

# **GOLDEN STATE SAMPLER**

## California's Central Coast provides waves, wine and winning destinations

By Renee Brincks



Choosing California for your next event is easy. More challenging, however, is selecting a host destination in this sprawling state that boasts 1,264 miles of coastline, 265 state parks, 800 commercial wineries and countless meeting alternatives.

Do you want classic California, with salty Pacific breezes, swaying palm trees and soaring coastal cliffs? Perhaps chic California, where attendees can follow an afternoon meeting with lavish spa treatments and celebrity spotting? Or maybe charming California, where locally grown ingredients grace menus and cozy inns face vineyard-wrapped hills?

Happily, meeting professionals find it all on the Golden State's central coast. At once relaxed and refined, this scenic corridor, which runs from



Rendering of the Art Gallery of Alberta.

sq. ft. of varied function space. Northlands, which sees 2,500 events and 3.5 million visitors a year, is only a seven-mile drive from downtown.

#### **FUN ACTIVITIES**

The area has more than 70 golf courses—and to warm the hearts of planners and die-hard golfers, in summer's 17 hours of daylight, you can play a round after the meeting adjourns for the day.

For other types of fun, there's the Western Edmonton Mall (westedmall.com), not only the world's largest entertainment and shopping center, but Alberta's number one visitor attraction. Now wonder: It has the world's largest amusement park, the world's largest indoor lake and the world's largest triple-loop roller coaster—not to mention 800 shops and its own hotel.

### JASPER V

Edmonton is a gateway to Jasper National Park, but it can also be reached from Lake Louise along the 143-mile Icefields Parkway, called-rightly so-"one of the most spectacular drives in the world." It segues through Banff National Park, edged to the west by the towering peaks of the Continental Divide. A hundred glaciers are said to be tucked between the mountains, and wildlife—like bighorn sheep and even bears-stroll across the highway at will.

Downtown Jasper fans out from the train station, its streets lined with shops, restaurants, saloons and hotels, including The Sawridge Inn and Conference Centre (sawridgejasper.com), which has renovated its guest rooms and is planning a re-do of its meeting space.

Above town, on the shores of Lac Beauvert is The Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge (fairmont.com). Tucked among the chalets, cabins and lodge accommodations at the Fairmont are 18 meeting rooms. Or choose the clubhouse at the property's 18-hole golf course, which was rated as the #1 Best Golf Resort in Canada by SCOREGolf Magazine. It's the only lodge-type property in the Fairmont collection, and an idyllic retreat.

#### SMART MEETINGS MAGAZINE STATEMENT of OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, and CIRCULATION

- Publication Title SMART MEETINGS
- Publication Number 022-632
- Filing Date SEPTEMBER 28, 2008
- Issuance Frequency MONTHLY
- Number of Issues Published Annually 12
- Annual Subscription \$60.00
- Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication -475 GATE 5 ROAD, SUITE 235 SAUSALITO, CA 94965
- Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher - SAME
- Publisher MARIN BRIGHT 475 GATE 5 ROAD, SUITE 235, SAUSALITO, CA 94965 Editor - CAROLYN KOENIG - 475 GATE 5 ROAD, SUITE 235, SAUSALITO, CA 94965
- 10. Owner Full Name Complete Mailing Address MARIN BRIGHT 475 GATE 5 ROAD, SUITE 235, SAUSALITO, CA 94965 LUC TROUSSIEUX 475 GATE 5 ROAD, SUITE 235, SAUSALITO, CA 94965
- 12. Tax Status Has Not changed During Preceding 12 Months
- 13. Publication Title SMART MEETINGS
- 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below September 2008
- 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation Average No. Copies Each Issue No Copies of Single Issue
- Total Number of Copies

35919

(1) Paid/Requested Outside County Mail Subscriptions Stated On Form 3541

647 357

- (2) Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated On Form 341
- (3) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution
- (4) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS
- Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation [sum of 15b. (1), (2), (3) and (4)]

31503

- Free Distribution by Mail (Samples complimentary, and other free)
- (1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541

194

(2) In-County as Stated on Form 3541 2864

3091

(3) Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS

Total Nonrequested Distribution

3380 3058

Total Distribution (sum of 15d. and 15e.) 34883 34561

Total Distribution (sum of 15c, and 15f)

412

Total (Sum of 15f. and g.)

