

## Overview of Wilbur Hot Springs

Wilbur Springs, California – Without a doubt, one of the highlights of a stay at Wilbur Hot Springs is the natural hot mineral water. As long as well over a century ago, Wilbur has been known for its therapeutic mineral waters that heal the body and soothe the soul – both by European settlers of the 1800s and Native American inhabitants long before that. Today’s guests appreciate the waters and more – the resort’s unique and rustic charm, the solitude and peace of the area, opportunities to reconnect with nature, and enjoyable recreational activities afforded by the 1800-acre preserve.

Most guests are first attracted to Wilbur by the popular hot mineral springs. Sheltered by a Japanese-style “Fluminarium,” the water is channeled into three long “flumes” with average temperatures of 98, 105 and 110 degrees Fahrenheit. The area is completely private, and clothing is optional in the flumes, sauna and deck areas (although clothing is required everywhere else on the property). Open day and night to guests, the flumes are a serene haven where courtesy and modesty prevail.

According to Dr. Richard Louis Miller, Wilbur Hot Springs’ owner since 1972 (and ‘caretaker,’ as he prefers to be called, reflecting his commitment to Wilbur’s stewardship), the clothing-optional policy in the fluminarium came about naturally, so to speak. When Miller first purchased the place, it served as his home and of course, one doesn’t wear clothing in one’s bath. Then his cousin married a Japanese woman, skilled in Ikebana and the formal Japanese tea ceremony. She shared with Miller the age-old traditions of the Japanese baths, a public bathing ritual for a private, reserved culture. The group soak also reflected Miller’s personal experiences at the time at places such as Esalen in Big Sur, where similar bathing practices were common. The last factor was a pragmatic one: after several soaks, one’s swimsuit became caked with minerals from the water, and it was just easier to go without! As Dr. Miller says, “When we wore bathing suits in Wilbur’s waters, they became crusted with the minerals that we loved to bathe in, but did not like on our suits. Furthermore, when we hung the suits in our rooms, they smelled of sulfur – which was excellent for the skin, but not for the ambience of the bedroom.”

Thus, the ‘clothing-optional’ policy was born at Wilbur. This continues today and Wilbur’s regular clientele are enthusiastic, vocal proponents of this policy. However, in the interest of attracting others who might enjoy the hot springs, but who are less comfortable with the clothing optional policy, Wilbur occasionally offers Bathing Suits-On Weekends.

The hot waters in the flumes are enhanced by a large, cool-water mineral swimming flume with splendid vistas of the surrounding hills, an outdoor hot mineral sitting flume, and a dry sauna next to the bathhouse. To further enhance one’s well being, Wilbur offers complimentary yoga on weekends on the yoga deck. Trained instructors teach various types of yoga, and guests of all experience levels are welcome. In addition, Wilbur offers massage treatments year-round, performed by licensed professional therapists trained in a variety of techniques, including Esalen, Swedish and deep tissue work.

Guests enjoy other outdoor activities, as well. Hiking and biking are very popular in the nature preserve, home to breathtaking valleys and ridges, high meadows and remnants of the century-old mining operations.

## Wilbur Hot Springs \* For Immediate Release

In spring, wildflowers grow in profusion in the valley, internationally known for the quantity and diversity of its blooms, including orange poppies, yellow tidytips, purple lupine and owl's clover, and rare adobe lilies. Bird-watchers are rewarded year-round: recent sightings include bald eagles, Great Blue Herons, Pileated Woodpeckers, Belted Kingfishers, Goldfinches, Bluebirds, and a variety of hawks, including Red Tails, Northern Harriers, and American Kestrels.

Mountain biking is also a favorite pastime, and complimentary bikes are available for guests to use. For a wilder adventure, river rafting is available nearby in Cache Creek Canyon. There is also a major gambling casino within 30 minutes drive, for those who are so inclined.

Indoors, Wilbur Hot Springs offers guests a selection of accommodations. Reflecting its turn-of-the-century origins, Wilbur's hotel offers private guest rooms, rustic and charming, each with its own special touches. Some rooms feature queen-sized beds, while others offer extra beds for families or small groups. There is also a spacious suite with a private bath and kitchen, and three optional adjoining bedrooms, ideal for a larger family or group of friends. For those on a more modest budget, there is a comfortable 11-bed Bunk Room.

