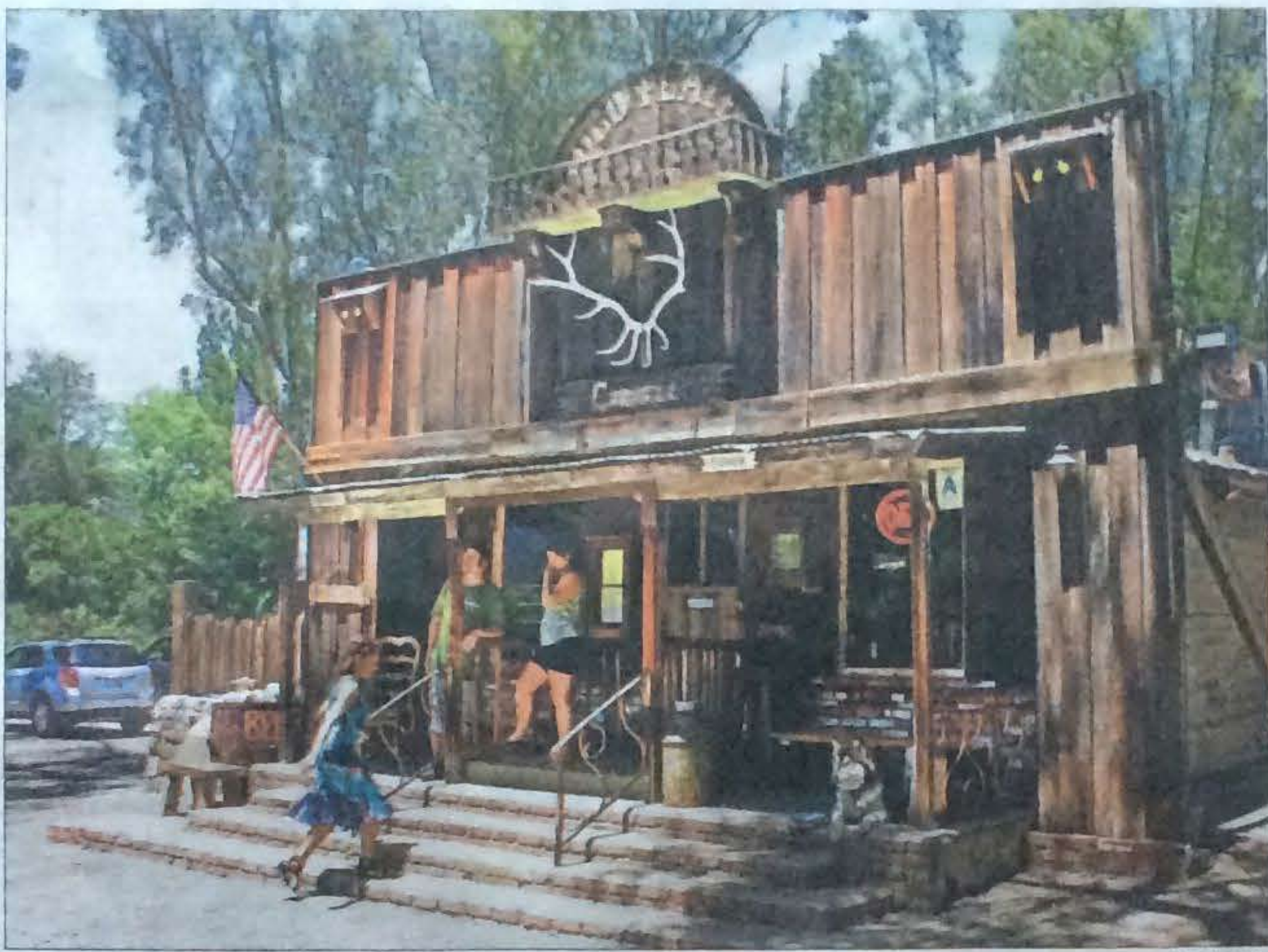


WEEKEND ESCAPE | CORNELL, CALIF.



RAFE JUDDINS

THE OLD PLACE in tiny Cornell, between Agoura Hills and Malibu, serves wood-fire grilled steaks and other hearty classics.

Time to savor

The clock is set a century or so in the past in this tiny canyon town just 40 miles from downtown L.A. Sit back and just breathe.

BY RAFE JUDDINS >>> The smells are what get me. Smoke from an open-air oakwood grill. The sweet earthiness of sagebrush fields. They take me back to a childhood spent in the mountains of Utah and Wyoming, but in fact I'm less than 40 miles from downtown Los Angeles in the tiny 1890s canyon town of Cornell. Sandwiched between Agoura Hills and Malibu, this hidden haven smells of the Old West in all the best ways and makes you feel as if you've left L.A. in your dust. The tab: My boyfriend and I spent two days here for less than \$300.

The bed

The Caboose in Cornell (www.airbnb.com/rooms/1668703; \$228 a night) is not only the best bed in Cornell, but it also may be one of the best beds in Southern California. It's set on a gorgeous 2½-acre estate in the Santa Monica Mountains. Owners Doug and Diana Tharalson have refitted this old train car as a rustic-chic love nest. As we watched the sunset from the roof of the caboose with glasses of local wine in hand, we were cursing the fact that we couldn't stay more than one night.

