

## Ojai: A Spiritual Getaway Just North of L.A.

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This quaint town of 8,000 people, just a 90-minute drive north of Los Angeles, has long been a laid-back refuge for artists, health gurus, and bohemians—a sunny getaway with avocado groves and yoga retreats, organic gardens, and ceramic studios. Along with earthy residents, the town has also attracted its share of celebrities looking to get away from the limelight. Those who have purchased homes or land here include Emily Blunt and John Krasinski, Channing Tatum and Reese Witherspoon (Robert Pattinson famously hid out at pal Witherspoon's Ojai pad post break up with Kristen Stewart).

Although it has gradually become more gentrified, with a recent slew of shops and galleries catering to upscale hipsters, Ojai still retains its hometown vibe—along with all the backyard teepees and performance art, there's still Ojai Ice Cream, with its homemade fudge (since 1979) and an old fashioned Fourth of July parade. Once home to the Chumash Indians, the place has a magical, somewhat spiritual feel and locals wax romantically about the "Pink Moment": A time at sundown when the valley is bathed in a rosy glow.

I recently took a girls road trip there to see what all the fuss is about, and here's what I learned along the way:

### WHERE TO STAY



COURTESY OJAI VALLEY INN AND SPA

### THE OJAI VALLEY INN AND SPA

This 200 acre property, first opened in 1923, is known for its verdant golf course, tennis courts and first class Moroccan style spa. But it's also just a nice place to kick back poolside, take some classes and use as a base while exploring the valley—on bike or foot.

We kicked off our girls' weekend here with gimlets and appetizers at Jimmy's Pub, at an outdoor table overlooking the golf course. We then took a sunset stroll around the grounds, enjoying the

smells of lavender and rosemary along the way, before settling in for a delicious al fresco dinner at The Oak—named for its view of a giant oak tree.

The next morning we had lattes and yogurt with fresh berries at Libbey's, the Inn's new coffee house/bakery complete with a gourmet gift shop offering up fancy cheese boards, olive oils and cook books. The adjacent boutique was jam packed with cute crocheted bikinis, floaty dresses, fun gifts and lots of jewelry perfect for layering. We gradually ended up at a cabana at the adults-only Indigo pool—which came with a lunch of fresh veggies, fruit and a bucket of cold beverages, and we spent a good part of the day there reading and dipping into the water.

In the afternoon we had excellent deep tissue massages at the luxurious spa. The treatments were great but I don't recommend making a spa appointment at 4 pm on a Saturday—the waiting area which is normally a tranquil respite, looked more like an airport lounge at that time.

What we didn't do, but wish we had time for: take a painting class at their artist cottage, or one of their mixology courses, partake in their "Picnic and Pedal" program using their complimentary Linus bikes, or eat at their fanciest restaurant, Olivella and Vine, a romantic spot with an Italian influence.

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