

# *Glorious & Victorious* **NAPA VALLEY**

| BY TRACY BEARD







Last October, the media flooded the news with coverage of raging fires roaring through Napa Valley. Many people around the world watched the repeated footage and believed that nothing remained of the picturesque Valley. However, misfortune has a way of building or breaking people. Locals and outsiders came to the rescue, and today Napa Valley remains magnificent and magical despite the flames.

**I**n February 2018, following the fire, I spent a week in Napa Valley. As I traversed the area looking for signs of devastation, they were surprisingly challenging to locate. I learned from locals that after the disaster, communities banded together, cleanup crews removed the rubble, contractors started new construction, and only a few months later the bright colors of spring blanketed the Valley. New growth camouflaged black scars left from the vicious flames, and the Valley stands vibrant and alive ready for visitors.





## NAPA VALLEY

Napa Valley offers numerous resorts, B & Bs, hotels, restaurants, and wineries. The Meadowood Napa Valley, a luxury resort, is ideally located in St. Helena, California, and makes the perfect base for exploring the Valley. Delicious food is synonymous with the area, and no trip here is complete without exploring a few wineries. Angèle Restaurant & Bar in Napa and Redd Wood in Yountville are essential destinations for great food. For a unique and tasty wine experience tour Amici Cellars in Calistoga and Hourglass Wine Company Inc. in St. Helena.

## MEADOWOOD NAPA VALLEY

Meadowood Napa Valley unfolds along the vast hillside and offers an assortment of accommodations. My childhood dreams were brought to life when I spent two nights in a one of the luxury Treeline suites. Lounging on the California King bed, I gazed out the windows high above the ground surrounded by tree branches and spring leaves that fluttered in the wind.

My cozy yet opulent suite, decorated in cottage style, extended outside onto a white-washed deck overlooking the fairway where I spent



the evenings with a glass of wine in hand and the mornings with a cup of steaming coffee. The abundance of amenities, which included a flat-screen TV, coffee machine, refrigerator, and fully stocked bar, superbly equipped my temporary home.

Guests at Meadowood often choose to participate in one of the onsite activities like golf, tennis, croquet, swimming, hiking, or a spa treatment. Jennifer Chiesa, Director of Public Relations, excitedly reports, "Forbes Travel Guide has just unveiled its annual Star Rating list, naming Meadowood as a Forbes Travel





Guide 15-Star recipient with the Hotel, The Restaurant and Meadowood Spa each receiving the Five-Star Rating! The estate is now one of only 13 hotels in the world to have all three Five-Star designations at the same property.”

#### THE RESTAURANT AT MEADOWOOD

Fabulous dining is essential to any trip, and The Grill overlooking the golf course offers scrumptious options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The Restaurant at Meadowood, a Michelin-star establishment under the command of Chef Christopher Kostow, serves elevated Napa Valley cuisine in the evenings.

#### MEADOWOOD SPA

Enticed by Meadowood’s spa reputation, I booked an appointment. As I stepped out into the women’s relaxation garden, I found myself letting go of any stressful thoughts. I sat next to the mineral soaking pool and dangled my feet into the water like a child.

Soon I was roused and taken to my private treatment room where I received a massage that lulled me to sleep. The all-suite spa design offers privacy, and each suite features a steam/sauna room, private bathroom, and treatment room. Jennifer says, “In addition to the many culinary and wellness amenities available, we first and foremost want our guests to feel well taken care of, as if in their own home away from home. Just as everyone is unique, we strive to create the best personalized experiences for their stay.”

#### ANGÈLE RESTAURANT & BAR

Napa Valley boasts excellent restaurants. Standing the test of time for over 20 years, Angèle Restaurant & Bar is tantamount to visiting a magnificent bistro in France. As I entered this culinary gem next to the river, I immediately felt transported to my favorite city in the world, Paris. Seated by the window, watching pedestrians stroll alongside the river, I witnessed the sun going down as I savored a dish





of tasty escargot tucked away in puff pastry with garlic, parsley, and a beurre blanc sauce. This sophisticated appetizer preceded a rich and hearty beef bourguignon with buttered noodles. I finished with a delectable butter-scotch bread pudding with bourbon ice cream. It was so flavorful and enticing that two ladies from a neighboring table volunteered to join me in polishing off the dish.

Proprietor Bettina Rouas says, “Owning Angèle is about my love for food, wine, and taking care of people. My goal is for our customers to feel like they just had a quick trip to France. I hope they can’t wait to return.”

### REDD WOOD

Redd Wood, a Yountville pizza restaurant, offers a contemporary version of Wine Country cuisine. This vibrant restaurant serves casual upscale fare with bold flavors and beautiful colors. Chef de Cuisine Jake Kossman works with Richard Reddington, executive chef and owner, to keep the menu exciting and seasonal.

I began lunch with a cold crisp Caesar salad and moved on to a bucatini pasta with authentic Italian bolognese sauce. I finished with an extraordinary scoop of sweet and salty date and bacon ice cream. Pizza is a staple at the restau-

rant, and the mushroom pizza with béchamel is a repeat winner. Creativity abounds at the bar, and the mixologist conjures up stunning cocktails.

### AMICI CELLARS

Wineries litter the main roads; but for a more intimate experience, book an appointment at Amici Cellars owned by Robert Shepard and John Harris, long-term friends for over 25 years. Melissa Devore, Executive Vice President, says, “Amici Cellars has no curfew and no limits, and we want to be approachable to everyone at different price points.”

John talked about the different cooperages, or barrels. He said, “We use mostly French, 98%, but we have tried some Hungarian barrels. We have found that different cooperages work better with some vineyards than others.” Robert says, “Oak is like a spice rack. Different forests and barrel companies produce different flavors and components in the wine, and that’s where the winemaking team comes in to do their magic.”

Amici offers several wines. The entry-level brand “No Curfew” is great for what I would consider the “Tuesday night wine,” and the middle-level brand “Olema” is moderately

priced. Finally, the elegant premium wines listed under the brand “Amici” are those I would have to reserve for special occasions.

### HOURLASS WINE COMPANY

Hourglass Wine Company is made up of a winery, two vineyards, and a collection of estate wines. Owners Jeff and Carolyn Smith worked alongside Napa architect Ollie Lundberg to design a winery where they could produce cutting-edge wines. Ollie’s final design for the winery came to him in a dream. Inspired by nature and the principles of modernism, the team worked together to carve the new winery into the hillside. Hourglass wines are in high demand, and the uniquely stunning winery is worth a visit.

### VICTORIOUS NAPA

Napa Valley has so much to offer visitors. The collaborative efforts of those living in the Valley led to the quick recovery of the community. Napa stands glorious and victorious after fighting the flames; but we need to remember that even though it is challenging to find evidence of the fires, there are those still recovering from severe losses.