

Destinations

THE LATEST LOCAL TRAVEL DEALS AND GETAWAYS PLUS JOURNEYS AROUND THE GLOBE

WINE COUNTRY

POST-HARVEST, PRE-HOLIDAY

*Fall is an ideal time to visit
the wine country »*

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La Plage, Auberge du Soleil's
inviting pool sanctuary.

TRINETTE REED



A SCRUSH SEASON wanes and the colorful leaves start to fall, it's a great time to head to the wine country. Autumn events include the Napa Valley Film Festival, November 9–13, and Flavor! — a four-day farm-to-table feast benefiting the scholarship program at Culinary Institute of America at Greystone (CIA), November 17–20. But you don't really need a reason to visit beyond maybe wanting a quick respite before the holidays. Where to stay? Here's a close look at five wine country properties we think you'll enjoy.

➔ Auberge du Soleil

THE ROOMS Overlooking the Napa Valley, Auberge du Soleil was first developed as a restaurant in 1981 by legendary French restaurateur Claude Rouas; in 1985 he opened the inn with business partner Robert Harmon. A top-tier French-inspired wine-country destination for three decades, the resort in 2010 underwent a renovation led by award-winning designer Suzanne Tucker, who spruced up the rooms and revitalized the outdoor pool, now renamed La Plage. Each room has comfortable oversized furnishings, handmade tile floors and French doors leading to a private terrace, often with views of the valley below, as well as down bedding, Italian linens, Wi-Fi connections, plasma TVs, complimentary snacks, beverages and fresh fruit daily.

THE MEALS With arguably the best view of the valley, the on-site Michelin-starred restaurant has been led by executive chef Robert Curry for more than eight years. Signature dishes include seared ono with wakame, bacon-wrapped veal with foie gras ravioli and Liberty Farm duck with figs. Previously, Curry was executive



chef just down the road at the Wine Spectator Greystone at CIA.

THE SPA The 7,000-square-foot Auberge Spa is for hotel guests only, enhancing the tranquility of the space. There are three outdoor pools: cold, hot, and warm —the warm one being an infinity pool with views of the valley. Eight treatment rooms each feature a private patio with outdoor shower or tub.

THE LOCATION Located in the heart of Napa Valley on Rutherford Hill Road off the Silverado Trail, Auberge is a short drive to downtown St. Helena to the north and Yountville to the south. Wineries abound within a two-mile radius, including Rutherford Hill, Niebaum-Coppola, Frog's Leap and Sawyer Cellars, to name a few.

NOT TO MISS Indulge in that last sweet bit of decadence with the resort's unique Madeira pairings. Head sommelier Kris Margerum has curated three hard-to-find vintages to accompany house-made confections by executive pastry chef Paul Lemieux, including chocolate hazelnut truffles, pistachio caramels sprinkled with fleur de sel and amandes au chocolat. After all, when in Rome ...

BOOK IT Rooms start at \$675 per night, auberge dusoliel.com. **N.W.**

➔ Carneros Inn

THE ROOMS Situated on sprawling acreage in the Carneros region of Napa County, the property includes 86 individual cottages and a lushly landscaped private courtyard with teak



Clockwise from top left: Complimentary bicycles at Solage Calistoga; a luxurious bath at Bardessono; a typical cottage at Carneros Inn; open-air “hallways” of Bardessono; couples massage at Spa Solage; a room at Auberge du Soleil; the hilltop pool at Carneros Inn.

furniture great for entertaining. Some units have soaking tubs; all have outdoor showers. Wood-burning fireplaces, flat-screen TVs and wireless connections are standard with every room. Bathrooms are spacious, with both tub and shower, limestone countertops and heated slate floors. Walking to and from the spa, pool area and restaurant on the native-landscaped paths is a central aspect of the ambience here and confirms you are truly in wine country.

THE MEALS Executive chef Steven Tevere oversees the resort’s three restaurants, incorporating seasonal ingredients from the organic garden. A graduate of San Francisco’s California Culinary Academy, he’s led such respected kitchens as La Folie, Left Bank, Boulevard and The Lodge at Pebble Beach.

THE SPA Spa director Jeannie Jarnot has been with the inn since its inception and has made it her mission to provide guests with a memorable spa experience. The Spa at the Carneros Inn features nine indoor and three outdoor treatment rooms. Treatments include wine country-inspired wraps, massages and facials showcasing indigenous ingredients like chardonnay oil, Carneros-grown-and-pressed olive oil, goat milk and goat butter. The Carneros Healing Gem and Stone and the Flower Power Pulse Point massages are client favorites. A sauna and steam room are infused with herbs from the garden; the fitness center has state-of-the-art equipment and a motion studio.

THE LOCATION Only a 45-minute drive from southern Marin, the inn is on Carneros

Highway (121) between Napa and Sonoma. Wineries such as Viansa, Gloria Ferrer, Buena Vista and Domaine Carneros are a short drive away. The di Rosa art gallery and Cornerstone Gardens are unique nearby attractions.

NOT TO MISS Whether you’re a serious swimmer or a weekend kickboard warrior, start your day with a dip in the heated main pool near Hilltop Dining Room, an optimal spot to catch the sunrise as it illuminates the entire valley.

BOOK IT Rooms start at \$395 per night, thecarnerosinn.com. **N.W.**

➔ Solage Calistoga

THE ROOMS Solage Calistoga had to clear more wall space for awards this year. Solbar, the on-site restaurant, earned yet another



Left: Solbar at Solage Calistoga. Above: The guest-only spa at Auberge du Soleil.