35795 34973

Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c. divided by 15g. times 100) 91.15% 88.01%

16. Publication of Statement of Ownership, will be printed in the October 2008 issue of this publication

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. Marin Bright, Publisher, Editorial Director, 09/28/2008 Monterey County south to Ventura County, showcases California's multifaceted appeal and offers options to please any group.

#### MONTEREY COUNTY V

With the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, rugged Big Sur, Salinas Valley's wine and agriculture and a cluster of cities on the Monterey Peninsula, Monterey County provides fitting venues and activities for any interest. In fact, attendees here often extend meetings into family getaways and romantic escapes.

"In this destination, there are so many neat little things you can do for a short afternoon or a long weekend. You can kayak among sea otters and sea lions. You can drive the 17-Mile Drive. There's wine and golf and dining and historic tours and more," says Bruce Skidmore, director of sales for the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau (montereyinfo.org).

#### MAJOR VENUES

Conveniently located in downtown Monterey, the Monterey Conference Center (monterey-

#### **GETTING THERE**

- Three major airports welcome guests within a few hours' drive of the Central Coast: San Francisco International Airport (flysfo.com) and Mineta San Jose International Airport (sjc.org) to the north and Los Angeles International Airport (lawa.org/lax) to the south.
- Monterey Peninsula Airport (montereyairport.com), four miles from downtown Monterey, offers direct connections to and from Denver, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Los Angeles and San Francisco.
- American Eagle, U.S. Airways and SkyWest serve San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport (sloairport.com), with taxi and shuttle options available to individual destinations.
- Nonstop service links Santa Barbara Airport (flysba.com) to 12 major cities, including Dallas, Denver, Salt Lake City, Seattle and Los Angeles.
- United Express offers daily flights between Los Angeles and Ventura County's Oxnard Airport (iflyoxnard.com).

conferencecenter.com) is connected both to the Portola Hotel & Spa and the Monterey Marriott. The center itself can accommodate up to 2,500 attendees for events and meetings. Connected by the **Portola Hotel**'s (portolahotel.com) atrium lobby, the hotel and Monterey Conference Center together offer 50,000 sq. ft. of flexible event facilities. The **Monterey Marriott** 



Right, Alisal's Cottonwood Room; below, Hyatt Regency Monterey.

(marriott.com) recently renovated its 10th-floor event space, where guests marvel at 270-degree views of historic downtown and Monterey Bay. Also nearby is the Hotel Pacific (hotelpacific. com), an Inns of Monterey property that is refurbishing its 105 suites. The hotel group offers a blindfolded kayaking package in partnership with Adventures By The Sea (adventuresbythesea.com) that tests participants' trust—an intriguing team-building opportunity.

Monterey's newest hotel opened this summer on Cannery Row. The 208-room InterContinental The Clement Monterey (intercontinental.com/montereyic) features a business center, spa and fitness facilities, waterfront dining and





a 3,500-square-foot outdoor courtyard with fire pits for foggy nights.

Many of the area's hotels are renovating and refurbishing. The Monterey Plaza Hotel (montereyplazahotel.com), perched above Monterey Bay on Cannery Row, recently finished an upgrade to guest rooms and meeting space. After completing room, restaurant, fitness center and pool renovations, Hyatt Regency Monterey Resort & Spa (monterey.hyatt.com) will open their spa in February 2009. A remodel of the four-bedroom President's House, an exclusive venue with a full kitchen, formal dining and living rooms, private pool and high-tech amenities, also is finished.

Ten miles north of Monterey, beachfront rooms at the former Marina Dunes Resort have been refreshed, and the property is now Sanctuary Beach Resort (thesanctuarybeachresort. com). To the sun-drenched south, Carmel Valley Ranch (carmelvalleyranch.com) updated its meeting space and reception areas, enhanced its 18-hole golf course and clubhouse and tapped

James Beard-winning chef Michel Richard for the new Citronelle restaurant.

### UNIQUE VENUES AND ACTIVITIES

Monterey features an eclectic mix of options for planners. An art gallery and café are housed in the Cannery Row Imax Theatre complex that opened this summer. Nearby, the Culinary Center of Monterey (culinarycenterofmonterey.com) offers exciting team-building activities for foodies (and nonfoodies as well), and the Monterey Bay Aquarium (montereybayaquarium.org) hosts receptions and dinners for 30–3,000. In 2009, the aquarium will celebrate its 25th anniversary and open a new seahorse exhibit.

