

# WHAT'S NEW IN CALIFORNIA

WINTER 2023/24



visit  
California





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Visit California is pleased to present this Winter 2023/24 update on What's New in California. The information in this publication is also available on our online Media Center at [media.visitcalifornia.com](https://media.visitcalifornia.com). There you can dynamically search the most up-to-date information by category and region. For even more information and inspiration, please visit our consumer website at [visitcalifornia.com](https://visitcalifornia.com).

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Above:  
Alpine Meadows, Lake Tahoe, CA  
On the cover:  
Glenn Blair Bar Experience, Fort Bragg, CA

# What's New

What's New in California showcases new openings and developments happening across the Golden State. Find inspiration for stories centering around accommodations, arts and entertainment, culinary, outdoor, and technology and tours. Dates listed are subject to change without notice. Confirm with the appropriate media contacts listed with each entry.

## Accommodations



### CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA

#### **Carmel-by-the-Sea La Playa Hotel Opens After Renovations**

**La Playa Hotel**, established in 1905 as a haven for artists and bohemians in Carmel-by-the-Sea, has emerged from a \$15 million renovation and is ready to welcome eager travelers this winter. The renovation breathes new life into this historic gem while maintaining its timeless appeal. Designed by Post Company, it seamlessly blends modern aesthetics with the building's rich history, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Notable features include air conditioning in all guest rooms, custom Barmoire setups for a curated cocktail experience, three 1-bedroom suites, king-sized beds in all single bedrooms and updated guest bathrooms.

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### COACHELLA

#### **New Luxury RV Resort Opens in Coachella**

CRR Hospitality has opened its first luxury RV Resort in California and the third luxury RV resort in the southwest—**Coachella Lakes RV Resort** in Coachella. The first phase of the resort includes 90 RV sites, eight park model vacation rentals, and first-class amenities including an 18-hole world-class putting course, entertainment-filled Clubhouse, 24-hour access fitness center, a heated swimming pool, two hot tubs, amphitheater, playground, five lakes, K9 Corner Dog Park and pickleball courts. The property is located just off Interstate 10 and is the first RV resort when entering Palm Desert from the east.

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## INDIAN WELLS

### Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort & Spa Now Open in Greater Palm Springs

The 11-acre Tommy Bahama Miramonte Resort & Spa opened as the brand's first destination resort in early November in the Greater Palm Springs area. Set amid an olive tree grove, fragrant citrus and flower gardens are 215 guestrooms with five luxury villa suites; Grapefruit Basil, a new signature restaurant offering coastal-inspired dishes and a seasonal craft cocktail menu; two bars, the indoor Grapefruit Basil Bar and poolside Chiki Palm; three saltwater pools including the signature Tommy Bahama Pool with private cabanas; exclusive retail products at Rosa Boutique; desert-inspired wellness treatments at the 12,000-square-foot Spa Rosa; and 35,000 square feet of flexible indoor/outdoor meeting and event space.

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## LOS ANGELES

### The Westin LAX Unveils New Look

Sitting a few miles from SoFi Stadium, **The Westin Los Angeles Airport** offers guests a haven of modern wellness. In late 2023, the hotel unveiled an extensive \$45 million renovation to match Los Angeles' ongoing tourism boom, as well as LAX's extensive multi-billion-dollar modernization project. Updates include a re-imagined lobby and lounge area offering guests a refreshing and stylish oasis through natural design features. Connecting guests to nature, the biophilic design used throughout the property will include water elements, native Southern California plant life, and organic, natural materials. The renovation also includes updated and enhanced meeting space such as a 13,100-square-foot ballroom with 18-foot ceilings and natural light as well as state-of-the-art theater space.

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## MARIN COUNTY

### Lodge at Marconi Opens as a Newly Reimagined Modern Coastal Retreat

**Lodge at Marconi**, the upscale coastal retreat managed by Oliver Hospitality in Tomales Bay, is now open and welcoming guests after a multi-million-dollar, 17-month-long renovation. Formerly Marconi Conference Center, Lodge at Marconi sits on 62 sprawling acres off Highway Route 1 within the Marconi State Historic Park, affording visitors direct access to West Marin County's natural beauty, modern hotel accommodations, refreshed event spaces and beautified grounds. Highlights of the property include interior design by New York-based Home Studios, a lively reception lounge and market featuring local provisions, landscape architecture by Bay Area-based Dune Hai, reimagined event venues and distinct amenities—all set against magical views of rolling green hills and the shimmering Tomales Bay seashore.

