

## Rustic Seasonal: Carmel Valley Ranch Holiday

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Carmel Valley Ranch, bucolic and beautiful, hosts a cheerful raft of holiday to-dos throughout December.

**YOUR MERRY ITINERARY:** Hotels have been staging holiday-themed activities practically since the invention of hotels. Historians can quibble over why this is so, but the reason seems to come down, pretty squarely, on this: Hotels are people's homes, at least for a night, and if we'd observe a holiday at home, we're going to do so on the road, somehow, especially if it is tradition for us. Several stay-over spots have excelled in this regard, particularly destination hotels that regularly erect a glittery lobby tree come Thanksgiving and host a roster of cinnamon-scented events throughout December. But not all hotel holiday happenings are cut from the same sequin-sparkly cloth. There are the big city properties, that do a lot of over-the-top, twinkle-and-bustle seasonal stuff, and there are the more rustic destinations, that go in for a quieter Christmas. [Carmel Valley Ranch](#) offers a more bucolic end-of-the-year experience, and the list of lovely, home-away-from-home happenings is as long as a popcorn or cranberry string on a tree. They include...

**HOMESPUN HOLIDAY CRAFT AND CULINARY WORKSHOPS:** Oh yes. This is where you're going to learn how to make a beeswax candle, and distill lavender oil (something the property knows a lot about, also being a famous lavender farm), and make gingerbread houses, and make lavender soap, too. Maximizing the marvelously hill-and-dell-y setting are the [Holiday Burn-Off Hikes](#), which, no surprise, happen on Dec. 26 and Jan. 2. And will there be s'more-making and cider-sipping around a fire pit? It hardly seems like a more nature-snug vacation without it.

**THERE ARE OTHER GOINGS-ON...** from Nutcracker Holiday Teas to Santa Family Portraits, so it isn't all an outdoorsy yuletide. There is, however, a strong emphasis on the natural world at Carmel Valley Ranch, and that extends to the property's seasonal celebration. Gotta love a big-city hotel's celebration, but making a beeswax candle, and noshing on s'mores, has that slow-down but still celebratory vibe many people desire come December.