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DOW JONES REPRINTS

**Napa, Without the Wine**

Gardens, architecture, cooking and the arts fuel many other passions in California's Eden

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Next weekend kicks off tourism season in Napa Valley, a 30-mile-long patch of California Eden. Home to more than 400 wineries, the Valley draws some five million visitors each year, many of whom are there to swirl, sip and spit.

But for all but the most passionate oenophile -- and especially for vacationers with minors or nondrinkers in tow -- the allure of discovering the chewy tobacco undertones in French-oak-fermented Syrah is likely to fade after the first few winery stops.

Fortunately, Napa, once something of a culture-free zone, now boasts enough events and attractions to keep even the most wine-averse visitor engaged, from its parade of architectural follies to its quirky art collections. During four years of reporting on Napa's many layers and complexities, and over many more years of visiting the Valley, I've developed a list of favorite stops off the wine trail. Here are some of the standouts.



Getty Images

A Napa landscape

Daryl Sattui's controversial Castello di Amorosa is a must-see destination for the non-drinker touring the Napa Valley. WSJ contributing writer Julia Flynn Siler reports.

**NATURE & GARDENS**

Heading north from San Francisco over the Golden Gate Bridge, you'll reach Cornerstone Place, nine acres of modern garden installations. Just over the Napa county border in Sonoma, this eccentric collection of gardens and shops has something to offer children, gardeners and shoppers alike. It's hard to miss the white picket fence undulating in midair next to the highway and the 10-foot-tall Adirondack chairs at the entrance. A dead tree wrapped with blue plastic Christmas ornaments leads the way to Artefact Design & Salvage, a shop selling cast-iron mermaids (\$249 each) and a vintage rocket ride plucked from a Virginia Beach amusement park that recently sold for \$3,400.

The English-style parterre garden at Newton Vineyard, a 560-acre estate on Spring Mountain created by the late garden designer Peter Newton, is marked from the road with a bright-red British phone booth; reservations are required. The film director Francis Ford Coppola's Rubicon Estate is inspired by the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, right down to the fountain with wooden sailboats and imported French lampposts and trash cans. Visitors may also inspect its collection of wine and movie memorabilia, including the "Tucker" car and magic lanterns from the 1660s (Mr. Coppola's five Oscars are housed at the family's winery in Sonoma).

Bird-lovers can ride on an electric motorboat with Napa River Adventures, leaving from the Kennedy Park dock in southern Napa County, near the airport in an area where few tourists go. The personable captain, Kevin Trzcinski, is a fine natural-history guide who helps visitors appreciate Napa's protected wetlands. "There's a Cinnamon Teal right ahead of us!" Mr. Trzcinski exclaimed on a recent trip, pointing out a water bird with red-orange eyes and a long, blue wing patch. The Napa River, once clogged with sediment and rubbish, has been an environmental battleground, and the Valley itself was designated the nation's first protected agricultural preserve in 1968. On a recent visit, the riverbanks near downtown were neglected, populated in one place with a small camp of homeless people. This summer, the U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers plans to plant willows, bulrush, and salt grass.



Castello di Amorosa

**OFF THE TASTING TRAIL**

**Nature and Gardens**



Peju.com

### Peju Family Estate Winery

- [Cornerstone Place](#)<sup>1</sup>, 23570 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, (707) 933-3010.
- [Chappellet Vineyard](#)<sup>2</sup>, 1581 Sage Canyon Road, St. Helena, (707) 963-7136. (By appointment only.)
- [Peju Family Estate Winery](#)<sup>3</sup>, 8466 St. Helena Highway (Hwy. 29) Rutherford, (707) 963-3600.
- [Newton Vineyard](#)<sup>4</sup>, 2555 Madrona Avenue, St. Helena, (707) 963-9000. (By appointment only.)
- [Rubicon Estate](#)<sup>5</sup>, 1991 St. Helena Highway, Rutherford, (707) 968-1100.
- [Napa River Adventures](#)<sup>6</sup>, P.O. Box 10881, Napa CA 94581, (707) 224-9080.

### Art and Music



www.dirosapreserve.org

### Di Rosa Preserve

- [Di Rosa Preserve](#)<sup>7</sup>, 5200 Carneros Highway, Route 121, Napa, (707) 226-5991. (Reservations required.)
- [Hess Collection Winery](#)<sup>8</sup>, 4411 Redwood Road, Napa, (707) 255-1144.
- [I. Wolk Gallery](#)<sup>9</sup>, 1340 Main Street, St. Helena, (707) 963-8800. (Also galleries at Auberge du Soleil and Cliff Lede)
- [Clos Pegase](#)<sup>10</sup>, 1060 Dunaweal Lane, Calistoga, (707) 942-4981.
- [Robert Mondavi Winery/Summer Music Festival](#)<sup>11</sup>, 7801 St. Helena Highway (Hwy. 29), Oakville, (888) 769-5299.
- [Music in the Vineyards](#)<sup>12</sup>. P.O. Box 6297, Napa, (707) 258-5559.

