



From wine flights to dog delicacies, find a gift for anyone on your list

## INSIDE

**Outdoor adventure:** Discover gifts for the nature lover in your life **\$4**

**Getaways:** Spend a fun weekend away while shopping local **\$6**

**Furry friends:** Don't forget a gift for your pets this year **\$9**



MARIA HARKEY

**Above:** There are many eclectic shops and tasting rooms on or near Healdsburg Plaza. **Right:** The Roman Spa Hot Springs Resort, a tranquil 2-acre resort, has a holiday shopping itinerary for guests and geothermal pools to take a break. **Middle right:** Carmel has many different unique gift shops and more than a dozen wine tasting rooms. **Far right:** Kris Kringle of Carmel is known for its dazzling variety of Christmas ornaments, which the store will customize, and related holiday decor.



TYLER CHARTEY



# Create a new tradition while shopping

By Jeanne Cooper

I've never been one for Black Friday shopping at the mall, but Plaid Friday in Sutter Creek? That's a different stripe altogether.

The quaint Gold Country town is one of many communities across the United States that has embraced the shop-local initiative created by Oakland artist and entrepreneur Kerri Lee Johnson in 2009.

Rather than getting up before dawn the day after Thanksgiving to brave the crowds at big-box stores, Plaid Friday encourages holiday shoppers to ease into a day of visiting independently-owned boutiques, who in turn may offer special treats or discounts to those who wear something plaid.

I discovered Sutter Creek's version by accident five years ago, while staying at the vintage Hotel Sutter for Thanksgiving. My friend and I had just finished a bountiful buffet dinner at the hotel's Sutter Restaurant when we spotted a Plaid Friday ad in the local paper. Our first stop the next morning was to buy a tartan muffler just down the block at the Clothes Mine, one of some 40 independent stores in and around historic Main Street. Second stop: Choco-Latte, where the staff wore plaid pajamas as they served us espresso drinks and pastries to help fuel the rest of our forays.

I ended up bringing much more home than a plaid scarf, thanks to the tempting fashions at cowboy-themed Romancien' the Range and Unique Boutique for U, the adventure-oriented gear at Sierra Mountain Outdoors and the goodies at Sutter Creek Cheese Shoppe, which also sells locally crafted Miller wines, jams and honey. Browsing the aisles at a half-dozen antique and collectibles stores such as Tigby Hill Vintage and the Antique Gardener yielded more treasures that helped me tick off names on my Christmas gift list.

Since that serendipitous time in Sutter Creek, which hosts Plaid Friday this year on Nov. 26, I've learned you don't have to schedule your travels over Thanksgiving to benefit from a holiday shopping getaway. Many hotels offer discounted rates in the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas, too. And taking a break from your typical haunts — assuming you're vaccinated and following all other recommended antivirus safety measures — can provide not only gift-giving inspiration that supports small businesses, but also some much-needed change of scenery in a busy season.

Here are some highlights of

Northern California destinations ideal for both shopping and catching-your-breath getaways:

## CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA

Artist Christian Jorgensen built the mansion that became La Playa Carmel, now a 75-room hotel, as a gift for his wife, Angela Ghirardelli, in 1905. Beautifully restored in 2012, the hotel now aids modern givers by offering free holiday gift-wrapping for their finds from the many intriguing shops uphill.

One such store is Kris Kringle of Carmel, a 37-year-old institution known for its dazzling variety of Christmas ornaments and related decor.

Owner Carol Montana became inspired to open the 400-square-foot store while on her honeymoon in Germany with husband, Michael, now deceased, and she is still very hands-on, according to Pam Sheppard, owner of the 20-room Horizon Inn & Ocean View Lodge in Carmel.

"They will personalize any ornament in the store while you wait. I use their ornaments for our Anniversary Celebration packages and guests love them," Sheppard said.

"It's perfect! It's Christmas-themed year round," seconded Miranda Natrass, manager of the 30-room Coachman's Inn, a short walk to Kris Kringle in the charming Doud Arcade off Ocean Avenue. "Some other great little shops include the Mole Hole, Ms. Fabulous, and the Carmel Honey Company."

