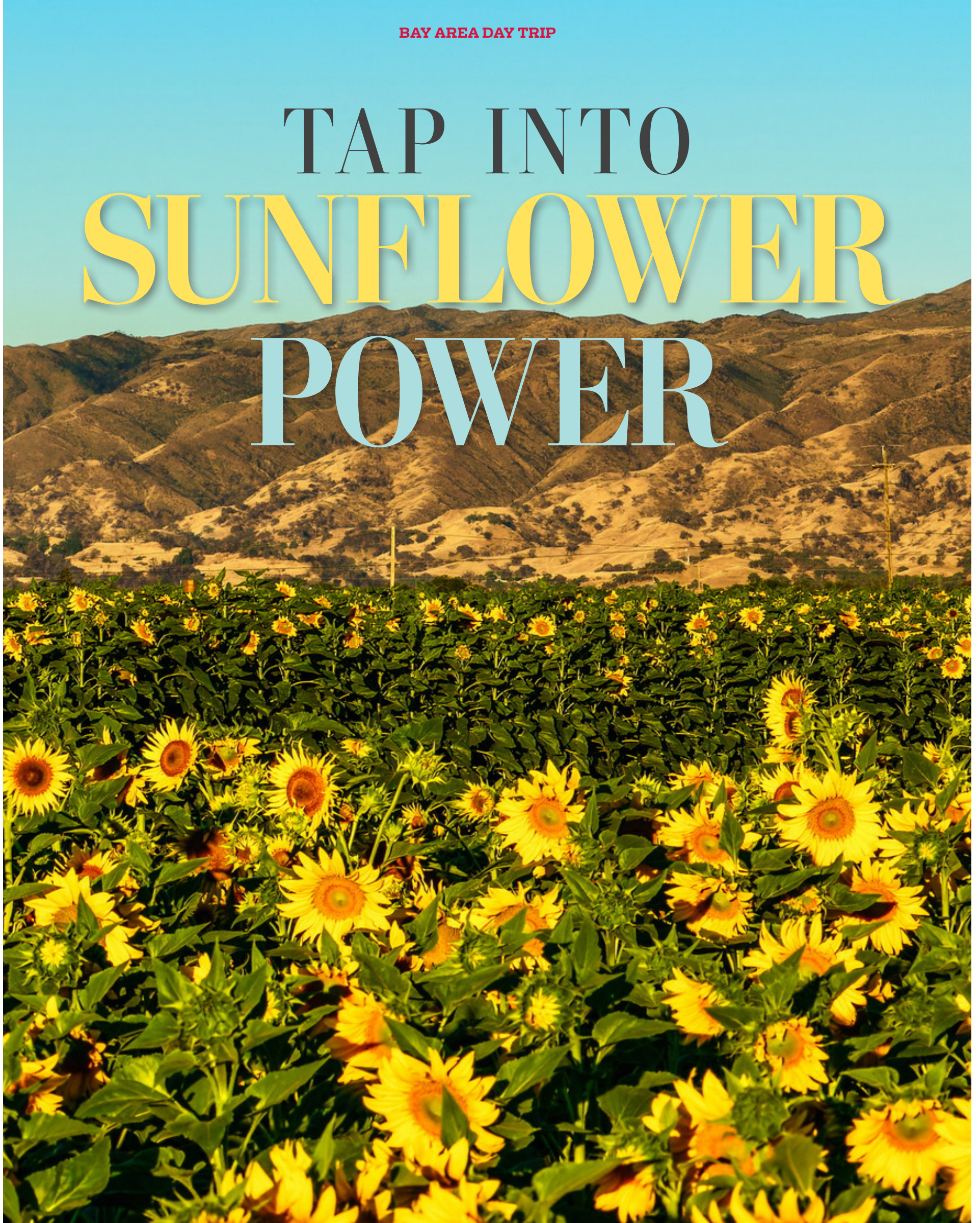


BAY AREA DAY TRIP

# TAP INTO SUNFLOWER POWER



GETTY IMAGES

Blooming sunflowers fill the fields at several spots in Yolo County, where flower-based tourism, restaurants and wine tasting rooms woo visitors from near and far.

