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Tee off at the state's top event-friendly golf destinations

+ **GROUP
GETAWAYS**
4 perfect
properties for
restorative
retreats

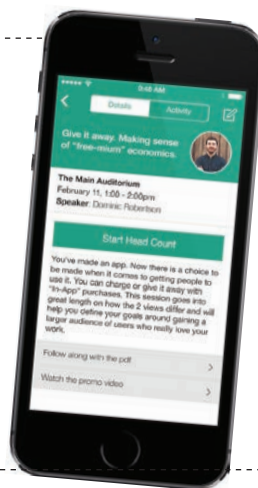


meetingNOTES

{APP}

DoubleDutch

DoubleDutch's iOS and Android apps just got better. The company, a dominant provider of mobile event applications, recently introduced two new features for its apps that use iBeacon and Bluetooth LE location-based mobile technology. One such feature, Head Count, tracks attendance based on guests' proximity, while the other, Network Nearby, allows attendees to see when interesting people are near them. Both are available for event planners to use at conferences, trade shows, meetings and more. New features are also in the works for this year. doubledutch.me —*Candice Wheeler*



{TEAM-BUILDING}

Four-Wheeling Fun in Carmel Valley

Carmel, at the southern end of the Monterey Peninsula, is an internationally known golf destination. It also offers a team-building opportunity that's one of a kind on the West Coast.

The Land Rover Experience, based out of Quail Lodge & Golf Club in the Carmel Valley, specializes in corporate team-building excursions. Participants who get behind the wheel of a \$60,000 Range Rover Sport don't have to know a break-over angle from a pivot point to have a blast, but they'll be very familiar with these terms and more before the two-hour session is over.

"We teach expedition-style off-road driving, and we can do anything from as little as an hour to multiple consecutive days," says instructor Mark Curtsinger. The driving school operates on 150 acres of hilly terrain developed as an elaborate off-road obstacle course. Six miles of dirt trails climb steep, rutted hills, squeezing between trees, descending into water-filled ditches and traversing long series of bumps resembling moguls on a ski hill. Drivers learn to trust their tricked-out vehicles—and each other—through exercises like one where team members coach a blindfolded driver through the course; and smooth operator, in which teams attempt to navigate while keeping water in a cup that's suction-cupped to the hood. There are also geocaching challenges and other exercises that foster competition, collaboration and cooperation.

Tech types especially love it. "We've had every household name tech company out here, many of them more than once," says Curtsinger. Some of them even end up buying a Land Rover. quailodge.com —*Janet Fullwood*

