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destinations

ALLEGRETTO VINEYARD RESORT

Escape Artistry



The taste on view at Allegretto—be it in the form of an original canvas or grand marble sculpture—is impeccable.

The Allegretto Vineyard Resort offers a getaway you might not ever want to get away from.

by Polina Steier



STEP INTO THE LOBBY OF THE ALLEGRETTO VINEYARD RESORT IN PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA, and your eyes are immediately drawn upward to a shimmering, waterfall-like chandelier that seems to float over the room. The delicate piece, by New York artist Petia Morozov (of the MADLAB architecture and interior-design firm), is composed of thin fiber-optic strands that sparkle like glass, shifting in color from bright white to deep blue and green. It is an elegant and striking design that contrasts with the hotel's sweeping stone staircase, below it, and Tuscan-style frescoes on the ceiling above.

The chandelier is just one highlight of the hundred-plus-piece collection displayed at the resort. Each artwork was handpicked by Doug Ayres, the owner and scion of the Ayres hotel group, on his travels around the world; the collection includes such diverse entries as a Southeast Asian Buddha, a cross section of an ancient sequoia, and colorful impressionist landscapes from California local Erin Hanson. The property's rambling Mediterranean gardens house additional pieces, including an Egyptian obelisk and a "sonic labyrinth sound circle": a meditative walking path on which motion sensors activate soft, soothing tones created by ceramic flutes.



Hotel guests can take a docent-led tour of the property's collection, but for many, the stunning art on offer is just the icing on the cake. The twenty-acre luxury resort feels like a little piece of the Mediterranean that has been dropped onto California's sun-drenched Central Coast. The Tuscan-style grand villa comprises 171 rooms and suites—all with high ceilings, wood-inlay furniture, plush bedding, and marble-filled bathrooms—as well as ballrooms, a health center, and a spa offering indulgences like vine-inspired aromatherapy and a Himalayan salt stone massage. Outside, you'll find the 12,000-square-foot Piazza del Magico, a courtyard inspired by the Renaissance-era homes of Florence, in addition to a bocce court, firepits set beneath olive trees, a cabana-lined pool, and sweeping vineyards.

These vineyards produce most of the grapes used in Allegretto's estate and single-vineyard wines. Made by acclaimed vintner Alan Kinne, the

wines are available exclusively at the resort, in the tasting room or at the Cello Ristorante and Bar. At Cello, chef Justin Picard (formerly of the Ojai Valley Inn) offers creative, Mediterranean-inspired fare made from ingredients sourced from local farmers, ranchers, and fishermen—and even some grown in the property's own garden. Entrées include grilled mussels from Salt Spring Island in British Columbia with Iberico chorizo, roasted fennel, and caramelized-onion brodo; butter-

nut squash ravioli with mascarpone, Meyer lemon, and osetra caviar; and a fifteen-ounce USDA prime rib eye grilled over an oak pit and served with seasonal vegetables, roast garlic smashed potatoes, and an herb salsa verde. These dishes pair wonderfully with the estate's viognier, malbec, tannat, cabernet sauvignon, and sparkling wines or with the restaurant's "garden to glass" cocktails, which feature combinations like bourbon and amaro with carrot juice and fresh thyme. The rest of the Paso Robles region (which boasts over two hundred wineries) likewise offers a variety of tasting and dining experiences—though once you've settled in to the warmth and splendor of this unique resort, you may find that there's really no reason to leave. ☼



This page, clockwise from top left: The lobby's chandelier evokes falling water; an Old World-style abbey offers romantic possibilities for intimate events; Allegretto's hillside vineyards.

A FINAL TIP FOR CABERNET AND BORDEAUX ENTHUSIASTS IN PARTICULAR:

The Paso Robles Cab Collective can offer ideas and inspiration aplenty for your Wine Country sojourn—click over to PasoRoblesCab.com.