## Bucolic town of Winters is full of fun, colorful blooms

By **John Metcalfe**  
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It's one of nature's little-known cool facts that sunflowers, just like humans, have circadian clocks.

They start the morning facing east and swing west as they track the sun. In the evening, they swing back to prepare for the next sunrise. Even when moved indoors without natural light, they insanely swing back and forth for days following the beat of their internal drum, according to researchers at UC Davis.

### IF YOU GO

**Park Winters:** The Flower Farm is open on weekend mornings through October by reservation. Make reservations, too, for the open-air Pavilion restaurant, which is open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekends at 27850 County Road 26, Winters; parkwinters.com.

**Séka Hills Olive Mill and Tasting Room:** Open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday–Sunday at 19326 Road 78, Brooks; sekahills.com.

**Hooby's Farm:** Open from 4 to 8 p.m. Friday and noon to 8:30 p.m. Saturday (weather permitting) at 24830 County Road 95, Davis; hoobysbrew.com/hoobys-farm.

**L'Apero les Trois:** Open from 3 to 8 p.m. Thursday, noon to 8 p.m. Friday–Saturday and 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sunday at 22 Main St., Winters; laperlestrois.com.

**Preserve:** Open for lunch and dinner Monday–Saturday and brunch Sunday at 200 Railroad Ave., Winters; preservewinters.com.

And around Davis every summer, the fields bloom with millions of these sunflowers, all turning their heads in unison like some great petaled army. Their numbers are matched by the throngs who flock to Yolo County to admire the flowers, which are largely grown for seed-oil production. And when sunflowers aren't in bloom, there are still plenty of flowers – fragrant lavender in the summer and drifting almond blossoms in late winter.

If one were to take a day trip to Yolo for a flower experience to delight all the senses – including touch and taste – where might they begin?

WINTERS » PAGE 8

## The List » Lavender festivals to enjoy in Northern California and Oregon this summer

June and July are peak season for lavender in Northern California and Oregon, where fields fill with the fragrant blooms and farmsteads throw open their gates for floral celebrations. Here are five festivals to explore – plus a bonus non-festival.

**1 LAVENDER BLUE HARVEST DAYS »** This Placerville festival – which is today – at Bluestone Meadow Farm includes make-your-own lavender wreaths, a lavender labyrinth and more. [www.bluestonemeadow.com/](http://www.bluestonemeadow.com/).

**2 HELVETIA LAVENDER FESTIVAL »** This lavender farm in Oregon's Willamette Valley offers a chance to stroll through the gardens, cut lavender bouquets and enjoy live music and food stalls July 5-7 and July 12-14. [www.helvetialavenderfarm.com/](http://www.helvetialavenderfarm.com/)

**3 SOUTHERN OREGON LAVENDER TRAIL FESTIVAL »** Several Rogue Valley lavender farms – including Dos Mariposas Vineyards & Lavender and the English Lavender Farm – will celebrate the bloom July 12-14 with lavender lemonade, bouquets and more. <https://southoregonlavendertrail.com/>

**4 SANTA RITA HILLS LAVENDER FESTIVAL »** Enjoy lavender lemonade, pizza and other treats at this Lompoc lavender festival on July 13; [www.goldenstateapothecary.com](http://www.goldenstateapothecary.com)

**5 WILLAMETTE VALLEY LAVENDER FESTIVAL »** This annual festival and plein air art show runs July 13-14 at the Chehalem Cultural Center in Newberg, Oregon with art and craft booths, food trucks and lavender-based sips and bites. [www.chehalemculturalcenter.org](http://www.chehalemculturalcenter.org)

**6 MATANZAS CREEK LAVENDER FIELDS »** This isn't so much a festival as a series of events that lets you unwind and relax with yoga in the lavender fields at Santa Rosa's Matanzas Creek Winery from 4 to 6 p.m. July 21, Aug. 18 and Sept. 15. [www.matanzascreek.com](http://www.matanzascreek.com)



JACKIE BURRELL — STAFF

You can go wine tasting at Dos Mariposas Vineyards & Lavender at any time of year, but June and July are peak bloom season for the winery's lavender fields just outside Medford, Oregon.

## TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

# Airline won't cover full cost of lost bags

## DEAR TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

» I recently flew from Rome to Palermo, Italy, on ITA Airways. Unfortunately, my luggage did not. I filed a claim immediately at Palermo Airport. I didn't receive my luggage until the end of my trip a week later.

Since my luggage was missing the entire trip, I had to make purchases, including luggage. My coat was in my suitcase. Thank God another woman on my tour lent me her coat. The weather was cold with heavy rain.

So many things that I needed were difficult to purchase because we returned from tours late in the day. I think I did a good job of keeping my cost of purchases to a minimum, but I still spent \$992. I have copies of my receipts.

ITA Airways wants to reimburse me \$733. I'd like to be fully reimbursed. Can you help me?

— Jacqueline Bartolini, Bradenton, Florida

**ANSWER** » ITA Airways is liable for the entire \$992. Under the Montreal Convention, if an airline loses, damages or delays your checked luggage, you're entitled to compensation up to an amount of about \$1,400 (unless there's damage caused by an "inherent" defect in the baggage).

Bottom line: If you can prove that you purchased these items while you were waiting for your luggage, ITA Airways should cover them.

Unfortunately, airlines don't always pay what they're supposed to. They may scrutinize your list of items and say, "We don't think you really needed that." Looking at your list, I can see a few items that might have raised eyebrows, including \$85 in

cosmetics, a \$6 mirror and a pair of shoes for \$172. However, you were careful to document each purchase and noted the reasons for buying each item.

I think ITA Airways needed to tell you why it wouldn't cover certain items, but I don't see it justifying its decision not to reimburse you anywhere in your correspondence with the airline.

You might have avoided these problems by traveling light and carrying your luggage on the plane. I know this sounds unreasonable, but take it from someone who lives out of his luggage — it's doable.

You could have appealed this to an executive at ITA Airways. I publish the names, numbers and email addresses of the ITA Airways executives on my consumer advocacy site, Elliott.org.

Given that ITA Airways didn't really explain why it shorted you \$259, I thought it was worth asking. So I did. After you reached out to my consumer advocacy team, we checked with ITA Airways. At first, the airline said it couldn't refund you because it didn't have documentation for some items. But it did have them, and you showed them the receipts again.

Finally, 10 months after you lost your luggage, ITA Airways sent us the following statement: "ITA Airways apologizes for the disruption and confirms that the customer will receive a refund for the expenses related to the purchase of items which occurred due to this inconvenience."

Then it sent you a check for \$733. I contacted ITA again and asked it to cover the rest of your expenses, as agreed. It finally did.

Email Christopher Elliott at [chris@elliott.org](mailto:chris@elliott.org).



Christopher Elliott  
Columnist



JOHN METCALFE — STAFF

A variety of flowers hang from the ceiling of the drying barn at the Park Winters inn in Winters. The inn in Northern California allows visitors to drop by and pick their own bouquets from a flower field.

## Winters

FROM PAGE 7

The day might start with a visit to Park Winters, a historic bed and breakfast on a luxurious country estate near the town of Winters. The inn offers a variety of day activities, including cutting your own bouquets (\$35) from a field of sunflowers, daisies and cardoons — not the goombah insult you'd imagine, but an artichoke cousin with troll doll-hair thistles.

On this particular June day, the flower field is buzzing with songbirds and honeybees and tourists dressed in sundresses, setting up tripods for the all-powerful 'Gram. After you pick a bouquet you can visit the drying barn — an amazingly scented place with a ceiling of hanging flowers — and its tea cottage, built from doors and headboards and looking like something from Alice in Wonderland.

