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Under-The-Radar Second Home Settings Worth Discovering

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One of the 40 private Montage Healdsburg residences in the Sonoma County Wine Country locale of Healdsburg, Calif. CHRISTIAN HORAN

There are folks who love crowds, as witnessed any New Year's Eve in Times Square. But when seeking a second or vacation home, even the most ardent crowd aficionados are likely to savor undiscovered jewels unknown to the teeming masses.

Happily, a number of largely overlooked mountain, beach and wine country settings still exist. In this roundup, we'll travel from Idaho to the Baja Peninsula to California's Sonoma Wine Country in search of the untrammelled gems tucked away in each.

Mountain Town: Teton Valley, Idaho

Everyone's heard of Downtown Jackson and the Jackson Hole Ski Resort. Fewer are aware that just to the west, over the Grand Tetons, sprawls the comparatively lightly trod Teton

Valley, a more serene and less populated ski town alternative. Among the Teton Valley's residential communities is Tributary, where buyers like the convenience and uncrowded surroundings of the neighboring Grand Targhee Ski Resort.

“The Teton Valley provides the charm of small-town living, while still offering access to endless outdoor pursuits,” says Jeff Heilbrun, Tributary real estate director.

“Similar to other mountain towns – but without the crowds found in many popular ski towns – our area has gorgeous hiking, world-class golf and a range of other activities exploring the mountains, valley and surrounding waterways.

“Winter in the Teton Valley offers skiing both at nearby Jackson Hole or local mountain Grand Targhee Resort, as well as snowshoeing, snowmobiling and more. Buyers at Tributary tend to be drawn to our authentic mountain town feel, laid back with plenty of room to explore.”

Beach Setting: Baja Peninsula's East Cape

As Jackson Hole is to skiers, Los Cabos is to those who love lively Mexican vacation destinations. The twin towns of Cabo San Lucas and San Jose del Cabo have long lured those seeking vacation and second homes. But as they've grown more crowded, the nearby East Cape of the Baja Peninsula has remained comparatively untouched.

This region of Baja is replete with beaches, waterfalls and mountain trails, yet remained largely undiscovered until development firm Irongate began developing Costa Palmas. Today, Costa Palmas is the setting for a Four Seasons Resort and Residences, as well as its newly announced Costa Palmas-branded offering Casa Blake.

“The area has the benefit of being accessible from the Los Cabos Airport, but set away from the bustle of Los Cabos,” says Ricardo Medina, senior director of marketing for Irongate. “In contrast to the dense crowds and development along the corridor on the east side of the peninsula, the west side still feels secluded and remote, reminiscent of how Los Cabos once was. Upon a first visit, home buyers and visitors are welcomed by the miles of

azure calm waters on the Sea of Cortez and immediately sense East Cape is a new take on Cabo.”

Wine Country Destination: Healdsburg, Calif.

California’s most widely recognized wine region is Napa Valley, its next most well-known Sonoma. But within the latter destination, the town of Healdsburg enjoys the distinction of being a bit more firmly under the radar than other settings. The character of Healdsburg is more one of bucolic village than mobbed metro.

The ultra-luxury Montage hotel brand’s opening of Montage Healdsburg two years ago brought to its 258 acres in the heart of Sonoma wine country 130 bungalow-style guest rooms and suites. Along with them came a collection of private Montage Residences, including 25 fully furnished Harvest Homes and 41 Estate Homesites to build your own wine country estate.

Meantime, the town of Healdsburg is not likely to stay a comparative secret for long. “While small in population, Healdsburg’s awareness continues to grow due to recent and upcoming hotel openings, high-profile restaurants, boutique shops and its small-town charm,” says Tallia Hart, chief executive officer at Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau. “Now more than ever, we’re attracting travelers who might have previously looked toward bigger wine country cities.”