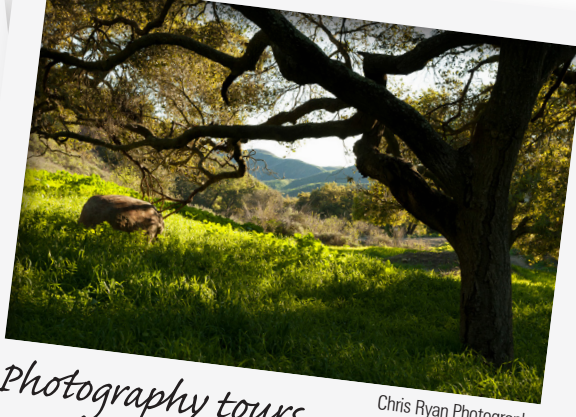




Hiking adventures



Photography tours

Chris Ryan Photography



Restoration projects

Wine & Food
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The VC Star Wine & Food Experience,
presented by Mission Produce,
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Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust: Home of the Two Trees

Opening Nature's Door to Ventura Residents and Friends

BY LISA CAREY

Standing as nature's sentinels along the ridgeline of Ventura's Santa Ynez Mountains, Two Trees dwell at the home of the Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust. Beyond a picturesque screensaver, the iconic eucalyptus trees have come to symbolize Ventura's perseverance and connection to the rich lands bordering the sea.

Altered, much like many Ventura residents in the wake of the Thomas Fire, the trees remain, their 120-year legacy ensured by the unlikely tour de force of Richard and Bonnie Atmore. In 2014, the rancher and purpose-driven philanthropist co-founded the Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust with the goal of providing continued stewardship to over 6,000 acres of working landscape in the Ventura foothills.

"You can't help but smile within when you hike among the trees and canyons here," says Bonnie. "The sights, the smells, the critters, they open a window to view life's essence. Sort of like a reality re-boot that puts you in a different frame. We all need that."

LEGACY OF CONSERVATION

At a time when development is sub-dividing and swallowing up local lands, Rancho Ventura is seeking to further expand the preservation of the region's sweeping vistas for future generations.

"These foothills were stewarded by the Chumash Indians dating back over 22,000 years. The life of the land is at the heart of everything we do, it's who we are," says Richard. A land management professional, environmental contractor and rancher, he has been continuously managing more than 6,000 acres of rangeland in the Ventura Foothills in one capacity or another for more than 39 years.

As the co-founders of the Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust, Richard and Bonnie came together by traveling different, yet parallel paths. Theirs is a love story that takes to heart the harmony of the hillsides. After leading separate lives and raising families of their own, after knowing one another in social circles, as professionals, colleagues and friends, they fell in love, married and merged their passions into one. Call it kismet, or fate, the duo discovered what drew them together, lie at their feet. The land.



Stewardship and conservation

NATURAL DIVERSITY

Richard and Bonnie view Rancho Ventura as a working landscape. They are the stewards.

"Our mission is to protect the natural diversity, scenic open space, and agricultural vitality of our Ventura County ranch and coastal areas," says Richard, a recipient of numerous awards for "Excellence in Environmental & Agricultural Land Stewardship" and holistic land management practices.

Together they run a 300-head cow-calf operation. By rotating pasture grazing and paying close attention to the various ecosystems, the ranch refuge is flourishing and productive. Keeping the ranch's cattle on these Ventura hillsides where the Spanish first introduced livestock when building the San

Buenaventura Mission in 1782, is essential to the holistic land practices of Rancho Ventura.

The duo also farm 91-acres of avocados on the ranch. All the while, promoting diversity of native plants, reducing invasive plant species, and improving the habitat for the prolific wildlife.

SHARING THE LAND

Although very close to a metropolitan area, the wildlife and plants in the Ventura Foothills remain relatively isolated and protected. "Sharing this rich land and its inhabitants with our neighbors allows us to inspire nature lovers of all ages," says Bonnie. "There's nothing more rewarding than seeing that spark in a child's eye when they come upon an animal in the wild, or sharing that

sense of accomplishment when a local hiker crests the mountain top, takes in the fresh air and views their homeland with a sense of humbling awe."

Hikes on select Saturday mornings give guests the opportunity for a 45-minute hike from the Poinsettia Pavilion top parking lot to Two Trees. "Introducing wonder and appreciation of our natural surroundings is super important to maintaining the vitality of these precious hills," says Bonnie. "Nature has a subtle way of replacing our daily stress with a sense of calmness."

On a clear day, visitors can see dramatic views of the region south and southwestward over the City of Ventura to the Channel Islands. The vast Oxnard Plain, Santa Monica Mountains and Point Mugu can be seen to the southeast, and Sulphur Mountain and the Topa Topa Mountains lie in the north distance. You may even find a Western Burrowing Owl, Southern California Rufous-Crowned Sparrow, or Northern Harrier, as well as other rare birds. Rare mammals like the Long-Eared Myotis, and San Diego Desert Woodrat, and reptiles such as San Diego and California Horned Lizards and Coastal Western Whiptail, have also been sighted. Mountain Lions are regularly seen in the lens of the trail cams throughout the back country.

EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

This year additional recreational programs like bird watching, photography tours, and group service restoration projects were also offered. "We will soon be launching the Conservation Ambassador program for students to learn about land conservation and agriculture," says Bonnie.

According to hiker Jeremy Williamson, "Have you ever wondered about the seashells in our local mountains? One of the perks to hiking with our Two Trees docents is you might learn something cool!"

Home to Two Trees and two people sharing a common vision, the Rancho Ventura Conservation Trust ensures the preservation of a protected space where animals, fauna, and people, can all come together as One with nature. To find out a bout local events, donate, or get involved, visit venturaconservation.com.

RANCHO VENTURA
CONSERVATION TRUST

Join us in conserving
these hillsides forever.

Go to venturaconservation.com
or call 805-644-6851

"Our mission is to protect the natural diversity, scenic open space, and agricultural vitality of our Ventura County ranch and coastal areas." —Richard Atmore, co-founder

Chris Ryan Photography