

MARCH 3, 2008

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HOT NEW HOTELS

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Venice Beach ECO- COTTAGES

BY MARK ROGERS

WHEN IT COMES TO BEING HIP, GREEN IS THE NEW BLACK. Nowadays it's hard to find a resort or hotel that isn't knee-deep in green initiatives. But you'd have to search hard and long to find a more eco-sensitive property than the newly opened **Venice Beach Eco-Cottages** (www.venicebeachecocottages.com). Each of the three one-bedroom, circa-1922 cottages in Venice Beach, CA, have been restored in three completely different styles, albeit along the eco-sustainable principles held dear by the husband and wife owners, Cynthia Foster and Karel Samsom. Foster is an actor, having appeared in such programs as *Rescue Me* and *The Dave Chapelle Show*, and Samsom is a professor and environmental activist. Samsom is fond of describing their aims as being guided by The Triple Bottom Line Principle—"People, Planet, Profits."

The three cottages are priced at \$1,400 per week, \$1,500 per week in the summer high season. All three come with a small front deck and share the same floor plan.

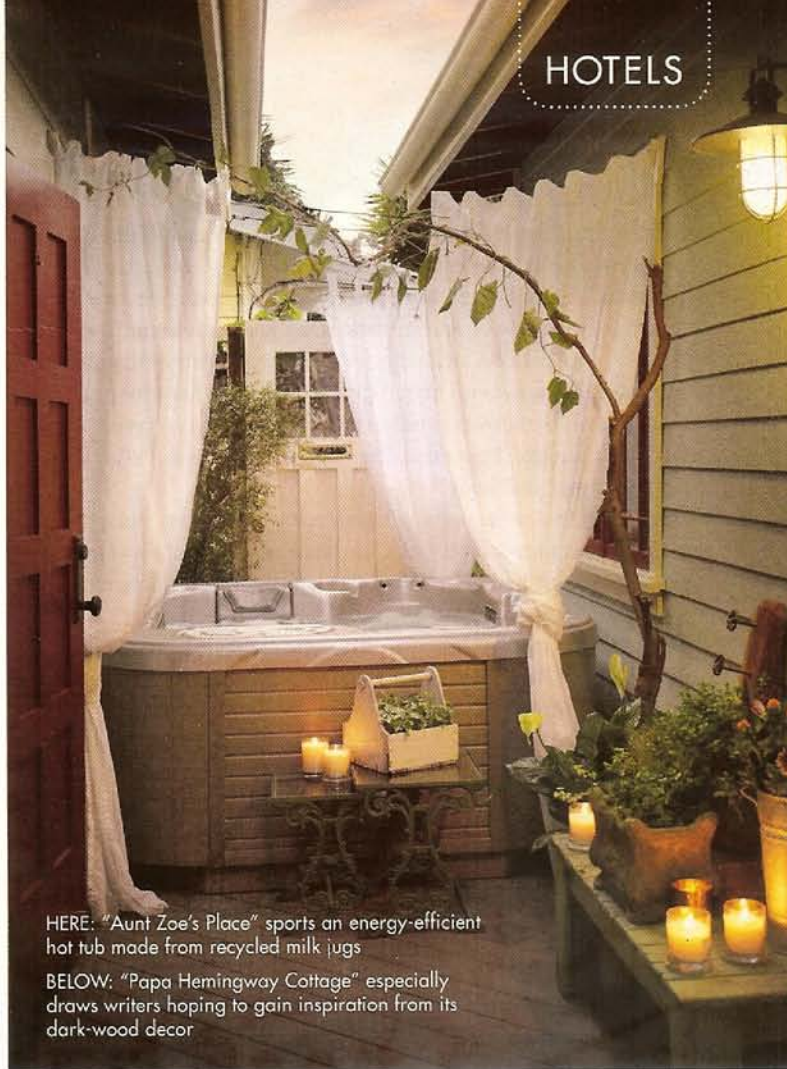
The "Papa Hemingway Cottage" is a tribute to alpha-male scribe Ernest Hemingway. The cottage's interior design features dark stained wood and a sophisticated, masculine decor. Writers especially are drawn to its cozy ambiance. Sunny California may await outdoors, but inside, it's easy to imagine you're in a piney Michigan cabin.

"Aunt Zoe's Place" is a celebration of 1940s/50s kitsch. The cottage has a lake cabin theme, full of vintage knick knacks and contemporary art. It's a good choice for couples because of its sunny bedroom and access to the sole hot tub on the property (for an extra \$20 a day). The energy-efficient Dimension One hot tub's exterior is fashioned from recycled milk jugs and the water is cleaned with ozone and UV light. Guests should be aware, however, that the hot tub sits on a deck between Papa Hemingway and Aunt Zoe's cottages, making it less private than some guests might prefer.

