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WHEN TO GO

A popular time to visit Bodega Bay is during the spring and summer when gray whales are migrating north. The Sonoma Coast State Park provides a great vantage point for whale watching. The park is also home to abundant wildlife, including black-tailed deer and elusive gray foxes, along with 300 bird species. The park's ocean, bay and river frontage provides great fishing opportunities, while some 5 miles of hiking trails wind through dunes, secluded coves and along the scenic shoreline.

Baywatch

Bodega Bay, California, offers eclectic meetings and events space in a serene, waterfront setting.

BY SAM BOYKIN

Bodega Bay is a ruggedly beautiful destination along California's Sonoma Coast, about two hours west of Sacramento. In addition to dozens of award-winning wineries and restaurants, Bodega Bay is noted for outdoor adventures, including kayaking, deep-sea fishing (ranging from sharks to cod), and hiking or zip lining at the Redwoods of Armstrong Redwoods State Reserve, where you'll find the world's tallest trees. There are also charming marinas with waterfront restaurants, massive sand dunes and scenic coastal golf courses.

For event and meeting planners, Bodega Bay offers an array of accommodations and venues.

Bodega Bay Lodge recently renovated its 295 guest rooms and bar. The resort, which is poised atop a tranquil

bluff with a spa, pool and award-winning restaurant, has four meetings rooms. The 1,050-sq.-ft. Waveside has an outdoor patio overlooking the water and is connected to the more intimate Chart Room, an ideal space for morning receptions, with built-in credenzas and lots of natural light. For top-notch audiovisual presentations, Captain's Quarters has comfy couches, lounge chairs and a 600-sq.-ft. patio that boasts dramatic views of Bodega Bay.

Other local venues that host special events include Bodega Bay Harbor Yacht Club, where up to 130 guests can mingle at the oceanfront indoor banquet space. For smaller meetings, the club's Bluewater Bistro restaurant is situated on a gorgeous Robert Trent Jones-designed golf course and can serve up to 60 guests.

Elsewhere, the elegant Bodega Bay Secret Gardens is filled with ferns, redwoods and flowers. The 2-acre space can accommodate about 150 people. At Sonoma Coast Villa, event organizers have multiple spaces to choose from, including The Courtyard Lawn, the ideal choice for large parties. The 800-sq.-ft. Carriage House can be configured for 40-plus theater-style meetings or private dinners. Another option is The Board Room, a perfect setting for a private dinner for groups of up to 20 as well as private break-out sessions.

Finally, Sea Ranch Lodge has luxurious yet rustic meetings spaces for groups ranging from six to 72 people, with on-site activities like some 50 miles of hiking trails, a spa and gourmet culinary offerings.