

Smart meetings

The Intelligent Way to Plan

January 2013 • \$5.00

Trend Watch 2013

What's Hot: Decor, Tech and F&B



PLUS

INSIDE ASAE'S
TECH EXPO

THE TRUTH ABOUT
GOVERNMENT MEETINGS

WHERE TO MEET
IN CALIFORNIA



Alcatraz, San Francisco

THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA MUST LIST

Can't-miss options in a world-class meetings locale

By Nikki Gloudeman



Monarch butterflies at Natural Bridges State Beach, Santa Cruz

Northern Californians are quick to share an audacious opinion: Their region is the best in the world.

A lofty claim, sure, but there are ample facts to back it up: Where else can you find scenic coastal towns, a world-class metropolis, a political hub, the epicenter of technology and a renowned ski resort? Where else can you explore one of the world's most heavily visited wine regions *and* national parks? And where else can you do all this in a famously sunny and temperate climate?

The reality is, few other places boast the diverse appeal of Northern California, and few serve as such an enticing, well-rounded meetings locale. Making the decision to book in this stellar region should be easy; a better question is what to do while here.

To help, we at Northern California-based *Smart Meetings* have devised the following list of absolute must-dos. Space constraints mean we've had to omit a plethora of other amazing attractions and experiences. Such is the burden of covering one of the best destinations in the world.

Monarch butterflies photo: Santa Cruz County D/C

MONTEREY TO HALF MOON BAY ▼

Peaceful coastal panoramas, tucked-away wineries, fresh seafood and frequent wildlife sightings—of pelicans, Monarch butterflies, seals, otters and other protected species—distinguish this coastal region of Northern California, a seaside sanctuary for the business-weary. Among the most covered meeting options here are Half Moon Bay, Santa Cruz, Monterey and Carmel. In these gorgeous locales, do yourself a favor and:

- Midway between San Francisco and Santa Cruz, enjoy a lobster clambake on the beach at **Sam's Chowder House**, a Half Moon Bay favorite featuring an oceanfront lawn area perfect for an outdoor seafood feast. Six indoor meeting spaces are additionally available.
- In Santa Cruz, a surf-lover's paradise, book a stay at the retro **Dream Inn**, where guest rooms, the elegant Aquarius restaurant, two meeting rooms, and an orange-umbrella-rimmed pool and hot tub all face the sea, easily accessible and especially awe-inducing during color-blazed sunsets. The character-filled Joie de Vivre property, with 3,500 sq. ft. of space, loans out board games to guests upon request.
- For an experience that plays up on Santa Cruz's woody side, consider the brand-new **Hotel Paradox**, where features include a glass wall etched with a forest landscape. Meeting space encompasses 12,000 sq. ft.
- Also in Santa Cruz, encourage childlike wonder by considering the following: a trek to the edge of the wharf to watch barking sea lions; a ride on the historic and exhilarating Giant Dipper on the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk; or a venture to glorious **Natural Bridges State Beach**, where hundreds of Monarch butterflies cluster on trees and flutter overhead from October through February.
- For yourself or your group's VIP, book an oceanfront suite at **Monterey Plaza Hotel and Spa**. In the morning, open the curtains to view pelicans preening themselves on a cluster of ocean-sprayed rocks. Carve out time for the top-floor spa, where two outdoor hot tubs jut out over the sea. In total, the property offers more than 17,000 sq. ft. of indoor function space, as well as an outdoor plaza and terrace.
- Explore and meet in the world-renowned **Monterey Bay Aquarium**; stay at the sleek **InterContinental The Clement Monterey**, with 15,000 sq. ft. of space, located just 40 feet away.
- Also in Monterey, plan an early morning group jog from Cannery Row to Lovers Point—romantic, but not just for lovers—passing twisted cypress trees and sea lions resting on the shore



Guest room at Garden Court Hotel, Palo Alto

as the sun rises over the Pacific Ocean.

