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AUSTRALIA'S BOX OFFICE MARVEL

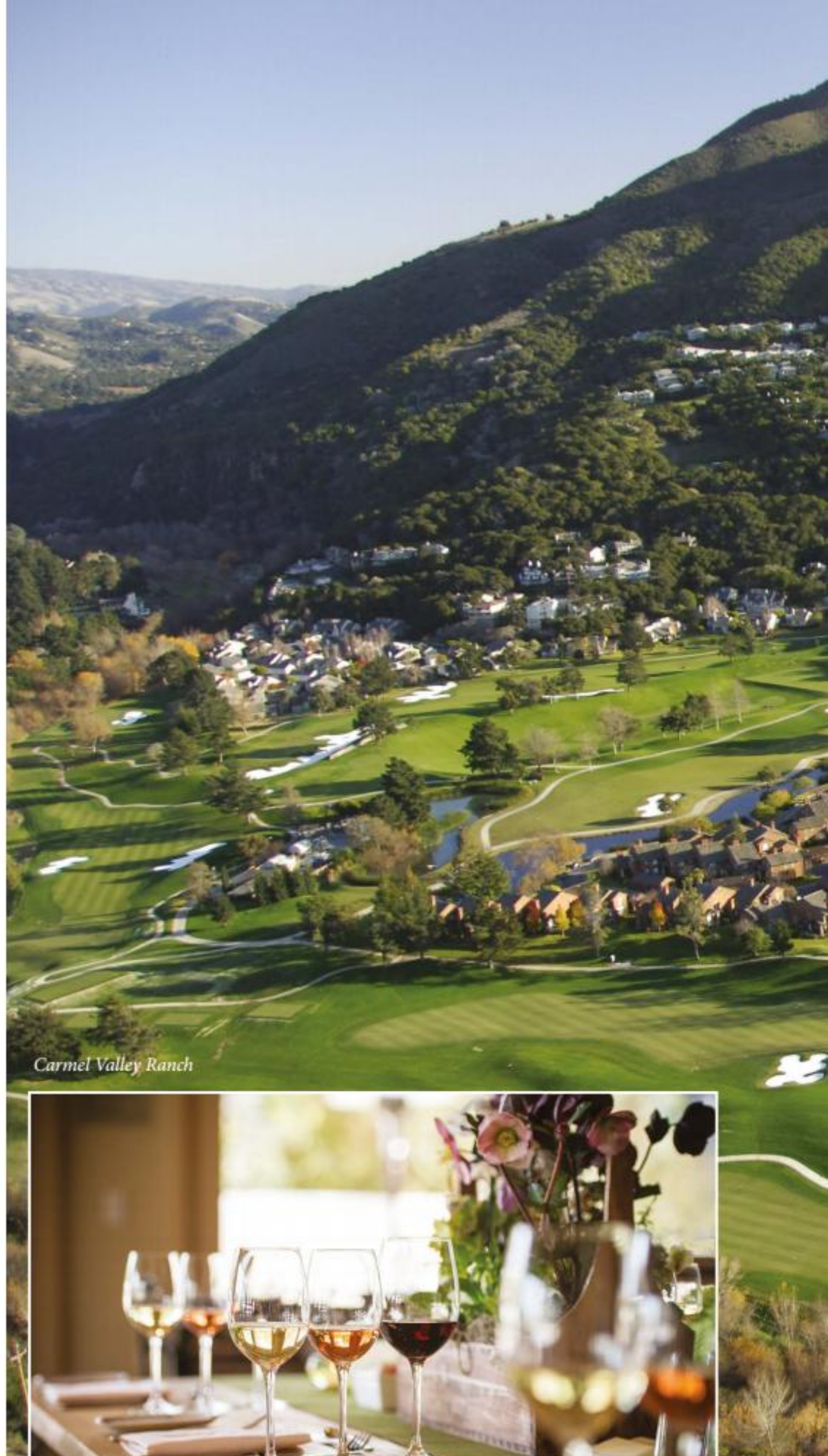
STAY & PLAY: Carmel Valley Ranch

Speaking of the wild side, we head over to our next hidden gem, Carmel Valley Ranch. This resort places its emphasis on the “idea of play.” From rounds of golf to an intense bee experience (suiting up in a beekeeper’s suit and getting up close and personal with the bees), this is a spot for play for all ages. The suites and guest rooms draw upon a California ranch style from their vantage point sitting on the ridges and rolling hills of the Santa Lucia Mountains. Guests can choose their suite location from three different neighborhoods depending on their view preference of the valley, the bluffs and golf course or the incredibly intimate courtyard gardens. The rooms themselves define the precise point where luxury meets bliss.

Focusing on the idea of play, we head over to the resort’s 18-hole golf course which is the only Pete Dye-designed golf course in Northern California. With a recent multi-million dollar course enhancement, the par 70 course challenges your game with its dramatic elevation changes while forcing you to avoid its natural surroundings like vineyards, lavender fields and old oak groves that guard each hole. The award-winning views mixed with the unique microclimate that provides over 300 days of sunshine promises nothing but the perfect round of golf.

After playing 18 holes, you’re welcome to enjoy the gorgeous clubhouse that in 2013 underwent a million-dollar enhancement. Golfers have access to the newly-placed fire pit seating areas, updated locker rooms and huge outdoor patio seating to further take in the views and ambiance surrounding the course.

Carmelvalleyranch.com



Carmel Valley Ranch



Valley Kitchen

EAT: Valley Kitchen at Carmel Valley Ranch

Stepping back indoors, we head over to the newly remodeled Valley Kitchen, where Chef Tim Wood reiterates that the kitchen is the heart of the home (or in this case the Ranch). The freshly expanded Valley Kitchen creates a highly vibrant environment that connects its guests with the local community through the taste of food and is arguably the social hub for the entire resort.

Focusing on the popular “farm to table” concept, Wood encourages his chefs to be creative and unique. The menu is broken down into three sections — “Let’s Taste” (nibbles), “Let’s Share” (commune) and “Let’s Eat” (full portions). Diners are meant to feel as if they are experiencing a home-cooked meal which they are sharing among their family. All items are sourced from the valley region and the dining experience is inspired by the area’s natural surroundings. Carmelvalleyranch.com/dining/valley-kitchen



Swing Wines

TASTE: Swing Wines at Carmel Valley Ranch

To further help guests experience the local Monterey culture, the Ranch has even created its very own wine label. Swing Wines launched in fall of 2015 and is curated from its Carmel Valley Ranch Pinot Noir Vineyard that spans four acres across the actual ranch. Winemaker Peter Figge, who sadly passed away this year, held a zest and passion for life that he poured into his wines.

Among the wines curated, some of the most notable were the 2015 Swing “Reserve” Pinot Noir Carmel Valley, a rich bodied Pinot with flavors drawing from dark cherries, plums and earthy threads. The 2015 Swing Pinot Noir is a vibrant, bright bodied wine known for its long finish from bing cherries, blackberries and earthy nuances. And last but not least, the 2016 Swing “Reserve” Rose is crisp, clean, and full of summery acidity created from hints of strawberries, melon and white cherries.