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San Francisco & Wine Country

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Napa Valley, which continues to produce some of the world’s most celebrated wine, has also become a mecca for those looking for a retreat in balmy California weather, complete with excellent hotels, superb dining and stunning scenery.

**Lay of the Land**

Beyond its established wine-producing valley, Napa also boasts two culinary destinations—Yountville and St. Helena—increasing visitors’ interest in food-and-wine pairings and reaffirming the area’s bountiful resources. Most travelers fly into one of the San Francisco-area airports and drive northeast on Highway 101 about 60 miles to Napa.

The valley itself is approximately 30 miles long, from the town of Napa in the south to Calistoga in the north, encompassing Yountville, Oakville, Rutherford and St. Helena in between. Because of the traffic jams on Route 29 and the Silverado Trail, however, it can take more than an hour to travel from one end to the other.

Thanks to its temperate climate, there really isn’t a bad time to visit Napa, except maybe weekends in the summer, when the heat can be stifling and the traffic terrible. Spring and fall are slightly quieter, and the weather is sublime.

**Stay**

**Auberge du Soleil**

Set in an olive grove on 35 hillside acres with vineyard vistas, Auberge du Soleil consists of a main house, a spa and 50 individual maisons. Provence clearly inspired not just the hotel’s name (which translates as “Inn of the Sun”) but also the colors that add warmth to the rooms’ contemporary design.
The best accommodations are the hillside ones, which have fireplaces and patios with views, but all are spectacular in their design and décor. The spa, accessible only to hotel guests, offers indoor and outdoor massages, and the heated infinity-edged pools overlook the valley. Casual meals and drinks are served on the terrace, with spectacular Napa Valley panoramas, and the Restaurant at Auberge du Soleil serves elegant, refined cuisine. **Who Should Stay:** Auberge du Soleil is for those who appreciate true luxury with a sexy atmosphere. It is not the best option for families. [aubergedusoleil.com](http://aubergedusoleil.com)

**Meadowood**
With its low-key charm and genteel, all-American atmosphere, this sprawling estate in the Napa Hills reminds many guests of a New England colony. Its 250 acres are scattered with white clapboard cottages and crisscrossed with hiking trails winding past tennis courts, croquet lawns and a nine-hole golf course. Founded as a private club in the 1960s, the property still operates as a club for local members.

The 85 guest rooms range from cozy studios to two-, three- and four-bedroom lodges. With their large living rooms, decks and lawns, the latter feel like country guesthouses, with homely touches like cushioned window seats, stone fireplaces and well-chosen books. There’s a brand-new state-of-the-art spa and incredible sports facilities, including a summer kids’ camp. The three-Michelin-starred Restaurant at Meadowood is considered by many to rival French Laundry. **Who Should Stay:** Couples, families and friends who enjoy a casually upscale resort and numerous outdoor sports and activities as well as die-hard foodies will be very happy at Meadowood. [meadowood.com](http://meadowood.com)

**Calistoga Ranch**
This luxe retreat on a wooded hillside embraces both natural splendor and pampering luxury. Set on 157 acres of lush canyon landscape between Calistoga and St. Helena, this lodge features accommodations in individual cedar cottages that offer outdoor spaces, fireplaces and plenty of privacy. A winding path leads to the bathhouse, where guests can relax in a thermal pool or soaking tub before their mud treatment or massage. The pool and gym overlook the canyon. Activities include botanical walks, wine tours and Ai Chi (yoga for two, performed in a private 98-degree soaking pool). **Who Should Stay:** Calistoga Ranch is for those seeking to enjoy Napa Valley’s natural setting. The cottage configurations are good for groups of friends or families. [calistogaranch.com](http://calistogaranch.com)

Contact Indagare for help booking a trip to Napa Valley.
Napa Dining

Napa Valley is the ultimate wine destination, but it is also a mecca for gourmet food, with top restaurants located in many of its charming towns.

