



# safe haven

Leave your cell phone, TV, and laptop behind. You'll never miss them at this tranquil California retreat.

**the** haze of night slowly gives way to the warmth of first light. It's time to rise. Shuffling into the kitchen, a sleepy vacationer sees a flyer under the door. It reads, "Still-warm eggs just out of the nest are waiting for you on the broom peg on your porch! Enjoy." As promised, a small basket brims with eggs of varying pastel hues. The cottages at Mar Vista offer the freshest wake-up call along the West Coast.

On Anchor Bay, 100 miles north of San Francisco, Mar Vista attracts visitors who want to slow down and decompress. Removed from satellite connections and big-city distractions, guests quickly forget the daily grind and make themselves at home in the 12 housekeeping cottages scattered across 9 lush acres.

Owners Tom and Renata Dorn purchased this property in 2000. With Renata's years of experience in hotel management and Tom's dreams of



TEXT BY VICKI J. WEATHERS  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA ROMEREIN  
STYLING BY SUNDAY HENDRICKSON



The cabins are  
“blank palettes—  
guests can create  
their own  
sense of home  
here.”

—owner Renata Dorn

becoming a gentleman farmer, they quickly set about creating first-rate accommodations in a pastoral, coastal environment.

The cottages, built in the 1930s and '40s, had been neglected for years. Tom and Renata renovated, retaining original redwood ceilings but replacing plumbing, adding fireplaces, and updating the interiors. They painted the cottages' exteriors a soft yellow and decorated inside with primary colors. Today each fully refreshed cabin is outfitted with slipcovered furniture, simple beds dressed with down comforters, and a nicely equipped kitchen. “They’re blank palettes—guests can create their own sense of home here,” Renata says. The housekeeping staff spends three to four hours preparing each rental for use, inspiring visitors to remark that they feel like the first ones ever to stay there.

“Mar Vista’s simplicity allows people to become completely relaxed,” Renata says. She recalls a CEO who came on





Mar Vista is many things to many people: a child's playground, a solitary retreat, a romantic destination.

vacation with his family. As soon as he realized the place lacked a phone, TV, and Internet access, he began to bellow about leaving, declaring that he never stayed in anything less than the finest hotels. Later that afternoon, Renata found him sitting outside with a book and glass of wine. He sighed and said, "I get it. My stress level has dropped to zero. This place has probably prevented me from having a heart attack."

Tom and Renata greet lodgers like long-lost relatives. Most newcomers receive a tour of the property, which includes large vegetable and flower gardens open to all, a soaking tub, a fruit and nut orchard, and a pond. The Dorns tell guests how to harvest from the gardens and get to the quiet pocket beach across the street. Cathy Bosch, who visits four times a year with her partner, Karen McGahey, says, "I used to think that they only did special things for us, but they do the same things for





At the end of the day, guests settle into chairs sprinkled about the property to watch the sunset. The only distractions are the crash of the ocean surf and the soft sounds of nature.

everybody. After a warm welcome they'll be around if you need them, but they won't intrude."

With the vegetable garden and a local market for supplies, it's easy to set up housekeeping and never leave. Call ahead and Renata will even do the shopping for you. She and Tom are also happy to share detailed information about area activities, as well as offer restaurant recommendations.

Several guests who first visited while dating have become engaged or exchanged vows at Mar Vista. A few even return to the property with their children. "My kids loved it and are already asking to go back," says Tiffany DiMarco. "My daughter met some playmates, and she would run out the door yelling, 'Mom, I'm going out to the rope swing with my friends!' This safe environment allowed my children to experience what it's like to play outside."

At the end of the day, guests settle into chairs sprinkled about the property to watch the sunset. The only distractions are the crash of the ocean surf and



the soft sounds of nature. Observant lodgers might catch a glimpse of a deer wandering across the lawn. The darkening sky unveils a spectacular carpet of stars.

As Renata says, "Mar Vista is a series of surprises that slowly reveal themselves during the course of a stay." 🌿

For more information on Mar Vista, call 877/855-3522 or visit [marvistamendocino.com](http://marvistamendocino.com).