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star5112

Napa & Sonoma. A Joie de Vivre Guide

Sonoma, Napa Valley, 1 Day

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: While it is true that this area is now a major tourist attraction and may be annoyingly crowded, the quality and quantity of wines, interesting restaurants, and spectacular scenery still make this a must-see of the Bay Area. Summer and fall are the most popular times to visit, but head to the valley in winter to find a pleasant retreat of empty tasting rooms and clear, crisp days.

The 'other valley', according to Napa natives, Sonoma is more spread out and can be challenging to navigate and find the hidden treasures. Sonoma County covers the area from the town of Sonoma northwest to Geyserville, with Glen Ellen, Kenwood, Santa Rosa and the Carneros District in between. There are wineries dotting the entire county.

http://www.jdvhotels.com/files/Image/4367/GaigeHouse_woodsidesuite_high.jpg

Itinerary Overview

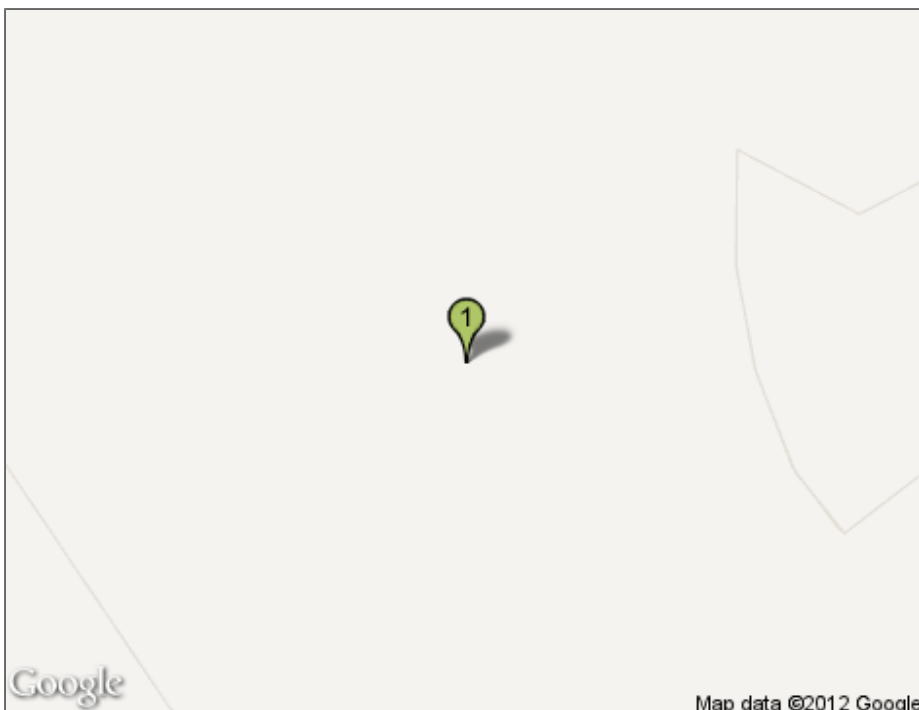
things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Napa Valley



Hess Collection Winery
Art Extraordinaire & Wine Too

Day 1 - Napa Valley



QUICK NOTE

contact:

tel: +1 707 255 8584 / +1 707 255 1144

fax: +1 707 253 1682

<http://www.hesscollection.com/>

location:

4411 Redwood Rd
Napa CA 94558

hours:

Daily 10am-5pm, except
some holidays

1 Hess Collection Winery

DESCRIPTION: Tucked into the hillside of rural Mount Veeder, this winery brings art and wine together like no other destination in the valley. Swiss art collector Donald Hess is behind the 1978 transformation of the Christian Brothers' 1903 property into a winery/art gallery exhibiting huge, colorful works by the likes of Frank Stella, Francis Bacon, and Andy Goldsworthy. A free self-guided tour leads through the collection and offers glimpses through tiny windows into the winemaking facilities. Newer guided tours and food and wine pairings, which include four to six wines and seasonal noshes, are available by appointment only Thursday through Saturday for \$35 to \$50 per person. But you can drop by the tasting room anytime, pay \$10, and sample the current Cabernet and Chardonnay plus one other featured wine; \$15 to \$20 gets you a reserve tasting. Current-release bottles start at \$22 and top off at around \$120. © Frommer's

MY NOTE: In addition to fine wines, this winery houses one of the most spectacular private collections of contemporary art in California. The Hess Select Chardonnay is a good reason to visit, too. A small fee is charged to taste their Cab, Chardonnay, and one other wine.



