

ZUZU

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THE BEST DAY EVER IN

Napa

Downtown Napa is full of energy these days. Here's where to feast, hang out and, of course, drink wine.

By [JESS LANDER](#) and | Oct. 27, 2022

Five years ago, there wasn't much enticement for tourists to spend time in downtown Napa. Sure, there was Morimoto and a few other established restaurants, but most visitors drove right past Napa's exit and continued on to the next town up: Yountville, the ritzy home of chef Thomas Keller's mini-empire.

A lot has changed in five years. These days, downtown Napa is full of people and energy, especially on the weekends.

The town's impressive and fast revitalization tracks back to First St. Napa, an outdoor development complex that awakened the town from a long, deep sleep like Snow White's kiss. Since debuting its first tenants in 2017, the new hub has filled in with luxury shops, a 180-room boutique hotel with a rooftop bar, lively restaurants, chic wine tasting rooms, local art installations and even a brandy house, for anyone who needs a break from Napa's bread and butter.

Momentum pushed this transformation out to nearby Second and Main streets, and even across the Napa River to the Oxbow Public Market. Formerly an island by itself, the food hall is now part of its own hood, the Oxbow District. The bustling thoroughfare is lined with more wine tasting rooms, breweries and convivial, al fresco gathering spaces like Feast it Forward and Napa Yard. The Oxbow River Stage puts on a summer concert series with big-name acts like Leon Bridges, Third Eye Blind and Robert Plant. One street over, the fairgrounds host the BottleRock music festival every Memorial Day Weekend.

There's no sign of a slowdown either. At least one new tasting room seems to open every month — check out the hip Benevolent Neglect, the newest addition to town — and exciting restaurant openings lay ahead, including a Morimoto Asia, a Moroccan street food concept from acclaimed San Francisco chef Mourad Lahlou and a second restaurant from the owners of Napa Valley's uber-popular Italian spot, Bistro Don Giovanni.

So if you haven't visited downtown Napa in a while, here's an ultimate guide to the top new hangouts, plus some go-to landmarks. We have recommendations for , , and . (Though nightlife has improved, Napa is still a touch sleepy.) The best part: This whole itinerary can easily be accomplished on foot. With several hotels within walking distance, there's no need for a designated driver.



Night

Gorge on seafood with a river view

Or try one of these options:

ZuZu The owner of beloved tapas restaurant ZuZu recently expanded into the adjacent building with a Spanish-inspired gin bar. Design your own gin and tonic — choose from 16 gins sourced from all over the globe — and then nibble on boquerónes or go big with ZuZu's signature paella. Ask about the fish photo at the entrance for a surprise. 829 Main St., Napa. zuzunapa.com