



# fwT magazine

FOOD WINE TRAVEL

Albania | Trina

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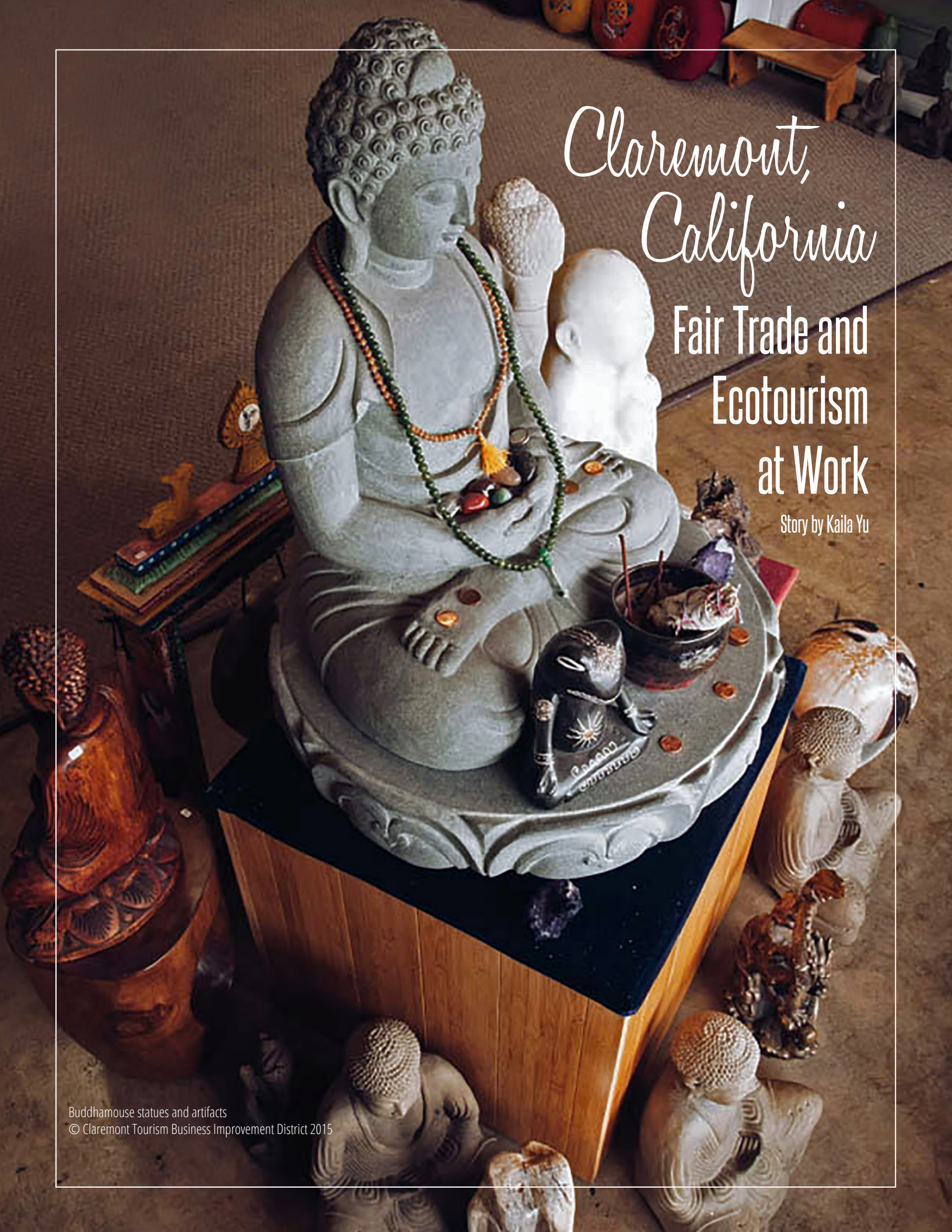
Portugal | Vila Nova de Gaia

Spain | Andalucia Segovia

Sweden | Stockholm

USA | Arizona California Virginia Alaska





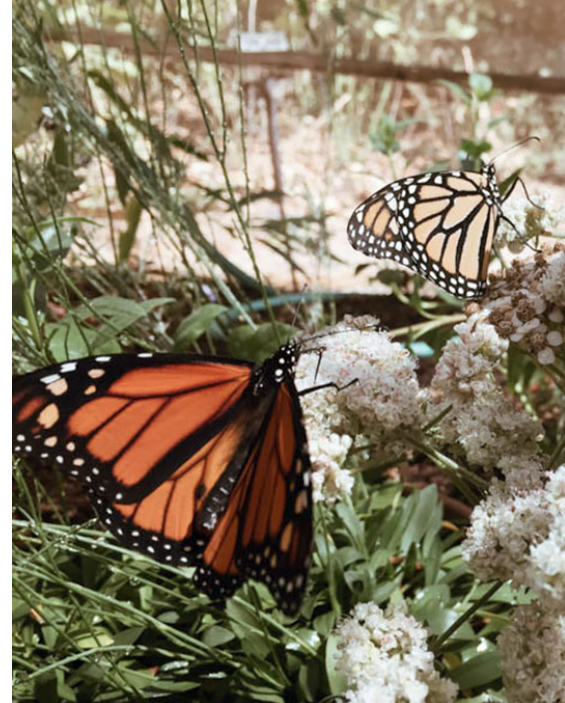
# Claremont, California Fair Trade and Ecotourism at Work