Photo courtesy of Hess Collection Winery

My List

contact:

tel: +1 707 938 5277
fax: +1 707 938 9460
<http://www.gunbun.com/>

location:

2000 Denmark Street
Sonoma CA 95476

1 Gundlach Bundschu Winery

DESCRIPTION: Gundlach Bundschu Winery's story springs in 1850s and continues to move forward with its wines and entertaining events. The lush green slopes of the vineyard is interrupted only by the walking tracks winding through the yard. Join them for the wine tasting sessions at this beautiful location. Touring their estate is a fun, especially those eerie caves in the hills. Call the winery and reserve yourself a place on the tour. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: What could be a better value than this? A free self guided tour via tram, free tastings, and scenic picnic spots. Tickets are given out on a first come, first served basis each morning. Call for daily tour times. Tastings are daily 10-5:30p.m.



Photo courtesy of Gundlach Bundschu Winery

contact:

tel: +1 707 935 4700
fax: +1 707 935 4731
<http://www.viansa.com/>

location:

25200 Arnold Drive
Sonoma CA 95476

hours:

Daily 10a-5p

2 Viansa Winery

DESCRIPTION: Viansa is a premier destination wine and food pairings. The winery retails lesser-known varietals of Aleatico and Primitivo apart from the usual Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc varieties. The on-site marketplace vends wine accessories and gift baskets and doubles as a gourmet deli for salsas and vinegars. Tuscan Club members avail invites to private events, complimentary tastings, discounts, private tours, access to limited edition releases. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: This Carneros District winery is at the very beginning of Sonoma Valley, and sits atop a knoll off the highway. This complex includes a marketplace offering a variety of gifts and foods. A counter inside the market offers free tastings. Open daily 10-5p.m. in winter, and 10-6pm. in the summer.



Photo courtesy of Viansa Winery

contact:

tel: 707- 935 5994
www.cafelahaye.com

location:

140 East Napa Street
Sonoma CA 95476

hours:

Tu-Sa 5:30p-9p

3 Cafe La Haye

DESCRIPTION: Seared black pepper-lavender filet mignon, chicken breast with goat cheese and herb stuffing, steamed mussels with fennel and garlic broth...Sounds mouth-watering? Then head to the Cafe La Haye at Sonoma since that's what's on the menu here. Sumptuous food, experienced staff and a tranquil atmosphere adds to your dining experience. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: This relatively undiscovered storefront eatery is a good choice for a casual dinner. The teeny-tiny kitchen turns out great dishes like house-smoked salmon with potato pancakes, and grilled steak perfumed with lavender. Also open for weekend brunch.



contact:

tel: 707- 935 0576

fax: 707- 933 0737

<http://www.dellasantinas.com/>

location:

133 East Napa Street
Sonoma CA 95476

hours:

Daily 11:30a-3p, 5p-9:30p

4 Della Santina's

DESCRIPTION: Della Santina's offers the best of pastas, rotisserie meats and other dishes from the Italian cuisine. The tables are neatly placed, with comfortable seating, and decorated with the best flowers, which has become a hallmark of the restaurant. The dining hall is spacious and offers a good view of the street. For more privacy, you can also sit on the back patio. This restaurant also has a garden which is available for corporate functions, cocktail parties and banquets. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: Friendly service, a comfortable setting, and traditional Italian dishes are a few reasons why this is a favorite for lunch or dinner. The garden patio is great on a warm day.



contact:

tel: 707- 938 3634

fax: 707- 938 2064

<http://www.thegirlandthefig.com>

location:

110 West Spain Street
Sonoma CA 95476

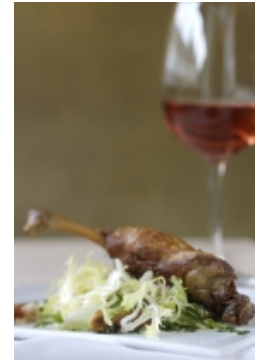
hours:

