

dR Travel

Travel Wine Country

Meadowood Napa Valley

Photos courtesy of Meadowood Napa Valley



The West is wine country and Napa Valley is its purple heart. Only 30 miles long and five miles wide, the fabled region boasts 500+ wineries scattered around the picturesque towns of Napa, Yountville, Oakville, St. Helena and Calistoga.

Meandering up and down country roads, I fell in love with the region when I covered June's fabled Napa Valley Wine Auction. There I tasted hundreds of vintages, played croquet at Meadowoods Resort, dined with Mr. Duckhorn in a fancy candlelit barn and sipped on jammy wines and brick oven handmade pizza with the Coppolas in the backyard of their vineyard home.

It was love at first sip. While summer and the fall crush are popular with enophiles, I think springtime in Napa is magical. Plan your grape adventure now and uncork your appetite for five-star restaurants, luxurious hotels, serene spas and seductive historic wineries.

Where To Stay

For a small hotel experience, I recommend Yountville's Maison Fleurie's 13 small but country-sweet rooms or Senza, a luxurious boutique hotel and spa that was once a B&B.

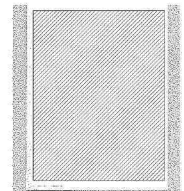
Home to the Napa Valley Wine Auction, Meadowood Resort's lovely 250 acres make it Napa's premiere luxury hideaway. The

Resort is perfect in every season for golf, tennis, croquet, hiking, relaxing poolside, exquisite dining, world-class wine tasting, soothing spa retreats, family adventures (stand-alone private villas) or romantic hideaways with a roaring fireplace and posh amenities in a cozy cottage.

Imbibe: Escape to quiet, gentle contemplation on the terrace with a crisp Sauvignon blanc or relax in the indulgent spa. The graceful, elegant lobby provides a comforting nook for nursing a seasonal martini. Or meander to the resplendent Restaurant at Meadowood Bar for boutique wines and craft cocktails. You can even take a cocktail or cooking class to show off at your next Tampa Bay dinner party.

Rejuvenate: Designed by renowned architect Howard Backen, the 14,000-square-foot, all-suite spa features a spa menu and eight treatment suites, each offering forest views and a private environment for relaxation. Each spa suite also features a private bathroom, steam shower and daybed.

Nibble: Chef Christopher Kostow presides over The Restaurant at Meadowood Bar and is only the second Napa Valley chef to receive the coveted three Michelin stars in addition to The French Laundry's Thomas Keller. Settle in fireside at the bar and order his three-course menu. For less than \$100 (okay, very little less),



By: Nanette Wiser

you'll taste how celestial seasonal food—with a focus on the garden—can be in three-star hands. Kostow's modern approach to Napa cuisine is both casual and elegant.

Sip & Savor

Think global, drink local and never touch French wine again. I have many favorites in Napa but Raymond Vineyards boasts a mirrored Crystal Cellar tasting room with a masked cat lady hanging from a trapeze, an outdoor room with acrylic Louis XVI chairs, a blending lab (you blend), and a demonstration biodynamic garden with a self-guided iPhone app. Raymond has been reinvented by Jean-Charles Boisset, one of France's prominent winemaking families and husband to California wine aristocrat Gina Gallo-Boisset.

The two million bottles of bubbles in two miles of moss-perfumed underground caves at Schramsberg Vineyards is a showstopper, especially when you drink creamy bubbly under a giant candelabra in one of the caverns.

In the Carneros region, Starmont Winery & Vineyards' single vineyard Pinots and Chardonnays are compelling deals, and they have a handsome, reclaimed-wood and concrete tasting room with a bar that can roll right out to the patio firepit. Other wineries we love include Stag's Leap Wine Cellars award-winning Cabernets and newcomer Odette Estate, owned by a group that includes billionaire philanthropist Gordon Getty and California Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom.