Victorian B&Bs line the town of Pacific Grove's rocky coastline. Near the entrance to Pebble Beach is Asilomar Conference Grounds (visitasilomar. com), a Julia Morgan-designed landmark with 31,000 sq. ft. of function space surrounded by sand dunes and forests. Along the 17-Mile Drive, the Pebble Beach Resorts (pebblebeach.com) present world-class golf and amenities.

#### **NEWS**

- Santa Barbara's Hotel Oceano has completed renovations on its 122 rooms.
- A new ballroom, spa, three restaurants and beach boardwalk are among plans for the 202-room Miramar Hotel & Bungalows in Montecito, slated to open in 2010.
- Silverado Stages' Coast Flyer service now offers daily service between Los Angeles International Airport and San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties.
- The new 14,000-square-foot hospitality center at Vina Robles Winery includes a tasting room, retail shop and banquet facility.
- Among recent additions at Hyatt Regency Monterey is the Regency Club, a business and hospitality center with high-speed Internet access, fax and copy services, concierge center and expedited resort check-in and departure services.
- The 330-room Fairmont Resort Seaside, with 24,000 sq.ft. of meeting space, a full-service spa and 36 holes of golf, is expected to open in 2010.
- The Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach opened a two-level, 2,500-squarefoot outdoor deck that seats 100.

#### Neptune Pool at Hearst Castle.

Celebrities frequent the galleries, beaches and inns of enchanting Carmel-by-the-Sea, a one-square-mile enclave once the home of a bohe-mian group of artists and writers. Local wines and live jazz set the tone for strolling receptions in the garden courtyard at Carmel Plaza (shop-carmelplaza.com), the village's retail hub. Inland, the 14-mile-long Carmel Valley has several resorts, wine tasting rooms and the Land Rover Experience at Quail Lodge (quaillodge.com), a fun option for your rugged outdoor incentive groups. Over the hill in Salinas, the National Steinbeck Center (steinbeck.org) accommodates up to 600 in several event venues.

#### SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY V

Spirited San Luis Obispo County is home to Hearst Castle (hearstcastle.org), with grand architecture, European antiques and the iconic Neptune Pool (private events can be arranged here). SLO also encompasses California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, re-



nowned for its engineering program; the Madonna Inn, a fun hotel with quirky themed suites and a collection of beach communities blessed with warm sun and big waves.

"This area is ideal for groups of 10–2,000," says Sarah Gomez, sales and marketing coordinator for the San Luis Obispo County Visitors & Conference Bureau (sanluisobispocounty.com). "Since we're midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, 'meet in the middle' is our motto."

San Simeon, situated below Hearst Castle, and quaint town of Cambria anchor the county's north coast. Driving south on Highway I, visitors pass Morro Bay and its iconic, 576-foot volcanic peak before winding through the city of San Luis Obispo and on to Pismo Beach. North of SLO, and inland along Highway 101, is Paso Robles, the center of the county's burgeoning wine industry.



Peopy Young, Peopy Young & Associates

800.676.1685 • SeascapeResort.com

What's your wish? At Seascape Beach Resort we want to hear about it. Because we know that the best possible meeting experience is the one that makes both you and your attendees feel good. Let the magic of Monterey Bay, our all-suites accommodations, meeting rooms with views, beach parties, 4-star food, and competitive conference packages, make your next meeting a breeze. Our sales team will attend to your every wish, while you sit back and shine.





17,000 sq.ft. of meeting space • 15 conference rooms • All-suite accommodations.
High-speed Internet access • Award-winning restaurant • Cutting-edge team building programs.
Championship golf • Sports center & day spa • 17 miles of Monterey Bay beachfront.

LUXE WORLDWIDE HOTELS

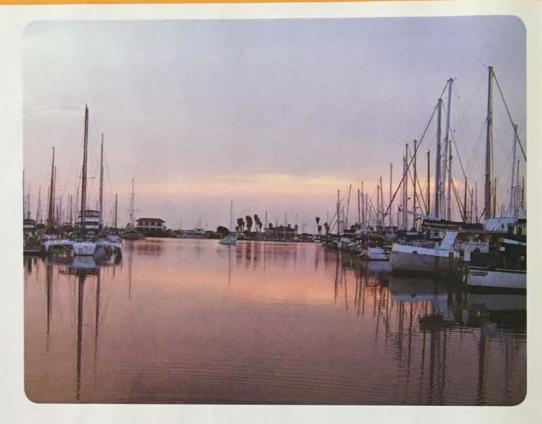
#### MEETING VENUES

The county harbors a variety of properties with meeting space, both on the coast and inland. For example, **The Cliffs Resort** (cliffsresort. com) is located on a bluff overlooking the ocean and its own beach. Fresh from a recent multimillion-dollar renovation, the resort offers 10,000 sq. ft. of flexible meeting space, along with a spa and fitness center.