- Plan a group paddleboarding or kayaking excursion with **Adventures by the Sea**, Monterey's premier outdoor-activity company, for up-close sightings of playful marine life.
- Book a private-dining experience for up to 40 in the Pacific's Edge Restaurant wine room at **Hyatt Carmel Highlands**. Set on a cliff overlooking the Big Sur coastline, the venue includes an extensive wooden case stacked with fine wines and a menu of fresh local seafood dishes like yellowfin tuna tartare. If your attendees need more space to stay and meet, bring them to **Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel & Spa**, which can partner with its sister property for events. It boasts the most space—40,000 sq. ft.—in the area, soon to unveil an updated aesthetic evocative of the region's coastal setting, and offers a top-flight golf course and expansive, recently renovated spa.
- Planning an executive retreat or incentive trip? In Carmel Valley, book a stay in an upscale-rustic ranch where nature is vast and development sparse. **Holman Ranch's** 400 acres encompass horse stables, vineyards and olive groves. Up to 500 can convene in event venues indoors or out, and eight overnight guest rooms showcase country style with luxury polish.
- In small and lovely Carmel-by-the-Sea, book a stay at one of several charming inns, including Eastern European-inspired **Hofsas House Hotel** and French-flavored **L'Auberge Carmel**, each with meeting venues for groups of fewer than 100. Larger groups can book the recently remodeled **La Playa Carmel**, with 4,937 sq. ft. of indoor space and a tiered courtyard. Leave time for attendees to stroll through mom-and-pop shops selling handcrafted perfume, fine art, wine and more. For fine dining, up to 60 can

enjoy the stylish, evocative atmosphere and inventive tapas at **Mundaka**, a dining standout.

SILICON VALLEY ▼

The ever-booming technology landscape distinguishes Silicon Valley, an area south of San Francisco that's anchored by San Jose and encompasses Mountain View, Palo Alto and other suburbs. Here, groups can take advantage of high-tech meeting venues, intellectual attractions and the luxurious offerings of an economically prosperous destination. Among the musts:

- For a haute experience in the heart of a vibrant downtown, plan a meeting that utilizes **The Fairmont San Jose's** 65,000 sq. ft. of space. Make sure to catch live jazz in the property's elegant lobby, and to book a group dining experience amid a sleek Asian ambience at The Pagoda and Bamboo Lounge.
- Book a reception at the historic and beautifully restored **San Jose Civic**, opened in 1934 and recently renovated to the tune of \$15 million. The 3,108-seat facility showcases Spanish mission-style architecture and is conveniently located across the street from the **San Jose Convention Center**, set to debut an expansion in fall 2013.
- Make your attendees cozy at the **Garden Court Hotel** in leafy, upscale Palo Alto. Elegant and luxurious, the hotel also feels like home, with such complimentary amenities as Peet's coffee and fresh pastries in the morning. An inviting lobby appealingly set one level up from the street welcomes guests with the flickering of a fireplace and local photography gracing the walls. Many of the guest rooms front a gracious and impeccably maintained courtyard where you can also hold memorable outside events



Left: Computer History Museum, Mountain View; right: lobster clambake at Sam's Chowder House, Half Moon Bay

beside trees draped with twinkling lights.

- Save money while promoting a cultural experience by booking a group tour of the **Cantor Arts Center** on Palo Alto's idyllic Stanford University campus. Free of charge, it includes an impressive Rodin collection, including *The Gates of Hell* in its entirety outside the museum and displayed in deconstructed parts inside.
- Immerse yourself in Silicon Valley's high-IQ side with a visit to, and event at, the **Computer History Museum** in Mountain View. Galleries tell the story of the evolution of technology from early, rudimentary calculators through modern marvels, with exhibits on supercomputers, rocket technology, wartime computing, robots, computer games and more. At select times, the museum shows guests how to operate the massive, complex difference engine, an early calculating system designed by math great Charles Babbage in the 1800s. A former office building, the museum can accommodate up to 2,000 in total, with outdoor options available. Also intellectually inclined is **The Tech Museum of Innovation** in San Jose, with exhibits exploring everything from space flights to earthquakes to biotechnology; it has 30,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.