Reflecting the building's century-old beginnings, toilets are conveniently located, European-style, through the hotel. Private showers are adjacent to the fluminarium.

In season, a few campsites are available for those who love to sleep under the stars.

Meals at Wilbur are unique as well. Guests bring their own groceries and prepare their own food. The professional kitchen is well equipped with dishes, cookware, utensils and spices. Refrigerator/freezer and storage space is provided for guests to keep their goods private and fresh. At mealtime, the kitchen becomes a bustling social hub as visitors prepare their meals alongside other guests – in what Dr. Miller calls “the ballet of the kitchen.” There are several delightful areas in which to dine – a small and cozy dining room, another in the Great Room, or al fresco on the veranda or under the ramada.

Recognizing that not all guests prefer to do their own cooking during their Wilbur stay, in 2004 Dr. Miller began offering “Guest Chef Weekends,” featuring well-known California chefs. For a modest fee, Wilbur guests on these special weekends enjoy all five weekend meals – Friday dinner; breakfast, lunch and dinner Saturday; and Sunday brunch – prepared by talented chefs dedicated to intriguing menus and healthy food. Launched in late 2004, the program is proving to be a major success.

In the evening, many guests take a walk under the stars or return to the flumes for another soak. Others congregate in the Great Room to share stories of the day, play music on the hotel piano and selection of other instruments, or curl up with a good book in the Library near one of the propane fireplaces.

For reservations or more information, contact Wilbur Hot Springs by telephone at 530-473-2306, by email at [info@wilburhotsprings.com](mailto:info@wilburhotsprings.com) or online at [www.wilburhotsprings.com](http://www.wilburhotsprings.com)

## **Wilbur Hot Springs' History**

Wilbur Hot Springs' history goes back centuries. Before European settlers came, the springs were used by the Patwin, Pomo, Wintun and Colusi – Native American inhabitants of Northern California's Coast Range mountains. That was soon to change. According to local lore, wealthy social activist and congressman General John Bidwell was searching for gold in 1863 when one of his men got deathly sick. Local Native Americans told him about powerful waters, later to be known as Wilbur Hot Springs. Bidwell brought his man to the waters where he was miraculously cured. General Bidwell went back to San Francisco and Chico (where he owned the best known farm in California) and spread the word of these healing waters.

Throughout America in the late 1800s, hot springs became very popular among those who could afford to stay at fashionable hot springs resorts – and to get there in the first place. Often the journeys were long and arduous – and getting to the Colusa County hot springs, soon to be as renowned as Germany's Baden-Baden spas, were no exception.

However, European settlers became attracted to the Wilbur Hot Springs area because of minerals – not in the water, but in the ground – first, copper and sulfur, then gold. In 1863, Ezekial Wilbur and Edwin Howell purchased a 640-acre ranch for \$1500. Formed to mine copper along Sulphur Creek, their partnership was soon disbanded when copper ore proved difficult to treat and decreased in value. Within eight months, Wilbur purchased Howell's share of the property for \$200, built a wood-frame hotel and announced the opening of 'Wilbur Hot Sulphur Springs' in 1865.

Later that year, Wilbur Hot Sulphur Springs was sold to Marcus Marcuse of Marysville. Meanwhile, the reputation of the "miraculous cures" of Sulphur Creek continued to grow. By the 1880s, the European-style health resort built beside the hot springs reached its heyday: Wilbur Springs was known for its scalding hot water springs – "unexcelled for certain diseases" – that boiled up over an area of 100 square feet. To get there, guests would travel on the Southern Pacific Railroad to Williams, then travel 22 miles to the springs, a four-hour trip by stagecoach.

By 1891, however, Wilbur's fortunes were in decline due to an absentee owner and a better hotel at Sulphur Creek Village. A mile down the road, Sulphur Creek featured a resort and mining village – this time for gold. With its ramshackle bathhouses and neglected cabins, there was "no hotel worthy of the name" at Wilbur. In 1909, the place became a U.S. Post Office (in service until 1945) and was used as a way station for the local stagecoach. In 1915, the decrepit cabins were razed and Wilbur's then-owner, J.W. Cuthbert, built the existing concrete hotel, which was one of the first poured concrete buildings in California. Through the decades, the property continued to change hands, first to the Barker family (supposedly of Ma and Pa Barker fame) and then to the Sutcliff family.