Also in Pismo Beach is the Mission Inn of Pismo Beach (missioninnpismobeach.com). Planners appreciate the breakfast buffet, wireless Internet, business center and 1,600 sq. ft. of function space. Banquet rooms at Pismo's Spyglass Inn (spyglassinn.com) seat up to 150 and some of the property's 82 guest rooms overlook the ocean.

At San Luis Obispo's **Apple Farm Inn** (applefarm.com), the Creekside Lawn seats 80. Four other indoor meeting rooms and outdoor patios are ideal for retreats and board meetings with 20-50 attendees.

Inland, the new 80-room Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites Atascadero (hiexpress. com) seats 10–12 in its executive boardroom and 80 in its dining space (available afternoons

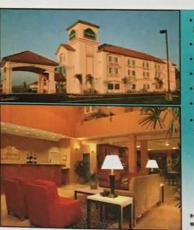


Sunset at Ventura Harbor.

### **SMART SHOWCASE**







- Located in the Central Coast Wine Region 200 miles between Los Angeles and San Francisco
- . Home to 170 near-by wineries
- Grand opening October 2006
- . Space for groups from 10 to 60
- · Evening complimentary wine and cheese tasting
- · Wine store and gift shop located in hotel lobby
- Meet the winemaker tours, personalized spa and golf packages available



-mail: lqD832gm@laquinta.com rww.laquinta.com Ph:805-239-3004 Fax:805-239-3014



only). The hotel is situated 20 miles from the San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport and 13 miles from Paso Robles.

#### UNIQUE VENUES AND ACTIVITIES

"San Luis Obispo has the college and a downtown area with lots of shopping and dining. Our south coast beach communities have great outlet shopping, while the north coast beach communities offer hiking, biking trails and whale watching," says Gomez. "Inland, Paso Robles and Atascadero have many different wineries and tours available."

Two venues ideal for large groups are the 2,600-person capacity Alex Madonna Expo Center (madonnainn.com) at the Madonna Inn and the Paso Robles Event Center (midstate-fair.com), an expansive facility that hosts the California Mid-State Fair.

For tasty team-building activities, try Marcove Executive Training (marcovetraining.com).

Culinary Institute of America graduate Jeff Marcove and his wife, Kathy, a management and training consultant, use cooking competitions and culinary adventures to boost groups'

communication and problem-solving skills.

You're in another wine country, one that may surprise as well as delight your group. For a taste of the area, try **Vina Robles Winery** (vinarobles. com), which completed its 14,000-square-foot hospitality center this spring. Highlights include vaulted ceilings, a library and lounge area, outdoor fountains and large, vineyard-view windows. Groups have access to five indoor and outdoor spaces; the Signature Room seats 257 theater-style or 120 for dinners.

The new Cass Café at Cass Winery (casswines.com) is available for private parties, and catering options extend to dinners in the vineyards. The winery's barrel room also seats 80, while 16 can dine in the cellar storage area.

#### SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

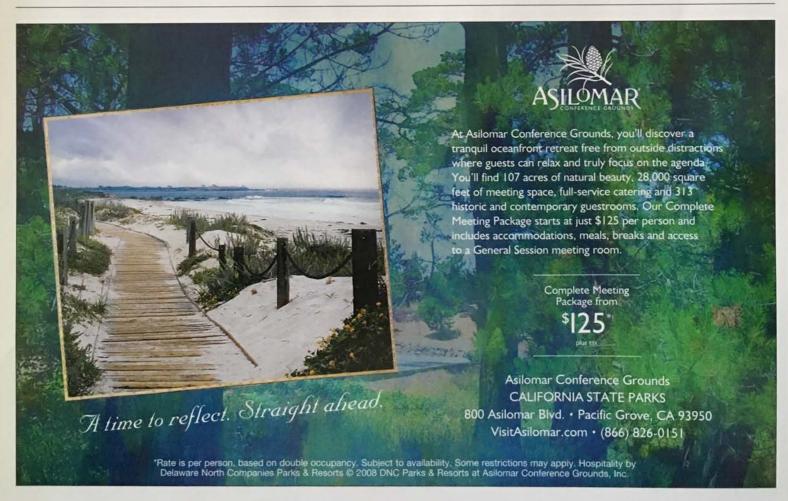
Like its neighbors, Santa Barbara County claims wide, white-sand beaches, rough-and-tumble agricultural land and inland valleys ideal for grape growing. Three California missions are within the county's borders, and Spanish influence is particularly evident in Santa Barbara's

white stucco structures.