GREATER SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA ▼

San Francisco's dining and cultural draws alone are enough to compel the masses; add in a distinctive progressive spirit and picturesque backdrop—

RESOURCES

- **Berkeley Convention and Visitors Bureau**
visitberkeley.com
- **Carmel Chamber of Commerce**
carmelcalifornia.org
- **Manteca Convention & Visitor's Bureau**
visitmanteca.org
- **Marin Convention & Visitors Bureau**
visitmarin.org
- **Modesto Convention & Visitors Bureau**
visitmodesto.com
- **Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau**
seemonterey.com
- **North Lake Tahoe Visitors Bureau**
gotahoenorth.com
- **Oakland Convention and Visitors Bureau**
visitoakland.org
- **Redding Convention and Visitors Bureau**
visitredding.com
- **Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau**
discovergold.org
- **San Francisco Travel Association**
sanfrancisco.travel
- **San Mateo County/Silicon Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau**
smccvb.com
- **Santa Clara Convention and Visitors Bureau**
santaclara.org
- **Santa Cruz County Conference and Visitors Council**
santacruzca.org
- **Santa Rosa Convention & Visitors Bureau**
visitsantarosa.com
- **Sonoma County Tourism Bureau**
sonomacounty.com
- **Team San Jose**
sanjose.org
- **Tri-Valley, California Convention & Visitors Bureau**
trivalleycvb.com
- **Tuolumne County Visitors Bureau**
tcvb.com
- **Vallejo Convention & Visitors Bureau**
visitvallejo.com
- **Visit Napa Valley**
visitnapavalley.com

Above: Tented event space at Cavallo Point, the Lodge at Golden Gate, Sausalito;
below: Hotel Vitale, San Francisco

not to mention a certain landmark bridge—and it's easy to see why the city is one of the most desirable in the world. The City by the Bay's environs, from up-and-coming Oakland to brainy Berkeley to the winery-rich Tri-Valley region, don't disappoint, either. Here's what you should pencil in:

- Promote inner peace with a meeting at **Hotel Nikko San Francisco** or **Hotel Vitale**, properties with vibes that reflect San Francisco's mellow nature. Hotel Nikko, Asian themed, has 25,000 sq. ft. of space; Hotel Vitale, which boasts two outdoor rooftop hot tubs, has 3,500 sq. ft.
- Enjoy a dramatic sense of arrival at **The Ritz-Carlton, San Francisco**, where the lobby, which completed a renovation in February 2012, features marble floors and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the Financial District.
- Embrace San Francisco's youthful, sultry spirit at a boutique property brimming with high-design panache. Bold colors and modern furnishings distinguish both **W San Francisco**, in the trendy SoMa district, and the **Clift Hotel** downtown, where a chic lounge serves as a popular gathering spot for young, well-heeled professionals. The former property has more than 12,000 sq. ft. of space and the latter 5,000 sq. ft.
- Plan a wine tasting experience at **Taj Campton Place**, a luxurious San Francisco boutique that's home to a longtime master sommelier who years ago became just the second person in the country to earn the accreditation.
- Nerd out—a very San Francisco thing to do—at the **Exploratorium**, relo-



cating to a dramatic setting along the waterfront in spring 2013. Why is your shadow longer in winter than in summer? What can we learn about people from their teeth? Book at this distinctive museum, with indoor and outdoor meeting spaces for 100–1,200, and find out by getting hands-on with interactive educational exhibits.

- Go historic by hosting a classy reception at **Bentley Reserve**. The city's former Federal Reserve Bank headquarters is an exemplar of the Classic Revival movement, replete with towering white columns. Yet the venue also boasts modern sheen in the form of high-tech amenities and eco features that earned it LEED Silver status. Meet-

ing spaces include the beautifully maintained 8,045-square-foot original Banking Hall, a lounge and boardrooms.