## **Wilbur's Recent Past**

In the 1970s, Dr. Richard Louis Miller became associated with Wilbur. Dr. Miller was a San Francisco psychologist who had left teaching at the University of Michigan in order to study in California with Virginia Satir, the founder of family therapy, and with Fritz Perls, the originator of Gestalt Therapy. Since the late 1960's, Miller had operated a clinic in San Francisco known as the Gestalt Institute for Multiple Psychotherapy. Wanting to relocate his practice to the country to develop a conscious-raising community, he believed intensive psychotherapy in a residential setting would be more effective than short, timed sessions.

## Wilbur Hot Springs \* For Immediate Release

In 1972, Miller came across Wilbur Hot Springs, which was in terrible shape, badly vandalized and littered everywhere with junk. Rusting vehicles and dilapidated buildings were scattered around the property, including the decrepit 20-room bathhouse; and literally tons of old wood, broken glass, burned mattresses and couches, old toilets and other junk littered the land.

Miller rented the “Red House” next door to the hotel and began to live at Wilbur on weekends, where he later rented the hotel for psychology seminars. To address the Herculean task of cleaning up the property, Miller led free Esalen workshops in exchange for two hours’ work per day. The barter system proved effective in cleaning the hotel area so that it could then be fully restored. In addition, the hotel was enlarged with a second floor bunkhouse and a new third floor. Later, an eight-suite passive solar lodge was built into the hill above the hotel.

Miller’s relationship with Wilbur was about to become more permanent: after the Sheriff nailed a foreclosure notice on the front door, Miller attended the foreclosure auction and won the bid for the property. Soon after, Miller and his wife moved to Wilbur full-time, where they lived for seven years. Their daughter Sarana, born at Wilbur in 1975, is now an occasional yoga instructor at the hotel.

Miller opened the historic Hot Springs to the public in 1974. Some years later, he implemented his desire of working with patients in the country. In 1981, he started Cokenders Alcohol and Drug program, closing the hotel for one week a month to hold this pioneering, non-institutional treatment program. There at Wilbur until 1990, Dr. Miller detoxified 1500 seriously addicted, chemically dependent patients using the hot springs’ waters and natural ambience as healing detoxifying agents – and not one patient required medication or hospitalization during their treatment.

In 1999 Dr. Miller bought the adjoining valley consisting of 1560 acres, which had been used for hunting. He placed a conservation easement on the property, thereby limiting development in perpetuity. As a result, Wilbur Hot Springs now has its own nature preserve.

Today there are several generations of regular guests who consider Wilbur their personal soothing sanctuary, calming retreat, and home away from home. They come back time and again to experience the soothing, hot mineral waters that have rejuvenated both body and soul for centuries.

## Wilbur Hot Springs \* For Immediate Release

### Fact Sheet

#### LOCATION

Wilbur Hot Springs is a historic spa and resort in Wilbur Springs, Colusa County, California. Nestled in its own 1800-acre private nature preserve in Northern California's Coastal Range foothills, Wilbur is 22 miles west of Williams and 22 miles east of Clearlake. Accessible via main highways, the resort is just 2-1/2 hours northeast of San Francisco, or 1-1/2 hours north of the Sacramento Airport.

#### RATES

Rates vary by type of accommodations. Private rooms begin at \$185 per night, double occupancy. The apartment – featuring private bath, kitchen, living and dining room – begins at \$289 per night double occupancy. The Bunk Room is priced at \$87 per person. Camping is \$59 per person, in season. Day use rate is \$47 and reservations are required. Special rates are also available for single occupancy (Monday through Thursday, excluding holidays), children and additional guests; please call for details.

*NOTE: These rates are current as of October 2008. Please visit [www.wilburhotsprings.com](http://www.wilburhotsprings.com) or call 530-473-2306 for the latest rates and information about seasonal specials.*

All rates include unlimited use of the natural hot mineral springs, sauna, 1800-acre nature preserve and other facilities.

#### RESORT POLICIES

- Clothing is optional in Wilbur's five mineral baths, located in the private fluminarium and surrounding deck area. However, clothing is required elsewhere on the property. On occasion, the hotel hosts "Suits-On Weekends," where bathing attire is required.
- A two-night minimum is required for bookings on the weekend (excluding the summer) and holidays. One-night reservations are sometimes available by calling the prior night.
- Children are welcome at Wilbur. Children under age 4 may stay for free, but are not permitted in the flumes. Children under age 12 are restricted to daylight hours for use of pools.