From the Santa Barbara Surfing Museum to the celebrity playground of Montecito, this destination is rich with unique group attractions. Santa Barbara Conference and Visitors Bureau (santabarbaraca.com) communications director Shannon Turner Brooks suggests booking events between October and May, when offseason values abound. "There are better prices and it's not as crowded. We have 300 days of sun per year, so there's typically good weather then, as well," she says.

#### MEETING VENUES

Several Santa Barbara meetings properties have wrapped up renovations in recent months, including Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara (fourseasons.com/santabarbara). A new restaurant, a 10,000-square-foot spa and 207 refreshed guest rooms were part of the hotel's six-year, \$240-million project. Fess Parker's DoubleTree Resort (fpdtr.com) revamped its meeting facilities, restaurant and 360 guest rooms; a tiled courtyard and several ocean-view banquet rooms are among its 45,000 sq. ft. of



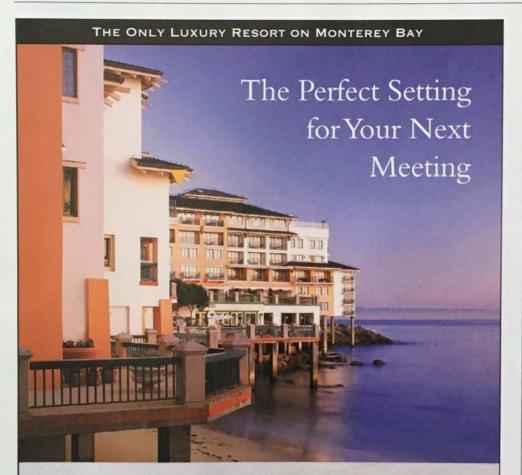
conference space.

Steps from State Street in downtown Santa Barbara, the former Hotel Andalucia has taken on a hip new existence as **Canary Hotel** (canary-santabarbara.com). The property's 97 guest rooms and 5,000 sq. ft. of function space are redecorated in Spanish style, and "The Perch," a rooftop terrace with 360-degree ocean and mountain views, continues to be a favorite for special events.

Seeking a tranquil executive retreat venue?

Figueroa Mountain Farmhouse (figueroamountainfarmhouse.com) accommodates small groups in a secluded lodge tucked above the Santa Ynez Valley. The property sleeps just 14 but accommodates 200 for outdoor events. Wireless Internet and catering are available.

Down the road in Solvang, the Royal Scandinavian Inn (royalscandinavianinn.com) is planning a restaurant redesign and menu updates emphasizing regional flavors. Groups are



With over 17,000 sq ft of meeting and banquet space perched over Monterey Bay, your meeting can't get any closer to the waves. Ocean view meeting rooms open to outdoor plazas, creating a memorable setting for your business and social events. Our recent \$3 million renovation provides wireless connectivity and state-of-the-art conference facilities. Centrally located on Cannery Row, you can walk to the Monterey Bay Aquarium and historic Old Monterey, or drive minutes to Carmel, Pebble Beach and world-class golf.

Ask about our

Meeting Packages and

Special Value Dates!

CALL OUR SALES DEPARTMENT AT

800.421.0640 OR LOG ON TO

www.montereyplazahotel.com/sm



## MONTEREY PLAZA HOTEL & SPA

400 CANNERY ROW, MONTEREY, CA 93940



#### **GROUP DINING**

MONTEREY COUNTY

Forge in the Forest, Carmel

forgeintheforest.com American cuisine in indoor saloon and outdoor gardens

Montrio Bistro, Monterey montrio.com European and American cuisine

**Nepenthe**, Big Sur nepenthebigsur.com California cuisine overlooking the ocean

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
 Artisan Restaurant, Paso Robles artisanpasorobles.com
 Regional American cuisine