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## NORTH LAKE TAHOE

### The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe Gets a New Look

Located mid-mountain and 15 minutes away from pristine Lake Tahoe, **The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe** provides a family-friendly destination in all seasons. Interlacing the local Tahoe surroundings throughout its interior and amenities, the resort invites guests into an oasis of relaxation after adventure-filled days on the slopes or at the lake. The luxury resort will have a brand-new look this ski season with all guest rooms and suites, as well as the Club Lounge, being completely revamped just in time to welcome back winter sports enthusiasts as well as those who want to relax at the property. In addition, the property will now feature a new 24-hour retail space and market in the lobby featuring ski essentials as well as sundries, gourmet snacks and more.

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## SAN FRANCISCO

### **The Jay-San Francisco's Newly Renovated Hotel**

With its recent debut on Nov. 15, The Jay-formerly the Le Méridien-is a 360-room renovated and rebranded property located on the edge of the city's historic Jackson Square neighborhood. Redesigned by AvroKo, the interior's textured textiles and warm tones are a departure from the historic brutalist frame by original architect John Portman. The hotel's third floor features a garden terrace and houses an eponymous dining and cocktail outlet by the famed San Francisco-based Omakase Restaurant Group.

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### **Westin St. Francis Unveils Luxurious 31st Floor Suites**

The **Westin St. Francis**, renowned as the "Grand Dame" of San Francisco's Union Square, has completed a renovation of its six luxury suites located on the 31st floor of the Tower Building. In honor of the hotel's upcoming 120th anniversary on March 21, 2024, the design draws inspiration from the hotel's rich history, paying homage to its past while reflecting its place in vibrant San Francisco.

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## SOUTH LAKE TAHOE

### **Margaritaville Resort Lake Tahoe to Open December 14**

Margaritaville, the global lifestyle brand, has announced the debut of **Margaritaville Resort Lake Tahoe** on Dec. 14. This is the brand's first lodging location in a ski destination and the only all-suite resort with 399 rooms in the Lake Tahoe basin that will feature separate bedroom and living room spaces with a dining table and wet bar. A nine-story lobby featuring the License to Chill Bar will provide ample seating-forming a central hub for guests. The resort's other restaurants will include LandShark Bar & Grill, a relaxed indoor/outdoor restaurant inspired by the traditional beach bars of the Atlantic Coast; Joe Merchant's, a one-stop shop for coffee, breakfast, and

afternoon snacks; Come Monday Café, a breakfast restaurant with a chef-driven menu; and JWB Prime Steak and Seafood, an acclaimed, laid-back luxury restaurant serving fine cuts of meat and fresh seafood, perfect for special occasions.

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## TRINITY LAKE

### **Alpen Cellars Winery Offers Off Grid Glamping**

Situated in a breathtaking mountain valley at the foot of the towering craggy peaks in the Trinity Lake region, the **Alpen Cellars** experience is an opportunity to taste award-winning wines, stay on-site in glamping tents, and connect with nature. The location offers unique charm by being one of California's only wineries to operate completely off the power grid. All grape varieties are grown on the estate property or sourced within the county, which is an area not known to grow wine grapes. The hidden gem's glamping tents overlook the vineyard and mountain valley. Sustainability and using the land's resources is a part of the Alpen experience. All the structures were created from trees on the property, and everything used is locally sourced or reused. This experience gives an appreciation to love the land and enjoy nature. The winery and glamping are open May-October, with the rest of the year by available appointment.

