



CALIFORNIA STYLE

EMILY BLUNT

The Talented English Rose Puts Down Roots in Hollywood

SHOW OFF

DITA VON TEESE BARES IT ALL

CASTLE IN THE SKY

A Château in the SoCal Countryside Beams with French Heritage

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GIFTS FOR THE SEASON

IN THE SPIRIT

PLUS

Golden State Resolutions for Mind, Body + Soul

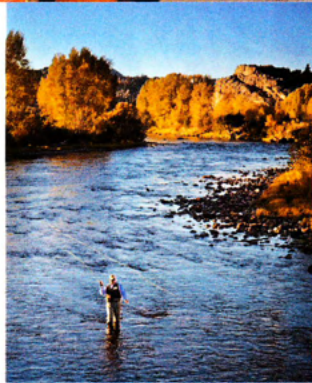
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Reboot Back at the Ranch

Three L.A. city slickers explore the peaceful beauty and vast expanse of the west **BY SUSAN CAMPOS**



FROM TOP One of the ranch's 40 plush rooms. Activities include fly fishing, horseback riding, skeet shooting, paintball, hiking, rock climbing and yoga. The Trailhead Great Room has panoramic window views from Snowy Range to Bennett Peak. The property was once a rugged working cattle ranch.



Normally, I wait until January to decide on my New Year's resolutions. This year, however, I got an early start on soul-searching during, of all things, a trip to a Wyoming dude ranch with my son and a good girlfriend. As we drove the few hours from the Denver airport to Saratoga, we had no idea what to expect until we arrived at the two-year-old **Brush Creek Ranch**—a dead ringer for the set of the old western show "Bonanza." Better still, there was a cast of characters equally as charming—and infinitely more gracious—working at this 40-room paradise stocked to the hilt with every conceivable five-star resort amenity.

We were equally impressed with the decor in the cabins and main

lodge. Exquisite chandeliers fashioned from antlers dangle from high ceilings over custom-made, dark wooden furniture and comfortable beds. While there are no television sets in the rooms, there is wi-fi. Picture 15,000 acres of Western landscape complete with stunning mountains, wildlife and Aspen trees. We couldn't believe how much there was to do instead of catching the latest episode of "Modern Family."

The attractive staff assists in the planning of endless activities such as yoga at sunrise on a bluff (overlooking the Medicine Bow National Forest), horseback riding, skeet shooting, paintball and rock climbing. We began with a morning hike where buffalo roam. (While we saw very, ahem, fresh signs, fortunately, we didn't run into any during our walk.) Later that morning, we went to the creek for a little fly-fishing—a thrill even though I clumsily hooked my arm rather than a fish.

After lunch, we marveled at the sight of a bear cub in a tree before landing at the obstacle course: climbing tires, walking a fairly high tightrope with a safety harness and a zip line.

"This is the coolest trip," my son confessed to one of the twentysomething guides.

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NOW BOARDING

A trio of first-class totes to carry on in style



Tod's,
\$1,845.



Mulberry, \$3,500.



Kate Spade
New York,
\$398.

REBOOT BACK AT THE RANCH

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By early evening, we were ready to retire to the saloon, where button-down and denim-clad guests swapped stories from their fun-packed days. A father-son duo from California was determined to return home with a buffalo head. A couple of women were getting away to celebrate a 50th birthday. The week prior, a team from Google had taken over the entire ranch. ("Of course they did," we all laughed.)

Friendly bartenders offered a panoply of drinks (from cosmos and fresh mint gimlets to Shirley Temples) before a communal, family-style dinner in the main lodge of corn chowder, delicious steak and killer peach cobbler.

It got me thinking that the best New Year's resolution might be to take vacations, or even days at home, where I choose to tune out from the high-tech pace of modern life and tune-in to nature. One trip to the BC Ranch, and this city gal is a dudette in spirit. *All-inclusive rates from \$720/night; 307-327-5284; brushcreekranch.com.* •

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

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ANDREA FIUCZYNSKI

Weeks before the live auction for the Pacific Asia Museum's annual benefit, Fiuczynski speaks with the event coordinator dozens of times to iron out nuts and bolts. "You always want to start and end an auction with a sure-fire sell," she says. A regular on the charity circuit—conducting approximately 20 auctions annually, including 2011's Artists for Haiti sale (which raised \$13.7 million)—she'll offer advice on merchandise, too. "I don't want to get up there and have five duds. The final impression is with the auctioneer and with Christie's."

The well-researched professional arrives on the scene with printed notecards, ready to add ideas about the opening bids, price intervals and tips about donors. Sometimes, she'll make a fuss about and bring a celebrity on stage; other times, she's extra discreet. She'll view the works for sale in person—"I never sell anything I haven't seen"—and heads for the ballroom.

Battling ambient dinner sounds, she paces the stage at an old-school club in downtown L.A., injecting energy into the sophisticated crowd and "feeling the room." "It's interactive theater," she says.

Once the last lot is sold, she slides gracefully into her seat and attempts to take a few bites from her dinner. She hugs two women who approach her and then whispers to me, "They were at the auction I did a few years ago, at the Beverly Hilton. The power went out. Someone found an old-fashioned bull horn, the director's kind, and I conducted the auction in the emergency lighting." After all, the show must go on. •

DEBORAH MCLEOD

who want to push the boundaries...most people who buy Contemporary art have to defend it, frankly," she says.