- For a meeting during the holidays, consider **Hyatt Regency San Francisco**, where twinkling lights are hung from the ceiling of a vast atrium, creating a memorable “wow” effect. The hotel offers 67,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.
- Sip wine on a shoestring in the **Tri-Valley** region, comprised of three valleys and five cities including Livermore, Pleasanton and San Ramon. Napa and Sonoma are well-known wine-tasting regions, but this area, just a 45-minute drive east of San Francisco, is more convenient and less pricey—without sacrificing the quality of the varietals or the splendor of a vineyard setting. Make sure to book an event at **Blackhawk Museum**, where superlative classic automobiles, including a 1926 Daimler once owned by the Maharajah of Rewa of India and featuring horns made of chrome snakes, are dramatically spotlit against a mostly black backdrop.
- Surround your group with high-design style at Five restaurant inside **Hotel Shattuck Plaza**, just two blocks from the University of California, Berkeley campus and boasting nearly 8,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. The restaurant, popular with locals and visitors alike, features pinstriped walls, bold red candelabras and a dazzling crystal chandelier, with a high-quality menu of contemporary American cuisine and innovative cocktails to match.
- See what everyone's been chatting about by planning an event in Oakland, named one of the top 45 places to go in the *world* last year by *The New York Times*. Like Brooklyn, it's an artistic, youthful enclave just a short drive away from a big-name city—in this case, San Francisco. Dine outdoors at **Lake Chalet**, overlooking tranquil tree-lined Lake Merritt, and book group rides on authentic Venetian gondolas. Catch an indie-act show at the historic, lavish Fox Theater. Get a spa treatment at the grand and historic **Claremont Hotel Club & Spa**. Dine and shop along waterfront Jack London Square and catch a live show at the legendary **Yoshis Jazz Club and Japanese Restaurant**. And get business done in the recently renovated, modernized **Oakland Convention Center** and connected **Oakland Marriott City Center**.
- In the North Bay, just over the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco, stay at **Cavallo Point, the Lodge at the Golden Gate** in Sausalito. LEED Gold certified and a member of Historic Hotels of America, it boasts meeting space for up to 300 and the onsite Healing Arts Center & Spa, where attendees can wind down in a heated outdoor meditation pool. Don't for-

get to explore Sausalito's quaint waterfront downtown and to stop by the *Smart Meetings* office!

SACRAMENTO, GOLD COUNTRY & YOSEMITE ▼

Temperate, friendly and a political epicenter, Sacramento is a natural fit for meetings and conferences; historic and scenic Gold Country and world-renowned Yosemite National Park add to the enticement. Here's what you shouldn't miss:

- Explore the newly expanded and revamped **Crocker Art Museum**, showcasing a stark, urban-cool design and an art collection aficionados can swoon over—from international ceramics to European classics. Groups can convene in spaces including a high-tech meeting room, an auditorium or two courtyards ideal for mixing and mingling in the sunny outdoors.
- Enhance your California wine cred by booking an off-site in Amador County, or—even better—plan a full wine-tasting day. Less than 45 minutes outside Sacramento, the region evokes

ADVENTURES IN CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Not to be outdone, Central California offers its own must-dos:

- Situated between San Francisco and Los Angeles, Bakersfield and Fresno are solid choices for convenient meetings. In Bakersfield, book private dining at a Basque eatery such as **Sandrini's**; the city has one of the nation's highest concentrations of restaurants from that European region.
- In San Luis Obispo, coastal landscapes are complemented by scenic hiking trails, luxury spas, superb golf courses and a handful of excellent wineries. Plan a group tour and event at opulent **Hearst Castle**, which can accommodate up to 250; stay at the new **Granada Hotel & Bistro**, housed in a circa-1920s exposed-brick building and featuring 17 guest rooms.
- Venture to Paso Robles, home to mineral hot springs and 26,000 vineyard acres. The **Paso Robles Event Center** and **River Oaks Hot Springs Spa** pavilion are among the distinctive meeting options.
- For the best of two worlds—the Pacific coastline and wineries—consider hosting an event in Pismo Beach, where more than 20 wineries are located near the ocean.
- Also considered part of Southern California, Santa Barbara anchors the southern edge of the Central Coast. **Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara** is an excellent choice here, with Spanish colonial-style accommodations in an immaculate garden setting. Smaller groups will love the colorful charm of **Canary Hotel Santa Barbara: A Kimpton Hotel**, where the Rooftop Perch [pictured] overlooks downtown.



» NORTHERN CALIFORNIA



Clockwise: Delta King riverboat, Sacramento; Francis Ford Coppola Winery, Geyserville; PlumpJack Squaw Valley Inn, Lake Tahoe

Napa with its rolling vineyards and rustic-chic tasting rooms, but has a distinctive Gold Country feel and some of the state's oldest vineyards.