"Le Bebe" is an attractive choice for the young and hip. The cottage sports what the owners call a "candied baroque" interior design. The color scheme is Parisian blue, candy apple red and chrome. Although the decor is described as

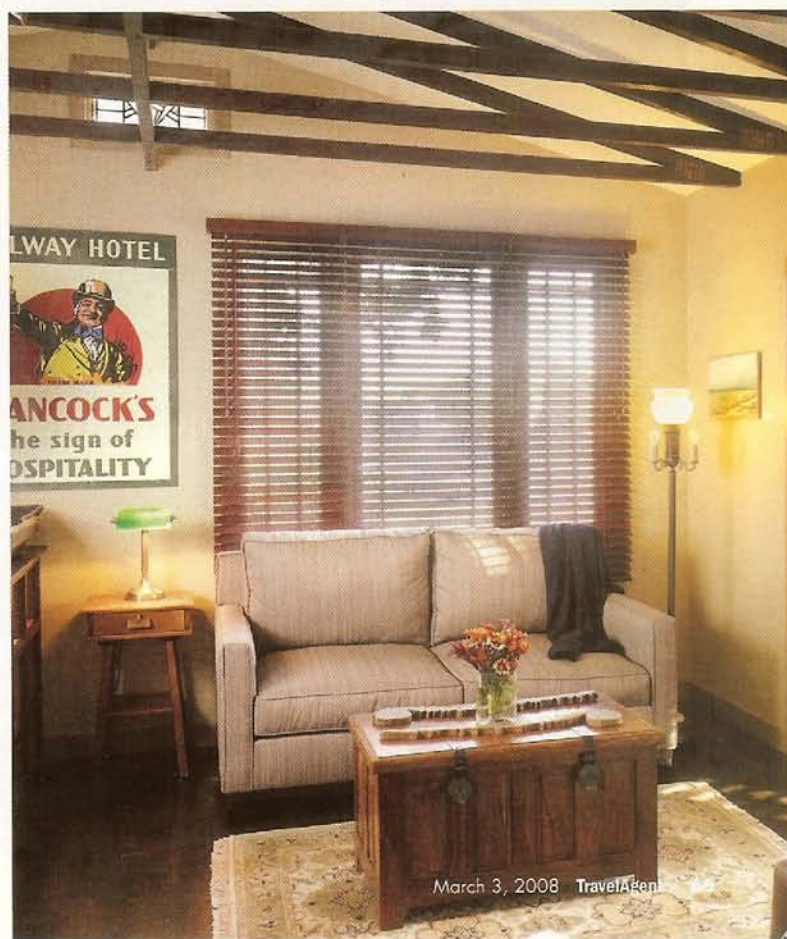
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HERE: "Aunt Zoe's Place" sports an energy-efficient hot tub made from recycled milk jugs

BELOW: "Papa Hemingway Cottage" especially draws writers hoping to gain inspiration from its dark-wood decor



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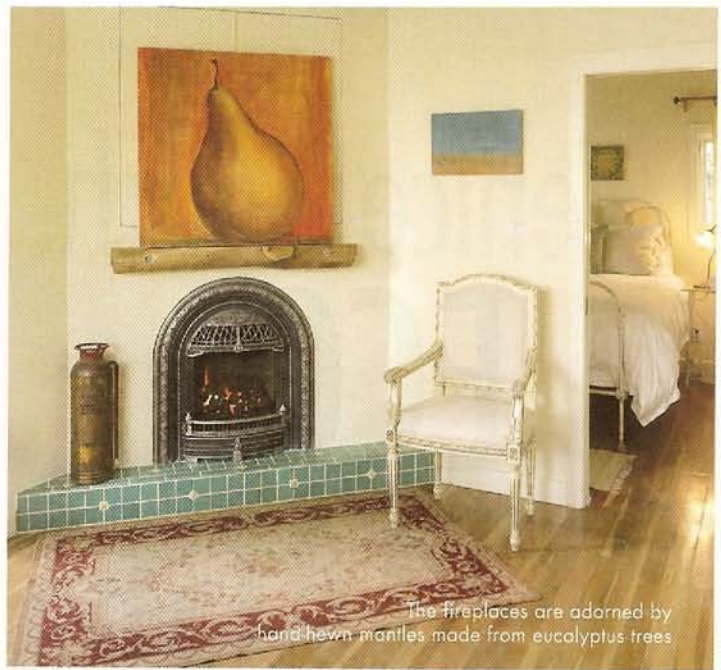
mid-century modern/late 1960s French, we noticed some hints of the '70s.

As different as the cottages are, they share many eco-sustainable details and features. They're solar powered, the couches are made from recycled polyester, the beds have organic mattresses and linens and bathroom floors are made of wine corks. A touch that we found particularly beautiful was the fireplace mantles hand-hewn from the eucalyptus trees that grow just outside the cottages, which the owners had to trim back so that solar panels would receive direct sunlight. Foster describes their design ethos as, "What did we find at the salvage yard today?"

Guests will find reclaimed Craftsman cottage windows, vintage stained-glass windows, farm sinks, kitchen Hoosiers, and clawfoot tubs. Tech junkies won't have to rough it; the cottages have a widescreen TV, a home theater system, an iPod doc and Wi-Fi.

Rounding out this eco-friendly picture are energy-efficient appliances and dual-flush toilets. The cottages also feature paintings by local artists, with many for sale. Venice Beach Eco-Cottages even employs a green cleaning service that uses enzyme-based cleaning products.

On arrival, guests find a welcome basket filled with organic coffee, fruit and wine. The owners suggest guests visit www.yummi.com and order in advance so their cottage pantries will be stocked with favorite food items. Venice Beach Eco-Cottages is pet friendly and homemade organic dog treats are provided. Arrangements can be made for in-cottage spa treatments and visits by personal trainers



The fireplaces are adorned by hand hewn mantles made from eucalyptus trees

(after all—guests are only minutes from Hollywood). The owners also consider doing good in the community to be an essential part of ecotourism. They belong to Pick a Charity and three percent of gross revenues will go to charities selected by guests from a list on the Venice Beach Eco-Cottages website.

The cottages are about a 15-minute drive from LAX and a four-block walk from shops and restaurants on trendy Abbott Kinney Boulevard.

Travel agents can contact the owners Cynthia Foster and Karel Samsom with special requests at info@venicebeachecocottages.com or 866-802-3110. ■

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