McLeod hopes to guide her artists into the hands of these sorts. She mentions no names, but

the biggies in California are obvious: the Broads, the Bells, the Schwabs, the Stones. "Selling artwork, all money is not the same shade of green." It's akin to an agent putting her actor in a movie, she explains. It needs the best script possible, the most interesting role, a great supporting cast.

And after five years at BlumHelman Gallery (co-owned by Joseph Helman, closed in 1991), another 13 at Christie's, and now eight at Gagosian, McLeod knows the players. On the artist side, she helps manage showing schedules and produces exhibitions at the gallery. On the collector side, she visits clients' homes to get a better sense of their aesthetic, attends museum shows with them and presents work she thinks might match. There's art to be found at Gagosian around \$50,000, but a million-dollar sale is "more fun." And for the committed collector, perks such as studio visits beckon.

There's also the thrill of working for the most powerful dealer in the world—Larry Gagosian. (But that's not all fun and games; as of press time, Gagosian was in the midst of two thorny lawsuits.) "Everything is first-class when it comes to Larry," McLeod gushes. "He has astonishing taste in all aspects. The heavy business cards, the Richard Meier building... he's also the most tenacious man I've ever met." •

MARY ZLOT

for some reason, must sell, she brings the piece back to the dealer. "I really believe in the dealer system. Being up-front and honest allows you to enjoy a reputation that is helpful for all your clients," she says. "When something great comes into a gallery, and they know we represent terrific clients, we get the call."

It's not just shopping. The team educates, researches the provenance of pieces, deals with insurance, manages the collections, and produces educational videos and slides for all their corporate accounts (Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co.'s worldwide international offices; Schwab corporation; Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe)—even commissioning and finding art for the \$1.2 billion Dallas Cowboys Stadium. Now, large-scale wall drawings by Franz Ackermann, Mel Bochner and Lawrence Weiner appear on staircases, walls and ramps, and Jenny Holzer does her "truisms" on the video screen. "Education is such a large part of our work. I love learning about new artists and I appreciate and respect the creative spirit. And sharing that with our clients...It never gets dull or boring!" she says. •

NOW SHOWING

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"I've had to try harder at everything I've ever done in my whole life except for being me. I'm not the youngest. I'm not the best dancer. I'm not the tallest. There are a lot of things that I'm not, but [that's why] I feel people want me to win. We like to watch people who are slightly flawed."

Against public opinion, the majority of Von Teese's fans are women, which she credits to the concept of manipulated versus natural beauty. "I know the effect I have on people when I'm stripped down without my tricks," she says. "On Halloween, I put on jeans and paint my nails beige, wear beige lip-gloss and a blonde wig. I never get a second look."

Heather (a name reserved for the closest kin) attended high school in Orange County—her parents relocated the family from her native Michigan. "I didn't have the money to buy designer clothes and things my friends were buying—Jordache and Guess jeans. I just felt really ordinary and boring and was incredibly shy." She found a curling iron, started wearing makeup, transformed flea market lingerie into dresses and relished the sudden attention.

After her stint at Lady Ruby's lingerie shop in high school, she was working at a makeup counter by day and by night, had landed her first gig at a Tustin strip joint called Captain Cream (which she left in '98). Von Teese's stage name was a tribute to the silent film star Dita Parlo, and when *Playboy* required a surname for a lingerie shoot, she chose Von Teese from the phone book. The magazine misprinted it as Von Teese, and she just decided to stick with it. It's also not a secret that in her twenties she got breast implants and had a beauty mark tattooed next to her left eye. And after years of wearing corsets, Von Teese is able to cinch her waist from a size 22 to a 16.5.

One day shy of her 40th birthday, she is elegantly perched on a blue velvet chaise in her library. A team of workers is in the process of covering the backyard in two feet of rose petals (she insists they are only helping for the party). "The theme is disheveled formalwear. Exiled aristocrats." Hardly showing her age, Von Teese performed her signature Martini Glass number just a few weeks prior at the opening of The Ritz-Carlton, Vienna. It's not a family show, in nothing but a G-string and pasties, she swirls and strips around the rim while bathing herself with an olive shaped sponge. "When I'm up there, I'm not like, 'Oh my god, everyone thinks I'm so sexy.' I'm thinking, 'I hope people like this. I hope it's funny. I hope they get the joke.'" By and large they do—and her sex appeal is not lost on anyone, either.

Since her divorce in 2007 from musician Marilyn Manson, plus another three-year relationship, she has been single for the past year. "I'm a grown-up now. I definitely feel differently about trying to let people know more about who I really am. I'm not trying to intimidate people," she says. The real Dita Von Teese seems to be an honest woman who's still looking to buy her '50s dream house, takes dressage lessons in Griffith Park and enjoys throwing parties. She's laying the groundwork for a future off the stage, recently launching her first fragrance at Fred Segal, the international ARTDECO cosmetics collection, Von Folies lingerie (available on stylebop.com), and a dress collection at Decades on Melrose. She's quick with a compact—but deplores superficiality: "Someone asked me the other day if I ever feel objectified on stage. I've never felt objectified on stage, but I do when people just want to get my picture. You know they just want their Facebook picture; they want to Tweet. They don't even say hello or introduce themselves."

Or worse, "When I pick up a magazine, I don't want to read a story if the actress or actor doesn't say something racy or vulnerable or interesting. I don't want to hear about their character or their makeup line. No, I don't care." But only if it's the truth. She refers to an embarrassing story her family read in *Vanity Fair* that claimed she was in a triple X-rated gang bang (which was actually a Czechoslovakian girl using her name).

"How could they get that wrong?" she wonders. "It's not like I'm hiding anything." •