

[back to article](#)

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Timber Cove Reopens

Renovation brings better ocean views, upgraded rooms to landmark resort north of Jenner

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Timber Cove Inn once was the top destination on the Sonoma Coast, a secluded stone-and-redwood lodge perched on a rocky point above the crashing Pacific surf.

But the 50-room inn slipped into disrepair in recent years as the former owner tried to sell it.

A Southern California hotel developer bought Timber Cove for \$8 million last August and closed it for a \$2.5 million makeover.

It's open again and the sparkle is back.

"We think we have a jewel out there on the coast," said Bob Olson, president of R.D. Olson Development, the inn's new owner.

The renovated lodge 15 miles north of Jenner features a better view of the ocean from the restaurant and bar. There's a garden off the lobby, patio dining and an outdoor firepit overlooking the ocean where guests can enjoy drinks at sunset.

Its rooms have been redone from top to bottom, with fresh carpets, paint, drapes, beds and other furnishings. There are new paintings and sculptures in the rooms and lobby.



JEFF KAN LEE / The Press Democrat
The dining area at Timber Cove Inn overlooks the Pacific. The resort was purchased in August and underwent a major renovation.

There's a new restaurant, Alexander's at Timber Cove Inn, named for Alexander Rotchev, the last Russian commandant at nearby Fort Ross.

New chef Jon Mortimer, who trained in Europe and owned Mortimer's in Boise, Idaho, features dishes like wild mushroom cappuccino, seared sea scallops, hazelnut crusted pork tenderloin in pinot noir reduction sauce and Sebastopol apple cobbler.

Some things haven't changed. There's still a massive stone fireplace in the cathedral-like, wood-beamed lobby.

Just steps from the inn, modern artist Benny Bufano's 93-foot peace statue soars skyward. Bufano started the concrete and tile sculpture in 1962 -- the year before the inn opened -- but it wasn't finished until 1969.

The inn donated the sculpture to the State Parks system in 1980.

"We didn't want to change the character of the property," said Kurt Picillo, the inn's general manager.

Guests have taken notice. "It's really shown some improvement," said Bill Collier, who was vacationing there with his wife last week from Sandpoint, Idaho.

When they stayed at the inn about five years ago, "it was a little decrepit," he said.

The inn is more comfortable than ever, said Collier's wife, Carla Keefer. "It's just lovely," she said.

Timber Cove is now managed by Pacifica Hotel Co., a Santa Barbara company that owns or operates two dozen boutique hotels in California, Hawaii and Florida.

Olson partnered with Pacifica because they specialize in upscale coastal inns, he said. "They share our vision that we could really turn this place around," he said.

Pacifica is giving Timber Cove more Internet exposure, with a bookable Web site and links on Pacifica Hotels' main site, said Lori Keller, the group's marketing director.

"More than 80 percent of travel planning is done online, and this will expose the inn to a much broader audience," she said.

Rates at the refurbished inn range from \$179 to \$399 per night. Most rooms have ocean views, fireplaces and spa tubs.

Like other hotel groups, Pacifica has felt the impact of the slumping economy. It's responded by promoting its coastal

hotels as close-to-home getaways for regional travelers.

Pacifica also is planning to market Timber Cove as a spot for weddings and executive retreats.

Timber Cove Inn was built by Richard Clements, who developed a second-home subdivision nearby in the 1960s. Richard Hojohn owned the lodge from 1979 until last August.

Olson discovered Timber Cove on a camping trip in the 1970s when he was 21.

"I couldn't afford to stay there," Olson said. "I walked in and had a drink at the bar. There was a combo playing and it was full of people from all over the world. It was just alive."

Olson eventually founded a successful Orange County construction company that builds hotels, apartments, offices and retail centers.

Over the years, he returned to stay at the inn and then built a second home at Timber Cove.

Olson said he jumped at the chance to buy the inn when it came on the market. "We still love the place," he said.

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