### Food and Cooking



www.ubuntunapa.com

### Ubuntu Restaurant and Yoga Studio

- [Oxbow Public Market](#)<sup>13</sup>, 644 First Street, Napa (707) 226-6529.
- [Folio Enoteca & Winery](#)<sup>14</sup>, at the Oxbow Public Market, (707) 256-3700.
- [Taylor's Automatic Refresher](#)<sup>15</sup>, at the Oxbow Public Market and 933 Main Street, St. Helena, (707) 224-6900.
- [Three Twins Organic Ice Cream](#)<sup>16</sup>, at the Oxbow Public Market, (707) 257-TWIN.
- [Copia: The American Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts](#)<sup>17</sup>, 500 First Street, Napa, (707) 259-1600.
- [Ubuntu Restaurant and Yoga Studio](#)<sup>18</sup>, 1140 Main Street, Napa (707) 251-5656.
- [The French Laundry](#)<sup>19</sup>, 6640 Washington Street, Yountville, Reservations two months in advance through [www.opentable.com](http://www.opentable.com).
- [Bouchon and Bouchon Bakery](#)<sup>20</sup>, 6534 Washington Street, Yountville, (707) 944-8037.
- [Ad Hoc](#)<sup>21</sup>, 6476 Washington Street, Yountville, (707) 944-2487.
- [Redd](#)<sup>22</sup>, 6480 Washington Street, Yountville, (707) 944-2222.
- [Culinary Institute of America](#)<sup>23</sup>, 2555 Main Street, St. Helena, (800) 888-7850.

### History and Architecture



[www.castellodiamorosa.com](http://www.castellodiamorosa.com)

### Castello di Amorosa

- [Rubicon Estate](#)<sup>24</sup>, 1991 St. Helena Highway, Rutherford, (707) 968-1100.
- [Castello di Amorosa](#)<sup>25</sup>, 4045 N. St. Helena Highway, Calistoga, (707) 942-8200.
- [Darioush Winery](#)<sup>26</sup>, 4240 Silverado Trail, Napa, (707) 257-2345.
- [Quintessa](#)<sup>27</sup>, 1601 Silverado Trail, Rutherford, (707) 967-1601. (By appointment only.)
- [Opus One](#)<sup>28</sup>, 7900 St. Helena Highway, (Hwy. 29) Oakville, (707) 944-9442.

### Spas and Sports



[www.drwilkinson.com](http://www.drwilkinson.com)

### Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort

- [Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort](#)<sup>29</sup>, 1507 Lincoln Avenue, Calistoga, (707) 942-4102.
- [Indian Springs Resort and Spa](#)<sup>30</sup>, 1712 Lincoln Avenue, Calistoga, (707) 942-4913.
- [Solage Calistoga](#)<sup>31</sup>, 755 Silverado Trail, Calistoga, (866) 942-7442.
- [Napa Valley Bike Tours](#)<sup>32</sup>, 6488 Washington Street, Yountville, (800) 707-BIKE.
- [Robert Louis Stevenson Park](#)<sup>33</sup>, 3801 St. Helena Highway (Hwy. 29) Calistoga, (707) 942-4575.
- [Long Meadow Ranch](#)<sup>34</sup>, Rutherford, (707) 963-4555 ext. 161. (By appointment only)

### ART & MUSIC

In Carneros, a cooler grape-growing area that straddles Napa and Sonoma counties, is the Di Rosa preserve, a 217-acre ranch housing one of the nation's largest and most eclectic collections of California modern art. Rene di Rosa, a former San Francisco Chronicle reporter who began growing grapes and collecting art in the 1960s, owns the 2,200-piece collection, which includes works by the ceramicist Robert Arneson.

The private art collection of Swiss water magnate Donald Hess, housed at his Hess Collection Winery at Mount Veeder, on the Valley's western slopes, includes works by painters including Britain's Francis Bacon, Germany's Anselm Kiefer and Americans Frank Stella and Robert Motherwell. The view of the Valley is spectacular; getting there from State Route 29, the Napa Valley's main artery, requires a drive of 10 to 15 minutes up a windy, forested road.

