

Northern California weekend

BY SARA SCHNEIDER | PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID FENTON



1. Warm up and wind down

Chilly winter evenings call for crackling fires, and you won't find a better one than the sofa-lined slow-burner at **Bottega Napa Valley**. Opt for a Campari cocktail, then watch chefs drop by for an after-hours beer. \$\$; in *V Marketplace*, 6525 Washington St.; 707/945-1050.

Napa Valley day trip Yountville

Why go now: The crush crowds are long gone, leaving Napa Valley's best food and wine ripe for the picking. **Splurge without the sting:** Yountville is a big-ticket destination (hello, French Laundry!), but in February, hotels and restaurants roll out the deals to fill beds and tables. **Population:** Less than 3,000. **Star city:** Yountville restaurants account for six Michelin stars—and they're all within six blocks. **Sunday-brunch must:** A bacon-infused Bloody Mary and the Hangtown Fry omelet with fried Tomales Bay oysters at Michelin-starred Redd (\$\$, 6480 Washington St.; 707/944-2222). **No need for wheels:** A new slate of high-style tasting rooms packs a day's worth of wine sipping into an easy-to-walk four-block strip. **Man cannot live on cult Cab alone:** Between tastes check out the Art Walk (townofyountville.com), a mishmash of more than 30 outdoor sculptures, which winds through downtown. >20

Northern California

Day trip



2. Art or wine? Both, please

Couched in a restored century-old stone manor, **Ma(i)sonry Napa Valley** shows off a collection of fine art, high-design furnishings, and wines with no tasting room to call their own, including proprietor Michael Polenske's Blackbird label. Make an appointment for a guided tasting (*from \$10*), and, upstairs, don't miss the oil-on-paper costumes designed by Greg Lauren, nephew of clothier Ralph Lauren. 6711 Washington St.; maisonry.com

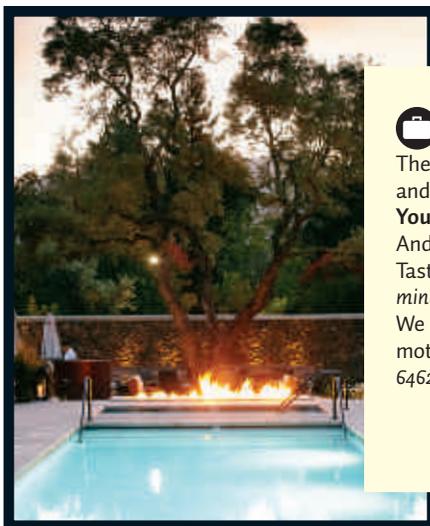
3. Your best ride by a mile

The first stretch of the **Napa Valley Vine Trail** is a glimpse into what wine country could be: a workout of something other than your car's brake pads. The mile-long path zips past the French Laundry garden and the V Market-place. Completion is a ways off, so stretch your route by coming in from the north, then dipping under State 29 at the south end, turning left on the frontage road. vinetrail.org



4. Meanwhile, back at the ranch

The new **Somerston** tasting room fronts a ranching operation in the Vaca Mountains, with sheep and gardens along with Cabernet and Merlot vines. Tables made from reclaimed wood bring a sense of the place to downtown, as does the gravelly power of the Somerston Estate Red. *From \$10*; 6490 Washington St.; somerstonwineco.com



Make it a weekend

The oversized jet tubs, steam showers, and loaner bikes at newly reborn **Hotel Yountville** are a steal this time of year. And the (comparatively) affordable Taste of Spa AcQua treatment (*\$95/30 minutes*) is pampering at the right price. We recommend hot stones and bergamot oil (*\$205/75 minutes*). *From \$259*; 6462 Washington St.; hotelyountville.com

Worship at the altar of Thomas Keller

It's the French Laundry celeb chef's town—we just eat in it. When we're lucky. Here are 3 killer Keller spots that won't break the bank

ADDENDUM

When the tiny takeout hut behind Ad Hoc reopens in April, don't walk but run there for the chicken box lunch with veggies and cornbread (at left). It will set you back only about \$17. *\$\$*; closed Sun.; 6476 Washington St.; 707/944-1565.

BOUCHON BAKERY

Try one of the butter-crisp scones or nab a slice of the famous ham quiche for breakfast. It involves as much cream as a custard will bear. *\$\$*; 6528 Washington St.; 707/944-2253.

AD HOC

One menu each night, served family-style—the chef's way of inviting us to Sunday dinner. Hope for deliciously old-fashioned chicken fricassee. Closed for renovations until spring; *\$52*; 6476 Washington St.; 707/944-2487.



Getting there

Yountville is about 55 miles northeast of San Francisco.



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