

## VENTURA COUNTY MAKES INROADS IN SEASIDE GETAWAY

Food, family-friendly accommodations add to a welcoming vibe

BY JULIE L. KESSLER

One doesn't often think of Ventura County as a proto-foodie haven, but in December, my daughter and I learned about Adolfo Camarillo, an early 20th century visionary. Camarillo, a prominent landowner, businessman and philanthropist — and the town's namesake — was a leading innovator in introducing new crops to the area, forever altering the local economy. Now in Ventura County, you can find impressive food, beachfront accommodations, a lovely marina, great shopping and a touch of history.

The tab: \$350 plus tax for two nights at the Embassy Suites Mandalay Beach Hotel & Resort, \$90 for a one-hour gondola ride in Channel Islands Harbor (805-612-4475, [www.gondolaparadiso.com](http://www.gondolaparadiso.com)), \$150 for dinner at Tierra Sur at Herzog Wine Cellars, \$45 for lunch at Rhumb Line Restaurant and \$20 for breakfast at the Boatyard Cafe.

### The bed

Embassy Suites Mandalay Beach Hotel & Resort (2101 Mandalay Beach Road, Oxnard; 805-984-2500, [www.mandalayembassy-suites.com](http://www.mandalayembassy-suites.com)) is a family-friendly, all-suite hotel on a wide, pristine beach. The 600-square-foot suites have separate living and sleeping areas and two granite bathrooms and come with kitchenettes and Keurig coffee makers. Full, made-to-order breakfasts and a daily cocktail reception are included. The grounds are lovely, with a large, sun-drenched pool, Jacuzzis, a fitness center and spa treatment rooms.

### The meal

Dinner brought us to Tierra Sur at Herzog Wine Cellars (3201 Camino del Sol, Oxnard; 805-983-1560, [www.tierrasuratherzog.com](http://www.tierrasuratherzog.com),

closed Saturdays). It's in an odd location in an industrial park, but SEE VENTURA • E12 the tasting and dining rooms are beautifully appointed and the service is impeccable. We had two of the best steaks we've ever had: a grass-fed Uruguayan rib-eye and a Crescent-certified Angus beef steak, complemented with a 2012 Petite Sirah. The kosher cuisine was delectable.

Also on the itinerary: lunch the following day at Rhumb Line Restaurant (1510 Anchors Way Drive, Ventura; 805-642-1200, [www.rhumblineventura.com](http://www.rhumblineventura.com)), a lovely spot with Ventura Harbor views, where we swooned over the New England clam chowder. Our final breakfast at Ventura Harbor's Boatyard Café (1583 Spinnaker Drive, No. 109, Ventura; 805-850-0202, [www.theboatyardcafe.com](http://www.theboatyardcafe.com)) was delicious and inexpensive (omelets \$10.50-\$14.95).

### The find



The Barefoot Boutique (1575 Spinnaker Drive, Suite 106B, Ventura; [www.barefootboutiqueusa.com](http://www.barefootboutiqueusa.com)) and Ventura Swimwear (1559 Spinnaker Drive, Suite 102, Ventura; 805-642-6281), both at Ventura Harbor Village, have unusual, well-priced items. While there, stop by Channel Islands National Park's visitors center (805-658-5730, [www.lat.ms/1YU-NYUd](http://www.lat.ms/1YU-NYUd)) and see "A Treasure in the Sea," an excellent, free movie narrated by Kevin Costner that explains the history and importance of the nearby Channel Islands.

### The lesson learned

Spending a weekend in Camarillo/Oxnard/Ventura will remind you that innovative food can be enjoyed outside big cities, and that small-town friendliness and abundant free parking are beautiful things.

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Visitors go for a walk along a pathway at Ventura Harbor in Ventura in December.