Carmel also hosts more than a dozen wine tasting rooms, which can serve as a source of locally produced gifts or as liquid revival for the shopper. Natrass recommends three in particular: Scheid Vineyards, which creates small-lot, sustainable wines from its 10 estate vineyards in Monterey County; De Tierra Vineyards, which offers live acoustic music from 3 to 5 p.m. Sundays; and Silvestri Vineyards, which produces seven varietals from its Carmel Valley vineyard. Luckily, guests at the 30-room Coachman's Inn are within walking distance of all three.

## HEALDSBURG

This favorite Sonoma County getaway brims with eclectic shops and tasting rooms, most on or near Healdsburg Plaza.

"Some of my favorite shops are Ereloom Men's Shop, Copperfield's Books and Mr. Moon's Gifts," said Jennifer Ostrom, manager of the 12-room Healdsburg Inn on the Plaza.

Copperfield's owners Paul Jaffe and Barney Brown opened their first bookstore in Sebastopol in 1981, and gradually expanded



JEANNE COOPER 2016

**Left:** Sutter Creek offers many different antique stores with a variety of gifts. **Right:** The five-room Blue Door Inn



to include eight more locations in Sonoma, Napa and Marin counties. Besides thousands of books, the light-filled Healdsburg store also includes a cornucopia of greeting cards, magazines, puzzles and (though not for sale) a friendly cat or two.

Founded in 2013 by Merete Wimmer and her son Bjorn, Ereloom showcases distinctive menswear brands and designers such as life/after/denim, John Varvatos and Will Leather Goods.

Like Ereloom and Copperfield's Books, Mr. Moon's Gifts is on leafy Healdsburg Plaza. Founded a few years after the original location opened in Calistoga in 1982, the Healdsburg site brims with gift ideas, including silver bangles, woven handbags, embroidered billfolds, fragrant soaps, new and retro toys for children, colorful baby clothes and artful greeting cards and wrapping paper. Owner Patty Timmsen curates the dizzying selection with her daughter Jessica.

For nearby wine tasting, Ostrom recommends Thumbprint Cellars, whose tasting room on the plaza a few doors down also doubles as an art gallery, and Journeyman Meat Co., a salumeria (handcrafted salami shop) created by renowned winemaker Peter Seghesio, which conveniently sells boxed packs of salami, beef snack sticks, spices and other gift possibilities.

"At Journeyman, you can taste their wonderful, local meats along with the wine — how cool is that?" Ostrom said.

Journeyman, which lies just over a block north of the plaza on Center Street, also includes a cafe with outdoor and indoor seating.

## NAPA

It's easy to make a gift basket of

Napa Valley goodies solely from vendors in downtown Napa's Oxbow Public Market, including Whole Spice, the Olive Press and Milestone Provisions, just to name a few.

Jenny Toomer, general manager of the nearby, 114-room River Terrace Inn, also recommends checking out the spirits for sale at Napa Valley Distillery inside the market, and driving to St. Helena to visit Napa Valley Olive Oil Company. Founded in 1931, the family-owned company produces delicious olive oil (available

by the jug) and also sells wine and delicacies imported from Italy. For local arts, crafts and jewelry, she points guests to Makers Market in the First Street Napa complex; it's close to another favorite store, the year-old Milo & Friends Pet Boutique, named for owner Chandler Manasse's Cavalier King Charles spaniel.

Scarlett Accurso, manager of the newly renovated, 11-room Milliken Creek Inn near the Silverado Trail, similarly guides guests to downtown Napa for wine tasting and shopping.



The Westin St. Francis is convenient for guests to enjoy the 30,000 light Christmas tree, skating on the seasonal ice rink and shopping at Macy's



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CAROL MONTANA

# Shopping local this year



SCOTT HARGIS

inn in Mendocino is fully renovated.

"I like Walt Wines — known for their Pinot — and Krupp Brothers, very near Oxbow Market, who do nightly wine tastings for us about once per week," she said. Another of her favorites: Vintner's Collective, which features "20-plus boutique wines in a historic building right of Main Street with walk-ins welcome," Accurso said.

