



CALISTOGA

Solage, take me away!

Whether for a girls' weekend getaway or a midweek romantic rendezvous, I love to flee to the upper end of the Napa Valley to submerge my bones in the area's hot springs. But now that the **Spa at Solage Calistoga** (solagecalistoga.com) has opened its doors, I've found a more civilized way to soak: in the spa's 65-foot, adults-only, open-air, geothermally heated pool. On my last visit, I spent a good hour just floating in the womb-warm waters. Solage's young, family-friendly vibe (try pedaling around on cruiser bikes and ordering the sliders from room service) sets it apart from wine country's stodgier resorts.

**SARAH MUELLER
BOSSENBROEK**

The cozy, modern rooms at Hotel Vitale (bottom, left) look out over the bay, the Bay Bridge, and what we locals call the heart of downtown: the Ferry Building Marketplace. What better way to beat the Saturday-morning farmers' market rush than by staying just across the street?



PENINSULA COASTLINE

A peak where I can perch in peace

I'm always on the lookout for little-known hikes where I can *ooh* and *ahh* in solitude. My latest find quickly shot to the top of my list: **Montara Mountain**, a quiet coastal perch a few miles south of Pacifica, where the **unobstructed views and nearly deserted trails make Mount Tam seem like a theme park**. At 1,898 feet above the Pacific, a summit the size of a closet rewards your three-and-a-half-mile climb with a 360-degree view of the Bay Area: north to the Marin Headlands and the avenues of the Richmond and the Sunset, east to the residential ridges of Oakland, south toward the hazy middle of San Jose, and west to, well, you know.

The hike is seven miles round-trip and takes about three and a half hours. By the time I get back to my car, I'm ready to change into flip-flops and drive a mile and a half south to **El Granada** and the oceanfront deck at one-year-old **Sam's Chowder House** (650-712-0245, samschowderhouse.com). The first order of business is ordering my favorite margarita. I don't care if blended margaritas are passé; Sam's still does it right: not too watery, not too chunky. With enough tequila to call it quits after two, the drinks leave me with an appetite (and enough money) to indulge in Sam's \$20 lobster roll, named one of the top five sandwiches in the country by the *Today Show's* food editor, Phil Lempert, and *the best sandwich in the country by me*. Atop a delicate bun sits a generous helping of lobster with a light layer of butter, celery, and herbs. It's just the boost I need to continue scouting roads less traveled.

MATT BLOOM

