

How to Spend 50 Perfect Hours in Mill Valley

By **Katie Morell** on August 04, 2015 12:30 PM

 Like  Tweet  G+1  Share 48



Take your next adventure to Mill Valley. *(Photo via Steve Casimiro)*

Just 10 miles north of San Francisco, over the Golden Gate Bridge, sits an idyllic town of 14,000 residents with tons of green spaces and leafy downtown streets filled with one-of-a-kind shops, art galleries, and restaurants perfect for strolling at any time of day. Welcome to Mill Valley.

Mill Valley is a magnet for tourists from around the world, many of whom want to move immediately following a visit. Here's how to spend 50 perfect hours in this charming Marin town.

DAY 1

8:00 a.m. – Wake up in a cozy room at the **Mill Valley Inn** right on Throckmorton Avenue in the downtown core. This boutique property offers charming touches like soaking tubs and fireplaces in several of its rooms. Relax with a cup of coffee on your balcony, then put on some active wear (yoga pants and a t-shirt is good for the ladies; pants made of breathable material are perfect for the guys), bring a hat, slather on a layer of sunscreen and don't forget your sunglasses.



Walk downstairs and get in line for the hotel's complimentary breakfast. Load up on waffles, oatmeal, pastries and fruit. Wash it down with some Peet's.

9:30 a.m. – Keep your car parked and head out on foot down Throckmorton until you reach Miller Avenue. The plaza in front of you is called Lytton Square and it is a central congregation point for the people of Mill Valley. Duck into **Depot Bookstore & Café** to check out the latest best sellers and grab a latte to go.

Spend the next few hours chatting with shop owners and locals and getting lost on the winding streets. Some of the cutest boutiques include **Mint**, **OSKA**, and **Summer House**.



12:00 p.m. – Head back toward your hotel and make a right on Madrona Street. Walk into **Avatar's**, one of the best Indian restaurants you will ever enter. Don't worry about the aesthetics of the place—it isn't much to look at, but you will remember the food long into the future. Order the Punjabi curried pumpkin burrito and a spinach salad on the side. Eat at the tables outside or walk back to Lytton Square and people watch.

1:00 p.m. – Walk back to the Mill Valley Inn and tell the front desk staff that you would like to take advantage of the hotel's free bike rental service. Make sure you have your helmets on, and then take your sparking TREK mountain bikes out for a ride. Ask the concierge for a few trail maps and then get lost in the foothills of Mt. Tam.

4:00 p.m. – Tuckered out from a brisk ride through the Marin County countryside, come

back to the Mill Valley Inn, take a nap and then a shower and get dressed in some fancier dinner clothing. Walk downstairs for the hotel's complimentary wine and cheese tasting and mingle with the other visitors from around the world.

5:30 p.m. – Say goodbye to your new friends and walk three blocks down Throckmorton until you get to **El Paseo – A Marin Chophouse**. This place is owned by legendary musician Sammy Hagar and is now one of the hottest restaurants in town (advance reservations and highly recommended).

Start by ordering a cheese plate, baby kale salad and deviled eggs. Ask your server for the best wine pairings and then move on to the California king salmon, shrimp Louis salad and cowboy ribeye.



7:45 p.m. – Ready for some live music? If so, walk about 500 feet out the door of the restaurant (yes, everything in Mill Valley is that close to each other) to 19 Corte Madera Avenue and snag a ticket at **Sweetwater Music Hall**. This place has welcomed the likes of everyone from Bob Weir (Grateful Dead) and Carlos Santana to Gregg Allman and Huey Lewis. Check the schedule in advance of your visit and settle in for a night of quality tunes.

Day 2

7:30 a.m. – Wake up early this morning (don't worry, it will be worth it!), throw a new combination of workout-esque clothing (fancy shoes not allowed), grab a few bagels from downstairs and jump in your car. Drive two blocks to **Mill Valley Market**. Fill a shopping bag with lunch items (I know, you aren't hungry for lunch yet, but you will be in a few hours) and a couple bottles of water.

8:30 a.m. – Drive four miles down a very windy road (this will take you 10-15 minutes) until you come to the entrance of **Muir Woods National Monument**, arguably the most popular place to visit in Mill Valley. As such, it is vital that you arrive early so as to get a parking space that isn't a mile away from the monument itself (opening time is 8:00am)



Spend the next four hours checking out sea-level trails, reading the plaques next to the

massive redwoods and venturing up the hills into some of the picturesque paths along Mount Tam State Park. Sit down on a fallen log and eat your packed lunch while breathing in the fresh oxygen and going through the hundreds of photos you already have on your camera.

12:30 p.m. – Drive back to the Mill Valley Inn, pack up your belongings and check out. No need to shower; more hikes are only moments away. Car packed, type in 810 Panoramic Highway into your GPS and enjoy the view down winding roads until you arrive at the entrance of the **Mountain Home Inn**, a secluded hideaway perched within Mt. Tam.

Settle into your beautifully appointed room, take a minute to stare out at the vistas from your balcony and then walk downstairs and ask for the best hiking trail in which to spend the afternoon. Looking for a recommendation from me? Try the **hike to the summit of East Peak**. This is a lengthy trek, so bring your hat, strap on your hiking boots and carry at least two water bottles per person. The trail is 6.5 miles round trip, but at 1,500 feet, it will take you between four and five hours.

5:30 p.m. – Back at the Inn, take a short nap, a shower and then change into some casual dinner clothing. You aren't going far to eat tonight (good thing, since with all that exercise you are likely ready to eat just about anything). Dinner will be downstairs (Note: Mountain Home Inn offers dinner Wednesdays through Sundays only). Meals are pre fix (a set menu) for \$38 per person—spring for the wine pairings for an extra \$25 per person.

Relax while looking out the picture windows over Marin County and enjoying steak, salmon, salad and chocolate cake.

Day 3

6:30 a.m. – Set your alarm for a crazy early wake-up. Stay in your pajamas, go out on your balcony and watch the sun rise over the San Francisco Bay. This is a once-in-a-lifetime sight (especially beautiful with the absence of fog), so enjoy it. Then go back to bed (you are on vacation after all).

9:00 a.m. – Wake up for real this time, change, pack and head downstairs for your complimentary breakfast. Mountain Home Inn serves a delicious, made-to-order breakfast with fresh squeezed orange juice and piping hot coffee. This is the perfect way to end your 50-hour getaway in Mill Valley.