

LOCAL DOCS:
PRACTICING WHAT
THEY PREACH?

p. 128

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Dream Weekends

Sausalito
Napa Valley
Carmel/Monterey
Mendocino
Santa Cruz
Berkeley

p. 106

Cavallo Point Lodge:
A luxury resort hotel at the
foot of the Golden Gate Bridge

ULTRA-FRESH FOOD
AT MAGPIE CAFE

p. 152

YOU HAVE HOW
MANY CHILDREN?

p. 100

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napa valley

GIRLS' SPA GETAWAY

WHERE TO STAY: The Meritage Resort—This property feels a bit out of place adjacent to a bleak industrial section of Napa. But its bare-bones location—behind Highway 12/Highway 221, just downhill from the metal grape-crushing guy that signifies you've arrived in the Napa Valley—also affords it its greatest attribute: a wine cave that's been dug beneath the hillside vineyard and transformed into a spectacular spa and tasting room. 875 Bordeaux Way, Napa; (866) 370-6272; themeritageresort.com; \$149–\$399

DREAM WEEKEND: Gather a group of girlfriends and while away the weekend bonding over spa treatments and wine tasting. With The Meritage as home base, the group can venture deeper into the wine country, or stay put for in-the-cave pampering and wine tasting, and sunbathing by the pool.



● **ROAD TRIP BY BIKE:** Join the Napa Wine Tours' "Winery Bike Tour From Calistoga." The trip costs \$160 per person (online) and includes bike rental, all cycling paraphernalia, a 10- to 17-mile excursion along quiet valley lanes, visits to wineries and a wine-country lunch beneath shady oaks.

GO UNDERGROUND: Let The Meritage's Spa Terra lure you beneath the vineyard to swaddle you in its dim, cool, rich-toned interior. Relax with friends in the candle-lighted blue room while awaiting pampering treatments—facials, massages, body scrubs. (The Oliva body scrub will leave middle-aged skin as soft as a baby's butt.) Then, stew in the whirlpool before hitting the decadent multi-directional showers.

SIP, SIP, SIP: Stay in the cave to visit Trinitas Tasting Room. Sample some of the Napa Valley's most famous export.

CHAT BY THE WATER: Poolside at The Meritage, chat with your friends over lunch—the chicken Caesar salad hits the spot after a massage—then jump into the pool for a few jubilant handstands.

ROAD TRIP BY CAR: As you head north on Highway 29/128, make a few key stops: 1) Oakville Grocery, a store crammed full of wine, cheeses, deli specialties, jams, baked items, breads, olives; 2) St. Helena, where the window shopping's great fun and Gillwoods Café is a must-stop for a high-calorie breakfast; and 3) Silver Oak Winery's Alexander Valley tasting room, located 16 gorgeous miles past Calistoga and promising some bracing samples of the famous Cabernet.

AVOID A NIGHTMARE: Swirl and spit, or designate a driver.



● **BRING YOUR APPETITE:** Try the black mussels in saffron sauce or the duck confit risotto at The Meritage's onsite Siena Restaurant. Or head up the road to Napa's Main Street for a truly inventive vegetarian dinner at Ubuntu.