

Marin, just a little out there



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Member of the Month November 2010

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Just guess where the MCVB got their great mousepad!

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Support a Marin County Green Business!



Ad.infin.Item has been a member of the MCVB since June of 2008





The Marin Convention & Visitors Bureau would like to congratulate the San Francisco Giants for a job well done for the World Series Win!

Photo credit: Tony Gutierrez

Holiday Event Highlights

Wintervention: Saturday, November 20th, 8:00p.m. at the Marin Veteran's Memorial Auditorium. Do you have a skiing or snowboarding problem? Do you always take "just one more" run? If you answered "yes" to either of these, it may be time for a Wintervention. Begin your winter mindset with a film narrated by skiing icon Jonny Moseley. Warren Miller's *Wintervention* is the definitive solution for the snow-obsessed.



Parade of Lights and Winter Wonderland: Friday, November 26th from 4:00p.m. to 8:00p.m. and continuing Saturday, November 27th, from 9:00a.m. to 2:30p.m. Always a favorite for those looking for a bit of excitement the day after Thanksgiving. Take a stroll down San Rafael's tree lit Fourth Street and enjoy the beautifully decorated store front windows. Step inside and discover unique gift items, friendly merchants, and hundreds of ideas for the holidays. This will be the 31st Annual Parade of Lights in Downtown San Rafael, and the 20th straight year of snow sledding on "A" Street between Fourth & Fifth Streets. Come and get your "snow fix".

Falkirk's Victorian Holiday: Wednesday, December 15th, from 6:30p.m. to 9:00p.m. The evening spotlights live holiday performances, hosted by Mr. Charles Dickens himself with characters in Victorian attire, Victorian parlor games and an authentic Father Christmas. Storytelling will take place for kids of all ages. In addition to the entertainment, hot cider and cookies will warm cold tummies and hands, and this year Origami crafts and Victorian dance lessons round out the evening. The Queen Anne style



mansion, decorated in her winter holiday finest, is the perfect setting to enjoy a nostalgic holiday dream of music, food, stories, and crafts. We invite you to step back in time and experience an authentic Christmas Carol in Victorian grandeur. Located in Downtown San Rafael at 1408 Mission Avenue.



Lighted Boat Parade: Saturday, December 11th along San Rafael's waterfront. Each year, San Rafael celebrates the holiday season with its annual lighted boat parade in the San Rafael Canal. Boaters throughout Marin County devote many hours and days preparing their vessels for what has become one of the largest lighted boat parades in the Bay Area. Parade viewing is best along San Rafael Canal, at Montecito Plaza, and at the Seafood Peddler restaurant.



Agritourism in Marin

Increased tourism helps preserve Marin's farmlands for the future

Have you ever wanted to live on a farm? Milk a cow? Or just escape urban life to the serene pastures of the country? If so, agritourism may be the answer for you. Short for agricultural tourism, agritourism is an industry in which farmers and ranchers open their farms to visitors. It's been popular in Europe for decades and is gaining a strong following in the U.S. These farm visits give guests a flavor of what it's like to be on a farm, to see how food is produced and gain an appreciation for natural ecosystems. At the same time it provides farmers and ranchers with additional operating income to protect their farms from development. Such farmlands and their native ecosystems are worth preserving, as they represent the last privately held open areas in the west. Marin County has about 160,000 acres of land zoned "Agricultural". Of this, virtually 99.5% is used for seasonal grazing of dairy, cattle and sheep.

Fear of losing open space farmland has led the University of California Cooperative Farm Extension in Marin County to encourage agritourism as a way of making Bay Area farms and ranches more profitable and preventing them from having to sell their land to developers. As part of its Agritourism Project



and website, the U.C. Cooperative provides a gathering place for growers, marketers, and community representatives to enable them to formulate visions, brainstorm strategies, and develop agritourism enterprises to add value to agriculture and rural products. Its specific business advice and resources provide farmers with the means to start their own ventures. The 2010 [Marin Agricultural Summit](#) on November 13th in Petaluma will be the

meeting venue for this purpose. Examples of topics to be discussed are Marketing Farm Products; Public Awareness & Support of Marin Agriculture;

Artisan & Farmstead Cheese and Sustainable Livestock Production.

Penny Leff, spokesperson for the University of California Small Farm Program, says that more agritourism businesses increase tourism to the county overall. Generally there's a great spill over from agritourism businesses to community development.

Charles Higgins is executive director of Slide Ranch in Muir Beach, the only working ranch in a national park on the Pacific Ocean and one that welcomes families for its educational programs. He says he hopes more farmers will add a farm tourism component in order to survive.

The U.C. Small Farm Program says the idea is catching on with all kinds of agriculture. There is a website to help tourists find farms and an outreach campaign with slogans like, "You've seen Disneyland, now visit the other California." Overall, it is good for farmers, visitors and the local economy.



Pieces of this article written by Ellie Rilla, farm advisor for Marin County with the University of California Cooperative Extension



What the Marin CVB is Doing

Marin's 2010 Tourism Summit on Thursday, September 20th was a huge success! There were well over 60 people in attendance. CTTC's Jean Johnstone and Tammie Carlisle were both informative as well as entertaining. We had numerous requests for copies of their presentations. A big thank you goes out to the Embassy Suites for the perfect room and incredible Chicken Crepes we had for lunch!