Given all this flower-picking is extremely energy-consuming, head next to the Flower Farm Pavilion, an open-air cafe with tasty bites such as a Capay Cubano (\$24) with dill pickles, eggs Benedict (\$24) with house-smoked salmon and farm eggs, and a champagne sorbet (\$8) with K&J Orchards peaches.

Then it might be time to visit the Séka Hills Olive Mill and Tasting Room for a free sampling of olive oil, balsamic vinegar and flower-scented honey. The drive passes through the scenic Capay Valley on the Almond Blossom Trail, and is dotted with charming towns, tractors chugging down main street, wine-tasting rooms, fruit stands and yes, fields of blossoms including a sunflower explosion happening right now just past Capay. (Note to visitors: Stay out of the fields, they're private.)

Séka Hills sits on the land of the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation among thousands of acres of almond trees, sunflowers, lavender and a whole bunch of olive trees. When you visit, a guide places little cups of olive oil in front of you and instructs you to rub them between your hands, like an evil genius concocting plans, to warm the polyphenols — fragrant chemicals with antioxidant properties.

The oils are fresh with a peppery kick at the back of your throat — olive oil that sits in supermarkets loses this quality. The olive oils range from one that smells delicately like green tomatoes and is good for salads to another that's more robust and better for cooking. The balsamics are made with local figs, elderberries and pomegranate, and the honey smells intensely of flowers, thanks to all the orange and lavender blossoms growing in the area. There's even hand-scooped Arbequina olive-oil ice cream (\$7) for dessert, served with a flaky olive-oil cookie.

The historic town of Winters is the main event for visitors, but if it hap-



COURTESY OF SÉKA HILLS

Olive oil is available from Séka Hills, which operates a tasting room in the quaint town of Brooks.



COURTESY OF HOOBY'S BREWING

Hooby's Farm welcomes guests to its open-air beer garden that's situated on a working farm in Davis.



COURTESY OF MOLLY DECOUDREAU

L'Apero les Trois, shown here from the inside looking out to a parklet, is a tasting room that offers French farmhouse-style aperitifs in the town of Winters.



JOHN METCALFE — STAFF

Carbonara with house-cured meat, chives and an egg yolk is available at the Preserve restaurant in Winters.

pens to be a Friday or Saturday, a detour to Hooby's Farm is an interesting way to slake one's thirst. Known only to locals — and people who study Google Maps really hard — this extension of the local Hooby's Brewing is on a working farm inhabited by chickens, sheep, goats and his majesty, Percy the Pig.

Look for the rusty tractor with a sign announcing "Beer," then turn off into a grass parking lot where goats meet you with friendly "Mehhhs!" A path overshadowed by huge fig trees leads to a modest bar in a field, pouring perhaps half-a-dozen beers such as Apricot Sour and Water Tower Kolsch (\$8). You can enjoy the suds at picnic tables by greenhouses and a cornhole court, watching small planes land at the Yolo County Airport across the way.

Winters is a charming hamlet full of good restaurants, art galleries, clas-

sic cars and much-needed shade trees. On summer Fridays, you'll find live music on Main Street, and on every second Saturday, there's an art-and-wine stroll with paintings of wine-country wildlife.

At the local history museum, exhibits detail the exiled Japanese families of World War II, and the lost town of Monticello, destroyed for the dam that created Lake Berryessa. (It might be the only history museum with a bar and pool table in the back — but those are for locals only.) A plaque on a former hotel commemorates the Vacaville-Winters earthquakes of 1892, which collapsed buildings and killed a man, Jeff Darby, who was struck by falling bricks.

Take respite from the Yolo heat at L'Apero les Trois, a well-appointed tasting room with a grand piano mysteriously playing itself in the corner. (Must be the ghost

of Jeff.) The lounge is devoted to farmhouse-style aperitifs, which co-founder Georgeanne Brennan learned to make while living in France. Brennan says these types of low-alcohol drinks — served chilled or mixed into cocktails — are becoming more popular in America.

"I think one reason is because they have a lower ABV than spirits," she says, "but still have a complexity that gives you a sense of having something special."

