

# Cynthia Kienitz

A big-city designer lost and found herself in the desert.



**Relocated**  
Starting a  
second act in  
a shack.

I guess I'm just one of those natural-born desert rats. When I first visited the tiny town of Tecopa, California, eight years ago, it was like coming home. So at age 47, I packed up my truck and headed for the hills, leaving behind my successful interior design firms in Chicago and Las Vegas.

I left because I wanted out of the rat race and into the natural world. The natural landscape completely fit with what I was trying to do in this second act of my life: defy and create. Instead of laying a foundation and cutting down trees to make room for my bed and breakfast, Ranch House Inn and Hostel, I remodeled and restored an old desert shack. Then I bought trailers and teepees and turned them into bedroom suites. Some day I hope to add a train car and a plane fuselage.

They will fit right in here in this strange town of single-wides, bottle walls, and strays who didn't quite mesh anywhere else. Life is slower in the desert, but it fits me better. A friend of mine said that people come to Tecopa either to lose themselves or to find themselves. For me, it was a little of both.