Clockwise from top left: roast chicken at Bouchon; the dining room at Solbar; shrimp at Atlas Social; Cindy’s Backstreet Kitchen; cocktails at Goose & Gander; al fresco dining at Auberge du Soleil.
With more than 120 restaurants in the area, several of which are Michelin-starred, Napa Valley is a premier dining destination. Options ranging from diner-inspired roadside stops to elegant eateries serving multicourse meals can be found across the region. Indagare has organized the top choices by town, listed from south to north, making it easy to pick spots for a morning tasting, lunch, dinner and something in between, according to where you are staying.

Napa
Set along the picturesque Napa River, downtown Napa is home to many of the area’s finest restaurants as well as some of its most fun spots. The Oxbow Public Market, an incredible farmer’s market-cum-gourmet hot spot, is a one-stop shop for wine, local produce, casual restaurants and artisan gifts.

Yountville
Yountville’s reputation as the culinary capital of Napa is no joke: The area boasts a line-up of acclaimed restaurants and experiences and more Michelin-starred spots per capita than any other place in America. Chef Richard Reddington produces stellar, seasonally driven dishes with subtle ethnic flavors at Redd. His more casual venture, Redd Wood, has a lively and warm vibe that complements the earthy Italian menu—delicious salads share the table with satisfying pastas and meat dishes. Thomas Keller’s Bouchon, which earned him one Michelin star, offers traditional French bistro fare that changes seasonally. Bouchon Bakery, adjacent to Bouchon, is the go-to for delicious pastries and coffee. Doors open at 7am daily—early birds on Saturday and Sunday will be rewarded with the first choice for weekend-only specialties, which tend to run out quickly. Considered by many to be the best restaurant in the country, Keller’s The French Laundry was awarded three Michelin stars in 2007 and has kept them ever since. A meal here is more of a sensory experience, and the atmosphere is true California, with no pretension permitted. Another Keller offering, Ad Hoc is a more casual spot but no less delicious than his other restaurants. The daily-changing menu highlights American comfort food and frequently offers additional courses that showcase more exotic ingredients. Reservations are hard to secure at celebrity chef Michael Chiarello’s Bottega, but locals and visitors agree that this elegant Italian eatery with its farm-to-table menu is well worth the effort. The art, design and wine gallery that is Ma(i)sonry occupies a 1904 manor house restored by Blackbird Vineyards’ founder Michael Polenske. Surrounded by a landscaped sculpture garden that presents visitors with a different experience in wine country—“a life aesthetic”—Ma(i)sonry offers seated private, semi-private and communal tasting experiences daily. Just north of Yountville, Napa Valley legend Cindy Pawlcyn’s Mustards Grill, a favorite for more than 30 years, will appeal to anyone who appreciates memorable meals and a warm, welcoming atmosphere. The hearty and healthy dishes—a mix of American fare and global influences—are made with fresh thinking and classic style.

St. Helena
The rural charm of the agricultural town of St. Helena is evident in its culinary offerings, from the small, roadside dining establishments to the
high-end experiences. At **Farmstead**, chef Stephen Barber prepares seasonal ingredients with a rural, farm-centric approach. **Gott’s Roadside**, which looks like a drive-in diner from the 1950s, serves the perfect all-natural burger and fries, plus a velvety espresso-bean milkshake. **Cindy’s Backstreet Kitchen** (another Cindy Pawlcyn restaurant) serves American comfort food with local, fresh ingredients in a California-casual scene done right. The quiet, romantic atmosphere of **Terra**, a mainstay in the Napa dining scene since chefs Lissa Doumani and Hiro Sone opened it in 1988, is a great place for a quiet dinner à deux. The larger **Bar Terra** offers diners a long wine and cocktail list as well as a small-plate menu. The **Restaurant at Meadowood** has long been one of Napa Valley’s most renowned restaurants—Chef Christopher Kostow achieved three **Michelin** stars and was named one of **Food & Wine** magazine’s best new chefs. The innovative menu specializes in sustainable, local California cuisine. The menu at **Auberge du Soleil**, Napa Valley’s most luxe property, focuses on regional and seasonal ingredients, and the results are inspired. Meals are somewhat of a splurge, but the gorgeous setting overlooking the valley and the beautifully prepared cuisine make it worthwhile.
Using high-quality food from local organic farms, Market creates seasonal American classics that are simple yet delicious. The menu at Archetype offers sophisticated, classic American dishes featuring seasonal, locally sourced ingredients. Seasonally driven, rustic American classics that celebrate Napa Valley’s agricultural bounty can be found at Goose & Gander. This public house is a favorite of both locals and visitors. The beautiful farmhouse setting at Press is matched by the outstanding food it produces—using high quality, seasonal produce and the highest cuts of meat available, this chophouse is sure to tantalize guests.

