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Wine Tasting in Santa Ynez

Santa Barbara, Ballard, Santa Ynez Valley, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Indulge in the Santa Ynez Valley wine region with a tour through vineyards and tasting rooms nestled in the area's bucolic scenery. Pamper yourself with a night's rest and a spa treatment at Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa, and fuel up with hearty eats at valley haunts.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Santa Barbara, Ballard, Santa Ynez Valley

DAY NOTE: Roll into Los Olivos for a cozy stay and spa treatment at Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa; then kick off a day of wine tasting with a hearty short stack breakfast at Paula's Pancake House in Solvang. Oak-lined roads lead you to vineyards and tasting rooms where you can sample the region's famous varietals. Be sure to break up wine tastings with a Mexican lunch at San Ynez Carlito's and dinner at the famous Mattei's Tavern.

	Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa
	Paula's Pancake House
	Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard
	Zaca Mesa Winery
	Carlito's Cava Restaurant & Bar Mexican Meal
	The Gainey Vineyard
	Sunstone Vineyards and Winery
	Brothers Restaurant at Mattei's Tavern

Day 1 - Santa Barbara, Ballard, Santa Ynez Valley

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Roll into Los Olivos for a cozy stay and spa treatment at Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa, then kick off a day of wine tasting with a hearty short stack breakfast at Paula's Pancake House in Solvang. Oak-lined roads lead you to vineyards and tasting rooms where you can sample the region's famous varietals. Be sure to break up wine tastings with a Mexican lunch at San Ynez Carlito's and dinner at the famous Mattei's Tavern.

contact:

tel: 800/446-2455

fax: 805/688-1942

www.fessparker.com

location:

2860 Grand Ave

Los Olivos CA 93441

1 Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn & Spa

DESCRIPTION: Yes, that Fess Parker -- Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, both. But when he's not playing pioneer legends, he's a big local developer. This sprawling eponymous inn is a deep lap of luxury, with each room uniquely decorated by "Mrs. Marcy Parker" herself. The rooms are certainly pristine and comfortable, and each comes with a fireplace and cushy beds with down comforters. Other welcoming perks include a complimentary full American breakfast, a bottle of Fess Parker wine upon arrival, and a free wine tasting for two at two local tasting rooms. There is also a full spa, a pool, and Jacuzzi. And if you haven't already, buy property in these parts -- this region is exploding. © Frommer's

contact:

tel: 805/688-2867

location:

1531 Mission Dr

Solvang CA 93463

hours:

Daily 6am-3pm

2 Paula's Pancake House

DESCRIPTION: Morning means one thing in Solvang -- Paula's three-page menu of breakfast treats. Paula's is friendly and casual, in the heart of town where patio diners can watch the world go by. So, should we order the wafer-thin Danish pancakes served plain and simple or sweet and fruity? Better include some sausage and eggs with that, and a side of buttermilk pancakes. No, make that a side of whole-wheat honey pancakes, a waffle, and sourdough French toast. Hmm, an omelet sounds pretty good too. More coffee, please. © Frommer's



kirinqueen

contact:

tel: 800/841-1104

http://www.fessparker.com

location:

6200 Foxen Canyon Rd

Los Olivos CA 93441

hours:

Tastings daily 10am-5pm;

tours daily at 11am, 1pm, and

3pm

3 Fess Parker Winery & Vineyard

DESCRIPTION: You loved him as a child, now see what Hollywood's Davy Crockett/Daniel Boone is up to. Fess Parker has made a name for himself in Santa Barbara County, with resort hotels, cattle ranches, and now an eponymous winery that's turning out some critically acclaimed Syrahs, among other varietals. Look for the Syrah and chardonnay American Tradition Reserve vintages in the tasting room. Parker's grandiose complex, shaded by the largest oak tree I've ever seen, also features picnic tables on a terrace and an extensive gift shop where you can even buy (you guessed it) coonskin caps. © Frommer's



