

CALIFORNIA CONDOR SIGHTINGS JUST PART OF UNIQUE BIG SUR GETAWAY PACKAGE

BIG SUR, Calif., Feb. 23, 2009 ... Weekend travelers to Big Sur this year can venture into the natural habitat of the rare California Condor, taking an intimate look at the once endangered species through a unique package unveiled at the luxurious [Ventana Inn & Spa](http://www.ventanainn.com) <<http://www.ventanainn.com>> in association with the Ventana Wildlife Society.

When the last free-flying California condor was captured from the wild more than 20 years ago, an intensive recovery effort began to save this species from extinction. Today, thanks to organizations like the Ventana Wildlife Society, the condor population stands at 326, nearly 170 of those living in the wild.

“There aren’t very many places you can go to see condors – there are only a few places in the world,” said Kelly Sorenson, executive director of the Ventana Wildlife Society.

“Because we work so closely with the condors and we know their habits inside and out, we are in the unique position of being able to provide a true insider’s tour.”

In the Big Sur area, Sorenson said there are 47 free-flying condors, three of which are wild-born. Plus, he estimates there are as many as four baby condor chicks in Big Sur alone.

In addition to viewing the condors that call Big Sur home, Sorenson said his society’s “red carpet tour” also will allow guests to view peregrine falcons, bald eagles and assorted marine life.

Available on weekends from March 20 through Oct. 31, the two-night Ventana Wildlife Package for two starts at \$1,030 and includes:

- Two nights’ (Friday and Saturday) deluxe accommodations
- Limited release bottle of Chalone Vineyard red wine in honor of the California Condor
- Two-hour wildlife viewing excursion led by a Ventana Wildlife Society biologist
- Complimentary one-year membership to the [Ventana Wildlife Society](http://www.ventanawildlifesociety.org) <<http://www.ventanawildlifesociety.org>>
- Daily activities, including wine-and-cheese reception, discovery walk and yoga session
- Complimentary continental breakfast daily

For each package purchased, Ventana Inn & Spa will make a \$300 donation to the Ventana Wildlife Society, a non-profit organization.

The package is subject to availability, and no more than three Ventana Wildlife Packages can be booked each weekend. Rates vary by room type and arrival date and do not include tax, gratuity or the \$25 per night resort fee. The Ventana Wildlife Society cannot guarantee condor sightings on each tour (which will include no more than six resort guests), but their specially trained biologists will put guests in an excellent position to view the rare birds.

Ventana's lodging options feature 60 spacious rooms and suites in 12 separate one and two-story buildings, each with private balcony or patio and either ocean or valley and mountain views. Resort amenities include the award winning Allegria Spa, two swimming pools (one clothing-optional), and the Inn's famous Japanese baths, which are open daily and nightly to moonlight and a spectacle of stars.

Ventana Inn & Spa, named one of the "500 World's Best Hotels" by *Travel + Leisure* magazine, is fresh from an \$18 million renovation, which has resulted in a dramatic facelift of its 60 suites and guest rooms, a restoration of the upper Japanese Baths and an enhancement of the gardens.

To book the "Ventana Wildlife" package, call 800.628.6500 or visit www.ventanainn.com.

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About Ventana Inn & Spa (www.ventanainn.com)

Ventana Inn & Spa, a Joie de Vivre-managed hotel, is situated on 243 acres in Big Sur, 30 miles south of Carmel-by-the-Sea just off Central California's famed Highway One. Sitting 1,200 feet above the Pacific Ocean, Ventana is renowned for its romantic allure, rustic sophistication and tranquil setting, with 50-mile views of the rugged Big Sur Coastline. The resort features the renowned Allegria Spa and award-winning cuisine.

About Ventana Wildlife Society (www.ventanaws.org)

California's only not-for-profit releasing and managing condors in California, Ventana Wildlife Society is working hard to restore this magnificent species to the wild through direct, hands-on recovery, advocacy and research. Ventana Wildlife Society, the lone non-profit organization that is releasing condors in California, works in collaboration with US Fish and Wildlife Service, California State Fish and Game, National Parks Service, Santa Barbara Zoo and the USDA Forest Service as well as the captive breeding institutions of San Diego Wild Animal Park, Los Angeles Zoo, Oregon Zoo, and the Peregrine Fund.

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