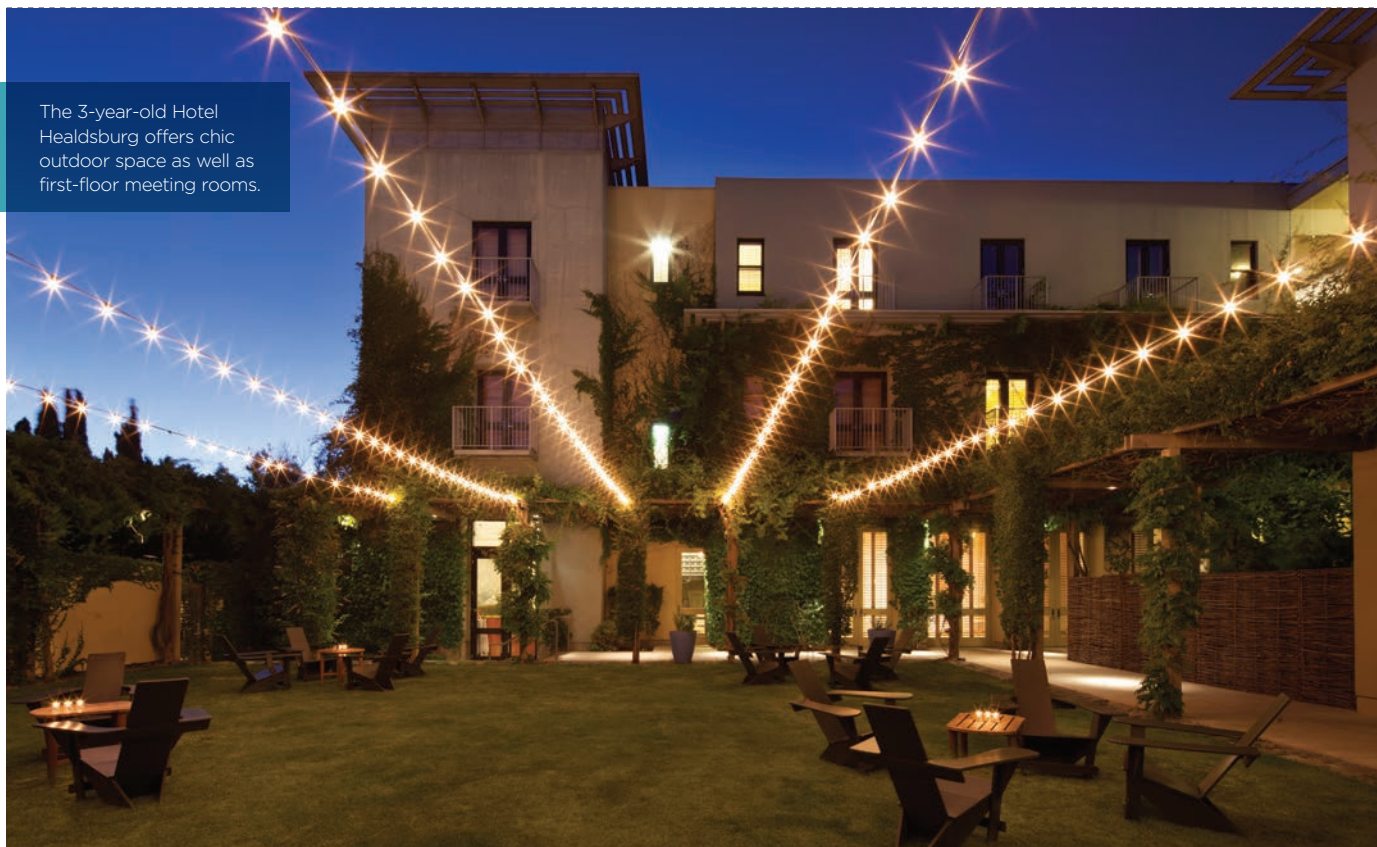
{ACTIVITY}

Putting San Francisco on the Mini-Golf Map

Indoor mini-golf has been around for a while—Concord, Alameda and Rancho Cordova are among Northern California communities with courses that attract the arcade-going family set. Urban Putt in San Francisco's Mission District, which opened in May, is something different: an immersive bar/restaurant concept with 14 holes of high-tech golf themed to everything from sea creatures to San Francisco landmarks. ¶ Two bars and a full-service, 72-seat restaurant led by chef Dane Boryta serve innovative cocktails and regionally sourced California comfort food. Private dining space is set aside for groups of up to 14 (upstairs) or 25 (downstairs). urbanputt.com —*Janet Fullwood*



The 3-year-old Hotel Healdsburg offers chic outdoor space as well as first-floor meeting rooms.



CORPORATE RETREATS *with a* GUARANTEE

It's nearly impossible *not* to feel centered, calm and energized after a stay at one of these four properties. BY SHELLEY LEVITT AND KATHY A. MCDONALD

CALIFORNIA HAS SCORES of options for corporate getaways aiming to restore and recharge. These four hotels have spot-on service and make planning the event an exercise in relaxation, too.

Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort & Spa, San Luis Obispo

In fall 2013, 65 gynecologists boarded a plane in Phoenix for a group getaway with no idea where they were going. When their flight landed at LAX, they were still in the dark. Then, after a three-and-a-half-hour drive, their van

stopped. The group leader asked the doctors to turn in their phones and announced this was the start of a three-day silent retreat. The doctors arrived at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort & Spa, buying out the entire 116-acre, 72-room property.

Sycamore Springs, in the Central Coast's Avila Valley, has all the amenities for an idyllic retreat. The tree-canopied hillside is dotted with 22 therapeutic natural mineral tubs, plus the Oasis Waterfall Lagoon, which accommodates groups up to 30, and each of the posh guest rooms also has its own mineral tub. The Healing Arts dome, set in a glen, hosts yoga classes, workshops and meetings. There's even

a labyrinth, modeled after the famous one at Chartres Cathedral in Paris, plus miles of easy hiking trails with ocean views. Stroll across a bridge and you reach the chef's garden, a bucolic setting for private dinners.

Located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, Sycamore Springs is especially attractive for companies that want to bring together employees in both their Southern and Northern California offices. The venue has 10,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space, from boardrooms to an 1,800-square-foot banquet space and the 5,000-square-foot Gazebo Lawn. "The peaceful atmosphere here is really conducive for groups that are looking

PHOTO COURTESY OF: HOTEL HEALDSBURG; PAUL DYER.

venueREPORT



Below: The newly renovated Essence Restaurant at Two Bunch Palms offers expansive desert views.
Top left: The resort's yoga dome.
Below left: The patio at Tally Ho, the 12-room hotel in Carmel-by-the-Sea.
Opposite: The hillside mineral tubs at Sycamore Mineral Springs Resort & Spa offer privacy and great views.

to have focus but not overstimulation,” says Caroline Whittaker, sales manager.