Story by Kaila Yu





VomFass olive oils and vinegars © Claremont Tourism Business Improvement District 2015



Monarch butterflies feed at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden

## Travel does not always begin with the booking of a plane ticket in advance of a trip to a far-flung location.

It often starts when you open your mind to new possibilities, even in your own backyard. I was surprised to discover Claremont, California as an eco-friendly getaway destination. I thought I knew all there was to know about the city of trees and PhDs, as I grew up in Upland, California, the neighboring city.

An idyllic place to live, Claremont was picked by *Money Magazine* as one of the top five cities to live in the country. Located 35 miles east of Hollywood, it's home to the distinguished Claremont Colleges. The campuses and surrounding neighborhoods are shaded by towering forests of verdant elm trees. Built on the land of former lemon orchards, streets are lined with an eclectic mix of pre-World War I bungalows and Spanish or Mediterranean inspired homes.

### THE RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANICAL GARDEN

One of the highlights of Claremont is the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden. Located in the heart of the city, it's entirely dedicated to the preservation of the native plants of California. With 86 acres, more than 70,000 plants are housed lovingly inside. On a Thursday morning, the garden was mostly deserted save for a few couples holding hands and taking selfies in front of the stately, tree-like Saguaro cacti. Birds

sang overhead, and squirrels gathered nuts and rattled dead leaves as they scurried busily out of my way.

I was headed to the Butterfly Pavilion enclosure inside the garden, erected only in the spring and summer, which houses hundreds of native butterflies. Inside the enclosure, the butterflies floated lazily overhead and feasted en masse on dried oranges and persimmons. Sweet little orange and black fuzzy caterpillars munched on leaves. A butterfly expert accompanied us inside the enclosure to point out the monarchs' brilliant, tiger-striped wings and the richly painted Sonoran Blues that flew about without even noticing that we had invaded their little home. The Butterfly Pavilion is only open between 10am-3pm from May 13-August 6. It tends to get packed later in the day, so make sure to get there early.

### CLAREMONT'S FAIR TRADE MOVEMENT

I spent the rest of the afternoon exploring the Claremont Village, the city's slow-paced and European style downtown. While browsing the local shops, many independent and family-owned, I noticed that a number of shops featured a sticker indicating their proud support of Fair Trade.





© Kaila Yu



VomFass brandy selection © Claremont Tourism Business Improvement District 2015

In fact, I learned that Claremont became the 28th Fair Trade Town in the United States in 2012 and the first Southern California Fair Trade town. As such, local businesses, churches, schools and citizens unite and collaborate to champion the availability of Fair Trade products and educate the community about Fair Trade's importance.

Fair Trade Campaigns is the organization that issues badges and Fair Trade recognition for cities, churches and schools. Their mission is to grow a nation of advocates who are dedicated to creating opportunities for those suffering from global poverty.

Fair Trade products are produced under safe working conditions in which workers are paid a fair wage and products are sold at an equitable price. Purchasers needn't worry about the practice of slavery, trafficking or child labor during the production of these products. They're produced with gender equality and environmentally safe practices in mind.

The shops that stood out most to me were VomFass and the Buddhamouse Emporium. VomFass is located right next to Casa 425, Claremont's sophisticated boutique hotel. Upon entering the store, you'll be welcomed into a unique, guided shopping experience. The walls of the little shop are lined with dozens of glazed ceramic jugs filled with artisan olive oils, vinegars and wines. Explaining that VomFass means, "from the cask" in German, an attentive employee guided me through tastings of some of the most popular pairings such as

garlic-infused olive oil paired with red wine vinegar and grapefruit oil with Calamansi balsam. Each spoonful was distinct and packed with its own unique, infused flavor. All of their vinegars, oils and wines are Fair Trade products.

The Buddhamouse Emporium is a meditation oasis that offers Fair Trade prayer flags, hanging bells and metal sculptures for sale. Upon entering the shop, I found the atmosphere to be instantly soothing with gentle chimes in the background. Owned by Charlotte Cousins, a certified meditation instructor, the store is filled with Buddhist trinkets from her travels in Nepal. Cousins is deeply knowledgeable about each and every item in her shop.

Travel can begin where you least expect it. Claremont surprised me with its small town New England feel and modern ecotourism sensibilities. I love that I can support artisans, both local and from around the world, so close to home.

### If You Go

Discover Claremont  
Casa 425  
Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden  
VomFass  
Buddhamouse  
Fair Trade Campaigns

*A special thanks to Discover Claremont and Casa 425 for hosting me on my visit.*