For fashionistas, both Toomer and Accurso endorse Boho Lifestyle, the women's clothing boutique at the corner of First and Main, founded by Indra Fortney in 2013 and run by a 10-woman

team. "They have darling clothing, jewelry and shoes," Accurso said.

For a green gift, Accurso suggests browsing the "incredible selection" at Riza Plants, which specializes in indoor plants and related supplies. Self-described "plant sommelier" Alyssa Piombo, the daughter of a Milliken Creek Inn employee, opened the store in mid-October.

## CALISTOGA

At the quieter end of Napa Valley, historic Calistoga's main street of Lincoln Avenue offers unique shops and tasting rooms to visit on foot. Elyse Quast, marketing and social media manager of 60-room Roman Spa Hot Springs Resort, a tranquil 2-acre resort one block away, has a holiday shopping itinerary at the ready.

"Explore West of Poppy, for cozy women's clothing perfect for fall and winter months, and Blackbird, which retails home decor and accessories — ideal for the ones in your life who love to cook and decorate," Quast said. "Make sure to swing by Picayune Cellars & Mercantile for a tasting of their beautiful wines, while shopping for artisan jewelry, fun accessories, art and one-of-a-kind blankets."

Afterwards, she added, "return to your room, grab your bathing suit and head to our three geothermal pools for ultimate relaxation."

## MENDOCINO

Late fall is a lovely time for an uncrowded getaway in the charmingly compact village of Mendocino. While its rugged coastal landscape and picturesque Victorian architecture are justly renowned, Mendocino's merchants also deserve attention.

Those shopping for kids and teens should gravitate to Out of This World founded in 1988. The Main Street store has "great educational and science-themed toys, games, puzzles, gadgets, science kits, chemistry sets, robotics and more," said Ramon Jimenez, marketing and sales manager for Visit Mendocino County.

He also recommends Gallery Bookshop, "one of the best and oldest independent bookstores in the nation," founded in 1962 and sharing a site (and ownership) with Bookwinkle's Children's Books since 1993. Just around the corner from Main Street, the store also boasts a spectacular view of the coastline, which can be enjoyed from cushioned window seats.

Jimenez's other picks for shopping include Astoria Home Decor & Gifts of Mendocino on Main Street, where locally handcrafted items include charcuterie boards, and Tangents, a couple blocks north on Lansing Street, which sells "charming novelties, jewelry, clothing, mugs, cards, books and much more," he explained. "Its

## Details

Rates shown below are for non-holiday weekends in December, excluding taxes. Check websites for seasonal packages and other discounted rates.

**Hotel Sutter:** 53 Main St., Sutter Creek, 209-267-0242, [www.hotelsutter.com](http://www.hotelsutter.com). From \$205.

**Coachman's Inn:** San Carlos Street between Seventh and Eighth avenues, Carmel-by-the-Sea, 831-624-6421, [www.coachmansinn.com](http://www.coachmansinn.com). From \$235, including breakfast.

**Horizon Inn:** Junipero Street and Third Avenue, Carmel-by-the-Sea, 831-624-5327, [www.horizoninn.com](http://www.horizoninn.com). From \$209.

**La Playa Carmel:** Camino Real at Eighth Avenue, Carmel-by-the-Sea, 800-582-8900, [www.laplayahotel.com](http://www.laplayahotel.com). From \$429.

**Healdsburg Inn on the Plaza:** 112 Matheson St., Healdsburg, 707-433-6991, [www.healdsburginn.com](http://www.healdsburginn.com). From \$325, including breakfast.

**River Terrace Inn:** 1600 Soscol Ave., Napa, 707-927-2217, [www.riverterraceinn.com](http://www.riverterraceinn.com). From \$359.

**Milliken Creek Inn:** 1815 Silverado Trail, Napa, 707-255-1197, [www.millikencreekinn.com](http://www.millikencreekinn.com). From \$575, including breakfast.

**Roman Spa Hot Springs Resort:** 1300 Washington St., Calistoga, 707-942-4441, [www.romanspahotsprings.com](http://www.romanspahotsprings.com). From \$265, two-night weekend minimum stay.