Café Roma, San Luis Obispo caferomaslo.com Italian fare

F. McLintocks Saloon and Dining House, Pismo Beach

mclintocks.com Barbecued steaks, ribs and seafood

 Santa Barbara County
 Chuck's Waterfront Grill, Santa Barbara chuckswaterfrontgrill.com
 Steaks and seafood

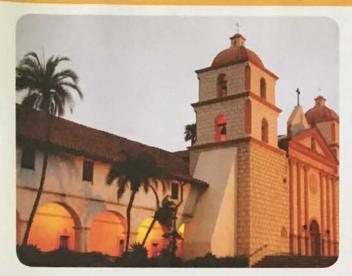
SeaGrass, Santa Barbara seagrassrestaurant.com Seafood fresh from the Santa Barbara Fish Market

Stateside Restaurant & Lounge, Santa Barbara statesidesb.com Asian and California cuisine

Ventura County
 Palm, Ventura
 Ipalm.com
 French country and American cuisine

The Greek at the Harbor, Ventura greekventuraharbor.com Traditional Greek fare and entertainment by belly dancers

Watermark, Ventura watermarkonmain.com Contemporary American cuisine with local ingredients



welcomed in 133 rooms and 4,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

#### UNIQUE VENUES AND ACTIVITIES

All that sunshine inspires visitors to head outside. Santa Barbara Adventure Company (sbadventureco.com) leads group excursions and team-building activities ranging from kayaking to surfing to cycling tours. For an overview of

Santa Barbara's historic mission.

Santa Barbara's history and architecture, download a free Red Tile Walking Tour map or watch the podcast on the bureau's website. And, for receptions with a cultural flair, consider the picturesque Old Mission Santa Barbara (santabarbaramission. org) or the outdoor courtyards at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum (santabarbaramuseum.com).

Thirty miles inland, the slow-paced Santa Ynez Valley combines pastoral beauty and old-world charm. Discover art

galleries, boutiques and wine tasting rooms in tiny Los Olivos. Stroll cobblestone streets in the Danish village of Solvang. Or, sample vintages along the Foxen Canyon Wine Trail (foxentrail. com). Gainey and Firestone Vineyards accommodate up to 500 for events, while several others welcome smaller groups.

"Culinary tourism is also really popular here, with interactive cooking classes, guided tours and

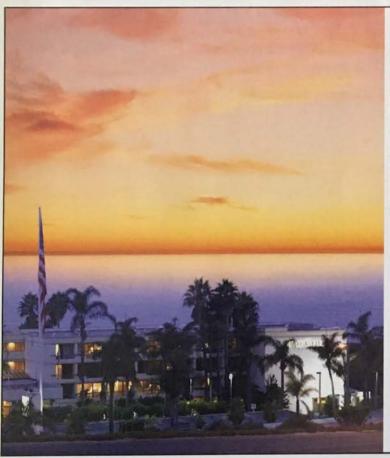
wine-blending seminars, even painting with wine," says Turner Brooks. Small groups sample the region's organic and biodynamic blends with **Sustainable Vine Wine Tours** (sustainablevine.com) and explore culinary hotspots with Market Forays (marketforays.com). Customized outings include field walks, fruit picking, conversations with local producers and gourmet cooking classes.

#### VENTURA COUNTY V

"The big attraction here is being right on the ocean and having a cute little downtown area within blocks," says Kathleen Fitzgerald, director of sales for the Ventura Convention and Visitors Bureau (ventura-usa.com).

She credits investors for bringing exciting eats and renewed energy to the city's center: Kevin Costner recently threw a screening party for his latest movie at Watermark (watermarkonmain. com), which opened in August. Housed in a meticulously restored early-1900s bank building, the three-story restaurant boasts characterrich dining rooms and a glass-enclosed rooftop lounge with retractable ceiling.

An events coordinator at nearby San Buenaventura State Beach (parks.ca.gov) assists





let vourself coast...



