

Destinations

by **JAX FAX**

Travel Advisor's Guide to
Worldwide Destinations

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Absolute Luxury

By Maxine Albert

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California: What's New in Napa and Sonoma



Solage Vineyard Napa
Photo: Solage Auberge Resorts



Bungalow, R INN Napa
Photo: R INN Napa

It's not surprising that California with its beautiful landscape, superb food, wine, and wellness retreats, has become even more attractive to travelers seeking top vacation spots within the US. It was evident on my recent trip to Napa and Sonoma that tourism is thriving. And a host of new properties, exciting renovations, and creative chefs offering elevated cuisine, are sure to delight visitors.

NAPA VALLEY

Napa Valley is a world-class destination with award winning-wines and stunning countryside. Some of the most acclaimed wineries and eating establishments in the country are found in this select Northern California enclave. You can schedule a tasting at one of Napa's premier wineries, such as **Etude** and sample some exceptional varietals while taking in glorious views. www.etudewines.com

Recently, the Town of Napa has undergone a major renaissance, transforming 'downtown' into a 'happening place' with art galleries, boutiques, hip wine bars, wine tasting rooms, eateries and a scenic riverfront promenade. Located just 2 blocks from the vibrant town and a 2 minute walk from superb Celadon Restaurant, **R INN NAPA** is a new, contemporary family owned, sleek boutique hotel that includes fashionable loft suites and rooms with original art work, fireplaces, adjustable beds that transport you to dreamland plus open air courtyard with chairs to relax in. Some of the rooms don't have windows or have small ones and although atmospheric, are dark, so I opted for the utterly charming standalone 2-bedroom bungalow. It's supremely comfortable, stylish and comes with a

full kitchen, living room, laundry room, cozy porch, private back yard and detached indoor/outdoor 10-seat dining pavilion for cocktail and dinner parties. www.rinnnapa.com

Solage, Auberge Resorts Collection, Napa Valley completed a \$30 million dollar renovation May 2021, making it even more fabulous. The spectacular redesign included all guest rooms, public areas, swanky new suites with outdoor soaking tubs, Solbar Restaurant, new Picobar and lounge spaces to the pool. Each Estate Suite also comes with a Mercedes-Benz and in-room oxygen bar experience. <https://aubegeresorts.com/solage>

To complement fine food and wine, you must spa! Calistoga's famed **Dr. Wilkinson's Backyard Resort & Mineral Springs** opened in June after a year long multi million dollar renovation. The main attraction here is the re-imagined spa, offering the same world-famous, mineral-rich mud bath treatments and secret-formula mud mixture of the renowned organic, local Calistoga volcanic ash perfected by Doc Wilkinson almost 70 years ago. After your treatment, stop in at their new open-air eatery, House of Better, for some scrumptious fish tacos and a refreshing juice concoction. <https://drwilkinson.com>

Other new hotel openings to look forward to include **Four Seasons Napa Valley** which debuts November 2021. www.fourseasons.com/napavalley and **Stanly Ranch, Auberge, Napa** opens early 2022. <https://aubegeresorts.com/stanlyranch/stay>

SONOMA

Sonoma wine country is more than

double the size of neighbor Napa and with its gorgeous scenery, superb farm to table dining and esteemed grapes, it's easy to fall under its spell.

The Stavrand, a new luxury retreat tucked away on nearly six acres of lush orchards and majestic redwoods in the heart of Sonoma's picturesque Russian River Valley, opened this October. The property offers guests a secluded woodland escape. A meticulous renovation transformed the former Applewood Inn into a charming 21-room boutique hotel restoring Mediterranean Revival architecture in the three guestroom buildings including the historic Belden House.

Chic interiors feature contemporary furnishings as well as handsome antiques. Colors and textures blend harmoniously to create a soothing ambiance. I loved sitting on my balcony, looking at those gorgeous redwood trees, feeling quite serene. Guests enjoy farm fresh, seasonal California cuisine using the rich bounty from the hotel's organic garden. Don't miss the nightly private chef experience for delectable dishes paired with coveted Russian River Valley wines.

You'll likely find co-owner and GM, Emily Glick, on property making sure everything is just right. The personable Ms. Glick proudly states that the Stavrand specializes in service that is customized to each guest and her hospitality team follows through. Some of the activities in this bucolic paradise include: walking amid the exquisite redwoods or relaxing on a nearby bench - immersing yourself in the healing energy the trees give off known as forest bathing; complimentary bicycles to explore the wooded surroundings; outdoor yoga; massages



Stavrand
Photo: Emma K Morris



Silverado Suite, Solage Auberge
Photo: Ron Starr

under the redwoods; board and lawn games; meandering through the apple, quince, fig, apricot, pear and plum trees; lounging by the pool; kayaking down the Russian River; a 10 minute stroll into the quaint town of Guerneville just across the river via a scenic bridge; and savoring fireside evening aperitifs. www.thestavrand.com

Montage Healdsburg, a luxe wine country retreat nestled among 258 acres of rolling vineyards and oak tree groves in Healdsburg in the heart of Sonoma County, opened earlier this year. The posh resort with 130 bungalow style rooms and 40 residences, features an 11,500-square-foot spa, a zero-edge resort pool with vineyard views and three signature dining

options. Wine aficionados will delight in the opportunities offered to experience exclusive, personalized wine tastings with local vintners. www.montagehotels.com/healdsburg

While in Healdsburg, don't miss a sublime dining experience at master chef Dustin Valette's much anticipated new restaurant, The Matheson, opened this September. I dined on exquisite tuna tataki, sushi, sashimi and bavette steak paired with the region's prized wines on the stylish rooftop, Roof 106 – one of the dining options in this high temple of gastronomy. www.thematheson.com

For more information about traveling to and within the Golden State, go to: www.visitcalifornia.com



Montage Healdsburg, Forest Room
Photo: Christian Horan



Peninsula Shows

BY PENINSULA TRAVEL PRESENTATIONS, INC.

Peninsula Travel Presentations, Inc.
Register Online: <https://peninsulashows.com/travel-agent-registration>
Phone: (800) 278-3838
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2022 Tentative Spring Schedule



WEEK ONE

Atlanta, GA - Mon., February 21
Greenville, SC - Tue., February 22
Charlotte, NC - Wed., February 23
Greensboro, NC - Thu., February 24

WEEK TWO

Pittsburgh, PA - Mon., March 07
DC Suburbs, VA - Tue., March 08
Baltimore, MD - Wed., March 09
Cherry Hill, NJ - Thu., March 10

WEEK THREE

Tampa, FL - Mon., March 21
Orlando, FL - Tue., March 22
Melbourne, FL - Wed., March 23

WEEK FOUR

Dallas, TX - Mon., Apr. 04
Austin, TX - Tue., Apr. 05
San Antonio, TX - Wed., Apr. 06
Houston, TX - Thu., Apr. 07

After a successful series of shows this past spring we are ready to go again with our fall series starting in October. Please note that we also have a tentative Spring '22 schedule for your consideration. Hope you can join us in these educational round tables that we've been producing for the past 28 years!