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## Culinary



### FOLSOM

#### Michelin-Recognized Chefs to Open Pedregal in 2024

In January 2024, two local, Michelin-recognized chefs are coming together to craft authentic dishes from Northern Mexico, with bold flavors and cooking techniques that pay homage to some of the best restaurants from one of their hometowns. Patricio Wise and Cinthia Martinez, chef and owners of Nixtaco, and Brad Cecchi, executive chef of Canon, will open Pedregal in Folsom. **Pedregal** is a collaborative venture between these two acclaimed restaurant groups who share a love of heritage, hospitality and exceptional experiences. Nixtaco, in Roseville, has maintained its Michelin Bib Gourmand status, a distinction for restaurants that provide excellent dining experiences at a reasonable price, since 2021. Canon, in East Sacramento, has held the honor since 2019. Pedregal's menu will feature botanas (small plates) and shareable platters with house-made tortillas and salsas, local beers and Mexican lagers.

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### MONTECITO

#### Legendary San Ysidro Ranch to Open Speakeasy at Plow & Angel

Inspired by the clandestine bars of the Prohibition era, San Ysidro Ranch is opening a new dining venue, the **Speakeasy at Plow & Angel**. Guests will step through a discreet entrance to a refined interior space that celebrates the spirit of hidden indulgence. Every

night, the venue comes alive with sultry notes of live music, making it the perfect place for those seeking an escape from the ordinary. The enchanting space is adorned with sumptuous red banquettes, exotic tiger-striped chairs and vintage furniture, including an iconic Chesterfield couch, one-of-a-kind rugs, and copper tabletops that serve as functional art. The expansive drink menu ranges from seasonal cocktails, Seedlip mocktails, classic combinations and libations named after famous speakeasies of the past. Rare tasting flights are also available, including a bourbon tasting flight with Old Rip Van Winkle 10 Year, Van Winkle Special Reserve 12 Year, and Colonel E.H. Taylor.

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### MONTEREY COUNTY

#### Carmel Valley Natives to Open Lady & Larder in 2024

Get ready to savor the delights of **Lady & Larder** as this beloved Santa Monica gem makes its way to the heart of Carmel Valley in 2024. Founded by twin sisters who are native to Carmel Valley, Sarah and Boo Simms, Lady & Larder is renowned for its visually captivating charcuterie boards, brimming with locally sourced produce and artisanal cheeses. Starting next month, guests can indulge in their signature cheese and meat boards for special events. The grand opening of their retail shop is slated for spring 2024, complete with a cheese counter, a selection of natural wines and delectable sandwiches. The Simms sisters have long dreamt of bringing their culinary passion

back to their hometown, nestled amidst California's finest farms and wineries. This exciting addition to Monterey County's evolving food scene promises to be a delectable journey, with plans to incorporate locally baked bread from Ad Astra Bread Co. in Monterey.

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## NAPA VALLEY

### Chandon Celebrates 50 Years of Sparkling Winemaking

**Chandon's** California home has been a destination for exceptional sparkling wine in Napa since 1973. Marking its 50th anniversary, Chandon's original Napa winery—designed with organic shapes and materials and with a prescient environmental sensitivity—has been reinterpreted to create a home in tune with their ethos, and quintessentially Californian. The space has an easy, fluid beauty, focused on light, texture and the outdoors. This is the perfect setting to enjoy a curated tasting flight or in the renewed restaurant to experience the Culinary Journey, a five-course menu crafted with Chandon wine and food design method.

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### Baldacci Family Vineyards Wine & Chocolate Tasting Experience

The Baldacci Family Vineyards' **wine and chocolate tasting** was launched as a new offering in the fall. Renowned Napa Valley Chef Holly Peterson of Flourish Chocolate created the perfect pairing of hand-crafted chocolates to savor with the estate-grown Carneros Chardonnay, Carneros Elizabeth Pinot Noir and Fraternity Red Wine Blend. The tasting experience commences with a splash of brut-style Pops Sparkling Wine, and a guest journey through three delicious wines each thoughtfully paired with three distinct signature chocolates. Wines include Pops Sparkling Wine, Carneros Chardonnay, Carneros Elizabeth Pinot Noir and Fraternity Red Wine Blend. The 60-minute indoor wine-tasting experience is \$65 per person and is available by reservation.

