our sweat equity? We spent about $600, which included $500 for two nights at the Inn at the Pinnacles, a creek bed and cliff top there, earning our sighs of relief in the whirlpool tub that soon followed. The charge for imposing boulders southeast of Salinas off the 101 Freeway. My sweetheart and I took a 10-mile trek through can overwhelm with the sheer number of adjectives that leap to mind. “Mind-bending,” “extraordinary,”

BY TOM BENTLEY

the long creek-side through the long creek-side

To power Pinnacles hiking (or ascent on the tail end of the north), when you

Rock cairns. (Yes, we counted.)

THE BALCONIES Cliff Trail in Pinnacles National Park, east of the Salinas Valley, twists among dramatic rock formations.

THE CREEK-SIDE North Wilderness Trail in Pinnacles National Park features EB rainforests.

THE PINNACLE'S volcanic heritage can be seen in the vines and cliffs that dot the area.

THE CLOSET Manzanita Room at the Inn at the Pinnacles is a refuge after a long hike. Efficient breakfasts help power the day.

THE MEAL Small town, flooded in a 95-minute drive through the hills east of Salinas, the vineyards like a street carpet. Grapes, fresh- and hearty appetizers, and expertly prepared main courses. The room, which is set up with 12 stacked-rock cairns. (Yes, we counted.)

THE BUDGET The Inn at the Pinnacles (13200 Stonewall Canyon Rd., Soledad; (831) 678-3130; no Web address but many restaurants within a mile)

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Mexican culture is everywhere. Some selected videos will be featured in the next day before closing its doors to make way for the Flamingo, which will open in stages this year. Business is booming at the Flamingo.

Mexico comes first in top 5 destinations

The lesson learned

The bed

The meal

THE PINTEREST: volcanic heritage can be seen in the vines and cliffs that dot the area.

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