



KLAMATH RIVER

Wet and wild

OLD TRIP: SERIOUS THRILLS ON THE WHITE WATER

NEW TRICK: A TONED-DOWN RIDE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Ever find yourself longing for the days when vacations included more adventure and adult conversation, and fewer bathroom breaks and mouse ears? There's not much to be done about the pit stops, but once you make the drive up north to the Klamath River, there are rafting outfitters willing to work with large groups—so you and your friends and the kids and their friends can have a grand old time. The rush you get from seeing your offspring's gleeful grins might just surpass any you'd experience tackling Class IV rapids without them.

PLAY: Owner-guide-yogi-teacher John McDermott of Mount Shasta-based rafting outfit **River Dancers** has a special talent for making people of every age and skill level—even the really big babies—feel safe and confident enough to have the time of their lives. He

and his wife, Chantal, founded the company almost 15 years ago, and they run their family trips through the kid-friendliest stretch of the Klamath (they also offer more white-knuckle adventures through other parts of Northern California and Oregon). Pack your own sleeping bags and tents, which you'll set up and take down, but River Dancers takes care of pretty much everything else. The ride starts in Happy Camp and covers 25 miles over the course of three days, during which you'll pack in all of the following: camping, kayaking, swimming, exploring, eating Chantal's excellent organic food, playing guitar, reading *Captain Underpants* around the campfire, and snoring to the music of crickets.

DINE: No one will want the weekend to end, so take the party to Yreka for one last, raucous dinner at

Grandma's House (good, hearty, well-priced food; lots of tchotchkes in the gift shop to charm little girls) before the five-hour drive back to the Bay Area. Or grab one of the 600 reasonably priced hotel rooms in town and take an extra day to explore Victorian-laden Yreka. Don't mistake this remote town for backward—the locals refer to themselves as "greennecks," rather than rednecks, because of two major projects: rehabbing the creek that runs through the town, and its bordering trail. Downtown, the **Liberty Arts** gallery and educational center has been a cultural institution for nearly a quarter century.

NINA MARTIN



ORANGE COUNTY

Le monde gourmand

CLASSIC: A FUNKY BEACH HOUSE

NEW TRICK: OCEANSIDE ACCOMMODATIONS WITH EVERY AMENITY—AND SOME AMAZING FOOD

The O.C. may be synonymous with over-the-top wealth (thank you, *Laguna Beach* and *The Real Housewives of Orange County*), but until recently, serious dining finds were as hard to come by here as an overcast weekend in June is. Luckily, the tide has finally turned, and now even the most jaded Bay Area dining aficionados are returning home impressed. So head south, hole up in one of the area's notoriously flamboyant resorts, and put your mouth where the money is.

DINE: It's Michael Mina yet again. His **Stonehill Tavern**, in Dana Point, with an expansive lounge and a dining room overlooking the Pacific, is one of the region's finest restaurants. The menu balances high-end steakhouse eats (salt-baked lobster, Kobe beef burgers) with sophisticated fine-dining options (cumin-crust duck breast, scallops and gnocchi in chorizo-tomato broth). But for disciples of pure haute cuisine, **Studio**, at the Montage resort in Laguna Beach, just might be the mecca, turning the most common dining tropes into mini coups d'état. Oysters are served with mignonette dotted with tiny cubes of butternut squash; pork belly is cured in honey and served with harissa-cider syrup. (The wine program, under the direction of Jake Underhill and Troy Smith, is also a marvel.) For Rat Pack-era classics with a contemporary spin (crab cakes with yuzu aioli, a stellar French dip, and a much ballyhooed burger), slip into Newport Beach and one of **A Restaurant's** red Naugahyde booths.

STAY: Newport Beach's sprawling **Resort at Pelican Hill** is the splashiest to open here in years. The Italianate-style resort, with its wealth of olive trees, bungalows, and private villas, covers 504 acres and boasts virtual concierges and a 136-foot circular pool. Less plush but infinitely hipper is Laguna Beach's **Seven4One**. Awash in steel gray, turquoise, and sharp lines, the 12-room boutique hotel is located steps from the beach and has concierges who pride themselves on being able to do it all: set the rooms up with four varieties of pillows, arrange golf or theater excursions, and, in a stroke of genius, provide a walkie-talkie for beachside service.

PLAY: Right near the shopping hub of Fashion Island, the **Orange County Museum of Art** is worth a detour. The museum recently wrapped its biennial display of contemporary artists and is now showing three new concurrent exhibits: a history of electronic-media art, a collection of new video installations, and a joint showing of four American women modernist painters. Shopping may be an art in the O.C.—but apparently, so is art.

SCOTT HOCKER