

# EAST BAY TIMES

**Road Trip: A Santa Rosa getaway to the land of 'Peanuts'**

**By Mary Ladd, Correspondent**



Watching Charlie Brown and the Peanuts gang on TV is a joyful tradition, whether it involves Linus awaiting the Great Pumpkin or a certain very sad Christmas tree. The comics created by Charles “Sparky” Schulz helped us learn at a young age about life, love, friendships and kite-eating trees.

So it’s only fitting that Santa Rosa, Schulz’s hometown from 1969 until his death in 2000, continues that love affair with all things Snoopy. Just 50 miles north of San Francisco, the city makes a splendid weekend getaway, with a Schulz museum, an ice skating rink and enough Charlie Brown sightings to delight kids and grown-ups alike.

Start at the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center, which rocks a 22-foot tall black-and-white ceramic mural of Lucy famously holding the football for Charlie Brown. Made by Japanese artist Yoshiateru Otani with tiles depicting 3,588 comic strips, it’s a breathtaking and fascinating trip down memory lane and a reminder of Sparky’s prolific output.

Schulz's workspace has been re-created here, right down to his worn drawing board and desk. You'll find Christo's wrapped Snoopy dog house here, too. Schulz, a longtime fan of the artist and his wife Jeanne-Claude, first depicted the artist in a 1978 strip. And special exhibits run the whimsical gamut. Snoopy's literary career is explored in the current "It was a Dark and Stormy Night" (through Sept. 10), while a health exhibit dips into the comics characters' lazy eyes, injured elbows, depression and sports injuries — from football, jogging, tennis and, yes, ice sports.

Don't miss the Snoopy Labyrinth in front of the museum, to the right of the entrance. Then head next door for a spin on the Snoopy's Home Ice skating rink located in a Swiss chalet. It's a sweet way to get the blood pumping. Warm up via hot cocoa (including a Peppermint Patty version) and a pulled pork sandwich from the Warm Puppy cafe. Check out Sparky's favorite table, where he ate tuna on wheat daily during the work week and visited with his skate-happy kids on weekends.

Adding to the fun, the entire city is one giant "spot-the-character" game. There are 70 colorful Peanuts statues — most of them five feet tall and made of bronze or fiberglass — scattered across town, from the Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport to the vintage Flamingo resort. The lineup includes Charlie Brown, Linus, Lucy and, of course, Snoopy — great selfie opportunities for all.

The Flamingo resort offers Snoopy sightings, as well as heated swimming pools and midcentury modern rooms (which welcome Snoopy's canine cousins with a \$50 pet fee). For a slightly posher (and quieter) night's sleep, the Vintners Inn sits on 98 acres of land, and its John Ash & Co. restaurant offers legit wine country fare.

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Pay homage to Schroeder by nabbing tickets to a Beethoven recital at Sonoma State's world-class Schroeder Hall. It's part of the fabulous Green Music Center in nearby Rohnert Park — and the name is no coincidence. Jean and Charles Schulz's philanthropy extends to other college buildings, as well.

Schulz may have been known for his allegiance to the Warm Puppy Cafe — and it is very fun, indeed. But may we suggest that you discuss your favorite Schulz findings over juicy beef sliders and cheese curds at the Bird & the Bottle? The food is inspired by Asian, Jewish and American Southern cuisine, interpreted by James Beard nominees Mark and Terri Stark. Anything on the menu at the ever-creative Spinster Sisters eatery in the charming SOFA arts district is a good call. And the freshly made pastries and sandwiches over at the year-old Pharmacy, built in a renovated drugstore, will quiet any rumbling tummies.

On your way out of town, don't be surprised if you catch one last Snoopy, Linus or Charlie Brown statue in that rearview mirror.

### **If You Go**

Santa Rosa and the Peanuts statues: Find more information about Santa Rosa's charms via its visitors website ([visitsantarosa.com](http://visitsantarosa.com)). Download a handy guide to the 70 Peanuts statues situated around town at [bit.ly/2knvk1Z](http://bit.ly/2knvk1Z).

Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center: Open from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. on weekdays (closed Tuesdays) and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on weekends. The Snoopy-centric "It was a Dark and Stormy Night" exhibit runs through Sept. 10. 2301 Hardies Lane, Santa Rosa. Admission is \$5-\$10. Free for children under 3. Details: [schulzmuseum.org](http://schulzmuseum.org)

Snoopy's Home Ice and Warm Puppy Cafe: The Warm Puppy Cafe opens at 9 a.m. daily. Public skating hours vary for the ice rink — which is also known as the Redwood Empire Ice Arena. Check the website ([www.snoopyshomeice.com](http://www.snoopyshomeice.com)) or call 707-546-7147 for the daily schedule. Skating is \$7.50-\$9.50, plus \$3.50 for skate rental. 1667 W. Steele Lane, Santa Rosa

Schroeder Hall: Part of Sonoma State's Green Music Center, this recital hall hosts concerts and film screenings throughout the year. 1801 E. Cotati Ave., Rohnert Park; [gmc.sonoma.edu](http://gmc.sonoma.edu)

### **Sleep**

Flamingo Conference Resort and Spa: Rooms start at \$108. 2777 Fourth St., Santa Rosa; [www.flamingoresort.com](http://www.flamingoresort.com)

The Vintners Inn: Rooms start at \$234. 4350 Barnes Road, Santa Rosa; [www.vintnersinn.com/](http://www.vintnersinn.com/)

### **Eat**

Bird & The Bottle: Open daily for lunch and dinner at 1055 Fourth St., Santa Rosa; [www.birdandthebottle.com](http://www.birdandthebottle.com).

The Spinster Sisters: Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner at 401 S. A St., Santa Rosa; [thespinstersisters.com](http://thespinstersisters.com).

The Pharmacy: Open daily for breakfast and lunch at 990 Sonoma Ave. #1, Santa Rosa; [www.thepharmacysonomacounty.com](http://www.thepharmacysonomacounty.com).

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