



Stanly Ranch – Napa’s 5-Star Residential Getaway

By Ted Johnson

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The question of what makes the best second home or “getaway residence” often comes down to this: Where is the location of that property? Too far and the time and expense needed to get there often drains the enjoyment. Too close and it’s not really a place to escape everyday concerns but is more like visiting a neighbor – same type of shopping, eating and recreation options. One ideal is the second home that can be reached rather easily on a Friday night drive and then offers an early Monday morning return in time for the start of work. Alas, that limits the options, but a high-end resort and residential development in Napa increases the choices.

Stanly Ranch is the only 5-star resort and accompanying residential development in the Napa city limits. Just 45 miles away from central Danville, this development near the Carneros region on 712 acres features newly planted vineyards (pinot noir), trees and biking trails that coalesce into a very personal wine lifestyle experience that includes an Auberge resort (rooms starting at about \$1,000 a night). As part of the 21-property Auberge Resorts Collection, Stanly Ranch features amenities like the Halehouse, which is not a spa but a “healing destination” laden with private treatment rooms. Fieldhouse is the “movement center.” Add in the Spa Pool, Lavender Pool and access to the Bay Trail; the resort’s

amenities rank very high, to say the least. Finally, the best restaurant in the entire Napa Valley, Bear, is the resort's main culinary option. It more than exceeds Auberge's world class standard.

What makes Stanly Ranch and its resorts amenities different is it can become a more permanent part of your lifestyle. While the resort has been open for five years, additionally total of 110 residences are planned – 70 vineyard homes and 40 villas. Sales have been positive with the starting prices ranging from about \$3 million to \$6 million. At these prices, there's no false intent: Stanly Ranch is built and marketed for a certain segment of Northern California's populace. The design of the villas and vineyard homes reflect that. Featuring expansive indoor/outdoor living spaces, there are separate structures so that an entry way and small living room leads to an outdoor area and then into a large, covered family room, kitchen and media center. There's a large side yard resplendent in native fauna and perhaps a small pool. A large master and bath are on the first floor, more bedrooms and bath on the second.

What immediately becomes apparent is the roominess, an airy-ness. Rooms are not outlandishly large. Elevated ceilings coupled with windows that rise just as high create a sense of added space. In the temperate climate this means on many days all doors and windows can be open. The home lets the outdoors in. "Yea, that's what we had in mind," said Chris Crosby, president of the Nichols Partnership out of Denver that shepherded the residential development of Stanly Ranch. "We wanted to take advantage of what Napa and the wine country has to offer – easy access to outdoor and wellness activities."

Originally from Ohio with an MBA from Georgia and a Napa transplant during construction, Chris had to endure the rigors of California's approval process ("three agencies have to approve just to get water to the site," he said) and more recently a lawsuit from a financial partner.

All was settled this past March when Blackstone, the world's largest asset manager out of New York, bought the project. Thus, the last two years has forced Chris to juggle a lot, but now the path forward seems clear and stable.

"A lot of balls in the air, yes," he sighed. And yet his point is the main appealing marketing angle since the first backhoe hit the property remains simple: Napa Valley offers the ideal backdrop for immersive, resort-style living with enduring global cachet.



One example was the weekday I visited; the resort was preparing a large gathering structure – sort of a glassed-in tent – that would serve more than 100 Fortune 100 CEOs and guests. “The resort was bought out for the weekend,” Chris said.

The same day, Tracy Tutor, a prominent cast member on Million Dollar Listing Los Angeles (MDLLA) and is known for handling high-end, luxury listings across Southern California, visited as well. The high prices do stand out, but note that the homes and villas can be rented when the owners are not on property. Prices can vary but \$3,000 a night for an upstairs villa is a common rental fee. Stepping back, Stanly Ranch is designed to strike those who spend more than a few days as a place much more than a “stop-and-taste” location. Once on site, with the Napa Valley’s wineries beckoning, Stanly Ranch weekend activities include feeding chickens, some falconry (“the owls are the most cool,” according to Chris) and of course spa treatments, exercise, hiking and other wellness activities, all capped off with high-end cuisine.

Stanly Ranch offers more than just a “getaway.” It can be that place reached within an hour and once there the familiar can fade away among the vineyards, and therein the “global cachet” can be a big part of your life.