#### RESERVATIONS & CANCELLATIONS

In order to confirm a reservation, a 50% deposit is required or must be guaranteed with a credit card. The hotel accepts Visa, MasterCard, or personal California checks with identification.

Wilbur must be notified of cancellations no later than 12:00 noon, five days prior to arrival. For cancellations received within the five-day period, the resort will retain the entire deposit. No-shows will be charged the full amount. Note that all holiday periods require 10 days' notice of cancellation prior to arrival.

## Wilbur Hot Springs \* For Immediate Release

### CLIMATE

The Northern California climate is generally pleasant year-round. In the spring and fall, the weather is generally warm and sunny, typically ranging from mid-50s to low-80s. Winter temperatures range from the low-30s at night to the low-70s during the day; snow is rare (but when it sticks it is extraordinary). Warmer clothes, usually in layers, are recommended for winter evenings. Summer temperatures are warm to hot during the day, and balmy to cool in the evenings. Note also that the area's very low humidity makes summer days more pleasant than the temperatures might suggest.

### USEFUL INFORMATION

Attire is casual year-round: shorts or jeans, casual shirts, sandals, hiking or running shoes are appropriate. Bring some warm clothing for winter and cool summer evenings.

### THINGS TO BRING

Remember that the flumes are clothing optional, so guests should bring a robe and slippers or shoes to slip on and off. Towels are a must. A flashlight is handy. Things for fun could include: bicycles, non electric musical instruments, books and writing materials – and of course a sense of humor.

### RESERVATIONS

Wilbur Hot Springs  
Wilbur Springs, California 95987-9709  
Phone: 530-473-2306  
Fax: 530-473-2497  
E-mail: [info@wilburhotsprings.com](mailto:info@wilburhotsprings.com)  
Web site: [www.wilburhotsprings.com](http://www.wilburhotsprings.com)

**Biography of Dr. Richard Miller  
Founder & President of Wilbur Hot Springs Health Sanctuary, Inc.**

Richard Louis Miller, M.A., PhD., began the present Wilbur Hot Springs Sanctuary for the Self in 1972 to revitalize the ancient healing method of Balneology – the science of the therapeutic use of baths – and to combine the safety and security of the Wilbur environment with a modern personal health philosophy emphasizing dignity and respect for all.

As the Founder of the internationally acclaimed Cokenders Alcohol and Drug Program, Dr. Miller integrated his techniques of humanistic psychology and psycho-physical fitness training with social model rehabilitation. During the 1980s, he helped detoxify over 1500 persons at Wilbur Hot Springs. Not one of these people was medicated or hospitalized during their residential treatment at Wilbur, and Dr. Miller believes the therapeutic qualities of the mineral hot springs and the Wilbur environment significantly aided in his patients' recovery.

Dr. Miller's innovative approaches to healing have been the subject of national television news reports (including segments on the news programs of Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather, David Brinkley and Phil Donahue), print media (Time, Newsweek, and US News & World Report), two film documentaries and the book Gestalting Addiction.

In order to share information with the general public, Dr. Miller co-authored a weekly news column in the San Francisco Chronicle in the 1980s and co-hosted a weekly radio program that was syndicated to 16 stations in California.

Dr. Miller has presented his work at national conferences of the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Psychotherapists and the White House Conference on Drugs. He has also served as a consultant to the California State Assembly and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice.

Dr. Miller has spent the last 40 years studying, teaching, researching, administering and practicing psychology, health education, psychotherapy and Executive Consulting. His experiences include:

- \* Fellow, U.S. Public Health Service
- \* Faculty, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
- \* Founding Board of Directors, California School for Professional Psychology
- \* Founding Board of Directors, Gestalt Institute for Multiple Psychotherapy
- \* Founder, Cokenders Alcohol and Drug Program
- \* Vice President, Parkside Medical Services Corporation
- \* Executive Consultant

In addition to continuing his professional work in psychology, and performing his ongoing role as "Wilbur Caretaker," Dr. Miller currently hosts a weekly radio program, "Mind Body Health," on NPR affiliate KZYX & Z radio in Mendocino County.