The meal

A five-minute walk from the ranch is my favorite restaurant in the L.A. area: Old Place Cornell (29883 Mulholland Highway, [818] 706-9001, www.oldplacecornell.com. Entrees from \$14). You hear and smell it before you see it, the intoxicating scent of red oak-grilled steaks floating through the canyon along with the strains of live banjo. Arriving at the little restaurant's front steps, you'll feel as though you're walking into a 19th-century saloon. And in essence you are. It was built in 1884 to serve as Cornell's post office, but for the last half-century it's been a restaurant serving just six or seven entrees. But each is the best darn version of an American classic that you've probably ever had.

The find

Although you feel as though you're a thousand miles from L.A. in tiny Cornell, in truth you aren't. The beautiful surroundings have served as the backdrop for countless films and TV shows, including "MASH" and "Planet of the Apes." Malibu Rock Pool has been a prime film site. A 3½-mile round-trip hike (www.bit.ly/1XNChb) through forests of live oak and fields of sagebrush will land you at one of SoCal's loveliest swimming holes. If you have the nerve, jump from the cliffs into the crystal-clear water, as Tarzan once did.

The lesson learned

If there's a wait for dinner at the Old Place (there are only five booths and a 30-foot wooden bar), take a seat at the elegant Cornell Winery & Tasting Room next door (29875 Mulholland Highway, [818] 733-3542, www.cornellwinery.com. Open Thursdays-Sundays; call for hours). Have Djata Grant walk you through a tasting of some of the more than 50 independent vineyards in the Santa Monica Mountains or just buy a bottle. When your table is ready at the Old Place, you can walk over with whatever is left, giving you one last chance to stop and smell the sagebrush.

travel@latimes.com



RAFE JUDDINS

THE CABOOSE is available for overnight stays on a private 2½-acre estate in Cornell.



RICHARD DEBBE

MALIBU CREEK State Park, in the Santa Monica Mountains near Cornell, offers such entertainments as Rock Pool.



latimes.com/weekendescares

Go online for more Weekend Escapes.

NEED TO KNOW

NEWS • TIPS • TRENDS



SEAPORT AIRLINES

Flights from Burbank to San Diego coming

SeaPort Airlines, a small Oregon-based airline, will begin service in October between Burbank Bob Hope Airport and San Diego International Airport. The trip takes 65 minutes on nine-passenger Cessna planes. The airline will operate weekday flights from Burbank at 7:30 and 11:35 a.m. and 3 and 6 p.m. Return weekday flights from San Diego will operate at 6:30 and 10 a.m. and 1:30 and 4:45 p.m. The airline also will offer limited service on weekends. Introductory fares start at \$77.50 each way, including taxes and fees for October flights; tickets must be purchased by Sept. 15. Info: www.seaportair.com

— MARY FORGIONE

Automated Hilton

By the end of the year, you may not be dealing with a human when you check in or check out at a Hilton; it may all be with a mobile device. This won't all happen at once; Hilton's 4,000 properties in 80 countries aim to roll out the technology to make the process seamless. Besides the check-in and check-out process, you will be able to select your room beginning at 6 a.m. on the day before your reservation. When can you expect to do all this? Hilton says loyalty club members will be able to find floor plans on their HHonors app by the end of summer for Waldorf Astoria, Conrad, Hilton, Hilton Garden Inn, Homewood Suites and Home2Suites. It plans to add DoubleTree by Hilton and Embassy Suites by fall.

— MARY FORGIONE



TRAILS AND VISTAS

Musical peace hike

What better time for a prayer for peace? The 2014 Trails and Vistas World Concert next month on the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe brings together musical and performance artists in a show dedicated to peace and harmony. Nonprofit Trails and Vistas hosts musical events where guests walk on trails in the woods and are entertained along the way. This year's World Concert on Sept. 6 leaves the trails for the Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival outdoor stage at Sand Harbor State Park south of Incline Village. It kicks off with a duet by violinist Scarlet Rivera and flutist Ann Licarter. Rivera will be performing on what's called the "violin of peace," created from almost 100 different pieces of wood, including some from a tribe in Africa that had resolved a conflict with another tribe. Other acts include Brazilian funk band SambaDa, the San Jose State University Symphony Orchestra and the Taurinokai Talko drummers as well as dancers and aerialists. Tickets start at \$23 a person. Info: (800) 747-4897

— MARY FORGIONE



CAMELBAK.COM

Bottle and purifier

CamelBak, known for its hydration backpacks, has created a more conventional-style water bottle with a water purification system built into the lid. The All Clear Microbiological UV Water Purifier system uses high-powered ultraviolet light that neutralizes more than 99% of waterborne bacteria, viruses and protozoa, sterilizing the bottle's 750 milliliters (about 25 ounces) in 60 seconds. The light is powered by a built-in rechargeable lithium ion battery, one five-hour charge using the included mini-USB cable, which plugs into the cap. Is good for about 80 purification cycles. Just fill the water bottle, secure the screw-on cap, hold the power button on the cap down for 2 seconds until blue light illuminates the water and then rotate the bottle allowing the ultraviolet light to destroy and neutralize waterborne viruses and bacteria. An LCD screen on the cap displays the countdown from 60 seconds to drinkable and also has a battery gauge so you know when a recharge is due. CamelBak All Clear Water Filter Kit costs \$99. Info: www.camelbak.com

— JUDI DASH