Michelin star, and the entire resort secured a spot on *Travel + Leisure's* world's-best list. Situated on 22 acres, Solage features 89 cottages and suites, a 130-foot lap pool and a 2,000-square-foot spa and fitness area. The eco-friendly freestanding cottages, described by San Francisco design firm Dowling Kimm Studios as “Napa barn meets San Francisco loft,” have gas fireplaces and 400-thread-count sheets, and many of the cottages come with private patios and fire pits. One other perk popular with all ages: the bicycles available for getting around the property or for jaunts to wineries or downtown.

THE MEALS A two-time Michelin star winner, the 125-seat indoor-outdoor Solbar is a valley-wide destination; make reservations if you plan to eat here. Executive chef Brandon Sharp learned his craft working alongside chefs such as Gary Danko and Thomas Keller. While a few signature dishes such as the

Lucky Pig or Mount Washington eggs are always offered, the menu changes daily.

THE SPA A prominent feature of the resort, the award-winning Spa Solage and fitness area has partnered with beauty industry celebs like Kate Somerville and locally based Marie Veronique Organics to provide unique treatments, including the Solage facial, which incorporates both product lines as well as Éminence Organic Skin Care from Hungary.

THE LOCATION Minutes from downtown Calistoga, Solage is on the northern end of the Silverado Trail. Complimentary bikes allow easy cruising to restaurants, shops or wineries.

NOT TO MISS Amid the wining and dining, make time for a fitness class and a soak in the spa's three geotherapeutic thermal pools — all resort guests have access, spa appointment or not.

BOOK IT Rooms start at \$425, solagecalistoga.com. **M.T.**

➔ Bardessono

THE ROOMS Since opening in 2009, the 62-room Bardessono Hotel in Yountville — one of only three LEED Platinum hotels in the world — has upped the standard for luxury wine country lodging. The name is a nod to the Bardessono winery and its family legacy of three generations of wine-growing in Yountville. To earn the sustainability salute, the hotel's sleek exterior was crafted from reclaimed wood, corrugated steel and nontoxic recycled materials, and energy is sourced from geothermal heating and solar power. Even the gray water here is put to good use, for irrigation in town. Inside the spacious suites, the custom-crafted furnishings and original artwork are complemented by organic cotton bed linens and robes from Coyuchi of Point Reyes. Other touches include Fiore bath products, motion-controlled exterior shutters, and filtered “house”



Left: Alfresco dining at h2hotel's spoonbar. Below: An artisanal cocktail prepared there.

of its spacious spa, which has six treatment rooms (including a couples' suite), a relaxing garden patio and its own line of custom-blended premium products.

THE LOCATION The hotel is just off Healdsburg's charming main square and walking distance to nearby restaurants and shops; Sonoma wineries are a short drive away. Many tasting rooms are also nearby including Simi Winery, which celebrates its 135th anniversary this year.

NOT TO MISS Be sure to check out the local artwork on display, including a fireplace made of bound Steinway piano strings by Oakland artist Leonidas Kyriakopoulos, a photographic study of California oak trees by Sonoma State professor Stephen Galloway and a sculpture made of espresso spoons by Sebastopol's Ned Kahn. Even the bikes for guest use are local, made by Design Within Reach's Rob Forbes.

BOOK IT Rooms start at \$215 per night, h2hotel.com. **D.J.** 



water in clear milk bottles, stocked in the fridge to keep thirst at bay.

THE MEALS Latest news is that chef Victor Scargle has taken the toque in the main dining room, after prior stints as instructor at CIA, the now-closed Julia's Kitchen of Copia, and Go Fish just up Highway 29. Beside the dining, there's a spacious bar lounge featuring an array of artisanal spirits; cocktails are also served on the second-story pool deck in the warmer months.

THE SPA Most guest rooms can serve as private spa rooms, with steam and outdoor showers as well as a space for a massage table. But there's also a central spa on the property with an infrared sauna and steam room and an East-meets-West-inspired treatment menu chock-full of organic skin care options.

THE LOCATION It's centrally located in Yountville, which means walking distance to wine tasting rooms and world-famous restaurants like Bouchon, French Laundry, Ad Hoc, Bottega Ristorante, V Wine Cellar and Bistro Jeanty.

NOT TO MISS Greet the morning or end the day swogging (swim jogging) in the 75-foot solar-heated saline lap pool — the only second-story hotel pool in the Napa Valley, with commanding views of the town and surrounding vineyards.

BOOK IT Rooms start at \$550, bardesonno.com. **M.T.**

h2hotel

THE ROOMS In one short year since opening, h2hotel has pulled at the heartstrings of local and farther-flung travelers, keeping

the occupancy at near capacity regardless of the season. Just one look at this 36-room, LEED Gold-certified Healdsburg jewel — the younger, hipper sister (who refuses to use capital letters) of Hotel Healdsburg— tells you why. This place isn't just green in name; everywhere you look you see evidence, and a certain amount of joy, in the interpretation of that standard. From reclaimed wood, rainwater capture systems and a living green roof to the commitment to the upkeep and rehabilitation of Foss Creek (visible from the back balconies) to the 10,000-square-foot native meadow just beyond the lobby, it's all here. The rooms don't disappoint either, featuring elegant and tasteful touches such as striped bamboo floors and showing support for local companies with Peace Industry rugs, Coyuchi organic cotton linens and robes and even Heath Ceramics tile in the bathroom.

THE MEALS For both drinking and dining, spoonbar is a destination in itself, set just off the town square and hence a prime people-watching spot for guests and locals alike. That's especially true on warm nights, when the streetside glass doors are flung open to provide an almost alfresco experience. The food and exceptional cocktails, locally sourced to the extreme, are meticulously prepared by chef Rudy Mihal (formerly of Windsor's Odyssey) and mixologist Scott Beattie (formerly of Cyrus). It's a combination that will have you thinking about a return trip almost as soon as you've left.

THE SPA Guests of h2 need only walk up the block to Hotel Healdsburg to take advantage