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### RD Winery Introduces Vietnamese-Inspired Chocolate & Wine Tasting Experience

RD Winery is Napa Valley's first Vietnamese owned winery and has introduced a **chocolate and wine pairing** featuring San Francisco-based Socola Chocolatier. What makes this new type of tasting experience special is that all of Socola's handcrafted artisanal chocolate truffles are inspired by the diverse flavors of Vietnam. Visitors are treated to Napa Valley wines alongside a cultural celebration through these chocolates and in RD Winery's Vietnamese-inspired tasting room. The experience costs \$65 per person and is available Thursdays–Mondays.

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### Chispa Opens in Napa's Burgeoning Bar Scene

**Chispa**, a lively new addition to downtown Napa Valley's burgeoning bar scene, is a sleek tequila-centric gathering place. Brought to you by the team behind Napa's beloved Cadet Wine and Beer Bar, Chispa offers a deep dive into Bar Director Marco Garcia's world of agave spirits, accompanied by Chef Mac De Chavez's seasonally prepared and globally inspired food program such as Fried Oyster Po' Boys, Kung Pao Octopus and Crispy Lumpia.

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## SAN CARLOS

### Izzy's on the Peninsula Reopens After Remodel

After a seven-month renovation, beloved family-run dining destination, Izzy's on the Peninsula is now open. Imagined by The DuVall Family Hospitality Group and in collaboration with GACHOT, Izzy's on the Peninsula is set to redefine the South Bay dining landscape with stunning new interiors, a dynamic menu of elevated steakhouse favorites complemented by Izzy's classic sides and dishes, as well as an inventive cocktail program, robust wine list, dynamic private dining spaces, an alfresco garden and more. The restaurant's ambient setting exudes a sophisticated residential feel, that introduce a new level of refinement and understated glamour.

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## ST. HELENA

### New Food and Beverage Offerings in the Historic Shopping District of St. Helena

At **Charlie's**, owned by former French Laundry executive sous-chef Elliot Bell and a volunteer firefighter, guests can experience innovative dishes infused with local flavors. **No|Ma House Collective** offers a unique shopping experience, blending art, design, local artisanal collections, and a delightful food and wine scene. **The Station**, owned by Joel Gott, now serves premium wines and craft beers, perfect for pairing with their mouth-watering pizzas. **Orin Swift** offers tastings of Napa Valley's finest vintages. **ACME Fine Wines** remains the go-to spot for rare and exceptional wine selections, with expert guidance. **Model Bakery** stunning remodel preserves its historic charm.

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## SAN FRANCISCO

### Blue Whale Restaurant & Lounge Now Open in San Francisco

The new **Blue Whale Restaurant & Lounge** from Michelin-starred Chef Ho Chee Boon is a sprawling, sleek venue in the Marina. The restaurant opened in October and serves seasonal Asian cuisine. It features multiple dining areas, including a private dining lounge and a large open-air garden oasis tucked away in the backyard. Malaysian-born Boon introduces diners to favorite seasonal dishes and flavors inspired by his extensive travels and background. Blue Whale's menu includes crab meat Xiao Long Bao, wasabi crispy tiger prawns with pineapple, and baked lobster with buttermilk and chili. This is Chef Boon's second restaurant in San Francisco, following his elegant Cantonese restaurant, Empress by Boon, which opened in Chinatown in 2021.

### Union Square's Chotto Matte San Francisco

**Chotto Matte** San Francisco is a rooftop restaurant in Union Square that showcases Nikkei cuisine, the amalgamation of Japanese techniques and Peruvian ingredients. The new venue opened in October as Chotto Matte's first outpost on the West Coast.

Signature menu highlights include the iconic Chotto branzino ceviche, tentáculos de pulpo, sato maki sushi and pollo den miso. The restaurant occupies the newly developed rooftop restaurant and wraparound terrace atop 100 Stockton St., affording stunning panoramic views of the city. The design is chic yet organic, with prominent Japanese lava stone and shou sugi ban wood.

### Yokai Now Open in Downtown San Francisco

**Yokai**, a 60-seat hi-fi cocktail bar and charcoal grill, opened in September in downtown San Francisco. Inspired by Chef Marc Zimmerman's travels throughout Japan, Yokai pays homage to Japan's after-work food and drink culture with shareable plates and skewers cooked over binchotan charcoal. While wagyu is a focal point, the menu gives equal attention to fish and seafood selections, vegetables, and produce from Tenbrink Farms. The venue has a strong focus on Japanese whisky and cocktails, as well as brandies, cognacs and the budding Japanese gin scene.

