



Triple Creek Horse Outfit offers scenic rides in Sonoma County.

COURTESY OF TRIPLE CREEK HORSE OUTFIT; PHOTOS BY JULIE VADER

Sonoma County (sonomacounty.com) and Napa Valley (visitnapavalley.com)

By Carey Sweet

» My noble gray steed, Daisy, clearly knows her way through Jack London State Historic Park’s oak-studded meadows and towering redwood groves, and I barely need to touch her reins as she navigates meandering cliffside trails toward Sonoma Mountain’s 2,370-foot summit. The preserve’s historical buildings include

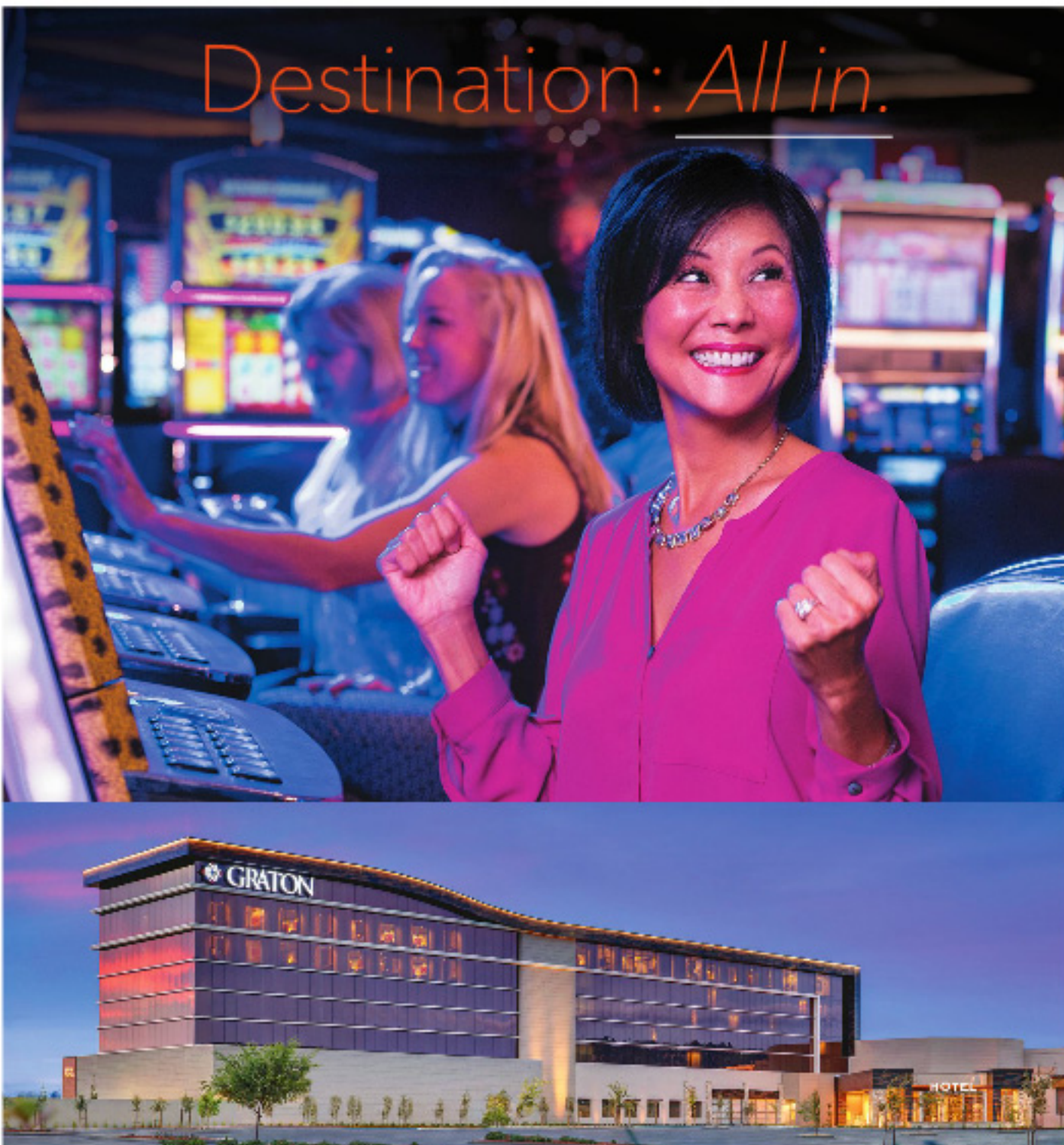
an 1860s cottage where author Jack London lived. He added on a room in which he wrote his novels beneath a clothespin line tacked with notes. The writer christened the land “Beauty Ranch” when he began purchasing his 1,400 acres in the early 1900s, and today, one of the best ways to appreciate the space is as he often did, on horseback.