Calistoga

Calistoga, located in the northern end of Napa Valley, may be known more for its rejuvenating hot springs and spas, and its most acclaimed restaurant, Solbar, is no less restorative. The Michelin-starred restaurant at the Solage resort offers some of the finest, most flavorful dishes in Napa Valley. Using fresh, seasonal ingredients, Chef Brandon Sharp offers a menu with a clear distinction: one side contains lighter dishes designed to “nourish your soul,” while those alongside them are meant to “comfort your body.”

For contact details, visit our website: indagare.com.
Napa Wineries

The Napa Valley region has more than 400 wineries, each with something unique to offer. Here, Indagare rounds up some favorites and what makes them special.
Since 1839, when George Calvert Yount planted the first vines in Napa Valley, vineyards have been an integral part of the landscape. In 1861, Charles Krug established the area’s first commercial winery, whose success prompted others to follow. Despite setbacks—insect infestation and Prohibition, for example—the industry flourished, and as early as 1948, the valley began welcoming tourists. Napa offers wines for every type of visitor, from serious oenophiles and collectors to neophytes. Here, we have rounded up our favorites based on the visitors’ experience.

High Design
Napa Valley is filled with properties whose stunning architecture and décor enhance the wine-tasting experience. The crescent-shaped Quintessa winery is environmentally sensitive, fitting into a hillside and doing little to disrupt the landscape’s natural beauty. Merus resuscitated one of Napa’s “ghost wineries”—abandoned during Prohibition—updating and furnishing the space with exposed beams, black granite, lacquered surfaces and sparkling chandeliers. Cade, an innovative and thoughtfully designed eco-winery, is LEED-certified and one of the greenest wineries in the country. Its striking contemporary design, with inviting rooms and an open terrace, honors the surroundings and the complexity of their wines.

Art Collections
Several wineries blend art and wine appreciation in memorable ways. The Fine Art Photography Gallery at Mumm Napa presents exciting photography exhibits. Hall founders Craig and Kathryn Hall are avid collectors, and their winery features works by such acclaimed artists as John Baldessari. Guests of Cliff Lede are invited to ramble through its sculpture garden and art gallery, which mounts rotating exhibitions. Donald Hess, founder of Hess winery, has been acquiring works by such artists as Robert Motherwell and Anselm Kiefer since the 1960s, and part of his collection is on view in his museum. Since 1997, Artesa winery has had a permanent artist in residence whose works in a variety of media are exhibited there.

Historic Napa
Napa’s viticultural roots run deep, and many of the original wineries still produce delicious vintages. Far Niente was founded in 1885 by John Benson, a forty-niner of the California Gold Rush and uncle of famed American painter Winslow Homer. Abandoned in 1919, the property was purchased in 1979 by Gil Nickel. One of Napa’s oldest wineries, sparkling-wine specialist Schramsberg was founded in 1862 by Jacob Schram, whose Victorian mansion still sits on the property. In 1871, George Yount’s son-in-law purchased a 75-acre farm and named it Inglenook, a Scottish word meaning “cozy corner.” The winery is now run by Francis Ford Coppola. La Jota Winery was established in 1898 by Frederick Hess, who built the facility out of volcanic ash rock quarried on Howell Mountain. Bernard Ehlers launched Ehlers Estate in the late 1800s when he bought a 10-acre vineyard. The stone barn he built acts today as the winery building and tasting room.

