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## New Google visitor center just the place for Silicon Valley tourists

Besides being a glimpse into the valley, it's supporting artists in Mountain View and beyond



(Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

The Huddle area of the new Visitor Experience at Google on Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023, in Mountain View, Calif. Google opened a visitor center, cafe, and store at their campus along Shoreline Boulevard. (Aric Crabb/Bay Area News Group)

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By **SAL PIZARRO** | [spizarro@bayareanewsgroup.com](mailto:spizarro@bayareanewsgroup.com) | Bay Area News Group

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If you've ever had friends and family visit from out of town, you may have had to let them down easy when asked to "see Silicon Valley." You would drive around to tech campuses where they could see signs for places like eBay, Adobe, Nvidia or Netflix. It ain't like Hollywood, where at least there was a Universal Studios tour.

And that's one reason to be thankful for the opening this week of the new Google Visitor Experience, housed in the unique Gradient Canopy offices at the Mountain View company's campus. There's a plaza filled with Burning Man Project art, a 2,600-square foot gathering space called the Huddle that's like the best-designed living room in the house of your dreams (which can be booked by community groups for meetings) and a Google store that has everything from Pixel watches to Google 25th anniversary bucket hats.

Got an aunt visiting from Phoenix? No problem. Take her there for art, tech and food, all in one impressive space surrounded by trees. And it's close to the Computer History Museum, which makes for a great pairing. Admittedly, the Apple Park Visitor Center in Cupertino arrived on the scene first, but its biggest draw is the Apple Store there and those aren't hard to find. Google's store is its first brick-and-mortar location on the West Coast.

But what really sets the Google Visitor Experience apart is the emphasis on Mountain View and the surrounding Bay Area community. Oakland artist Miguel Arzabe, who creates woven art, was hosting hands-on artmaking workshops at the Huddle on Thursday and Friday, and he'll return to do the same later this month. Also in October, San Jose's MACLA gallery will have a screen printing workshop and the Local Color art collective will host both a painting activity and a button-making workshop.

And besides making your own art, you can support local artists, too. The Pop-Up Shop next to the Huddle is home to the Moment Marketplace, with the San Jose Made team showcasing locally designed and created goods. The theme for the first three months is “Tiny Objects,” with all sorts of little things like pins, stickers and cards, but that’ll switch up every quarter to something new.

While there are lots of events on the calendar, the first Community Day on the Plaza is Oct. 21 with food trucks, live music and artmaking activities going on from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can get details on that and other events at [visit.withgoogle.com](https://visit.withgoogle.com).

**BLESSED EVENT:** Testarossa Winery in Los Gatos celebrated the 136th harvest on Wednesday afternoon with its traditional “blessing of the grapes,” performed by Rev. Peter Pabst, chancellor of Cristo Rey San Jose Jesuit High School. Testarossa is on the site of the old Novitiate Winery, and Testarossa owners Rob and Diana Jensen have had a traditional blessing since they took over in 1997.

Following the ceremony, they hosted lunch for all the former students of the Novitiate of Los Gatos, as well as the residents and staff of the Sacred Heart Jesuit Center — and that included some clergy members who picked grapes there starting in the 1940s. Rob Jensen noted that Oct. 11, 1888 was the first harvest at the Novitiate Winery, so it was the perfect day for the celebration — not to mention it was also Diana Jensen’s birthday.

The only question we couldn’t answer was if wine from blessed grapes tastes better. It seemed it would take a lot of taste testing to determine, and there was no guarantee anyone would remember the answer afterward.

**HEARTFELT RETURN:** With all the tragedy going on in Israel, the Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival may certainly mean something more to festivalgoers than it does in other years when it opens Sunday at the ShowPlace ICON theater in Mountain View.

“In times like this, we need to come together as a community,” Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival Executive Director Tzvia Shelef said in an email to supporters, noting that it’s a unique opportunity to be grateful for Israeli cinema and its portrayal of life in Israel. “So as we come together in person, and watch movies at home, let’s as a community mourn with those who are mourning, pray for those who are healing, and thank those who are defending all that we love and value.”

The festival opens at 7 p.m. Sunday with “Remembering Gene Wilder,” a documentary about the memorable comic actor that will be followed by a Q&A with producers David Knight and Julie Nimoy and director Ron Frank, moderated by Jeff Applebaum (a funny guy in his own right). It continues through Oct. 29 with three more in-theater events at the Palo Alto JCC and the Mountain View ICON, as well as online screenings. Get all the details at [www.svjff.org](http://www.svjff.org).

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