www.cliffsresort.com
PISMO BEACH



illomar Conference Grounds sitasilomar.com	314 rms/31,000 sq. ft	Accommodates up to 1,000 attendees, with 38 meeting rooms overlooking the Monterey Bay. Fresh, family-style meals served in Crocker Dining Hall.
naminade Resort & Spa, Santa Cruz naminade.com	156 ms/12,000 sq. ft.	Mountaintop retreat overlooks views of the Monterey Bay and the Santa Cruz mou tains. Newly renovated meeting space, guest rooms and suites.
att Regency Monterey onterey.hyatt.com	550 ms/40,000 sq. ft.	Recently finished room and restaurant renovations. New spa opens February 200 Largest hotel facility between San Francisco and L.A.; Golf, pool and tennis.
tercontinental The Clement Monterey tercontinental.com/montereyic	208 rms and suites/15,000 sq. ft.	New Cannery Row property with Monterey Bay-view guestrooms and venues.  Meeting spaces seat 10-450. Business center, fitness center and The C Restaurar
onterey Marriott arriott.com	341 rms/15,500 sq. ft. + Monterey Conference Center	Connected to Monterey Conference Center in downtown Monterey, Within walking distance of Fisherman's Wharf, Monterey Bay Aquarium and Cannery Row.
onterey Plaza Hotel & Spa ontereyplazahotel.com	290 rms and suites/16,000 sq. ft.	Beachfront resort on Cannery Row. Rooftop spa, two restaurants, retail shops. Ope air patios overlooking Monterey Bay.
rtola Plaza Hotel, Monterey rtolahotel.com	369 rms and 10 suites/20,000sq. ft.	Adjaent to Montery Conference Center (total 50,000 sq. ft. of meeting space); day spa.
rascape Resort, Aptos rascaperesort.com	85 suites, 164 villas/17,000 sq. ft.	Four-Diamond resort overlooking Monterey Bay, 15 functions rooms, most with ba views. Private beach for cocktail receptions and clam-and-lobster bakes.
N LUIS OBISPO COUNTY		The Real Property of the Party
ambria Pines Resort imbriapineslodge.com	150 rms/9,200 sq. ft.	Cabins and suites set on 25 wooded acres. Day-spa, restaurant and lounge. Some rooms with fireplaces and private patios.
ie Cliffs, Pismo Beach Iffsresort.com	165 ms/10,000 sq. ft.	Coastal setting with a 6,750-square-foot poolside terrace. Business center and will less Internet.
Quinta Inn and Suites, Paso Robles	70 rms, 14 suites/1,250 sq. ft.	High speed Internet, heated outdoor pool, business center.
aso Robles Inn asoroblesinn.com	98 rms/6,000 sq. ft. + outdoor venues	Downtown Paso Robles, Large ballroom with hardwood floors plus smaller meeting rooms and outdoor garden options. In-room refrigerators.
ANTA BARBARA COUNTY		THE RESERVE OF THE PARTY OF THE
lisal Guest Ranch & Resort lisal.com	73 rms/5,498 sq. ft.	Private, rustic getaway with abundant outdoor recreation and classic Western deco No phones or televisions in guestrooms. Opened new fitness center in 2008.
anary Hotel anarysantabarbara.com	97 rms/5,000 sq. ft.	Formerly Hotel Andalucia, this downtown property has been completely renovated Rooftop pool and patio. Largest meeting room seats 160.
ountry House Inns ountryhousemeetings.com	Varies	Historic homes and inns located in resort areas, including The Upham Hotel in Sant Barbara, plus other properties in the Pacific Northwest.
ess Parker's DoubleTree Resort odtr.com	360 rms and suites/45,000 sq. ft.	Some meeting rooms have ocean views. Outdoor courtyard with 20,000-square fee of event space. Complimentary airport and Amtrak transportation. Wireless Internetenis courts, bicycle rentals and putting green.
ENTURA COUNTY		
rowne Plaza Ventura Beach Resort oventura.com	258 rms and suites/17,630 sq. ft.	Newly renovated 2,500-square-foot beachfront deck. Top of the Harbor room, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Pacific, accommodates 700.
nbassy Suites Mandalay Beach, Oxnard nbassysuites 1 hilton.com	248 suites/16,000 sq. ft.	On 8½ oceanfront acres. Indoor and outdoor event space with gardens and water- falls. On-property fitness and tennis facilities, pool and bicycle rentals.
ai Valley Inn & Spa, Ojal airesort.com	320 rms/20,000 sq. ft.	Secluded, sunny resort grounds feature gardens and 18-hole golf course. Two ballrooms have fireplaces and outdoor terraces. Groups can book room clusters for added privacy.
erpont Inn & Racquet Club, Ventura erpontinn.com	77 ms/10,000 sq. ft.	Historic inn with garden cottages and suites. Vickers Estate mansion ideal for smal groups. Select meeting rooms overlook the Channel Islands.
entura Beach Marriott	285 rms/16,276 sq. ft.	One block from San Buenaventura State Beach. Largest event space seats 800. On site business center, fitness facilities, laundry and picnic area.

planners with on-site functions and beach parties, and Wi-Fi service is available in the park.