Views
Many wineries take full advantage of the valley’s natural splendor, providing visitors with breathtaking views. Located in a quiet canyon off Silverado Trail, Vine Cliff has a large outdoor seating area and gardens where guests can savor the sweeping panorama along with their tastings. Viader and Silverado both offer visitors beautiful vistas of the valley, the first from a ter-
race overlooking the estate, and the second from a stone deck atop a knoll. Round Pond has a terrace where guests can drink to the magnificent Mayacamas Mountains. Visitors to the Caves at Soda Canyon, dug into a mountainside overlooking the Napa Valley on one side and Soda Canyon on the other, can enjoy their tasting while admiring the impressive construction feat. The first winery to plant exclusively on high elevations, Chappellet is located 1,200 feet up Pritchard Hill’s rocky slope.

**Picnics**

Not much can top a picnic at a winery—great food, spectacular views and, of course, delicious wine. Visitors to Rutherford Hill, set on a lofty plateau above Napa Valley, can select from different wine packages, the perfect compliment to their lunch. Charles Krug, the oldest winery in the valley, makes its front and back lawns available for plein air lounging. Family-owned since 1885, the V. Sattui winery has an Italian-style marketplace where guests can purchase everything they need for a feast on the property’s expansive lawns. Visitors to the Frank Family Vineyards can sit at the wooden tables under giant elm trees and dip into their picnic baskets while gazing at the beautiful landscape. Clif Family Winery offers guests with the munchies a Bruschetteria food truck and a patio with fabulous views on which to enjoy their purchases. Picknickers at the Clos du Val have their choice of venue—overlooking the vineyard or in the property’s olive grove—for an alfresco lunch.
Private Visits/Special Access

Many wineries offer more intimate private tours, which must be booked ahead of time but make visiting this region even more memorable. In 1973, Joseph Phelps planted vineyards and constructed a winery on a 600-acre ranch, harvesting grapes the next year that would become California’s first proprietary Bordeaux-style blend, Insignia. Today, Joseph Phelps Vineyards offers tailored private tastings by appointment. B Cellars uses multiple vineyards to produce exceptional wine every season and blends complementary varietals to develop distinct flavors. The result is balanced and complex artisanal wines. Tastings include pairings with dishes ranging from small plates to a two-hour multi-course meal, and some vintages not released to the public. At Ma(i)sonry, a renovated manor house turned tasting room and “living gallery”—exhibiting hand-crafted furnishings, design and art—guests can enjoy private tastings of limited-production boutique wines inside or in the outdoor space. Spring Mountain creates limited-production wines, most prominently the award-winning Bordeaux blend Elivette. The property contains a number of remarkable old structures, including Villa Miravalle, which was built in 1885 and which TV buffs will recognize as the home in Falcon Crest. Located on the grounds of a farmstead settled in the 1880s, Nickel & Nickel produces single-vineyard Napa Valley wines. Tours, by appointment only, include a visit to the John C. Sullenger House, named for the original owner, and a walk through the farmstead, barns and the underground barrel aging cellar. Occupying the old Inglewood Estate — a 30-acre property at the base of the Mayacamas mountain range — the recently opened Sinegal Winery has nine organically farmed acres.

Family-Friendly:

The rustic Casa Nuestra welcomes the entire family, including well-behaved dogs. Frog’s Leap’s offers kid-friendly activities, as well as gardens and farm animals. A gondola takes guests 300 feet above the valley to Sterling, which offers self-guided tours. Kids will love the full-size fortress, complete with moat and dungeon, at Castello di Amorosa, but tours of this winery, modeled after a medieval Italian castle, will be interesting for guests of all ages. Juice and coloring pages are available for kids in the Knight’s Hall tasting room.

For contact details and more information on these wineries, visit indagare.com.