



MUY LOCO!

by Porsche Moran
photography by Sarah Ringo



Anarrow winding gravel road leads up to the **Casa De Loco Winery** in Camdenton, Missouri. Along the way, tall trees, creating a shady canopy of greenery, flank both sides of the road. Described as “the best kept secret at the Lake,” this bluff-top winery is a secluded and serene retreat.

“The property is out in the middle of nowhere,” says public relations manager Shayla Viele. “(My sister and I) grew up here and we didn’t know this place was

Casa de Loco, being out “in the middle of nowhere,” has an impressive variety of wines, and is regarded by some as the “best kept secret at the Lake.”

here. We’ve turned something that was an eyesore into something beautiful that people can enjoy.”

The winery is located just west of Camdenton and sits on 4.9 acres on the north bank of the Big Niangua River.

Larry Owens, owner of Casa De Loco, purchased the property in 2006 after it had been abandoned since the 1970s. The site was in disarray and was refurbished by D&B Construction. The property was added to the National Register of Historic Places and Casa De Loco opened in July 2007.

The buildings of Casa De Loco were originally built in 1930 by a St. Louis couple named Hugo and Ina Urbauer. The Urbauers constructed retaining walls around the property and a set of concrete stairs leading hundreds of feet down to the Big Niangua River. A sandstone quarry was

*This historic
Camdenton winery
serves up high quality
products, beautiful
scenery, plush
accommodations and
a whole lot of fun!*

commissioned on site along with a large lodge, a small cottage, servant’s quarters and a several car garage. They called their private getaway *The Millionaire’s Club* and invited close friends and the high society of St. Louis to visit.

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After Hugo's death in 1948, the property was sold and became The Ozark Club. A fire in the mid-50's closed the club.

The name Casa De Loco, meaning "house of crazy" in Spanish, is a reference to the property's past as a care center for elderly and mentally ill patients in the 1970s. Casa De Loco's custom wines, like Group Therapy Champagne, go along with the "house of crazy" theme. Their La'bottle'me Zinfandel was awarded a silver medal in the 2007 San Francisco International Wine Competition. Their Strait Jacket Syrah was awarded the bronze medal in the same competition in 2006.

"We aren't poking fun at the history of the property," says lodging and events manager Dayna Viele. "People love the name. They think it is fun and feel like

Casa de Loco is a secluded and serene blufftop winery that boasts impressive scenic views.

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they can come here and be crazy.”

The exquisite beauty of the winery’s natural surrounding can be enjoyed over a bottle of wine from one of the decks that overlook the Big Niangua River from 125 feet. The winery doesn’t serve food, but customers are allowed to bring their own food for picnics.

Wine tastings are held in the winery’s main building, which holds the administrative offices, winery room and a store. The wine tastings are free and allow customers a chance to sample Casa De Loco wines in a no-pressure setting.

“Most people want to try a little bit of everything,” Shayla says. “We let people decide for themselves and they get to find out what they like without spending a lot of money on something they don’t like.”

The best-selling wine from the Casa de Loco brand is the Schizo Bianco, a white table wine. All Casa de Loco brand wines range from \$10 to \$20. The winery also sells a variety of wines from other labels.

“One of our goals is to carry really good quality affordable wines,”

Dayna says.

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All of the Casa de Loco wines are currently produced at a vineyard in California. Owens says he plans to plant an acre of special Italian grapes at Casa de Loco in order to make estate wines. He also wants to bring in exotic juices to make specialty wines.

"It takes three years to grow the grapes and another year and a half to make the wine," Owens explains.

Aside from award-winning wine, Casa De Loco provides a venue for private events and functions. The winery's small meeting room is outfitted with a flat screen TV that can be hooked up to a computer for presentations. Their large private hall is used for bigger events and has cameras that can broadcast an event online for people who can't attend or on television for people who want to sit inside the hall during an outdoor wedding. The hall also features a full caterer's kitchen and men's and women's private dressing and bathrooms. The Casa De Loco staff offers event planning, tables, chairs, linens and clean up. In 2007, the winery hosted eight weddings. Twenty-two weddings were booked for 2008 and

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reservations have already been made for weddings for 2009.

"We are not a commercial winery," Dayna says. "We have a small staff. You'll see the same people every time you visit and we'll know your name. We are a lot more personal with our clients (than other wineries)."

After saying "I do," on the grounds of Casa De Loco, newlyweds don't have to travel far to find the perfect spot to hide away. A cozy cabin, dubbed the

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"You'll see the same people every time you visit and we'll know your name..."