br7tt

contact:
tel: 805/688-9339
<http://www.zacamesa.com>

location:
6905 Foxen Canyon Rd
Los Olivos CA 93441

hours:
Daily 10am-4pm (until 5pm
Fri-Sat); call for tour schedule

4 Zaca Mesa Winery

DESCRIPTION: One of the region's old-timers, Zaca Mesa has been in business since 1972, so one can forgive the hippie/New Age mumbo-jumbo pleasantly interwoven with the well-honed vintages. Situated on a unique plateau that the Spanish named la zaca mesa (the restful place), this winery's 750 acres are uniquely beautiful, with two easy nature trails for visitors. You'll also find picnic tables and a giant lawn chessboard. Inside, look for the usual Syrah and chardonnay offerings jazzed up with experimental Rhone varietals such as grenache, roussanne, and viognier. © Frommer's



Zaca Mesa Winery

contact:
tel: +1 805 969 8500

location:
1212 Coast Village Road
Santa Barbara CA 93108

5 Carlito's Cava Restaurant & Bar

DESCRIPTION: Carlito's offers authentic and mouth-watering tacos, burritos, enchiladas and fajitas, in a cozy and laid-back atmosphere. Spanish delights also feature on the menu. Chill out in the quiet and calm surroundings of the inside restaurant or choose to enjoy the outdoor seating. For all those music lovers who like to listen to some melodies as they dine, a local artiste plays the guitar everyday. Reservations are recommended. © wcities.com

contact:
tel: 888/424-6398
<http://www.gaineyvineyard.com>

location:
3950 E. Hwy. 246
Santa Ynez CA 93460

hours:
Tastings daily 10am-5pm;
tours daily 11am and 1, 2, and
3pm

6 The Gainey Vineyard

DESCRIPTION: This slick operation is one of the most visited wineries in the valley, thanks to its prime location on Highway 246 and its in-depth tours, offered daily. It has every hallmark of a visitor-oriented winery: a terra-cotta-tiled tasting room, plenty of logo merchandise, and a deli case for impromptu lunches at the picnic tables in a secluded vineyard garden. It bottles the most popular varietals -- chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir, sauvignon blanc -- and offers them at moderate prices. © Frommer's



lunita lu

contact:
tel: 800/313-WINE
<http://www.sunstonewinery.com>

location:
125 Refugio Rd
Santa Ynez CA 93460

hours:
Tastings daily 10am-4:30pm

7 Sunstone Vineyards and Winery

DESCRIPTION: Take a rambling drive down to this locally known winery, whose wisteria-wrapped stone tasting room belies the dirt road you take to reach it. Sunstone sits in an oak grove overlooking the river, boasting a splendid view from the lavender-fringed picnic courtyard. Inside, try its flagship merlot or treasured reserve vintages; there's also a fine selection of gourmet foods, logo ware, and cigars. The pretty setting and attractive tasting room, combined with excellent products, make this a quintessentially enjoyable wine-touring experience. © Frommer's



nicadlr

contact:

tel: 805/688-4820

<http://www.matteistavern.com>

location:

2350 Railway Ave
Los Olivos CA 93441

hours:

Daily 5-9pm; bar open daily
from 4pm

8 Brothers Restaurant at Mattei's Tavern

DESCRIPTION: Mattei's is proud of its stagecoach past. Built in 1886 by Swiss-born Felix Mattei to service waiting stagecoach passengers, the tavern remained in business until 1914 when the Model-A Ford put the coaches out of business. Rumors abound of high-stakes poker games in Mattei's back room, where many an early rancher literally "lost the farm." As soon as you step inside this rambling white Victorian submerged in wisteria you'll be impressed by how successfully it has retained its historic charm. The restaurant is known throughout the county for its signature reduction sauces and house-made ice cream. You'll find thick steaks on the menu, along with honey-glazed Iowa pork chops, prime rib with garlic mashed potatoes, and Australian lobster tail. Bust a pant button with the sinful fudge brownie sundae with banana ice cream, and then saddle up and mosey along. © Frommer's



