

Shopping



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DOWNTOWN MILL VALLEY

Easily walkable, the downtown area is reminiscent of small villages in Europe and the variety of stores and boutiques have everything from the original Banana Republic and Smith and Hawkins outlets to quirky shops. With a plethora of Italian restaurants (three within a one block stretch) and java joints (three within a half block) this is the place for the mocha ½ café latte light-on-the-foam and a plate of penne with marinara.

MAIN STREET-TIBURON

Tiburon is the last bastion of homegrown stores in Marin. Without a chain in sight, Main Street is a collection of pricey boutiques, eclectic shops and historic buildings. The nicest thing about this neighborhood is how walkable it is. While the beginning of the street is top heavy with restaurants, further down the road are a unique mix of retailers and Tiburon's Ark Row, a borough that in the 1890's was a houseboat neighborhood.

SAUSALITO

Sausalito is located just north of the Golden Gate Bridge, on the southeastern tip of Marin County. Sausalito was incorporated in 1893, and named by 18th century Spanish explorers for the "little willow" trees (Sausalito) that were found, in abundance, on the banks of its streams. Sausalito covers a mere two and one half miles; a small town of only 7,500 residents boasting spectacular waterfront views. While shopping at the many art galleries, boutiques and cafes in Sausalito, enjoy the sweeping views along the promenade of San Francisco Bay.

THE VILLAGE AT CORTE MADERA

With Nordstrom's, Macy's and a slew of big name retailers, this is the place to go for clothing. Lots of parking and should the window-shopping elevate your appetite, there is an extensive food court. To get there, take Highway 101 north from Mill Valley or Tiburon and get off at the Paradise Drive exit, turn right at the light. The shopping center is on your left.

STRAWBERRY VILLAGE

Located just off Highway 101 in Mill Valley, Strawberry Village is close to Acqua, the Mill Valley Inn and Water's Edge. While it doesn't have many of the big name stores found at the Village (VillageatCorteMadera.com), it does have smaller shops with charming service. From downtown Mill Valley, take the East Blithedale Ave/Route 131 exit and take the Redwood Highway access to the center. From Tiburon, just take Rte. 131 to Redwood Highway and turn left. From Acqua, Strawberry is just on the other side of the freeway. strawberryvillage.com

THE TOWN CENTER

Opposite the Village in Corte Madera, the Town Center has become the place to shop for people looking for ways to improve the home. With Z Gallerie, The Container Store and Sur La Table, as well as more conventional retailers like Radio Shack, The Town Center has become a very busy place. Take Highway 101 north and exit at Paradise. Go left at the signal, crossing over freeway and the stores are on your right. • shoptowncenter.com

THE MALL AT NORTH GATE

Marin's only indoor mall, North Gate has become a favorite with families because the mall has a 15-screen movie theater, Macy's, Mervyn's and over 50 other stores. Take Highway 101 North and take the Freitas Parkway exit in San Rafael and cross the freeway. Follow signs. themallatnorthgate.com

VINTAGE OAKS SHOPPING CENTER

The newest shopping center in Marin, this sprawling mall is known as a discount outlet with Marshall's Ross and Costco. Chains like Old Navy and Oshman's are also here and there is lots of parking. The shopping center is straightforward and a good place to go for basics. To get there, take Highway 101 North in to Novato, and get off at the Rowland Ave. exit. (415) 897-9999.