Another successful **GM and Sales Reception** was held at the Courtyard by Marriott-Larkspur on October 26th. There was a great turnout of hoteliers and the food was plentiful. A big thank you to our board member, GM, Sam Pahlavan and staff, for the generous spread. Also of worthy note is the Starbucks espresso machine in their lobby. Hotels in attendance were the Embassy Suites, Novato Oaks, Corte Madera Inn, Marin Suites Hotel, Four Points by Sheraton, Courtyard by Marriott-Novato, Inn Marin and Olema's Inn at Roundstone Farm.



Keep the Date for our annual **MCVB Holiday Open House** on December 2nd from 4:00p.m. to 7:00p.m. Come by and see our office and visit with old friends while sipping wine and munching on holiday treats! We will also have our

Food Bank barrel for your donated holiday canned goods. Watch for the party invitation in your email soon. See you here!

Restaurant Week in Marin County is January 2011

The Marin CVB is partnering with the California Tourism and Travel Commission (CTTC) for California Restaurant Month to be held this January 2011. California and Marin County will be celebrating the finest in regional culinary talent and the best in organic, seasonal and locally-sourced ingredients during the Marin County restaurant week of January 16 - 21, 2011. Marin County restaurants will be offering special discounted three-course, prix fix dinner menus to celebrate Marin County restaurant week. The Marin CVB website will have a listing of all the participating restaurants and a hyperlink to the CTTC restaurant month website. If your restaurant is interested in participating or if you have a favorite restaurant who you think should participate please contact [Christine Bohlke](#) at the Marin CVB, 415-925-2060 ext. 11.



We were recently quoted by Carolyn Blackburn in October's issue of Meetings West, a magazine for destination experts.

"One of the strongest meetings trends across the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County is that hotels and planners are working together to conduct green meetings, according to Christine Bohlke, sales and marketing director at the Marin CVB.

"Marin hotels have realized this process can't only be left to the planners," she says, explaining many hotels have stopped using plastic water bottles and pre-pouring water in glasses, and they are buying sustainable foods for meetings."

Marin Hotel Awarded

Reneson Hotels' Best Western Novato Oaks Inn was recognized with the M.K. Guertin Award of Excellence at the Best Western International's annual North American Convention held recently in Vancouver, British Columbia. The award was presented in front of more than 2000 industry peers.

This select honor is bestowed upon those member properties that represented the vision of Best Western's founder and best demonstrated exceptional levels of service, quality, value and commitment to the brand. The hotels must also meet the design and customer care standards, as well as other membership requirements, to quality.



The Best Western Novato Oaks Inn is one of only six hotels out of more than 2,400 properties in the U.S. and Canada to have received this designation.

"The M.K. Guertin Award of Excellence recognizes those Best Western hotels in

the top percentile that truly demonstrate the highest levels of quality and service within the brand," said Beth Campbell, board chair of BW International's Board of Directors. "The Best Western Novato Oaks Inn represents a strong commitment to excellent and to guests."

Located at 215 Alameda Del Prado, the [Best Western Novato Oaks Inn](#) features 107 spacious guestrooms and suites and professionally designed conference space.



In addition, the Novato-based [Inn Marin](#) has been named a certified green hotel at the leadership level by the California Green Lodging Program.



Travel Trends Hotel Occupancy and Rates Climbed in August

Hotels showed continued improvement in August 2010: According to PKF



Consulting, San Francisco occupancy for the month was 92.4 percent and average daily room rates were \$166.04 - both improvements over 2009. This continues the positive trend of occupancy and rate gains, and suggests that the tide has turned for the now-recovering hospitality industry.

Looking towards 2011, as hotel managers prepare their budgets, they do so in a hopeful environment. After suffering record-breaking declines in 2009, the U.S. lodging industry has shown signs of turning around during the 2010. Demand is up, occupancy is on the rise, and ADR declines have begun to contract.

Based on the initial signs of recovery observed in 2010, and positive economic forecasts provided by Moody's [Economy.com](#), PKF-HR is forecasting strong growth in both revenues and profits in 2011. According to the September 2010 edition of Hotel Horizons®, unit-level total revenue is projected to increase 5.9 percent in 2011, while profits are expected to rise 10.8 percent.

Despite the risks, PKF-HR believes it is appropriate for hotel managers to set relatively strong revenue and profit growth as goals for performance in 2011. However, based on our analysis of historical budget accuracy, optimism should not cloud reality. Just as hotel managers have historically not forecasted sufficient declines when approaching the downside of an industry business cycle, they should temper their expectations of gains during the initial stages of a recovery.



Robert Mandelbaum is the Director of Research Information Services for PKF Hospitality Research. He is located in the firm's Atlanta office. For more information on the benchmarking and forecast reports PKF-HR offers to assist hoteliers in the budgeting process, please visit www.pkfc.com/store. This article

was published in the September 2010 issue of Lodging.



The Marin Convention & Visitors Bureau November 2010 Newsletter

Our Mission is to develop a sustainable visitor base to Marin County, enhance the local economies, and protect the natural resources through responsible promotion.

Have fun in Marin County!

The MCVB staff: Mark, Christine, Deborah, Gina and Anuschka.



Every issue of our newsletter is also posted on our website, www.visitMarin.org

**Marin Convention & Visitors Bureau | 1 Mitchell Blvd., Ste B
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