M-Th 11:30a-10p, F-Sa
11:30a-11p, Su 11:30a-10p

5 girl and the fig (the)

DESCRIPTION: On the ground level of Sonoma Hotel, The Girl and the Fig offers eclectic French cuisine. The decor is casual and laid back and can get loud when the crowd streams in. Braised pork loin, steak tartare, duck confit, croque monsieur, pan seared duck, salami and brie sandwich, niman ranch jambon, salmon nicoise and homemade fig cake are some of the menu listings. Moreover, the bar has a great selection of French wines and cocktails. Reservations are the way to go. © wcities.com

MY NOTE: This hip eatery in the Sonoma Hotel serves nouveau country French dishes, many of which do use figs. This décor is chic and quirky and prices are reasonable. The wine list consists only of wines made from Rhone grapes. Dinner is served daily, and brunch on Sunday.



Sonoma Snapshot

Local Info

Known to locals as the "real wine country," Sonoma County has fewer tourists and at least as many working farms and wineries as Napa, giving it more the sense of a country getaway. Towns at the southern end of the county, just 45 minutes north of San Francisco are close enough for day trips or weekends, while the northern end of the county maintains a rugged remoteness perfect for getting away from it all. Laid-back and back to nature are the key concepts in Sonoma; with an incredible rock-studded coastline to the west and the Russian River making lazy Z-curves through the valley, there are endless opportunities for hiking, biking, beachcombing, and water sports of all kinds.

Epicurean culture is rooted in the rich soil that has yielded world-class wines and fresh produce for generations. Wine is a way of life in "Slow-noma," birthplace of the California wine industry and home to over 250 wineries. Family-run wineries and intimate tasting rooms abound visitors eager to drink in Sonoma's offerings. Local produce fills the many restaurants, which showcase superb California cuisine in elegant-yet-casual settings. A resort destination for over 100 years, hot springs await, and luxury resorts and spas are prepared to pamper. Sonoma County captures the natural diversity of Northern California with its fertile farmlands, rolling vineyards, redwood reserves and ruggedly beautiful coastline, and features outdoor activities such as golfing, kayaking, hiking and cycling. But even as its tourism grows, Sonoma County retains its small-town approachability and historical charm. An ideal getaway destination, Sonoma gives the perfect taste of Northern California living.

Sonoma

The city of Sonoma is the historical heart of Sonoma County and serves as a great base from which to explore Sonoma Valley. Sonoma welcomes visitors with its small-town charm and first-class amenities. Despite its recent growth and rediscovery as tourist center, Sonoma remains a laid-back and more affordable alternative to its neighbor Napa. At the city's center lays the leafy and tranquil Sonoma Plaza, a national historical landmark lined with hotels,

restaurants and quaint shops. Sonoma Plaza hosts several festivals every year, including the Valley of the Moon Festival, a Sonoma tradition for over 100 years. Wine tasting rooms and artisan food markets can be found throughout the city, while natural thermal waters can be enjoyed at nearby Boyes Hot Springs, original home to Sonoma's tourist industry.

Healdsburg

In northern Sonoma County, Healdsburg is a quainter, more upscale version of Sonoma, with every shop, restaurant and service you could need to indulge your "weekend in the country" fantasy. Once the working heart of Sonoma's wine culture, today Healdsburg is packed with acclaimed and luxury bed-and-breakfasts.

Three wine appellations converge near Healdsburg, making the area rife with lauded wineries and that low-key wine-country lifestyle. Nearby Alexander Valley is Sonoma wine country's most densely planted area, famous for its Zinfandels and signature Cabernets. Whether you prefer the elegant Francophile dining experience of Cyrus, the hip, happening feeling of Cafe Zin, or the locavore artisanal indulgence of Barndiva, devoted foodies will find a critically acclaimed restaurant to their taste.

Lodging options include the warm hospitality of Honor Mansion, the romantic indulgence of Hotel Healdsburg, with its resort-like spa and pool, and-- the newest arrival-- the quaint farmstay atmosphere of Healdsburg Modern Cottages, brought to you by the artsy collective that runs Barndiva. For the outdoorsy, hiking and biking options are aplenty, while the nearby Russian River makes a picturesque setting for kayaking and inner-tubing.

