

805 LIVING

AUGUST 2009



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Kids
COVER TO COVER



Clockwise from top: Unspoiled stretches of sea, sand, mountains, and sky are what the Channel Islands are all about; adventure awaits aboard Truth Aquatics' three vessels: *Vision*, *Conception*, and *Truth*; elephant seals make a ruckus on land and in the water—just don't get too close.

Back to Nature, Sea Style

Take your budding naturalists, sea captains, and teens who just like the great outdoors on a Truth Aquatics multi-day adventure cruise (from \$363 per adult, \$272 per child) to the Channel Islands. Highlights from a recent three-day trip aboard the 65-foot *Truth* included snorkeling in kelp forests, kayaking, hikes led by a volunteer naturalist, and an awe-inspiring trip inside Painted Cave on Santa Cruz Island (the world's longest sea cave; so named because fresh water trickling down through the rocks brings to light colorful minerals). The crew is knowledgeable, professional, and fun and do their best to accommodate everyone's needs and desires, so be sure to tell them what experiences are most important to you. Meals and snacks are delicious, plentiful, (and included!) and the galley cook somehow manages to take into account everyone's different dietary requirements to produce impressive multi-course meals in a kitchen smaller than most hall closets.

For three-day trips, guests board the night before in Santa Barbara Harbor and fall asleep as the ship gently sways in dock. The ship departs at 4 a.m. (both to ensure a smoother channel crossing and so you arrive in time for a full day of adventure). On my trip, I woke around 6:30 to the smell of bacon frying and the sounds of delighted passengers' squeals—we were surrounded by blue whales spouting, breaching, and showing off their flukes.

Guests sleep in comfortable single or double berths equipped with reading lights and privacy curtains, but these are close quarters (which just adds to the spirit of adventure). You may want to bring an eye mask to block out cabin lights and earplugs to dampen your neighbor's snoring; and it's a good idea to pack lightly since stowage room is sparse. But for the sights—animal, vegetable, mineral—you'll see and the memories you'll make, these are small concessions indeed. 805-962-1127; www.truthaquatics.com

HOT TIP

Power up the RV or dust off that tent and search for camping sites at www.camp-california.com, where you can search by location or special event (state fairs, music festivals). Area campgrounds Flying Flags RV Resort in Buellton (877-783-5247; www.flyingflags.com) and Pismo Coast Village RV Resort in Pismo Beach (888-782-3224; www.pismo coastvillage.com) both recently completed renovations. ■