



Glamping

Commune with nature without sleeping on the ground.

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
HEATHER SKYLER**

“THE REAL HOUSEWIVES OF ORANGE COUNTY” did it, so we thought we’d better give it a try. Glamping, or glamorous camping, has become very popular in recent years. The idea is that you get to go out and enjoy nature without the uncomfortable, tedious parts of camping, such as sleeping on the ground, keeping warm at night, getting rained on, hanging food out of the reach of bears, and so forth.

El Capitan Canyon, the same resort visited by the Housewives in Season 7, is the perfect place to experience glamping. Sitting on 300 rolling acres of canyon just across the highway and up the hill from El Capitan State Beach, and only 20 miles north of Santa Barbara, El Capitan Canyon caters to luxury campers.

Lodging comes in a variety of shapes and sizes; there are 145 cabins, all with a furnace, electricity, a bathroom and

a small kitchenette (*most don’t provide dishware or utensils*). Prices for cabins start at \$245 and go up to \$795, for the resort’s most luxurious living space.

Adventure Yurts are \$205 nightly and consist of canvas walls, an indoor skylight at the top of a domed roof and electricity.

The resort’s most rustic accommodations are called Safari Tents. Starting at \$155, these structures consist of canvas walls, screened windows, a wood floor and electricity. Bathrooms are shared for yurts and safari tents.

All accommodations are furnished with willow beds, down-style duvets, and Western-inspired blankets. Each site also comes with its own firepit and picnic table, perfect for dinner and a crackling fire under the stars.

We stayed in a creekside cabin, which was lovely but most likely would’ve



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1. WHO NEEDS A TENT?

Thanks to glamping, outdoor lovers needn't sleep on the hard dirt.

2. EL CAPITAN SPA One of the many rustic signs you'll find at the resort points you toward a hot-stone massage.

3. AT YOUR DOORSTEP

Nature's wondrous beauty is located just outside a comfortable mini-home.



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been even more delightful if the creek hadn't been dried up due to the drought. A small porch looked out over trees and the firepit. The furniture inside was constructed of dark, heavy wood – well-made and substantial. The bed was cozy and warm. A vaulted ceiling and lots of windows provided beautiful light and gave the illusion of extra space.

Unlike traditional camping, dining is fairly easy at El Capitan. Food can be purchased at the Canyon Market, which offers things such as eggs Benedict, pancakes, burgers, salads, sandwiches and pizzas.

All meals feature organic produce grown in the El Capitan Canyon Garden and at other local farms in Santa Barbara County.

Espresso drinks and coffee are for sale, and if you purchase a \$12 metal Canyon Logo Mug, you can get free

coffee refills for your entire trip and any future trips that bring you back to El Capitan Canyon. A nice perk!

If you want to cook in your cabin but didn't pack all the necessary tools, you can order signature barbecue kits from the Canyon Market. All kits include a main dish such as chicken or hot dogs, a Logo Canvas Bag, baked beans, a green salad, garlic bread, non-alcoholic drinks and a s'mores kit. Dinners for two begin at \$50, and dinners for four begin at \$65. With a few hours' notice, one of these meals can be delivered to your campsite.

And don't forget to try one of the many featured Santa Barbara County wines. Stay for a wine tasting, Friday nights in the summer.

During the day, there are an array of activities to choose from. Stay on site and enjoy the heated pool, or check out a complimentary cruiser bike and ride the trails. Walk down to the beach and explore the tide pools or surf.

If you're in the mood for pampering, hike up the hill to the El Capitan Spa and choose from a variety of massages. A classic Swedish-style treatment starts at \$125. There are hot-stone massages, "barefoot deeper-work," herbal scalp massages and foot salt scrubs.

At the end of the day, build a fire and sit back to enjoy the fresh air, bird song and the occasional skunk sighting. Yes, this is still nature, and there are creatures – despite the fancy cabin a few feet away.



Comfy origins Glamping originated in the early 1900s, when European and American travelers camped in Africa.