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NOV / DEC
2019

ISSUE 29

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MADONNA INN

HONEYMOON TRAVEL GUIDE

If Liberace and Disney collaborated to create a motel, the result would be California's iconic Madonna Inn. Since opening in the fifties, the fantasyland resort has gained the crown of the world's coolest motel, with whimsical interiors featuring plenty of dramatic fake waterfalls, gilded cherubs and an abundance of Pepto Bismol pink.

A hotspot for vintage lovers, the inn offers the perfect retro-chic honeymoon destination, surrounded by the relaxed beaches and mountains of America's West Coast.

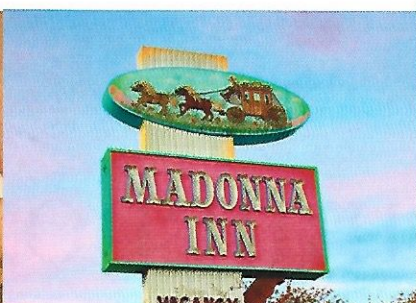
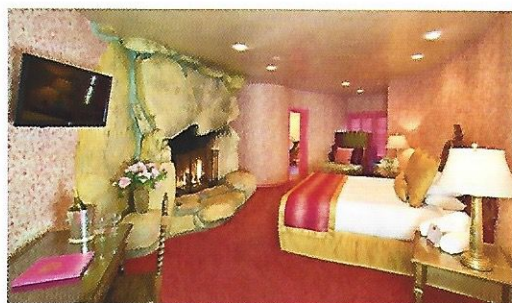


GETTING THERE

Flying into LAX, it takes just under three hours to drive to the Madonna Inn along the scenic Route 101. The motel is located in San Luis Obispo in the heart of California, known for its laid back pace of life, rolling hills and wineries.

STAY

The Madonna Inn was originally created in 1958 by construction magnate Alex Madonna, with his wife Phyllis taking the role of interior decorator. The Swiss-Alps style resort has since expanded to become the size of a small village, including 110 individually themed guest rooms, fuchsia coloured tennis courts and a secret garden for lawn games.



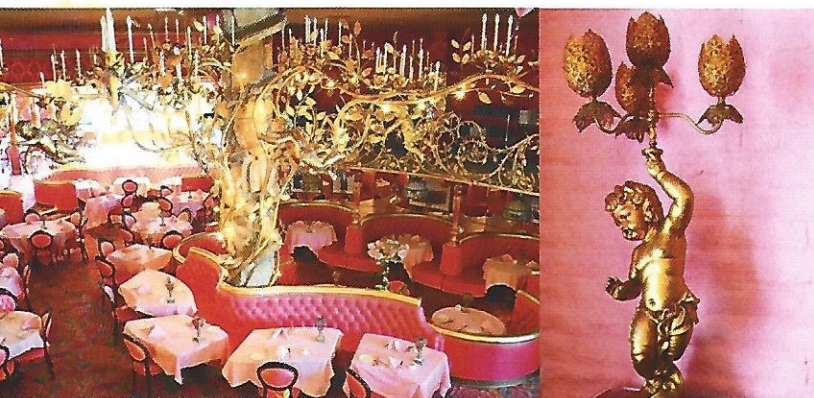


EAT

The Madonna Inn has plenty of dining options, from the on-site bakery and terrace pool bar, to the quirky Copper Café, where waiting staff in Lederhosen serve up specialities such as the signature pink champagne cake. As evening falls, make your way to the silver bar cocktail lounge for a Madonna rum punch, reclining at the pink bar surrounded by Tiki wood carvings. The clientele is a mixture of loyal regulars who have been patrons for decades, and young, stylish guests dressed in vintage, who have recently discovered the Instagram-worthy motel through blogs and social media. For supper, head to the Madonna Inn's outrageously pink Alex Montana's Gold Rush Steak House. At the centre of the restaurant sprouts a fantastical gold tree that is 16 feet high and 30 feet wide, taking the interior's wow-factor to a whole new level! Round off the evening by tapping your feet on the restaurant's wooden dance floor to the swing DJ or house band.

THINGS TO DO

Spend the day cooling off from the Californian heat at the resort's hilltop swimming pool area, which is colourfully lit at night and features a dramatic waterfall. The on-site spa offers a full menu of treatments, including The Caveman hot stone massage and the Blushing Bride massage, using calming lavender. Explore the local area on the motel's hot pink beach cruiser bike, on a horseback trail or by hiking the region's dramatic mountains and valleys. The nearby rugged coastline is a great spot for spotting dolphins and seals, and is dotted with surf-schools and water sports centres.



THE BEST ROOMS IN THE HOUSE

No two guestrooms are the same and each is extravagantly themed, taking inspiration from a seriously eclectic mix, including tropical jungles, the green hills of Ireland, early man and Austrian grandeur. As a popular wedding and honeymoon destination, The Madonna Inn also has a number of opulent bridal suites. These include the Old-Fashioned Honeymoon room, featuring a fantastically floral bathroom with freestanding claw-foot tub, while the Just Heaven room has a spiral staircase winding up to a Rapunzel style private viewing tower, decorated with frolicking golden angels. To really crank up the kitsch-factor, opt for one of the legendary themed rooms such as the Old Mill, which is straight out of a fairy tale – complete with an enchanted forest mural and a miniature mill that constantly trickles water. You can sleep in a horse drawn carriage (minus the pony!) in the Yahoo room, or with a fake tiger hanging overhead in the Safari room. For some vintage glamour, book into the Fabulous Fifties suite, painted in a rainbow of mid-century pastels. We chose to bed down in the caveman themed Jungle Rock room, which had rock walls and a waterfall shower, a tree growing by the side of the bed and vines stretching across the ceiling, finished off with an awesome retro shag pile carpet. It was pure Flintstones nostalgia!



WHEN TO GO

California is known as the perfect year-round destination for sun-seekers, although September is a particularly good time, as it's not too hot but still sunny with fewer crowds.

FLIGHTS

Most of the major airlines fly directly from the UK to LA, including British Airways and Virgin, and the average flight time is 11 hours 30 minutes.

RATES

Rooms cost from £170/ \$209 – £400/ \$479, depending on day of the week and room type.

TO BOOK

Visit madonnainn.com for up to date special offers and the best rates.

ABOUT ZOHEY GOTO

Zoey Goto is a journalist and author, writing for international publications about fashion, lifestyle and travel. She writes for titles including GQ, GQ Style, The Times, Escapism and Elle magazine and is also author of the book *Elvis Style: From Zoot Suits to Jumpsuits*.