Two Bunch Palms Spa Resort, Desert Hot Springs

Under new ownership and management (CEO Kevin Kelly is the former president of Canyon Ranch), the 52-room, 56-acre Two Bunch Palms Spa Resort in Desert Hot Springs is transformative. As the heart of the property, the grotto fed by hot mineral springs remains the same, while the Essence, the renovated restaurant, now takes in wide desert views. Room renovations are ongoing; the resort is reconfiguring some suites so that by fall's end there will be 70 rooms. Phase three of the multimillion-dollar renovation will continue next year and will add 36 guest rooms, a new spa and a fitness center.

Groups are welcomed in two ways. For 20-person events and under, the resort is converting the House on the Hill into a meeting space. For larger groups, a complete buyout of the property includes access to all the recreational facilities and the option to host events like grotto-side barbecues. All guests can enjoy the resort's weekly program of classes, including morning stretch, yoga and more, all held in the 3,000-square-foot yoga dome. The dome, set

into the hillside, doubles as an event space.

A true oasis, the resort's new room design includes all new furnishings and natural materials throughout, such as bamboo, alder, oak and limestone. Although just minutes from Interstate 10 and 15 minutes from the Palm Springs International Airport, Two Bunch Palms has been an iconic desert retreat for 84 years; its revamp and expansion is welcome news for groups seeking a chill place to recharge, relax and engage in a menu of soul-reviving activities.

Pine Inn, Carmel-by-the-Sea

Built in 1889, the 49-room, three-story Pine Inn was the first hotel in Carmel-by-the-Sea. Back then it was known as Hotel Carmelo and sat on a hilly dirt street. In 1903, as Carmel grew, the hotel was rolled down the hill on pine logs and pulled by mules to its current site, four blocks from the ocean and right in the center of a now bustling storybook downtown. The property is gracious and sunlit; the lobby's wood-paneled walls are padded with silk, the rooms decorated with traditional furnishings and antiques. The staff knows how to treat guests with Old World hospitality—Pope John Paul II had lunch there in 1988 when he visited the nearby Carmel Mission—but the property

also offers modern amenities such as complimentary wireless Internet.

“This is an old-style hotel,” says General Manager John Lloyd. “We don't have any elevators, but we have the kind of personalized service that's hard to find today. Our staff will help with everything a group needs, like planning itineraries, which might include wine tastings and a trip to the nearby Monterey Aquarium.”

The beautifully appointed guest rooms, with feather beds, armoires and flat-screen televisions, are spread over three small buildings, with six penthouse suites, each with a separate entrance, overlooking the courtyard. A sister inn, Tally Ho, is across the street; its 12 guest rooms include fireplaces, Jacuzzi tubs, heated bathroom floors and Bose sound systems. “These are some of the nicest rooms in town,” says Lloyd. “Companies often book rooms in both inns, with their VIPs staying at Tally Ho.”

Oracle, State Farm, Wells Fargo and Ducati are among the companies that have held multiday meetings there. The Ocean Avenue Room can accommodate 45 for classroom-style meetings, 70 for theater-style and up to 100 for receptions when the French doors leading to the piazza are opened. All catering is done by the in-house restaurant Il Fornaio, which has additional event space.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: STEPHANIE BRAUER, TALLY HO INN.



Hotel Healdsburg, Sonoma County

"A world away" is how Jason Farmer, director of sales at the Hotel Healdsburg, describes the 55-room boutique property and its Sonoma wine country setting, about an hour's drive north from its predominantly Bay Area and Silicon Valley corporate clientele. Located in the picturesque village of Healdsburg—deemed one of the nation's best small towns by *Smithsonian* magazine—the upscale boutique property is like a breath of chic city air in the mostly rural county. It's set across from the town's redwood-lined square and a short bike ride to many wineries (the hotel provides complimentary bikes guests can use); famed eatery Charlie Palmer's Dry Creek Kitchen is downstairs, along with several first-floor meeting rooms, which open to an always green event lawn. Their names reflect the laid-back, agrarian surroundings: the Carriage House (50 seated), Grange Hall (80 capacity) and Screened Porch (50 seated). Infused with natural light, it's not uncommon to see the meeting rooms with their doors open to the quiet courtyard. Guest rooms are quiet and decorated in a Zen-like style with pecan wood floors. The H2, a sister property one quick block away, has a lower price point and several additional breakout space options. 🍷

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