

► **CLOCKWISE:** The prime romping acreage of Los Padres National Forest and the Topa Topa Mountains surround Ojai Valley's orange groves and palm trees; bicyclists and pedestrians venture from Ojai to the coast by way of the 17-mile-long Ojai Valley Bike Trail; the Spanish colonial architecture of the Ojai Valley Inn & Spa, backed by the Topa Topa Mountains.

JIM HENKINS; COURTESY OF THE OJAI VALLEY INN & SPA; RICH REID/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STOCK; COURTESY OF THE OJAI VALLEY INN & SPA



THE NEXT OUTDOOR PLAYGROUND

If I didn't know better, my view from high atop the Shelf Road bluffs could easily be of the Loire Valley. Instead, it's Ojai, a small town 40 miles southeast of Santa Barbara. Ojai's reputation used to be that of a fainéant celebrity refuge and spa retreat. But in the past few years, the townspeople have turned their outdoor passions into entrepreneurial adventures, transforming the surrounding valley into an active traveler's destination. You can saddle up at **Ojai on Horseback**, and owner Debbie Godfrey and Lil,

her mare, will take you up to the bluffs at sunset or into the Ventura River Preserve, a 1,600-acre ecological sanctuary of streams, lilac fields, and oak and sycamore groves. Recently launched **Cloud Climbers jeep tours** takes you into corners of the the forest you wouldn't otherwise be able to see. And **Project Ride** lets you zip 2,000 feet down Sulphur Mountain trail by bike while taking in ocean views—and maybe spotting Reese Witherspoon or Larry Hagman, who both have homes in Ojai. More good news: Over the past few years, two new tasting rooms opened downtown (Ojai Valley Vineyard, Casa Barranca), and the valley hasn't ditched its luxury roots—the **Ojai Valley Inn & Spa** is as satisfying as ever. **JENNA SCATENA**

OJAI ON HORSEBACK: 2295 E. OJAI AVE., 805-509-3991, OJAIONHORSEBACK.COM, TOURS \$125-\$550. CLOUD CLIMBERS: DOOR-TO-DOOR SERVICE FROM AREA HOTELS, 805-646-3200, CCJEEPS.COM, TOURS \$99. PROJECT RIDE: 445 W. EL ROBLAR DR., 805-798-5193, PROJECT-RIDE.COM, RENTALS FROM \$25 PER DAY. OJAI VALLEY INN & SPA: 905 COUNTRY CLUB RD., 805-646-1111, ROOMS FROM \$300