The park’s wranglers, **Triple Creek Horse Outfit** owners Erin Ellis and Dominic Bettinelli (triplecreekhorseoutfit.com) are Sonoma Valley natives, and they share stories of the land’s rich history and London’s architectural genius as they lead private or group trail rides. London created still-standing stone barns for his beloved Shire horses, Erin tells me. He de-

signed the nearby “Pig Palace,” a circular stone-and-concrete abode, for his prized Red Duroc Jersey hogs, and sloping up the mountainside, he created some of the country’s first terraced crop fields.

He used part of a former stone winery building as a carriage house and ranch-hand living quarters. The winery was built by Hungarian immigrant Lajos Csomortanyi, who planted vineyards in the mid-1800s and also built the four-room cottage that became London’s living quarters. Today, parkland surrounds about 125 acres of private vineyards in the same general area as Csomortanyi’s plantings.

The park (jacklondonpark.com) opened to the public in 1960 and was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1963. We cross creek bridges and explore a mountaintop apple orchard, then Erin takes Daisy and me down a little-known



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path to the Grandmother Tree, an approximately 2,000-year-old redwood boasting a 14-foot-diameter trunk.

Midway through our 2.5-hour ride, we rest our mounts, and feast on a picnic lunch, with local cheeses and meats. We relax, soak up the blissful quiet, and—as I’m sure London would have wanted—we share our apples with our horses. The Triple Creek excursion also includes complimentary post-ride wine-tasting at a winery near the park. ■

Carey Sweet lives in Sonoma County.

Alaska Airlines (alaskaair.com) provides regular service to Santa Rosa, gateway to Sonoma County and Napa Valley, and wine flies free. For details, see sonomacounty.com/wine-flies-free-when-visiting-san-francisco-wine-country and alaskaair.com/content/deals/special-offers/wine-flies-free.aspx.

More Sonoma/Napa Highlights

Charles M. Schulz Museum, Santa Rosa (schulzmuseum.org): Celebrates the longtime former Sonoma County cartoonist, with 27,000 square feet of whimsy and art, including about 7,000 original cartoons.

Napa Valley Vintners (napavintners.com): Click on the website’s interactive map for information on 325 Napa Valley wineries, with details and tools to create a self-guided tasting tour. Also: The **Vineyard to Vintner** event, April 28–30 this year, will feature open houses at exclusive Stags Leap District Winegrowers Association wineries—some typically closed to the public—and at luxurious private homes.

Napa Valley Wine Train’s Private Reserve Train (winetrain.com): The train debuted last fall: Guests relax in a 36-seat,

self-motored Pullman railcar in retro-luxe style with leather and stained glass. Each 3.5-hour outing is hosted by a top-name winemaker—on my trip, there were two: legendary husband-and-wife team Jean-Charles Boisset and Gina Gallo—and the experience includes a wine-paired meal.

Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County (drycreekvalley.org): More than five-dozen wineries make this pastoral region a wine-taster’s dream, and the Winegrowers of Dry Creek Valley’s interactive map makes planning an itinerary a breeze. Also: **Passport to Dry Creek Valley**, April 29–30 this year; 45-plus wineries will host open houses.

LODGING

The Cottages of Napa Valley, Napa (napacottages.com): A garden compound of eight adorable luxury cottages in a former fruit orchard near Yountville; complimentary in-room wine, and wicker-

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