

news

Sampling Massages, Feather Beds, Golf at Sonoma's Luxury Hotels

Review by Elin McCoy

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Feb. 21 (Bloomberg) -- Sonoma County,



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Private Club

The secluded Mayacama golf and residence club east of Santa Rosa strikes a decidedly different note. A private road winds through rolling hills to the Mediterranean-style clubhouse and a Jack Nicklaus-designed golf course ranked No. 66 in America's top 100 by Golf Digest.

Now more wine. The 650 acres, once owned by Charles Schulz of "Peanuts" fame, now include fractional ownership residences for those craving a permanent spot in wine country with golf, spa, pool, restaurant, your own wine locker, and hobnobbing with vintner member heavyweights like Bill Harlan of cult Harlan Estate. (Here, too, service is spotty, though happily they've recently replaced the restaurant's chef.) For \$650,000 to \$900,000, you get 70 nights a year at plush one-bedroom casitas and three-bedroom villas, with both indoor and outdoor showers.

Tuscan Village

I follow. Managing Director Jonathan Wilhelm says the aim is a community, "like a Tuscan village." Call this the manicured, gated version, although the sweeping post-card perfect vistas are eye-soothing enough.

My casita overlooks the golf course, and as I sip wine on my patio I watch wild turkeys wandering on a fairway. By the look of things, I'm sure it's someone's job to clean up after them.

In-Town. My batteries recharged by luxury, I need something different, like pizza-and-pinot night at rustic roadhouse Zazu, where winemakers are usually swapping stories over great food. The superluxe lifestyle needs a bit of contrast for full appreciation.

The hotel's 2001 opening jump-started this small town's gentrification. Fortunately, chic clothing emporiums, two pet boutiques, 12 tasting rooms and Michelin two-star restaurant Cyrus haven't stamped out local culture. (My regular stops: Bovo for homemade gelato, Downtown Bakery & Creamery for morning sticky buns, tacos at Taqueria El Sombrero.)

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