For music in a pastoral setting, head to the 39th annual Robert Mondavi Winery Summer Music Festival. With its iconic bell tower and Mission-style architecture, the 42-year-old winery is still one of the Valley's most magical settings -- even though now it is owned by a New York corporation, Constellation Brands. This year, the series kicks off with a July 4 fireworks display and performances by the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, among other artists. From Aug. 6 to Aug. 24, the Music in the Vineyards chamber-music festival takes place across the Valley. One highlight: A concert titled " 'Degenerates': Composers Blacklisted by the Nazis" at the Michael Graves-designed Clos Pegase winery in Calistoga, which also features sculptures by Henry Moore and others.

### FOOD & COOKING

Once downright unglamorous, the city of Napa's downtown has become a not-to-be-missed stop on most Valley tours. Artisan producers and organic foodies gather at the Oxbow Public Market. Next door is Copia, aka the American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts, the \$70 million project founded by the late Robert Mondavi, which has struggled to attract visitors. In addition to wine-education classes, it offers cooking classes, garden tours, films and concerts. A recent addition is some of the late Julia Child's memorabilia, including the hanging pots-and-pans collection from the set of her PBS cooking show.

The Ubuntu Restaurant and Yoga Studio's talented chef, Jeremy Fox, prepares a tasting menu that recently included Marcona almonds in lavender sugar, a signature dish of cauliflower in a cast-iron pot with roast-purée couscous and a salad of fresh-picked greens, maple syrup,

strawberries, and pistachios. Burgers and fish tacos are at Taylor's Automatic Refresher; for dessert, the Three Twins Organic Ice Cream shop serves Meyer lemon sorbet.

The mid-Valley hamlet of Yountville is home to more Michelin-starred restaurants -- four -- over a short few blocks that any other town its size. That is largely due to the chef Thomas Keller, who opened the French Laundry here in 1994 and Bouchon down the street in 1998. Richard Reddington's Redd is another Michelin star holder, as is Bistro Jeanty. Mr. Keller's newest restaurant, the family-style Ad Hoc, is a good choice if you forgot to make your French Laundry reservation months before your visit.

One of the Valley's best-kept secrets is the Culinary Institute of America's Greystone campus in St. Helena, which offers public cooking demonstrations during the week for a fee of \$15 per person to watch. Housed in an imposing Victorian stone mansion, the CIA, as it is called, also offers two- and four-day courses, such as "Cooking for the Next Half of Your Life," at a cost of \$3,994 per session.

## **HISTORY & ARCHITECTURE**

Any visitor to the Valley should take in one of its most controversial new developments: the Castello di Amorosa. The vintner Daryl Sattui, who prefers to be called Dario, spent 15 years and more than \$30 million to construct it; the place has its own drawbridge, confessional and torture chamber, and it is stunning in its attention to detail, particularly the intricate masonry and the ironwork hand-forged by blacksmiths in Italy. Surrounded by vineyards, the castle also houses a winery. Ask to see the frescoes in the banquet hall, where Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have held fund-raisers.

Among the Valley's other architectural confections are Darioush Khaledi's Persian-style palace, with its 18-foot stone entrance columns; Chilean vintner Agustin Hunneus's hill-hugging stone edifice, Quintessa, landscaped with plants native to California; and Opus One, built in 1991 by a joint venture of France's Rothschild and California's Mondavi families. Designed by the Los Angeles firm Johnson Fain Partners, Opus One has been likened by locals to a spaceship that has landed in the vineyards. The view from the second-floor terrace is one of the best in the Valley -- but accessible only with a reservation and a \$30 tasting fee.

## **SPAS & SPORTS**

In the north end of the Napa Valley sits Mount St. Helena, formed after volcanic activity many millennia ago. There is still plenty of seismic and geothermal action in the area, particularly in Calistoga, where a mud bath at the funky Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort might be in order.

Be warned: A mud bath isn't for everyone. Royce Winans, a 70-year-old grandmother from Kankakee, Ill., still remembers the gift of a mud bath one of her daughters-in-law gave her several years ago. "I was trying to be gracious, but I was thinking, 'Oh my God! I've got to get into this vat of mud!'" She literally held her nose while lowering herself in; the best part, she says, was getting hosed off afterwards.

If exercise sounds like more fun, there are several hiking options, including a strenuous 10-mile round trip starting in Robert Louis Stevenson Park and rising 2,100 feet up Mount St. Helena. The reward: Spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean, San Francisco and, on a clear day, the Sierra Nevada mountains. Or head up into the 650-acre Long Meadow Ranch to hike or tour the ranch on an all-terrain Pinzgauer. See newborn Highland calves, Black Australorp chickens and Appaloosa horses, and taste organic olive oils and Sequoia strawberries. It's a long and twisty trip up there, but once you arrive, you'll forget the Tuscan minimansions of present-day Napa and bask instead in its rural heart.

***Julia Flynn Siler is the author of "The House of Mondavi: The Rise and Fall of an American Wine Dynasty."***