The aperitifs are made from Berryessa Gap Vineyards wine in which local fruits and botanicals are macerated — oranges, apricots, green walnuts, cherry leaves, rosemary and thyme blossoms. It's all strained out and then topped off with a little brandy. A flight of six (\$16) is a fun way to go if you want to do a blind "Top Chef" style taste-off to guess the various ingredients.

The snacks here are also delicious, thanks to Brennan, a James Beard award-winning food writer who designed the menu. There's a Mediterranean sampler with black-olive tapenade and salamis (\$15), a baguette with butter and anchovies (\$12), baked Cowgirl Creamery Mt. Tam cheese (\$14) and sometimes a smoky spread made from sun-dried tomatoes and sunflower seeds (\$10).

Don't eat too much, because Winters is full of quality dinner options. Buckhorn Steakhouse is your classic meat palace with happy hour on the patio, and Putah Creek Cafe is a family-run operation with specials like tri-tip fajitas and chicken pot pie. Something new-ish is the Back Alley, a bar extension of Preserve restaurant, where you can enjoy herb-infused cocktails in an enchanted garden decorated with funky art. Occasionally, there is live music and food popups (check [instagram.com/\\_the\\_back\\_alley\\_](https://www.instagram.com/_the_back_alley_)), otherwise order Mexican fare through the window leading to Chuy's Taqueria.

The main Preserve restaurant emits an impressive vibe even before you step in the door — it looks like the jungle took it over, it's so draped with vines and flowers. Inside is a rustic wood and exposed-brick dining room with a horseshoe bar surrounding a glass-encased cooler, loaded with fresh mussels, cured meat and, yes, preserves, like vats of house-made pickles.

The vegetables are so fresh, you might as well be a cow munching them in the field. An appetizer of pea tendrils (\$9) tastes of sweet spring, made rich with fried alliums and corned beef. The carbonara (\$25) is lemony and lighter than most, with a shiny egg yolk to add richness. And the Public House Burger (\$20) is extremely tasty, squished with roasted-onion aioli and goosed cheddar and spiked with those fresh pickles.

With grub like this, you might just find yourself swinging back this way — kind of like a sunflower.

## Wish You Were Here



COURTESY OF THE KOORHAN FAMILY

San Rafael residents Peggy and Glenn Koorhan recently traveled to Willemstad, Curaçao.

**CURACAO** » San Rafael residents Peggy and Glenn Koorhan have traveled to many Caribbean islands, but their "new favorite," Peggy says, is Curaçao. "It is less traveled than the typical Caribbean islands, but very worth visiting. We went in January, fantastic weather! The friendly people of Curaçao — and neighboring Aruba — speak Dutch, English and Papiamentu, a creole blend of Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch (and other influences). I speak Spanish and a little Portuguese and was able to pick up so many expressions — bon bini (welcome), bon dia (good morning), dushi (sweet, good, delicious!). "Curaçao has many beautiful beaches, like Porto Marie and Grote Knip, with tranquil, crystal clear bays perfect for snorkeling. Music is everywhere. You can listen to energetic African-derived rhythms with influences from genres like reggae, Latin and pop. The cuisine is dushi! Lots of fish and vegetables with

creole sauces and spices." Curaçao's capital is Willemstad, pictured. "You almost feel like you're in Amsterdam. Strolling the streets is a must."

**TRAVEL TIPS** » "We learned all about blue curaçao liqueur by taking a tour of the 19th-century country mansion distillery of Landhuis Chobolobo. Make it a point to visit the Mikvé-Israel-Emanuel Synagogue. It was dedicated in 1732 and is the oldest operating Jewish institution of worship in the Americas! It's beautiful. Also, make sure to stop by Serena's Art Factory, where you can see colorful sculptures and learn about this fascinating artist."

Join the fun! Send a photo of yourself on your latest adventures — local, domestic or international — to [jburrell@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:jburrell@bayareanewsgroup.com). Tell us where you are, who everyone is and where they're from, and share a travel tip or two.