



Arden: Helena Modjeska Historic House and Gardens

PARK GROUNDS: OPEN FOR SELF-GUIDED TOURS WEDNESDAY - SATURDAY 10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.
GUIDED HOME TOURS: BY ADVANCE RESERVATION ONLY. CALL 949-923-2230

Mailing address:
c/o 25151 Serrano Rd.
Lake Forest, CA 92630-2534
949-923-2230

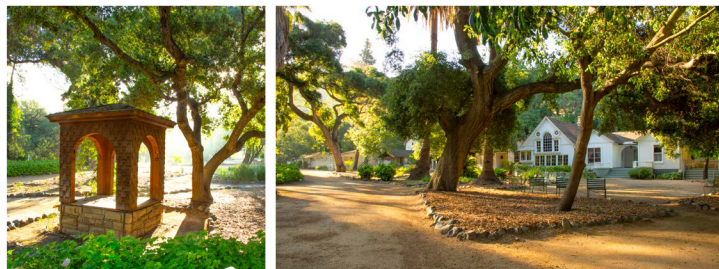
HISTORIC
PARK

Tucked away amidst a live oak grove on the banks of Santiago Creek in Modjeska Canyon lies the century-old home of world-renowned actress Madame Helena Modjeska. Named for the grounds' resemblance to the Forest of Arden in the Shakespearean play, "As You Like It," Arden is designated a National Historic Landmark.



THE LIFE OF ARDEN.

Around 1873, Orange County homesteader Joseph Pleasants built a small cottage on what is now known as the Arden property. Over the next several decades, the original cottage received new additions, including a dining room and screened porch. From 1888 to 1906, Helena Modjeska and Count Bozenta hosted many prominent visitors, including fellow actress Maud Durbin, famed pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski and many more. In 1906, they sold their beloved Arden, moved briefly to Tustin then Newport Beach where Helena Modjeska died in 1909 at age 68.



EXPERIENCE THE FOREST OF ARDEN.

OC Parks offers guided tours of the historic home by advance reservation only. You'll relive the years Helena Modjeska resided in her canyon home as you walk the rock-lined pathways of what she so fondly called the "Forest of Arden."

THE BIRTH OF ARDEN.

Helena Modjeska's successful debut in San Francisco was soon followed by performances in New York, London and countless rural opera houses and small theaters across the United States. Over the next 30 years, she became one of America's most beloved actresses.

Returning to Orange County after nearly a decade on the road, Modjeska and her husband, Charles Bozenta Chlapowski, known as "Count Bozenta," bought a small ranch home in a shady canyon. They hired famed New York architect Stanford White to redesign the existing house into the picturesque residence we see today. The beauty of the surrounding oak groves reminded Modjeska of the Forest of Arden in the Shakespearean play, "As You Like It," prompting her to name the property "Arden."



"I have acted Lady Macbeth and Portia now for many years. The lines have a charm that's like my California home. I never wish to forget or cease to be fond of either."
- Helena Modjeska



A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK.

Over the years, Arden changed hands several times, but minimal alterations have occurred. In 1986, Arden was sold to the County of Orange for the purpose of establishing a historic park. On December 14, 1990, the National Park Service honored Helena Modjeska's beloved former home by designating it a National Historic Landmark, one of few that tell an immigrant woman's story. In 2023, OC Parks completed an extensive renovation of the Joseph Pleasants Stone Building, opening both floors to the public for the first time in park history.



The ruby-red glass that Madame Modjeska installed in the bathroom imparted a rosy glow that she jokingly explained was a beauty treatment.



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ARDEN: HELENA MODJESKA HISTORIC HOUSE AND GARDENS IS LOCATED IN A RESIDENTIAL SETTING IN MODJESKA CANYON AND IS NOT OPEN DAILY. GUIDED HOME TOURS OFFERED BY ADVANCE RESERVATION ONLY.
FOR RESERVATIONS, PLEASE CALL 949-923-2230
866-OC PARKS | HERITAGEHILL@OCPARKS.COM | WWW.OCPARKS.COM/MODJESKA

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OC Parks has been entrusted with the care and protection of this park. Help us preserve our county's natural and cultural resources for you and your fellow guests' future enjoyment. Please check with your Park Ranger for this park's specific rules, or see them online at www.ocparks.com.