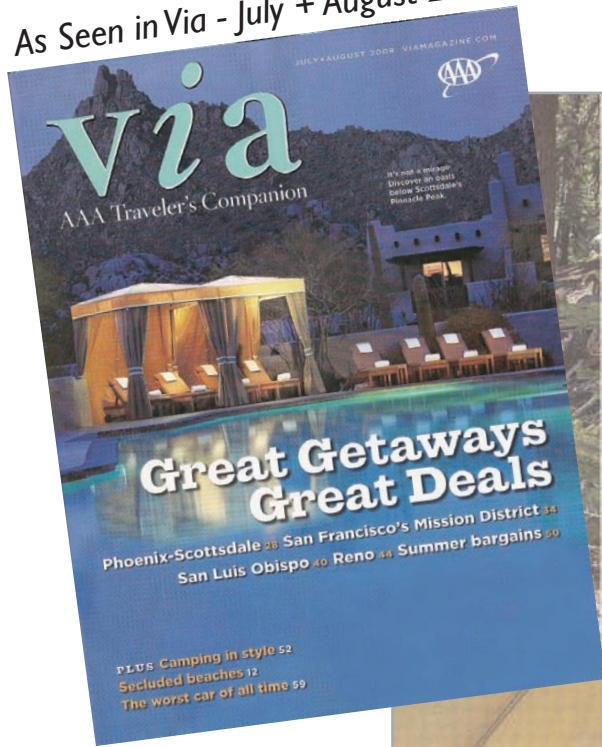




# HAPPY CAMPER

"getting to where life is good"

As Seen in Via - July + August 2008



architecture simply served to showcase us as poor—or at least eccentric—cousins. Morning unveiled our environs, an oak- and sycamore-dotted stream drainage within walking distance of El Capitán State Beach. More than 100 cabins (outnumbering tents four to one) were separated into "villages" where kids and couples were riding bikes or relaxing. To us, however, camping still meant hiking (if without heavy packs), so after breakfast we set out on the Bill Wallace Trail, which climbs 1,000 feet into the backcountry. (Nowadays, docents lead day-only outings on the trail.)

Shoulder hawks were shot past. We were led by sandstone with white yucca on the steep slopes. The trail was miles, levitating; then we followed to the coast, with a view away below. We grilled our tent, having a set-and-utensil bar for \$73, not including who costs another campground's market. I reported the premise of camping, though I secretly envying our who retreated within after the sun went the fog came in.

member of the resort's—and a sizable number opt for a cabin on the site attracts a decidedly up in RVs—some of and some of the adults. None of this was terrible, which after all is beside a wider brand of luxury it.

When we drove in after dark, we noticed somebody else tent illuminated by lamps from within, the inhabitants' silhouettes moving about on the walls. Our own safari structure sat between two bona fide wooden cabins; the 12 x 14 foot tent itself was appointed with a willow-frame bed flanked by tables for reading lamps, wooden chairs, a storage trunk, and an electric heater, with towels and toiletries stacked on a table as they would be in a bed-and-breakfast. Still, we felt unexpectedly self-conscious. In places like Yosemite's Camp Curry campground, I realized, everyone stays in a tent. Here the canvas

rainchild of Burr Hughes, a 54-year-old Memphis insurance executive who, armed with a new architecture degree from the University of Cambridge at age 45, proceeded to carve a high-end resort from a forested slope in the Sierra Nevada. Inspired by the Yosemite camps, Hughes bought 40 acres between Kings Canyon and Sequoia national parks, where he spent \$3 million building 36 tent cabins and a dining pavilion patterned after an Etruscan temple.

This is the realm of Ryan Solien, a 40-year-old chef who had never lived outdoors or even been to the mountains but has