial use," she says. "Our only purpose is to allow these magnificent animals to live out their

lives with love and dignity. Each "Wild One" has the best human, nutritional, medical, emotional and mental care possible." An animal rights activist from way back, Hedren offers these special safaris as a fundraising opportunity and even makes herself available as a gracious host.

Once the Safari portion of the adventure has concluded, you will retire to your tent to rest up before adjourning to the Gazebo where you and your gal pals will be served appetizers, followed by a salad, gourmet dinner and a dessert. And if you're lucky, Hedren will be counted among your posse. Schedule permitting, the star of Hitchcock's "The Birds" and "Marnie" will be right there with you to discuss the next bill she plans to get passed through Congress to protect wild animals. Hedren is responsible for the passage of a 2006 bill prohibiting the sale and purchase of exotic wild cats as pets. As she discusses her plans for the future, it's unimaginable to think that this beautiful, vibrant woman is in her early 80s, but she is.

When you retreat to your tent for the night, you'll be serenaded by the occasional duck in the pond or bird in the tree, and you'll never think of 'night life' in

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exactly the same way again. In the morning, you'll awaken to the roar of the lions and wonder if you really are still in California. Muffins, fruit and juice will be served on the verandah for breakfast, and chances are you and your posse won't be the least bit concerned that your makeup isn't just right or that your hair is mussed or whether your favorite "Dancing With The Stars" cast member made the final cut. You'll have mustered the courage to go out and experience something only the truly adventurous OC girls can handle: Wild life, real life. Life as far from the OC as it gets.

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