



This region boasts no shortage of terrific views — and venues from which to enjoy them

NAPA VALLEY

The revered wine region has meetings covered

— BY ALEX PALMER —

As new vineyards pop up across the country, not only throughout the Pacific Northwest, but in Texas, Virginia, and beyond, Napa Valley remains the standard bearer for American wine. But it's not just its esteemed wine that has people flocking to the area: New venues and a culinary scene to match the region's vino is making this an ideal time to visit the region.

“With all of the new developments in the Napa Valley, including new hotels, wineries, tasting rooms, and restaurants, there has never been a more exciting time to visit the Napa Valley,” says Teresa Savage, vice president of sales for Visit Napa Valley. “Meeting planners have the same expectations as aspirational travelers — both are looking



Kayaking on Napa River is one of many outdoor activities here

for a memorable experience in a beautiful destination.”

For example, in late fall, the CIA at Copia — the newest member of The Culinary Institute of America — opened its doors. It provides not only exceptional dining options, but memorable meeting spaces, such as indoor teaching kitchens, a 200-seat theater, an amphitheater on the Napa River, outdoor gardens, and, of course, a restaurant.

As for hotels, the Silverado Resort and Spa recently completed an additional 30,000 square feet of new function space. A 5,000-square-foot pavilion and 15,000-square-foot conference center are among the property's offerings. Last year, The Carneros Inn, a PlumpJack Resort set on 27 acres of grape-

WHERE TO



EAT

Round Pond Estate

This estate winery offers luncheons in its private garden for up to 60 attendees as well as a walking tour and wine tasting for up to 90, where visitors can take in the Mayacamas Mountain Range and taste seasonal bites. Groups of up to 10 can also take part in a private tasting in Round Pond's olive mill, trying the estate-grown olive oil and barrel-aged red-wine vinegar.



MEET

Merryvale Vineyards

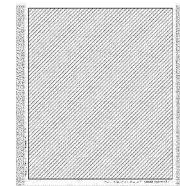
Whether discussing serious business or enjoying a leisurely chat, it's more stimulating to do so in a century-old room surrounded by 2,000-gallon casks. This Cask Room is one of the spaces at Merryvale that exude Old World winemaking, including a red-curtained dining room as well as a tasting cellar.



SEE

The Napa Valley Wine Train

Hop aboard these restored early 20th-century Pullman cars to tour the Napa Valley region in style. The train's new Quattro Vino Tour takes passengers on a culinary and wine trip with stops at vintners including Robert Mondavi, Charles Krug, and V. Sattui wineries, with not a car in sight.



vines and farmland, underwent an extensive \$6.5 million renovation, enhancing its outdoor spaces, pool, and guest entry and reception area. Its 86 cottages and 10 suites underwent a \$2.8 million renovation themselves, with all improvements expected to wrap this year. Altogether, it offers 10,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Marriott Napa Valley Hotel and Spa

boasts 22,000 square feet of meeting space (including 8,000 square feet of outdoor space and a resort-style swimming pool). The Westin Verasa Napa provides more than 12,000 square feet of flexible meeting and event space, including a ballroom and three boardrooms.

But while the hotel inventory here is impressive, Napa Valley's most attractive offer-

ings for groups may be its tasting rooms and unique activities. Judd's Hill Winery hosts Bottle Blending Day Camp for groups of eight to 300 attendees. For a rock-n-roll themed gathering, Jam Cellars, in downtown Napa, can accommodate groups of up to 40 people, with space for live musical performances and a tasting room that can also serve as a recording studio. Brasswood Cellars (formerly Cairdean Estate) offers space for indoor and outdoor meetings, while Raymond Vineyards serves up a "Winemaker for a Day" experience for groups in its blending room.



Brasswood Cellars features unusual meeting spaces

Tired of wine? Planners can consider a visit to the Napa Valley Distillery, serving up cocktail-making classes, barrel tastings, and other non-wine experiences.

Whatever visitors decide, Savage urges planners to visit the CVB's website at visitnapavalley.com and to reach out for assistance with planning a program.

"Our full-service sales team, who are experts in the market, will happily suggest venues and activities that best meet the needs of each group to ensure they have a legendary and memorable Napa Valley experience," she says. ■ *Questions or comments? Email apalmer@ntmlc.com*

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