

LocalGetaways

CALIFORNIA



PREMIERE ISSUE

**GLADOW NEAD
COMMUNICATIONS**

**LOCAL GETAWAYS
MARCH 2022**



On the Road to Design

California offers

thrilling escapes with
diverse architecture and
captivating experiences.

By Zahid Sardar

tall ceilings, Dutch doors and equestrian murals, the 3,000-square-foot, stable-inspired spa has outdoor spaces off each treatment room where guests can shower or lounge following their treatments. In keeping with the times, the spa is now called the Wellness Barn, for a range of mind and body treatments that use unguents made from vibrant homegrown ingredients. In fact, the intimate gardens on the 10-acre property with fountains, picturesque vineyards nearby and poolside lounging are all conducive to a feeling of well being. That's why, on some mornings, Joe Bartolomei leads hikers through the surrounding woods across hidden trails, while others learn about farm yoga.

The new guest-suite barns, connected by a bridge, replicate the look and feel of the old but have vertical board and batten exteriors, with modern concrete floors and state-of-the-art amenities. The old and new exteriors are all a buttery yellow, except for the spa that is painted white. The late Healdsburg designer Myra Hoefler also chose white for the interiors, and added signature slip-cased furnishings and leather and wood accents that feel pastoral yet chic. Hoefler's firm, now helmed by her daughters, continues to refine the spaces at the Farmhouse Inn that all have either wood-burning or two-sided gas fireplaces, jetted or soaking tubs, saunas or steam showers, and private decks or courtyards.

The award-winning 25-room Farmhouse Inn has now reached the coveted Four-Diamond luxury boutique hotel status. Definitely expect aromatherapy toiletries, luxury robes, sensuous linens, flat-panel televisions, mini-bars and yes, eight-bottle wine refrigerators. After all, this unique enclave is in Sonoma where you will surely encounter must-have wines. farmhouseinn.com About \$760 per night plus tax.



△
Farmhouse Inn

HOTEL SAN LUIS OBISPO

San Luis Obispo

Long considered a sleepy road stop halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the charming town of San Luis Obispo at the foot of the Santa Lucia Range in Central California — close to Hearst Castle — is slightly older than both those cities and is a destination unto itself. And, it appears that hoteliers Circe Sher and Paolo Petrone of Piazza Hospitality, whose Hotel Healdsburg helped to ignite a cultural renaissance in Healdsburg, thought so too.

“We really wanted a modern, beach-meets-ranch style hotel with a Southern California look there,” Sher said. “San Luis Obispo’s downtown is a walkable, lively place. We wanted to introduce people to that and become a hub for the community.”

Their three-story, 78-room Hotel SLO, a block away from the 1772 Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa that gives the town its name, opened shortly before the pandemic shut it down. When it rebooted, its indoor/outdoor public spaces — two street-access restaurants with generous outdoor rooms, a dining courtyard and pool sheltered within the U-shaped building, and a rooftop bar — intended to capitalize on the area’s warm weather, were exactly where people felt safe.

Now, even on a Monday night, the High Bar with grandstand views of the Nine Sisters — hikeable volcanic peaks that ring the town — gets filled with hotel guests, young professionals who work in tech, design and the area’s growing wine industry, as well as students and faculty from Cal Poly State University on the edge of town. It’s a kind of rooftop piazza with a youthful vibe.

Architect Chris Harrelson, of the San Francisco firm Gensler, designed the airy, modern, stucco-steel-and-glass building with rooms that have individual terraces or balconies. Interior designer Danielle Velasco who had worked with Sher on another Healdsburg hotel, picked warm wood features and mid-century modern furnishings for the lobby, outfitted the modest spa, decorated Ox + Anchor and Piadina restaurants, and helped curate the robust art collection showcased in rooms and on every floor. A round living wall by David Brenner, who also designed the one at SFMOMA, is incorporated into the signage. The fresh white guest rooms, with contemporary Scandinavian-style furnishings and super graphics painted above the headboards, have pops of color in pillow covers as well as commissioned art prints depicting present-day SLO landmarks and some from a now-disappeared Chinatown whose inhabitants built the town’s 19th century railway. As a subtle nod to that



nearly-forgotten past, “the façade’s terracotta tiles are a Chinese material,” Sher adds.

There are other histories to learn, and Phoenix Books, a wonderful used book store nearby, has a rich eclectic trove of books that remind you that laidback SLO is a counter-culture college town of roughly 50,000 people with diverse creative interests. The first motel, the Frisbee, and the colorful kooky Madonna Inn were all born there. Embracing the SLO life, many residents have become full-time cafe musicians, vegan shamans, and some are surfing instructors at nearby Pismo Beach.

Food is a big SLO feature, so interspersed between clothing and home decor boutiques along tree-lined Higuera Street are choice eateries, brewpubs and bakeries tucked into 19th century storefronts. A picturesque creek also runs through town and you can follow it as it slips in and out of public parks, under footbridges, beside museums and into secret restaurant gardens.

On Thursday evenings a farmers market takes over the center of town, and that’s where the hotel’s executive chef Ryan Francher finds organic ingredients and local cheeses. “It is heaven for chefs,” Calabria native Petrone says with a satisfied sigh. *hotel-slo.com* About \$300 per night, plus tax.

