

By Maxine Albert

AbsoluteLuxury

Festival Del Sole



The Fabulous Festival Napa Valley

The *Festival del Sole*, recently renamed *Festival Napa Valley*, is held every summer in California's gorgeous Napa Valley – a dazzling showcase of great food, fine wine and top cultural performances. A chic and fun crowd, clad in fashions that Anna Wintour would approve, make this the most happening party around. The festival runs for 10 days, July 15 - 24 this year, and attracts a wide array of talented artists and interesting people from near and far. Some of the luminaries who have graced the festival's stages include opera super star Renee Fleming, Tony award winner Audra McDonald and jazz great Chris Botti. Throughout the event the major valley wineries host lunches and dinners at various places in Napa. At these soirees regulars get to catch up and socialize with friends they initially met at the festival. "It's like a summer camp

for adults," said one festival aficionado.

In addition to the sensory delights and great time had by all, money is raised to increase arts education for students in Napa County schools. There was an auction offering a red carpet appearance with Kevin Spacey, a dinner with Gloria and Emilio Esteban and more.

The Festival Napa Valley truly offers something for everyone. Wine enthusiasts will love events at notable Opus one and Far Niente wineries. The settings themselves are spectacular; Seven Stones Winery is a veritable art gallery with magnificent valley views. Darioush resembles an exotic Persian Palace. Foodies get to experience unsurpassed culinary offerings. At last summer's festival guests savored Jeff Banker's grilled Sonoma rack of lamb, Meadowood catering's Ora king salmon and renowned chef Charlie Palmer's roast-

ed squab served at his brand new Harvest Inn - all paired with fine wines.

Those coming for the entertainment can expect a star studded extravaganza of world class talent. I saw musical legend Herb Alpert with his wife Lani Hall perform at twilight in an open air castle, Castello di Amorosa. It was pure magic. No less remarkable was the Dance Gala featuring principal dancers from American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and the Royal Ballet. Ever since actor/director Kevin Spacey crooned to an enchanted audience at the Festival, he has added 'singer' to his repertoire. The closing night party with acrobats on wires scaling walls plus a salsa dance-a-thon captivated all.

For amazing shopping in between wining and dining, head to the charming town of Helena lined with voguish

Estate Suite Bedroom and Living Room - Meadowood Napa Valley



boutiques, galleries and eclectic shops selling snazzy arts and crafts. This is one fabulous festival you don't want to miss. www.festivalnapavalley.org

WHERE TO STAY

Situated on 22-acres surrounded by majestic mountains and vineyards, **Solage Calistoga** features beautifully done contemporary guest rooms and suites, some with soaking tubs, fireplaces, steam showers and outdoor Jacuzzis. Accommodations have sliding glass doors leading to outdoor private patios with Palisade and Mayacamas Mountain views. The resort also houses Michelin starred Solbar and award-winning Spa Solage with 20,000 square feet of health and wellness, includ-

ing their renowned mud treatments mixed with the area's therapeutic hot springs. www.solagecalistoga.com

Meadowood in Napa, once a country club, and now a luxurious resort, offers spectacular lodging combined with Napa's finest food and wine. The resort features comfy cottages and expansive elegant suites with fireplaces and terraces. Gastronomic Michelin three-star 'The Restaurant', legendary wines, indulgent spa and a splendid private forested setting create a chic and cozy cocoon. www.meadowood.com

HOW TO GET THERE

Arrive in Style: If you're flying into San Francisco and renting a car, **Enterprise**

has an Exotic Car Collection of elite vehicles including a Maserati Gran Turismo Convertible.

Sausalito Escape: For visitors flying into San Francisco, as well as anyone seeking the ultimate getaway, glamorous **Casa Madrona Hotel & Spa** in charming Sausalito will not disappoint. Located hillside, this plush 19th century historic mansion offers sweeping views of the bay and the sailboat filled marina. During an elegant renovation last year the suites were whitewashed and glammed up with decorative flourishes and refined furnishings.

Chief among the re-do is the dazzling 5,000 square foot Alexandrite Suite. With swanky, modern design using light blue and dove fabrics, this super luxe two bedroom suite features a fitness room and a hot tub on the 1,500 square foot terrace, plus a nine panel Samsung media wall.

If you rent the entire place or the Alexandrite Suite, you also get: a yacht to sail on the bay, a Mercedes ML 350 Blutech, a chef, fitness expert and other dedicated staff. All that for just \$25,000 a night. www.casamadrone.com

Dariouh Winery



Alexandrite Suite, Casa Madrona

