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Holman Ranch & Vineyards: Making Memories & Wine at Romantic California Hideaway

June 20, 2016

11:50 AM MST



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The original Spanish stone hacienda, built over 80 years ago, hosted celebrities of the day, today it's the centerpiece of the estate's special events.

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“Anything and everything you can imagine”, that is Holman Ranch’s motto. Steeped in history, this Carmel Valley hacienda estate has morphed from a working ranch into a multi-pronged hub of hospitality. Winemaking, olive oil production, and horse boarding are at the outer spokes, but at its heart are the [special events](#), everything from [weddings](#), retreats, and corporate meetings. Hosting only one event at a time, [Holman Ranch](#) offers a remarkable escape, a chance to step back in time and experience California as it once was. A perfect backdrop for friends, family, and coworkers to commune and set future goals, Holman Ranch has a storied past, acknowledged in their “Where the Past is Always Present” trademark quote.

Nestled in the rolling hills of [Carmel Valley](#), Holman Ranch was originally part of a Mission land grant from Spain in the 1800’s. In 1928, San Francisco businessman Gordon Armsby bought 600 acres, including what would become Holman Ranch. Armsby built the rustic stone Spanish-style

hacienda on a grassy hilltop, and entertained many Hollywood celebrities of the day, a sort of “gentleman’s retreat”. In 1940, Clarence Holman purchased the ranch from Armsby, turning it into Holman’s Guest Ranch, remodeling and expanding to include amenities such as guest cottages and a swimming pool, alongside a working cattle ranch. The ranch became quite the hip place to stay, and many Hollywood stars flocked to this private hideaway, such as Clark Gable, Joan Crawford, and Marlon Brando, but the most frequent guest was Charlie Chaplin. Time passed and in 1982, Dorothy



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McEwen took over, preserving the **Ranch’s historic past** while expanding the **facilities**, planting vineyards and opening a stable. In 2006, the torch was passed to another family. Thomas and Jarman Lowder, who, brimming with their own vision and energy, bought the stunning 400 acre property, restoring and refurbishing the main hacienda, guest cottages, and swimming pool. Keenly interested in making wine, they replanted the **vineyards** and built wine caves. Today, the Lowder family produces wines under two different labels, Holman Ranch and Jarman, and operates two separate tasting rooms and a restaurant, Will’s Fargo, on the main drag through the valley, where everyone can experience a taste of the magic that is Holman Ranch.

Still an exclusive retreat, Holman Ranch offers many different ways to enjoy this romantic step back in time. There is no better place to exchange vows, with the breathtaking scenery of the scrub-covered Santa Lucia Mountains and the Pacific Ocean’s Big Sur beyond. An elevated terrace, at the edge of a grassy yard attached to the sprawling main hacienda, is the perfect spot to pledge your love, framed by grape vines, mountains, and blue sky panoramic views. Available year-round, Holman Ranch offers outdoor and indoor event options, such as the private Hacienda Chapel when the weather is not so friendly, with many **packages** available, from an intimate gathering of 50 people to a full-blown affair of hundreds. Every detail is taken care of, or if you prefer, they will work with outside vendors, to make sure your perfect day is a dream come true. And the most important aspect to Holman Ranch, only one event is scheduled at a time, which means that for your wedding, the Ranch’s grounds and hospitality is yours alone.

The same goes for Holman Ranch’s **other events**, such as family reunions, grand celebrations, corporate events, or just a group of friends spending quality time together. The Ranch is not a hotel, it’s a private residence that opens its doors for special events. Whether a multi-day retreat or just an afternoon meeting, it will only be you and your guests that get to enjoy this exceptional property. You won’t have to share this quaint and historic estate for this all too brief moment in time! As such, for any overnight event, all ten cottages must be rented, but certainly is more than worth it. The cottages are decked out in early California decor, sort of a Western theme, and the movie posters hanging on the walls correlate to the stars that stayed in those individual bungalows, such as Charlie Chaplin and Gene Autry. Yet, each room offers all modern amenities, such as flat screen TVs, cable, and wi-fi so you can stay connected, even though it feels like you’re a world removed from today’s hustle and bustle. Silky linens, down pillows, and boutique sundries offer a sense of luxury beyond the rustic appeal. A Welcome Gift awaits you, with a bottle of

Holman Ranch estate-grown wine and snacks to nibble on. The daily “Wrangler, a breakfast buffet of fruit, coffee, and pastries is provided each morning, and a lunch menu can be selected, in addition to an evening barbecue and bonfire, if you aren’t having a catered event. Organized activity packages, by theme, such as Wine Lovers’ Delight, Wellness and Spirit, Culinary Escape, Ranch, or Sports are available, and can be tailored to your specific wishes, truly “Where Anything and Everything is Possible”! Nick Elliott, Guest Services Manager, will make sure everything runs smoothly. A dedicated Ranch event manager is at your beck and call, orchestrating estate activities and even helping with exploration of the [Monterey Peninsula](#).

The Vineyard and Winery uses cutting edge technology to grow and produce their estate wines, which are certified organic and sustainable. Carmel Valley is best suited to Burgundian grapes, such as Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and 21 acres of the Ranch is planted to them, and a small amount of Pinot Gris. The [Winery](#), located in the Caves that were finished in 2012, is completely underground, keeping a naturally cool, humid environment for the wines. Here the grapes are processed, and wines are fermented and aged in French oak barrels. Two tasting rooms along Carmel Valley road, not far from the Ranch, are open for all to sample their two different labels of wine, [Holman Ranch](#) and [Jarman](#), along with their estate olive oil. [Holman Ranch Vineyards Tasting Room](#) pours the Holman Ranch label wines, with five styles of four varietals to choose from, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, and a Rosé of Pinot Noir. Three of the Pinot Noirs are named after members of the Lowder family, such as Hunter’s Cuvée, Heather’s Hill, and Kelly’s Press, reflecting slight differences in style. Next door, the higher end [Jarman Tasting Lounge and Patio](#) pours estate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, an homage to the family matriarch, Jarman, which are crafted in a Burgundian style. These are rich and luscious wines that speak of Carmel Valley’s warm days and cool, foggy nights. The wines are sold locally and online, or through Holman Ranch's two [Wine Clubs](#). A perk to joining the upscale Grand Estate Club, with a choice of Whites, Reds, or Mixed bottles, is with the purchase of two cases annually, you receive a complimentary two-night stay for two in one of the Ranch’s hospitality cottages! It’s certainly an incentive to participate in Holman Ranch’s fledgling wine program, which continues to improve each year, and grants access to special wine events at the estate, including dinners and barrel tastings with the winemaker.

[Will’s Fargo Restaurant + Bar](#), operated by [Hunter Lowder and her husband, Nick Elliott](#), is at it’s heart a steakhouse, but, under the direction of Executive Chef Jerome Viel, has brought his classical French slant to the menu. Delicious escargots, French onion soup, and other weekly specials, alongside specialty cocktails, and of course, wines are served, not only the Ranch estate bottles, but a special house wine, the Wrangler White and Rustler Rouge, made by Holman Ranch, among other locally produced wines. It offers many options for everyone, including a happy hour, kids menu, and doggy pet dishes as well.

Surreal in its natural beauty, the historic [Holman Ranch](#), with its early California appeal, endless amenities, and countless options for personalized experiences, is a priceless gem. Its wild beauty and charm will mesmerize you, as you imagine what it was like a century ago in this hilly valley just 12 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. This is truly an unforgettable place, where you can tune out or party like a rock star, that will call for your return again and again.



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