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## SANTA BARBARA

### Cohiba Opens First U.S. Lounge at The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara

Tucked onto 78 acres overlooking the Pacific Ocean, The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara, features a new cigar lounge in a stunning al fresco atmosphere. In partnership with preeminent luxury cigar brand Cohiba, The Ritz-Carlton Bacara, Santa Barbara opened the **Cohiba Cigar Lounge** in August. The first permanent Cohiba lounge in the United States is set on a spectacular terrace with panoramic views, outdoor fire pits, a walk-in, cedar-lined humidor, and an array of Cohiba cigars that pair with cocktails, fine wines and spirits. The Cohiba cigar lounge is open to hotel guests and the public.

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## Arts & Entertainment



### BUENA PARK

#### Franklin Exhibit Set to Debut

From January 27-February 25, at Knott's Berry Farm's Calico Town Hall, guests will enter a new, limited-time exhibit dedicated to Charles Schulz's iconic character, Franklin, and discover his importance to history and pop culture. He joined the PEANUTS Gang in 1968 when Charlie Brown met Franklin at the beach. Plus, visitors can hang out with Franklin and snap a photo with him that is too cool for school!

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### SAN DIEGO

#### New Exhibit at The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego

The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego is proud to announce Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora, 1990s–Today on view from April 18 through July 28. An innovative rethinking of art in the Caribbean diaspora, this major exhibition features an intergenerational group of artists who live and work across the Americas and Europe. Forecast Form challenges conventional ideas about the region and reveals the Caribbean as a place defined by constant exchange, displacement, and movement rather than by geography, language, or ethnicity.

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### SAN FRANCISCO

#### Asian Art Museum Reveals New Art Terrace

On Oct. 3, the **Asian Art Museum** debuted its 7,500-square-foot East West Bank Art Terrace. Boasting cityscape views, the terrace is San Francisco's newest and most expansive outdoor platform for relaxing and experiencing contemporary art installations by local and global Asian and Asian American artists. The terrace is a destination for connecting with friends, dining al fresco and enjoying performances alongside large-scale sculptures and commissioned installations.

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## Outdoors



### BIG BEAR

#### **Big Bear Mountain Resort Receives \$12M in Upgrades for Winter '23/24 Season**

After a historic winter that saw record-setting snowfall, Southern California's year-round home for outdoor adventure, **Big Bear Mountain Resort**, is investing over \$12 million across its three mountains – Snow Valley, Snow Summit and Bear Mountain – to improve existing infrastructure, provide additional amenities and enhance the guest experience during the '23/24 ski season. The capital improvements which include multiple base area renovations, on-hill upgrades, and non-guest-facing facilities, reaffirm the resort's commitment to providing the best experience possible for its guests and employees.

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### MAMMOTH LAKES

#### **Mammoth Mountain Improves Visitor Experience with New Upgrades**

At **Mammoth Mountain**, the Canyon Express (Chair 16) high-speed detachable quad chairlift has been replaced with a new state-of-the-art Doppelmayr D-Line Series 6-Pack detachable high-speed chairlift. At Woolly's Tube Park, Phase 2 of the master plan buildout is underway with improvements including the start of construction of the new full-service Day Lodge, a new Wiegand Alpine Coaster, and the addition of summer tubing lanes for summer 2024. Ongoing improvements to Mammoth's extensive snowmaking system include a \$5.5 million investment to expand, automate and maximize efficiency.

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### SAN SIMEON

#### **New Educational Elephant Seal Tours in San Simeon**

**The Piedras Blancas Elephant Seal Rookery** in San Simeon is the only elephant seal rookery in the world that is easily accessible, free and open to the public every day of the year. From January through March 2024, Hearst San Simeon State Park will launch guided educational elephant seal tours. Visitors will learn about the elephant seal lifecycle while overlooking battling bulls, birthing cows and cackling pups.

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