**Blue Door Inns:** 10481 Howard St., Mendocino, 707-358-6899, [www.bluedoorgroup.com](http://www.bluedoorgroup.com). From \$175 to \$275 (depending on inn), including breakfast.

quirky inventory makes it an ideal gift store."

Within walking distance of all of the above are the Blue Door Inns, three intimate inns that are part of the Four Sisters Collection.

Check-in for all three is at the five-room Blue Door Inn on How-

ard Street, the most chic of the properties, while the six-room Packard House on Little Lake Street is the most affordable; rates at the JD House on Ukiah Street, whose eight rooms include a converted water tower, tend to lie in between.



WESTIN ST. FRANCIS

Hotels on Union Square's 83-foot tree and Neiman Marcus.

# Shopping 'staycations' also hold appeal

By Jeanne Cooper

You don't have to venture far from San Francisco to take advantage of a holiday shopping getaway.

As the only hotel right on Union Square, the 1,195-room Westin St. Francis (weekends from \$180) is perfectly perched for enjoying the 30,000 lights on the square's 83-foot Christmas tree, skating on the seasonal Union Square Ice Rink and shopping at Macy's, Neiman Marcus and other iconic stores in the area. The lights on the tree, donated by Macy's, switch on at 6:40 p.m. Friday, Nov. 26, as part of a special ceremony from 6 to 9 p.m. that day, and illuminate every night through Dec. 31.

Like the Westin St. Francis, the 131-room San Francisco Proper Hotel lies a few blocks from Westfield San Francisco Centre, home to Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom and 168 other stores.

"Some of our favorite local treasures include the wonderful Arsicault Bakery and a lovely choc-

## Details

**Westin St. Francis San Francisco on Union Square:** 335 Powell St., San Francisco, 415-397-7000, [www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)

**San Francisco Proper Hotel:** 1100 Market St., San Francisco, 415-735-7777, [www.properhotel.com](http://www.properhotel.com)

**Inn Above Tide:** 30 El Portal, Sausalito, 415-332-9535, [www.innabovetide.com](http://www.innabovetide.com)

**El Prado:** 520 Cowper St., Palo Alto, 650-322-9000, [www.elpradopalalto.com](http://www.elpradopalalto.com)

olate shop, Littlejohn's Candies, which have truly special holiday selections for gifts or gatherings," said Robyn Montes, general manager of the hotel's Villon restaurant.

La Bande, the hotel's new aperitifs and tapas bar, is "a perfect place to enjoy a meal prior to seeing 'A Christmas Carol' or 'The Nutcracker,' both of which are minutes away," Montes added. The choice of a \$50 dining credit at La Bande or a "Nutcracker"-themed Afternoon Tea is part of Proper's special two-night holiday package (weekends from \$364)

that also includes skating tickets, hot toddy setup and dessert.

Just a scenic ferry ride away, the 33-room Inn Above Tide in Sausalito makes it a breeze to score finds in San Francisco's gourmet-themed Ferry Building and Sausalito's unique boutiques, including the family-owned Holiday Shoppe and Soxalito, whose whimsical sock collection includes choices appropriate for Hanukkah as well as stocking stuffers.

Inn Above Tide is also ideal for viewing Sausalito's Lighted Boat Parade & Fireworks (Dec. 11) and browsing various stores and busi-

nesses' entries in the town's annual Gingerbread House Competition & Tour (Dec. 1-31). General Manager Mark Flaherty takes his own entry very seriously, while guests who book the one-night "Floating on the Bay" package (from \$545, through Dec. 30) receive their own gingerbread house kit, a ceramic sea lion from the Sausalito Foundation, a Voluspa aromatherapy candle and a book, "The Sea Lion and the Sculptor: The Tale of a Vagabond Bohemian Artist."

Downtown Palo Alto's eclectic wares, including quirky home decor at Five Ten Gifts and artisanal greeting cards at Letter Perfect, lie within an easy walk of the new, Spanish-themed El Prado, formerly the Garden Court Hotel. Design firm Nicoleholliis revamped the 66 rooms (weekends from \$399) and public spaces, a solarium with breakfast cafe and library with tapas bar. The Palo Alto Caltrain station lies a half-mile away, while open-air Stanford Shopping Center is a mile away on foot, a little longer by bike or car.