- Hold an event at Joie de Vivre's high-design **Citizen Hotel**. The city's political significance sets the tone, with the Capitol Building visible from many areas of the hotel, framed prints of political cartoons decorating guest rooms and "Closed Door Session" signs replacing "Do Not Disturb" signs on doorknobs. Groups can convene in 11,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.
- Travel back to the mid-19th century with a venture to **Old Sacramento**, a national historic landmark along the Sacramento River. The area contains dirt roads, antique shops, a one-room schoolhouse and an acclaimed railroad museum. Following some historic immersion, attendees can dine and catch a live show on the docked **Delta King** riverboat, which also offers 44 elegant staterooms to stay in.
- Make time for **Yosemite National Park**, home to soaring Sequoia trees, granite cliffs and myriad waterfalls (during some hikes, you can view multiple falls from a single vantage point). If you're staying in nearby Gold Country, plan a tour. Or meet amid the natural splendor by booking **The Ahwahnee Hotel**, a AAA Four Diamond property in the heart of the park that manages to feel simultaneously high-end and low-key. The property can accommodate groups of up to 150.

NAPA & SONOMA ▼

Visitors and groups have enjoyed a long-standing love affair with California's premier wine regions, and it's no secret why. Home to gorgeous rolling vineyards and France-trumping wines, Napa and Sonoma offset their luxury with California warmth and a lack of airs. If booking here, make sure to:

- Appease both cinephiles and oenophiles with a visit to the **Francis Ford Coppola Winery** in Geyserville. Film buffs will delight in a memorabilia collection that includes the iconic desk from the opening of *The Godfather* and a handwritten cast list for the film. Wine lovers will appreciate the selection of varietals, produced with the same care Coppola puts into his films.

Francis Ford Coppola Winery photo: Chad Keig

- For an experience rich in wine-region ambience but lacking pretension, consider an event in Healdsburg, a small and charming downtown in the Sonoma Valley where nature is abundant and wineries are paired with bookshops, inviting restaurants and a brewery (the award-winning Bear Republic). Meeting space is available in the wineries, brewery and boutique properties, including **Hotel Healdsburg**, where a library of rare wines can be used for receptions.
- Book private dining at John Ash & Co., the signature restaurant of the AAA Four Diamond **Vintners Inn**, a boutique hotel scenically set on 92 vineyard- and garden-filled acres in Santa Rosa. Here, up to 300 can enjoy a seasonal, local menu paired with exemplary wines.
- Go luxury-bowling in wine country—an experience that earns the word “unique”—at **The Meritage Resort and Spa** in Napa. The resort, which wrapped up an extensive renovation and expansion in early 2012, is newly home to Crush Ultra Lounge, a posh entertainment space with six bowling lanes. Planners can additionally take advantage of more than 50,000

sq. ft. of meeting space and an extensive spa.

- Worried about transport between wineries? Consider a meeting in the revitalized downtown Napa area. Within a walkable radius, your group can stay at the recently reflagged **Andaz Napa by Hyatt** (formerly Avia Napa), with 3,100 sq. ft. of meeting space; shop at Oxbow Public Market, featuring local artisan chocolates, cheeses, wines and other culinary pleasures; explore an eclectic collection of wineries; and private-dine at restaurants including **Morimoto Napa**, an outpost from acclaimed Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto.

NORTH LAKE TAHOE ▼

Home to North America’s largest freshwater lake and powdered slopes revered by skiers the world over, Lake Tahoe is one of Northern California’s most coveted destinations. Straddling the California-Nevada border, the area’s Golden State side trades casinos and nightlife for preserved natural wonder and remote experiences. Set aside time for the following:

- After a day of slopeside networking, encourage

attendees to unwind with a stress-relieving dip into one of several hot tubs located throughout **The Village at Squaw Valley**, where cozy suites, ski shops, a wine-tasting room, eateries and more evoke a Swiss alpine village. Don’t forget to plan a reception at **High Camp**, reachable via a lofty gondola ride and featuring meeting space overlooking the mountains and lake in the distance. Within walking distance to the village, **Plump-Jack Squaw Valley Inn** features some of the region’s finest wine at its PlumpJack Cafe.

- For a one-stop-shop experience, book the **Resort at Squaw Creek**, home to a full-service spa, five dining options, a Robert Trent Jones Jr. golf course, 405 guest rooms, 33,000 sq. ft. of indoor meeting space, 14,750 sq. ft. of outdoor space and proximity to mountain adventures.
- Bring an incentive group or executive retreat to **The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe**. Accessible via gondola from the Northstar California resort area, it showcases one of the area’s most stunning spas, with windows overlooking rugged mountain slopes, and features 30,000 sq. ft. of indoor and outdoor meeting space. 