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## GROUPS GET “SWEET” TREATMENT ON CALIFORNIA’S CENTRAL COAST

### **Santa Maria Valley Rustles Up Ranch and Agriculture Tours, Offers Online Tools and Complimentary Amenities to Groups**

*Santa Maria, CA*—Nestled between the Pacific shoreline and majestic vineyards on California's Central Coast, the Santa Maria Valley unfurls as a feast for the senses—and as a place where groups can kick up a good time at local farms and ranches.

Here, where fine wine, fresh strawberries and savory barbecue are found in abundance, the Santa Maria Valley Visitor Bureau offers a variety of online tools and personalized services that make it easy for groups to plan and enjoy a successful visit to the valley.

One such tool is a downloadable guide to Santa Maria Valley Ranch and Agriculture Tours, which helps groups plan visits to local farms, ranches and wineries. Related experiences include touring the wine caves at Cottonwood Canyon Vineyard & Winery; blacksmithing and Santa Maria Style Barbecue exhibitions at Rancho Miranda; and strawberry field tours at DB Specialty Farms.

The Santa Maria Valley is conveniently situated 200 miles north of Los Angeles, 300 miles south of San Francisco and 100 miles west of the southern Central Valley. Highway 101, Highway 166 and scenic coastal Highway 1 all converge in the valley.

More than 22,000 acres of wine grapes and strawberries are grown in the area, with a combined value of more than \$250 million. The wines and wineries of the Santa Maria Valley were recently showcased in the hit movie *Sideways*. Another local claim to fame is Santa Maria Style Barbecue, a local culinary tradition that *Sunset* magazine once called “the best barbecue in the world.” Santa Maria Style Barbecue, whose origins date back more than 150 years, can be savored at several local restaurants, including the Far Western Tavern, Hitching Post, Jocko’s and Shaw’s Steak House.

In addition to offering sample itineraries, group lodging and meeting information, and meeting planner resources online at [www.santamaria.com](http://www.santamaria.com), the bureau offers complimentary guest welcome bags, visitor orientation materials, customized itineraries, step-on guides, blank name badges for up to 1,000 event attendees, hands-on event planning assistance and more.

Popular group accommodations in the area include the Historic Santa Maria Inn ([www.santamariainn.com](http://www.santamariainn.com)); Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites ([www.holiday-inn.com](http://www.holiday-inn.com)); Radisson Hotel Santa Maria ([www.radisson.com](http://www.radisson.com)); and Best Western Big America ([www.bigamerica.com](http://www.bigamerica.com)).

The Santa Maria Valley also boasts pristine beaches, scenic drives, beautiful fairways and exquisitely mild weather. Indeed, it is no secret why the Santa Maria Valley is hailed as “California’s Sweet Spot.”

“We strive to give our signature ‘sweet’ treatment to every group that visits the Santa Maria Valley,” said Gina Keough, VCB manager.

For more information on group tours and lodging in the Santa Maria Valley, please contact Group Services Coordinator Megan Hale at (800) 331-3779, [megan@santamaria.com](mailto:megan@santamaria.com) or visit [www.santamaria.com](http://www.santamaria.com).