#### MEETING VENUES

"Ventura has four major hotels with substantial amounts of meeting space, all on the same street," Fitzgerald says. Four Points by Sheraton (fourpoints.com/ventura) is a modern option on Ventura Harbor, while the historic Pierpont Inn (pierpontinn.com) has 10,000 sq. ft. of function space.

Marriott Ventura Beach (marriottventurabeach.com) opened its 4,800-square-foot Las Brisas Ballroom, which includes a 1,400-squarefoot outdoor courtyard, late last year. Also capitalizing on Ventura's sunny climate is the Crowne Plaza Ventura Beach Hotel (cpventuta.com). With fire pits and tables, the new wraparound deck off the lobby's Aqua Bar is a prime spot for luaus and casual dinners.

Oxnard's affordable accommodations and proximity to Los Angeles (just 60 miles south) also appeal to groups on a budget. Housing many of the city's 1,800 guest rooms are major hotel brands such as Embassy Suites, Courtyard and Residence Inn by Marriott, Hilton Garden Inn and Best Western.

Away from the ocean, the Ojai Valley Inn and Spa (ojairesort.com) received its second consecutive AAA Five-Diamond award this year, and the spa topped TripAdvisor's 2008 list of the world's best. Two ballrooms, four flexible meeting rooms and 13 breakout rooms are among the resort's 20,000 sq. ft. of function space. Recreational activities range from golf and tennis to swimming and Channel Island sailing excursions.

#### UNIQUE VENUES AND ACTIVITIES

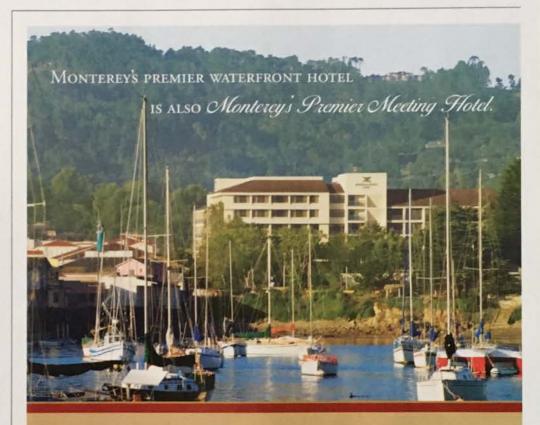
In addition to Ventura's downtown and oceanfront attractions, Fitzgerald recommends Fillmore & Western Railway Company (fwry. com), about 15 miles out in Heritage Valley. Groups hop aboard vintage train cars for murder mystery events, margarita tours with an openair dance car, western barbecue trips and other themed outings. Further inland, Limoneira Tours (limoneiratours.com) sets up ranch-style and formal dinners for up to 200 in fragrant lemon and avocado orchards.

Another area draw is Channel Islands National Park (nps.gov/chis), where half- and full-day outings offer picnicking, hiking, bird watching, fishing and scuba opportunities. Several vendors depart from Ventura and from Oxnard's Channel Islands Harbor. Island Packers (islandpackers.com) operates whale-watching trips, island excursions and dinner cruises, as well as private theme parties, catered tours and floating receptions for up to 140 passengers.

In Oxnard, Jim Hall Kart Racing School (jimhallkartracing.com) is a best bet for auto enthusiasts. Tea-building options and driving classes get attendees out on the track; catering and on-site meeting space are also available.

Minutes away, the Murphy Auto Museum (murphyautomuseum.com) showcases more than 70 gleaming classic cars and welcomes group events.

Renee Brincks is a freelance journalist who covers travel, lifestyle and wellness topics. Her recent outlets include Carmel Magazine and Sustainable Industries.



Few places in the world compare to the Monterey Peninsula for a meeting, especially at the Portola Hotel & Spa, an easy walk to popular attractions such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium, historic Fisherman's Wharf, Cannery Row, and adjoining full-service spa and Monterey Conference Center, attendees will remember their conference at the Portola Hotel & Spa long after the agenda is forgotten.









(888) 222-5851 | PortolaHotel.com

21 MEETING ROOMS | 50,000 SQ. FT. MEETING SPACE | 500-SERF STEINANT FORUM SPACE | THE FLACE | 18GET RESTAURANT & LOTINGS | PETER NO MICROPHILWERY