In Oakville's Golden Mile, you'll find respected wineries such as Groth, Silver Oak, and Rudd as well as my new favorite B Cellars Vineyard and Winery 2011 Blend 25, sleek wine caves and demonstration kitchen with a bar-side view of what the chef is whipping up for your wine pairing using their kitchen garden produce or farm-fresh eggs.

Stop in St. Helena at classic Joseph Phelps Vineyards for their groundbreaking reds and enjoy the remodeled cozy tasting rooms both soaring and open. And if you're an equestrian, ride up to Calistoga and visit Tamber Bey Vineyards, owned by a former executive at AOL and Apple, Barry Waitte who started a winery at his prestigious horse-training center, Calistoga's Sundance Ranch.

Dine Like Royalty: The superstars? Book in advance for the famous Napa restaurants such as the elegant French Laundry's nine course tasting menu, Thomas Keller's Ad Hoc four-course tasting dinner.

Other incredible edibles can be found In Napa (Torc. Morimoto and La Toque and for those who love Spanish cuisine, La Taberna); Yountville (Ciccio's hand-crafted pizzas, woodfired artichokes); Charlie Palmer's Harvest Table wine country cuisine; St. Helena's rustic Archetype and Goose & Gander (butter-rich eye-of-rib bone marrow, sweet charred onions) and in Calistoga, Evangeline's neighborhood bistro serves up Creole soul.

Skip the fancy and plan a sumptuous picnic under the trees. Shop for charcuterie, cheeses and warm Venezuelan arepa and seasonal produce at the 40,000-square-foot Oxbow Public Market, a cathedral of sustainable yumminess. At Silverado Market and Bakery, you can pick up baked goods from Yountville's renowned Bouchon Bakery and English muffins from Model Bakery in Napa.



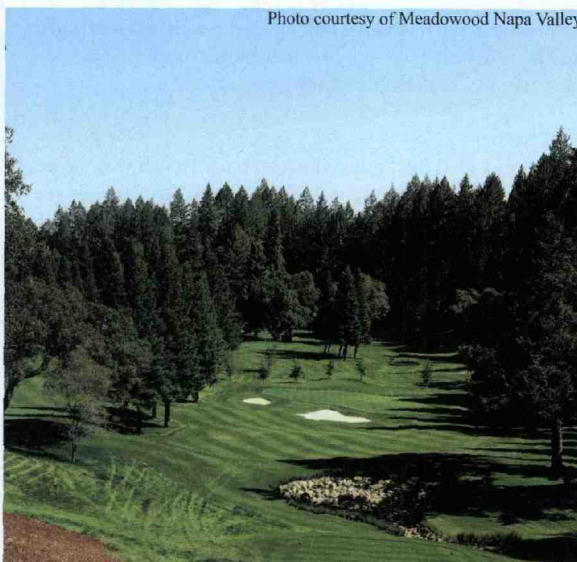
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March/April Events: From cooking classes to Luna Fest at Lincoln Theater, March roars in like a lion of cultural and culinary activities. Attend Flavor! Napa Valley, March 22 – 26, 2017, which supports programs and scholarships at The Culinary Institute of America’s (CIA) Greystone Campus in St. Helena, CA, are now available for purchase online at FlavorNapaValley.com. Flavor! Napa Valley takes place during Napa Valley’s “Cabernet Season” (November through April) and celebrates both Napa Valley and CIA graduate chefs and winemakers with five days of exclusive food and wine experiences that bring out the best flavors of the legendary Napa Valley.

If You Go: You can fly into San Francisco or Oakland, rent a car or take a limo to Napa Valley, approximately 70 miles from San Francisco or 63 miles from Oakland. In fall and winter, temperatures range from 60 – 70 degrees during the day and 40 – 50 degrees at night.

Savvy travelers add a night and stay in San Francisco on their journey. I recommend the Ritz Carlton, Kimpton’s Buchanon or Sir Francis Drake hotels, the Mandarin Oriental, and the fabled Fairmont Hotel whose tree, decorations and delicious holiday delights even lure local foodies. ●

Photo courtesy of Meadowood Napa Valley



For more information visit:
www.napavalley.com
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