Mattei's Tavern

Santa Barbara Snapshot

Local Info

Situated along an east-west section of the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Ynez Mountains, Santa Barbara stretches from pristine south-facing shores to the rugged San Rafael Wilderness Area. Known for its creative and diverse population of free-thinking hippies, dedicated farmers, surfing cowboys, inspired artists, discreet celebs, fabled eccentrics, and students from all over the world, this town was built upon the dreams of an industrious bunch—a requisite trait needed to come up with ways to afford the seaside enclave's ever increasing cost of living. But whether dwelling high on the hog in the coveted Hope Ranch, Riviera, and Montecito neighborhoods, or in a modest pad on the westside of State Street, north in Goleta, or on the breezy Mesa, Santa Barbara residents love their town and it's evident in the city's boisterous festivals. The annual Summer Solstice Celebration is a pagan paradise, Old Spanish Days Fiesta is a nod to the city's roots, and Earth Day began in town as a response to the area's devastating 1969 oil spill. In between festivals you can always count on weekly farmers markets to bring together chefs, shoppers, and the soil-tilling growers in the community—including winemakers from the renowned Santa Ynez Valley grape-growing region, and ranchers who work the same land founded by the city's earliest Spanish inhabitants.

With Brooks Institute of Photography, Santa Barbara City College, University of California Santa Barbara, and Westmont College within a stone's throw of each other, heaps of students frequent State Street's quaint coffee shops, bookstores, restaurants, music venues, and of course, the many clubs and bars that come alive at night. But not all of the city's favorite

haunts are reserved for student life; locals favor off the beaten path pubs, cafes, and wine bars that serve up Central Coast vintages, creative farmers market inspired dishes and cocktails, and live music. The legendary Santa Barbara Bowl is an intimate amphitheater nestled into a neighborhood hillside and draws big names to the stage, including well-known music makers that call the county home—think David Crosby, Jack Johnson, and Kenny Loggins. Historic downtown theaters including the Arlington and the recently refurbished Granada host dance and theater companies, comedians, authors, politicians, and more, who are wooed by UCSB's celebrated Arts & Lectures program.

The intrepid traveler will be glad to know that outdoor adventures are also on the menu in Santa Barbara. Hiking, mountain biking, and rock climbing are favorite activities in the Santa Ynez Mountains, while Pacific waters are prime for surfing, stand up paddling, kayaking, diving, and more. The mountains are a few miles from the heart of town and offer everything from short day hikes and bike rides, to multi-day backpacking trips. Famed wave riders Kelly Slater and Bobby Martinez have been known to ride local point breaks, but plenty of nearby waves are slow and safe for beginners. If you'd rather enjoy a dry day on the water, charter a sailboat from the Santa Barbara Sailing Center or head to the harbor and hop on a water taxi for a sunset cruise. Of course, you can always get your aquatic fix with a stroll along the shore and fish'n' chips from Harbor haunts Brophy Bros. and Longboards, or even on the sand at Shoreline Beach Cafe.

If shopping and eating are your main concern, look no further than downtown's State Street—home to boutiques, cafes, and bookstores. Pick up Santa Barbara

styles at local shops such as Wendy Foster and Blue Bee, or hit the bigger department stores in Paseo Nuevo—a mall of cobble stone pathways that lead to a movie theater, restaurants, salons, and more. To indulge in the city's gastronomic delights, stay on State Street for authentic Italian cuisine and wine on tap at Palazzo, or walk a few blocks off State for melt-in-your-mouth butternut squash ravioli with sage butter sauce at family-owned Ca Dario. With the city's strong Latin roots, you can count on epic Mexican eats at Carlitos Cafe and Cantina and Los Arroyos, and Argentinian treats and flamenco dancing at Cafe Buenos Aires. Local fish and California fare (think salads and anything with avocado) are also around every corner—The Hungry Cat serves up the freshest fish and imaginative cocktails, and Milk & Honey specializes in wine and tapas. If you dare to venture away from downtown, you'll find fabled haunts that have been serving Santa Barbara for decades. Arnoldi's is a classic Italian eatery with fierce bocce ball tournaments out back, and Harry's has served its hearty sandwiches and cocktails to everyone from Robert Mitchum to Bo Derek. Once the lights go down, dusty pubs, sleek bars, and live music venues open for business around State Street. Since 1928, Joe's Cafe has maintained its reputation for the stiffest drinks around, while across the street the James Joyce is known for big band tunes, peanut husk-covered floors, and Santa Barbara Blondes (by the pint and on the dance floor).

