



Porch swings are among the charms found at the Arrowhead Pine Rose Cabins in the San Bernardino Mountains.

Close-by cabin vacations

Enjoy the outdoors, with all the comforts of home

By Ann Marie Brown

Except for camping trips, every weekend getaway has a common denominator: the need for a roof over your head. A variety of lodgings can serve that purpose—a grand hotel, a budget motel, a quaint bed-and-breakfast, even a tent in a campground. But for an especially memorable experience, consider a cabin under the redwoods, a cottage in the mountains, or a bungalow by the sea.

Imagine cozying up by a blazing fire or gazing through windows at a sylvan view. A rental cabin is the ultimate escape: It fulfills the fantasy of owning your own vacation home, with all the privacy and convenience, minus the upkeep and expense.

Best of all, staying in a cabin doesn't

have to require driving halfway across the Golden State. Whether your taste runs to the rustic or the luxurious, you can find your home away from home within two hours of San Francisco or Los Angeles.

Northern California

■ BOULDER CREEK: Big Basin Redwoods State Park Tent Cabins

Set in a redwood forest, the Big Basin tent cabins are bare-bones: a single room with canvas roof, two double beds, a table and bench, and a woodstove. Bring your own linens and lantern (there's no electricity) or rent them from the camp host. After a good night's sleep, those up for a vigorous workout can hike 5½ miles (one way) from the park headquar-

ters to the park's showpiece, Berry Creek Falls.

PARTICULARS: Cabins accommodate up to four people. There are no kitchens; fire grills and picnic tables are provided outside. Bathrooms are communal.

COST: \$49 per night.

CONTACT: Big Basin Redwoods Park Company: (800) 874-8368, (831) 338-4745, or www.calparksco.com.

■ JENNER-BY-THE-SEA: Jenner Inn & Cottages

Where the Russian River meets the sea, the Jenner Inn shares a spectacular stretch of coast and estuary with pelicans and osprey, river otters, and a colony of more than 300 harbor seals.

PARTICULARS: The inn's six cottages have amenities such as fireplaces,

four-poster beds, and hot tubs; most have private kitchens; and all look out on the ocean, the river, or both.

COST: From \$148.

CONTACT: Jenner Inn & Cottages: (800) 732-2377, (707) 865-2377, or www.jennerinn.com.

■ **NEAR MT. TAMALPAIS STATE PARK:** *West Point Inn*

These five rustic cabins come without electricity but with a giant dose of Mt. Tam history: Built by the Mill Valley and Mt. Tamalpais Scenic Railway in 1904, the West Point Inn was originally a stopover for train passengers switching over to the Bolinas stagecoach. Bring your own sleeping bag, linen, and food, and be prepared for some exercise—the inn is a 2-mile hike from the Pan Toll parking lot at Mt. Tamalpais State Park.

PARTICULARS: Cabins accommodate up to five people. The kitchen and bathrooms are communal.

COST: \$30; \$15 ages 17 and under.

CONTACT: West Point Inn: (415) 646-0702 or (415) 388-9955.

■ **SAN MATEO COUNTY COAST:** *Costanoa Coastal Lodge & Camp*

If location is everything, Costanoa has everything: It's just a few hundred feet from tidepools and coastal bluffs and surrounded by the parklands of Año Nuevo, Butano, and Big Basin Redwoods State Parks. Clustered near its lodge, campground, and gourmet deli are 12 wood cabins and 100 canvas cabins. These come with or without a multitude of luxuries, including electricity, fireplaces, private decks, maid service, down comforters, and heated mattress pads. As the amenity level goes up, so does the price. Some guests have access to an outdoor hot tub, and in-cabin massages can be arranged.

PARTICULARS: Cabins accommodate up to four people. There are no kitchens, and bathrooms are shared.

COST: From \$70.

CONTACT: Costanoa Coastal Lodge & Camp: (650) 879-1100 or www.costanoa.com.



CATHERINE KARROW

Many rooms at the Jenner Inn & Cottages overlook the estuary and the ocean.

Southern California

■ **IDYLLWILD:** *Fern Valley Inn*

It's so quiet you can hear the squirrels chewing on pinecones. Located only ½ mile from the trailheads at Humber Park, these cabins are perfectly situated for hikers and nature lovers. All units have decks, fireplaces, queen beds, and handmade quilts. If the snow has melted, guests head up the road to hike one of several trails that offer panoramic views of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains.

PARTICULARS: Cabins range from studios to two bedrooms. Some have kitchens; all have bathrooms.

COST: From \$85.

CONTACT: Fern Valley Inn: (800) 659-7775, (909) 659-2205, or www.fernvalleyinn.com.

■ **LAGUNA BEACH:** *Manzanita Cottages*

Tucked away in a secluded garden compound in Laguna Beach, the two Manzanita Cottages and one studio apartment are loaded with Hansel-and-Gretel charm. Think Solvang and you've got the picture: shingled roofs, brightly painted front doors, fireplaces, hardwood floors, and hand-painted tiles. Each of the cottages has a private patio—accessed by French doors in the bedroom—opening onto lushly landscaped

grounds. A 10-minute walk brings you to the white sands of Main Beach or the shops and diversions of Laguna village.

PARTICULARS: Cottages accommodate up to four people and have kitchens and bathrooms; studio accommodates two people and has a kitchenette and bathroom.

COST: From \$110.

CONTACT: Manzanita Cottages: www.manzanitacottages.com or (949) 661-2533.

■ **TWIN PEAKS:** *Arrowhead Pine Rose Cabins*

Set in the pine and fir forests of the San Bernardino Mountains, these 17 cabins are all individually handcrafted. A favorite is Rustic Romance, with its open-beamed ceiling, fireplace, and tub with natural stone waterfall. Many cabins have porches with big willow chairs for whiling away the hours reading or bird-watching. If you want more activity, take a swim in the heated outdoor pool or soak in the arrowhead-shaped whirlpool bath.

PARTICULARS: Cabins range from studios to seven bedrooms, all with kitchens and bathrooms.

COST: From \$50.

CONTACT: Arrowhead Pine Rose Cabins: (800) 429-7463, (909) 337-2341, or www.lakearrowheadcabins.com. ♦