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TREND



SLEEP LIKE A LOG

Glamping is no longer a buzzword—it's a movement (and a boon to those who lack the skills to pitch a tent).

Here, 18 spots to camp in style. By Chaney Kwak

Sonoma's
AutoCamp

p. 24



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ake up to birdsong as a breeze carries the scent of a cedar forest into your tent. You've slept peacefully under the stars, and the morning sun prints leafy silhouettes on the translucent canvas walls.

Shield yourself from the incoming light by turning over and sinking into a bed—on polished wooden floors between a vintage nightstand and a tastefully obscured Wi-Fi router. Ah, wilderness, from the safari-like shelter of a glamp.

The term "glamping," or glamorous camping, may be relatively new, but its history extends well beyond turn-of-the-20th-century African safaris. After all, didn't Marco Polo marvel at the extravagance of Mongolian *gers*, or yurts, on wheels? But today's crop of alfresco pads goes a step further, running the gamut from colossal yurts to human-scale birds' nests, canvas tents adorned with vintage furniture to Airstreams and over-the-top cabins in the middle of the woods. Some have en-suite bathrooms stocked with spa-worthy toiletries, while others come with a flashlight and a sign to the nearest bathroom; a number of them make a point of staying off the grid, while dozens are happy to supply you with hashtags.

In a few short years, luxury camping has gone from niche to mainstream at a time when traditional tenting is declining. A quarter fewer Americans camped last year than did a decade earlier, according to The Outdoor Foundation. Apparently, industrialization and digitization haven't weeded out our innate craving to be close to wilderness; we just want to approach nature on our own modern terms. Plus, camping requires skills, which require time to learn—a precious commodity. People are looking for a quick way to hit the outdoors that goes beyond a hike. Glamps like Treebones answered that call.

Tucked into a curve along California Highway 1 in Big Sur and spilling onto a hillside are the resort's 16 yurts that, despite a wild coastal surrounding, do have running water and electricity, as well as a heated pool, a hot tub, and a sushi restaurant. Donna Heckert, a manager there, has seen popularity for the yurt village surge. "A decade ago, you could book three weeks ahead of time; five years ago, three to six months in advance. Now it's literally six to nine months for weekends. We're about 95 percent full year-round."

Big Sur is nearly midway between Los Angeles and the Bay Area. That makes the outpost a perfect compromise for time-crunched city folk looking to reconnect with their wild souls. Those in need can also now search relatively new sites like glampinghub.com, glamping.com, and hipcamp.com. Glamping Hub has seen its booking business take off, tripling every year since launching in 2013.

But the site that may have given glamping a big lift is Airbnb. It changed travelers' expectations of where they could stay.

"People's eyes have opened to what travel lodging can be. There's no turning back. We have entered a post-Airbnb era," says Ryan Miller, the 26-year-old cofounder of AutoCamp, which opened its second Airstream resort this month. The first one, in Santa Barbara, is sold out every summer and runs at 85 percent occupancy year-round. The latest, on a tranquil creek in Sonoma County's Guerneville, is a holiday camp of canvas tents and Airstreams kitted out in a midcentury aesthetic. For evidence of what demographic is interested, look to how AutoCamp was built: It was crowdfunded on Kickstarter. And the mattresses? They're Casper—another millennial start-up. Campers are less likely to sing "Kumbaya" than exchange Instagram handles over a glass of local Zinfandel or a Sonoma craft beer, sold from the clubhouse—all under a canopy of redwood trees.

"The outdoors needed a bit of a refresh to engage a new generation," says Scott Hale of Brand New Stay, which consults for hotels on how to add glamping options. In the forest behind Oregon's Vagabond Lodge, Hale pitches Eagle Camp and Woods Camp, both of which are closer to the Columbia River Gorge than the hotel. At night you can hear the water in the gorge, or you'll spot bald eagles—all without bringing any of your own equipment or nature know-how.

Not everyone is thrilled by remote-controlled gas stoves and 300-thread-count sheets on the rise in far-flung forests, though. Jeong Kim, a Bay Area scientist, briefly considered glamping when he and his wife couldn't snag a site at the Grand Canyon's Havasupai Falls. "But we didn't want to feed the industry that's killing the experience. Commercializing camping is a terrible trend."

Still, as Hale sees it, "We need a bigger audience to help steward the natural world." Getting more people outside—even if they need the added kick of a little luxury—keeps us all in touch with the great outdoors.

CAMP AT HOME

Love glamping? Buy one and retreat to your own backyard when the mood strikes—or use it as an office.



Nomads Tipi Makers, in Bend, Oregon, has sold more than 25,000 Lakota-inspired tents since 1970. Features can include weather-resistant fabric and critter guards. From \$969; tipi.com.



Rainier Yurts started in 1896 by supplying canvas tents to Klondike Gold Rushers. Now they glamp too. From \$10,710; rainier.com.



Pacific Domes has nailed the geodesic spheres, like the 8'6" high shelter with galvanized steel bones and a bay window. From \$4,050; pacificdomes.com.



Davis Tent constructs the familiar-looking safari-style glamp. The Denver manufacturer can even add an awning to it for a porchlike feel. From \$521; davisent.com.



Sonoma's Russian River. These aren't your ordinary silver midcentury moderns but custom models styled by Dan Weber Architecture and Geremia Design. Walnut cabinetry, a full shower, and Casper mattresses make this an alfresco overnight that's more like a true hotel experience. From \$175; autocamp.com.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

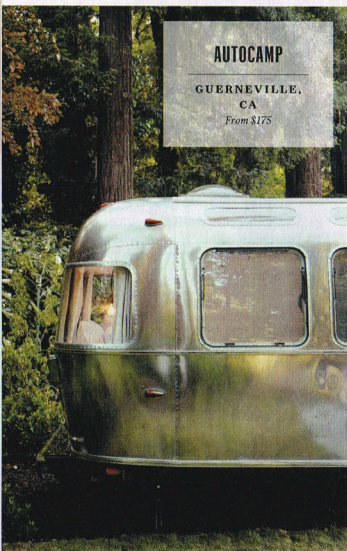
For fans of nostalgia (or *Mad Men*).

The Holidays has four 1960s-inspired trailers parked inside San Clemente State Beach, whose mile-long sand is book-ended by an imposing bluff and Pacific surf 58 miles from San Diego. Each trailer retains its vintage shell but comes updated with USB hookups and blue-tooth speakers. Neighbors can challenge one another in a game of bocce or a cook-off on the grills. \$209; theholidaysca.com.

MEXICO

Designed by up-and-coming Mexican architect Mauricio Rocha, **Cuatro**

Cuatros is fortunate to have Guadalupe Valley wine country in its backyard, although it itself is in nearby El Tigre. Raised on wood-and-steel platforms for sweeping views of the grapevines, the 18 climate-controlled *cabañas* pamper guests with organic toiletries and a minibar stocked with Sauvignon Blanc from the property's own 50-acre vineyard. From \$180; cuatrocuatros.com.mx.



AUTOCAMP
GUERNEVILLE,
CA
From \$175