Guerneville

Nestled along the Russian River, Guerneville is a popular day-trip destination for Bay Area families. The town's small beach rents paddle boats, kayaks and inner tubes, and also makes for fun splashing around. Riverside redwood reserves keep the area cool and shaded during the hot summer months. Home to many ex-urbanites, Guerneville is also known for its environmental and gay activism.

Petaluma

One of Sonoma County's larger cities, Petaluma boasts a picturesque historical downtown of restored 18th-century buildings filled with antique shops and restaurants. Although Petaluma is largely a quiet residential city, it does offer some of the area's best nightlife options. Both housed in historical buildings, McNear's Mystic Theater and the Phoenix Theater attract some of the biggest musical acts the North Bay sees. You can also play pool or karaoke at one of the many bars and pubs.

Santa Rosa

Sonoma County's biggest city, Santa Rosa is a wealthy community full of bustle and traffic jams. Three shopping districts offer everything from brand-name apparel to local art, while historical residential neighborhoods offer a glimpse into Santa Rosa's small-town past. Reasonably priced rooms can be found in Santa Rosa, in name hotels such as Hilton, Holiday Inn and Best Western. Families enjoy Santa Rosa's many kid-(and adult) friendly activities, from an ice-skating rink to Safari West, a safari-style African wildlife reserve. Comic lovers will have to make a stop at the Charles M. Schulz Museum for all things Peanuts.

Bodega Bay/Sonoma Coast

The Sonoma Coast showcases some of Northern California's most breathtaking views. Cliffs dramatically descend into the crashing Pacific surf along legendary Highway 1; take in the stunning views on a coastal hike or drive. The largest destination along the Sonoma Coast is Bodega Bay, a working-class fishing town that swells with tourists in the summer months. The town was the location for Alfred Hitchcock's horror film *The Birds*. But with luxury resorts like Bodega Bay Lodge & Spa, you have nothing to be afraid of.

Sonoma County's mild Mediterranean climate makes visiting enjoyable at any time of year. High season begins in April and runs through the summer, when many food, wine and cultural festivals take place. You'll encounter the greatest crowds during Harvest Season, or "Crush," as locals call it. The Sonoma wine country swells during this time, although the crowds are still less than in neighboring Napa County. If you are at all interested in wine and wine production, this is the best time of year to visit. Winter affords great deals

Sonoma Snapshot continued

and less crowds, though outdoor activities are limited. Weekdays are generally less

busy all times of the year, as Sonoma is a popular weekend destination for San Francisco Bay Area residents.

© NileGuide

Napa Valley Snapshot

Local Info

Napa Valley attracts some 5 million visitors each year, and for good reason. Located 50 miles north of San Francisco, Napa Valley is one of the world's premier wine-growing regions, home to picturesque small towns filled with foodie-fave restaurants, wellness spas, award-winning golf courses, artisan-oriented shops, and beautiful open spaces offering hiking adventures and ridgetop views...What's not to love?

Napa

The city of Napa is the largest of Napa Valley's communities, yet downtown Napa retains the feel of a quiet country town. While quite a few mansions and large estates rest back against the hill, Napa tends to be a friendly, down-to-earth town with a refreshingly unpretentious personality. In every season, the farms and wineries dotting the valley make a glorious setting for bike rides and country drives.

Napa's history as the center of the valley's Italian heritage is reflected in a variety of top-quality Italian restaurants. The valley's Hispanic population leaves its culinary mark as well; no drive down Soscol is complete without a quick bite to eat at one of the town's famous beloved taco trucks. The Carneros area on Napa's south side, prized by aficionados for its Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays, now features a slew of hip new inns and restaurants. And the revitalized riverfront area is a mecca for hopping bars and lively galleries.

The commercial center, known as the "Old Town" district, bustles with retail stores and boutique wine shops like Bounty Hunter Rare Wine and Provisions. "Old Town" provides casual dining options like ZuZu, a popular tapas restaurant with tons of local color, literally: most of the artwork featured is from Napa Valley artists.