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“honeymoon cottage,” is tucked away in the woods with enough distance from the winery to allow privacy. The cottage features a screened-in porch with a small wooden table and chair set and a large grill. The kitchen and living room are spacious and follow an open floor plan. The living room has large windows that look out onto the river and a fireplace. The bedroom is carpeted and decorated in a tan and rose color scheme. The bathroom features a Jacuzzi tub and flat screen TV and comes stocked with Casa De Loco bathrobes.

The winery also has four luxurious guest suites. One of the suites is in the former carriage house to the left of the main building. The suite was furnished by JC Mattress and decorated in soothing pastel pink, white and tan. Wicker furniture compliments the stone and wood walls. Despite the quaint appearance of the room, the room is packed with technology including wireless Internet, surround sound, Dish Network television and Sirius radio. The shower, from **My Bath** in Kansas City, looks like a futuristic space pod. It

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doubles as a Jacuzzi and steam sauna, has a foot massager, TV, radio and nine showerheads. Each room also comes with a kitchenette. Guests are pampered with extra details like towel warmers, Italian espresso makers and nearly silent heating and cooling systems.

"The whole setting of the winery is about getting away," Dayna says. "The rooms are classy and elegant with a feeling of home."

The elegant décor of Casa De Loco is aided by accents like granite countertops.

"They picked out some beautiful materials," says Marian Meimer, showroom manager at **Ozarks Granite Works**. "The granites they chose have exotic colors and add warmth to the atmosphere."

Ozark Granite Works built unique tables and wet bars for the winery by placing slabs of granite on top of large wine barrels.

"The guys in our fabrication shop did their own design," Meimer says. "When you walk in you see class."

Kevin Anderson of **Anderson Decorative Finishes** added faux

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finishing to the walls of the administrative offices at Casa De Loco. He used an artist brush to create a Portoro marble effect in Owens' office. For Dayna's office he created a bright metallic finish.

"(Faux finishing) throws personality into an area," Anderson says. "The room feels more welcoming with multicolor instead of one plain color."

Casa De Loco also hosts a number of public events such as intimate jazz and blues concerts and a New Year's Eve party. Their murder mystery dinners, held every other Wednesday, cost \$30 per person and include a catered meal and entertainment.

"The murder mystery dinners are already one of our most popular events," Dayna says. They give people something to do in the middle of the week. They also allow us to capitalize on our facilities. Everyone has a blast."

The Casa De Loco store features everything from wine, cheese and chocolates, to goat soap, hand-painted wine glasses and novelty items like Margarita shaped candles.

"We try to carry unique products," Dayna says. "Many of our products are

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locally made. We also go to trade shows and Larry brings stuff back after trips to our vineyard in California.”

Owens is pleased about the growing popularity of wineries in Missouri and welcomes the competition.

“When I first started, there were 45 wineries in Missouri,” Owens says. “Now there are over 70. I’d like to see at least five more (wineries) at the Lake. The more the merrier!”

To get to Casa De Loco:

Address:

442 Riverbird Lane
Camdenton, MO 65020

Hours:

Tues. - Fri. 10:00am - 6:00pm

Sat. 11:00am - 4:00pm

Sun. 11:00am-2pm

Phone: 573-317-9695

Website: www.casadelocowinery.com ■



The outdoor setting of Casa de Loco will truly make you feel as though you are getting away.

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Muy Loco! Resource Book

General Contractor

Dave Burton
D&B Construction
573-346-3657

Faux Finishing

Anderson Faux
and Decorative Finishes
Kevin Anderson
573-286-2822
www.kafaux.com

Castle Walls
Christine Koch
573-836-0173

Furnishings

J.C. Mattress
5645 Highway 54
Osage Beach, MO 65065
573-348-3334
www.jcmattressonline.com

Bathrooms

My Bath
210 E. 18th Ave
North Kansas City,
MO 64116
1-800-949-2204
www.mybath.biz

Countertops

Ozark Granite Works
4175 Highway 54
Osage Beach, MO
217-546-6933

Sound System

Intergration Excellence
Levi Angst
430 S. Jefferson Ave
Lebanon, MO 65536
(417) 532-9290
Levi@iecontrol.net

Patio and Walkway Stones

Creative Stone
Tina McCormack
17295 North State Highway 5
Sunrise Beach, MO 65079
573-374-9600
www.creativestoneonline.com

Historic Consultant

Gardner Historic Property
Consultants
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