



## Napa River Inn, California -- Hotel Review

### Not Your Run of the Mill

by Louis Charles



The Napa River Inn, set in the historic Napa Mill in California

Urban renewal and neighborhood redevelopment projects are always well-intentioned, but almost always end up looking as if they belong in Disneyland: places striving so hard for authentic atmosphere that they become caricatures of themselves. Then there are the success stories. At the top of this list is the two and a half acre Napa Mill Project, orchestrated and anchored by the Napa River Inn.

This planned village works so well because it incorporates existing architecture into its design. The non-smoking inn that welcomes pets is housed in the Hatt Building (which has a silo as its core) that was built in 1884. The building is held in the embrace of a curve of the Napa River and is somewhat unassuming from the exterior. Inside, though, is another matter altogether. The style recalls the Victorian decadence of San Francisco at the turn of the 19th century, complete with an overstuffed round couch. The lobby showcases marble floors, a stone fireplace and gilt accessories, while the bedrooms—many with beautiful brick walls—feature opulent furnishings such as fireplaces, canopy beds, velvet ottomans and tufted lounge chairs.

We had to walk through a homey "sitting room" to access our Hatt historic room, which features maple flooring from the second floor roller rink that once graced the

building, clawfoot tub and separate shower, a bed seat at the foot of the bed, fireplace, and red walls. There are also historic meeting spaces, which include spacious Hatt Hall, with its original pressed tin wall coverings, and the Keig Boardroom, with its elegant Victorian decor and cherry wood boardroom table.

Staying here also means you enjoy a California breakfast (and evening wine tasting) from The Napa General Store or Sweetie Pies Bakery, both of which are part of the Napa Mill Project. The latter often fills the Hatt Building with the enticing aroma of baked goods, which could be a good or bad thing, depending on one's willpower.



Deluxe State Room

In addition to accommodations in the Hatt Building, there are bedrooms and suites in two detached, contemporary buildings which feature some river views. Rooms in the River Plaza Building are done in California country style, and those in the Embarcadero Building recall the interior of a yacht—mirrors framed in a carved rope design and coffered paneling are nice nautical touches. All rooms feature high-speed Internet access (wireless, too), grapeseed oil based bath

amenities from the Napa Valley Spa and 25" TVs.

This complex is the largest historic redevelopment project in the history of Downtown Napa. Along with the 66-room inn, the Hatt Building and its surroundings house a variety of establishments that make the property a destination unto itself.



Angèle



Celadon

For dining, Sweetie Pies Bakery is a casual favorite with locals, Angèle serves country French cuisine, Celadon cooks up "global comfort food," while SILO's offers wine, light fare, and live music. Once you're done indulging in culinary delights, you can spoil yourself with a massage, facial, waxing or spray tan at the new La Pelle Skin Spa & Boutique, located in a separate building in the parking lot.

The touch that cements the village feel of the Napa River Project is the River Bend Performance Plaza, found on a site that was originally covered with warehouses. It is home to music concerts and the Napa Valley Summer Shakespeare Festival. Once again it shows the owners' attention to detail; its planters were built using bricks and cobblestones from the original warehouses and streets. Emphasizing history while meeting the needs of 21st century travelers, the Napa River Inn and its surrounding village offer a unique wine country experience. ♦

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