Yountville

Yountville is far closer to the popular Falcon Crest image of Napa Valley, retaining as it does the quaint charm a small, country town. Less populous and more gentrified than the city of Napa, there are also a lot of grapes growing here. You may see the vineyards first, strangely enough, as a bright, metallic twinkle: growers use reflective foil to scare away grape-eating birds. Yountville, however is perhaps

most famous for first-class dining: French Laundry, Bistro Jeanty, Bouchon, and Ad Hoc are clustered right here. Nationally famed, these establishments are happily embraced by San Franciscans as an integral part of the Bay Area restaurant culture, but clearly, they and Yountville stand on their own (and standing is indeed what you will do if you don't make a reservation weeks in advance). In 2007, the inaugural year of the Michelin Guide to San Francisco, Bay Area & Wine Country, several Yountville restaurants were awarded Michelin Stars.

Oakville

By this point, one has entered the heart of Napa Valley: Wine production. Robert Mondavi, one of the titans of California wine, is headquartered in Oakville. Other, smaller wineries can be seen on both sides of the valley, though the premium cellars seem to be on the west side. While tiny Oakville has a post office, it's really an unincorporated part of Napa County, best known for the Oakville Grocery, a legendary roadside delicatessen stocked with a mind-boggling array of gourmet delights from France, Italy, and their own kitchens. As with other spots throughout the valley, one is likely to be greeted in the early spring by a waving sea of yellow under sparse vineyards: growers often plant mustard underneath grapevines.

Rutherford

Microscopic Rutherford is home to Beaulieu Vineyards, Rutherford Grove, Rutherford Hill, and St. Supery Vineyards & Winery. Take in Napa's landscape with a chilled bottle of sparkling wine in Mumm's outdoor terrace. Francis Ford Coppola's Niebaum-Coppola Estate, generally mobbed with tourists, features memorabilia from his career in cinema. Rutherford is also a fine place to eat: Restaurant at Auberge du Soleil and La Toque are two exceptional Napa Valley restaurants.

St. Helena

With its rows of historic stone and beam storefronts and perfectly restored Victorians, downtown St. Helena looks much it did in the early 1900s. Off the main street, cottage gardens are tucked between elegant bed and breakfasts in historic mansions, while elegant boutique

hotels surround fountain-bedecked quiet courtyards. The Silverado Museum hosts an exhibit of Robert Louis Stevenson ephemera. Fans of ghost story writer and misanthrope Ambrose Bierce will want to stay at the Ambrose Bierce House, now a bed and breakfast. St. Helena is also home to the Beringer Vineyards, a popular tasting destination.

The Culinary Institute of America at Greystone is hidden in the vineyards of St. Helena. The CIA is a master's level training center for working, certified chefs. It's situated in the former home of the Christian Brothers winery, an awe-striking, three-story, 101-year-old building that housed generations of winemaking friars. Take a look at some of the history exhibits inside, and don't miss Brother Timothy's 1800-piece corkscrew collection. The CIA gives cooking demonstrations in their fully equipped teaching theater. Then enjoy the sights at the outdoor terrace of Wine Spectator Greystone Restaurant.

Calistoga

Calistoga is famous for the hot springs that bubble out of the geyser-studded northern end of the valley, and the mineral-infused mud that Europeans traditionally believed had healthful properties. Mud baths, along with mineral baths, saunas, hot steam treatments, whirlpools, and herbal body wraps, have all been an attraction of the area ever since San Francisco entrepreneur Sam Brannan first promoted the benefits of the area's hot springs in the mid-19th century. Dr. Wilkinson's Hot Springs Resort, Lavender Hill Spa, and Indian Springs Hotel & Spa are good spots to enjoy relaxing spa treatments.

To get a feeling for the thermal springs without getting in one, go two miles out of town on Tubbs Lane and catch Old Faithful Geyser of California. The geyser spouts boiling water 60 feet into the air every half-hour or so.

Calistoga is an engaging, health-conscious, bustling little town in every way. The Calistoga Inn Restaurant & Brewery or Wappo Bar & Bistro are all great places to replenish yourself after the ardors of a rub, steam, or scalding soak.

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