From historic watering holes, fine dining, wild nightlife, and rootsy bands to notable landmarks and adventure on both land and sea, Santa Barbara has a little something for everyone.

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Santa Ynez Valley Snapshot

Local Info

Located between the Santa Ynez Mountains and the San Rafael Mountains in Santa Barbara County, Santa Ynez Valley includes the communities of Ballard, Buellton, Los Olivos, Solvang, and Santa Ynez. For a small community with about 20,000 residents, "the valley" (as locals refer to it) has a lot to offer—hiking, biking, shopping, and of course, wine tasting to name a few. The wine-fueled film *Sideways* was shot on location in the area, and many visitors come to town to tour the actual sites of the movie—the Buellton Days Inn, the Hitching Post, and Alma Rosa Winery tasting room are key spots along the trail. But if you're heading to Santa Ynez, there is a lot more to explore than its moment in the Hollywood sun.

Solvang is a Danish word meaning "sunny fields," and it lives up to its name. The town was founded in 1911 by a group of Danes who sought a temperate climate away from harsh Midwest winters. Danish architecture, bakeries, restaurants, tasting rooms, and shops (yes, you can find wooden footwear here) dot the quaint streets and hearken back to another time... and country. Of all the Valley communities, tourists descend on Solvang—especially in the summer--

but that doesn't take from the charm of the place. Hadsten House and Hotel Corque both steer clear from kitsch with modern lodging in town, while The Alisal Guest Ranch and Resort is a tranquil, off the beaten path hideaway, which has beckoned horseback riders, anglers, and golfers since 1946.

Nearby Los Olivos is a small town of only 1,000 residents, but don't be fooled by its size—impressive food, wine, and shops can be found downtown. Fess Parker Wine Country Inn & Spa provides cozy rooms, indulgent spa treatments, and delectable Greek fare at its Petros Los Olivos Restaurant. A hop down the street you'll find wineries and shops to peruse. Grab a sandwich at Panino (chicken curry salad with balsamic dressing is only one of this spot's delectable offerings) then head across the street to Saarloos & Sons winery to indulge in a wine paired with cupcakes. If you want to be a part of the dusty, Old West feel of Santa Ynez, stop into Jedlicka's western wear shop—which has outfitted the town's cowboys and girls since 1932. Down the street you'll find handmade jewelry at Waxing Poetic. Located in an refurbished Victorian, it's the latest addition to the Los Olivos' handful of shops.

You simply cannot visit wine country without a walk through a vineyard and a few stops in the area's many tasting rooms. You can pick up a map and wind past oak groves and horse pastures stopping in to wineries along the way, or call a tour company to whisk you to choice spots. Sustainable Vine Wine Tours takes oenophiles to organic and biodynamic wineries, with a stop for organic sandwiches at a vineyard that produces grapes for Ampelos Cellars. Whatever way you decide to tour wine country, Firestone, Fess Parker, Rusack, and Sunstone are only a few of the hundreds of vineyards that make Santa Ynez famous.

When you've had enough wine, take a hike to Figueroa Mountain, known for its abundance of wildflowers, usually in bloom from February until April. For a different view of the Valley, hike, swim, and stay a night at Zaca Lake, a rustic getaway with a storied—if not spooky—past. The camping crowd who want a spot less off the radar than Zaca are welcome to Lake Cachuma, a popular destination for families.

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