



# From Apple Butter to Zinfandel: A Harvest-time Getaway to Healdsburg and the Russian River

# Healdsburg, Sonoma, 3 Days

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# **Guide Description**



AUTHOR NOTE: Cutesy Healdsburg might be, but get a block or two off the plaza and the tourist trappings fall away, revealing a hard-working Sonoma valley town where viticulture is taken seriously, and has been for many generations. No matter which road you take out of town, you'll stop umpteen times for snaps. The Alexander Valley boasts the Jimtown Store, everyone's favorite haute-roadhouse lunch stop, and the best bike route. Dry Creek Valley has some of my favorite wineries, including Preston, where the picnic area features bocce ball courts and a woodfired oven turning out hot loaves of homemade sourdough bread. After dinner at Dry Creek Kitchen and breakfast on the inn's sunny terrace, you'll be wondering if Sonoma residents ever eat anything that's not phenomenally fresh. Head south along River Road and you can taste sparkling wine from Korbel, and consider whether it's as good as the French version from the Champagne region whose name Californian bubblies are not allowed to use. Or stop being grown-up for a while and join the kids paddling in the river. Whether you'd rather kayak, canoe, or float downstream in an inner tube, the Russian River is the quintessential lazy river, with sandy beaches, cool green water and plenty of deep swimming holes to choose from. Though a short distance away from the river, the Farmhouse Inn is worth the drive for the rustic elegance of its atmosphere, sort of a cross between English manor house and Tuscan villa. The food is anything but rustic, though; San Franciscan foodies make the drive just for Chef Steve Litke's savory creations, which make the most of local ingredients like goat cheese handcrafted at an organic dairy just down the road. On the way home, be sure to stop at Mom's Apple Pies and pick up one made from gravensteins so fresh they were probably picked that morning in the orchard behind the bakery. Take home a slice of Sonoma graciousness to start the week off



# **Itinerary Overview**

things to do restaurants hotels nightlife

# Day 1 - Healdsburg



The Raford Inn of Healdsburg

Historic B&B surveys a vine-covered valley

# Day 3 - Sonoma



**Korbel Champagne Cellars** 

An Estate Worth a Visit



# Day 1 - Healdsburg

**QUICK NOTE** 

#### contact:

http://www.bedandbreakfast.c om/california-healdsburg-ther afordinnofhealdsburg.html

#### location:

10630 Wohler Road Healdsburg CA 95448



# The Raford Inn of Healdsburg

DESCRIPTION: The Raford Inn overlooks award winning vineyards and is listed as a Sonoma County Historical Landmark. Surrounding the inn are towering palm trees and old-fashioned gardens featuring Victorian plantings and more than 100 antique roses. The six guest rooms are furnished with turn-of-the-century antiques. A full breakfast is served in the dining room. The sun room and front porch invite guests to enjoy the splendid view and complimentary wine and hors d'oeuvres in the evening.



more at BedandBreakfast.com



**QUICK NOTE** 

#### contact:

tel: +1 707 824 7000 fax: +1 707 869 2506 http://www.korbel.com/

#### location:

13250 River Road Guerneville CA 95471

#### hours:

Daily 9a-4:30p



# **Korbel Champagne Cellars**

DESCRIPTION: While in Guerneville, a visit to the Korbel Estate is a must. Opt for the 50 minute Champagne Cellar Tour, which familiarizes you with wine-making techniques and includes a visit to the History Museum. After all the activity, you can cater to your gastronomic needs at the Korbel Delicatessen and Market by feasting on some traditional local food, and don't forget to stop by the gift shop to take home some of the rare wines (some of which are available only on the estate), wine accessories and other local souvenirs. You can also tour the Rose Garden, which features 250 varieties of antique roses. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Korbel Champagne Cellars

# 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 smalltown charm and first-class amenities. Despite its recent growth and rediscovery as tourist center, Sonoma remains a laidback 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 exurbanites, 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.

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### **History**

The birthplace of the California wine industry, Sonoma County has a history of isolation and discovery, of booming highs and quiet lulls. Originally home to indigenous tribes, Sonoma was discovered by Europeans, with Spanish missionaries establishing a mission in 1824; later, it played a central role in California's accession into the United States. The area sank into obscurity and neglect until the discovery of natural hot springs transformed it into a resort destination in the 1890s. Again, Sonoma fell from the limelight, growing quietly and steadily in the shadow of nearby Napa. Today, Sonoma is once again being rediscovered, emerging as a laid-back alternative to Napa's crowds and high prices.

Sonoma shares an early history similar to much of California, with indigenous tribes and Spanish missionaries. Sonoma was known as "Valley of the Moon" to the Miwoks, Pomos, Wintuns and other indigenous tribes who called the area home for 12,000 years before the arrival of Europeans. "Noma" is, in fact, thought to be a Mayakmah word for town. The first Europeans to establish a presence were Russian fur traders, in the early 19th century; they also left behind their linguistic mark—the Russian River bears their name. Spanish explorers and missionaries brought about the most dramatic change to early Sonoma County. Franciscan padres established the Sonoma Mission in 1824. the northernmost link in a chain of 21 California missions; these padres also planted the area's first grape vineyards. Mission life was harsh and within 50 years, indigenous tribes all but vanished.

Sonoma's prominence grew in 1834, when Sonoma Mission was completely secularized by the newly independent Mexican government. General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo transformed the Mission into a bustling Mexican pueblo, setting a street grid and building Sonoma Plaza, a national historical landmark which still serves as the center of Sonoma. By the

1840s, a steady encroachment of American settlers began to challenge Mexican power, and in 1846, Mexican rule ended with the legendary Bear Flag Revolt. The ensuing independent Bear Flag Republic only lasted a month before paving the way for California's accession to the United States.

Sonoma saw fell into neglect and isolation during the Gold Rush, as wealth poured down to San Francisco. Natural thermal baths discovered at Boyes Hot Springs created a rush of tourists in the 1890s. as Sonoma evolved into a resort retreat. Sonoma County's wine industry continued growing quietly, surviving both a root disease epidemic and Prohibition. Following World War II, Sonoma was rediscovered and again outsiders poured in. The population swelled, but urban development was kept in check. As neighboring Napa County's wine industry and tourism boomed, Sonoma continued producing topquality wines with a fraction of the fuss. This sheltering from the limelight, along with well-managed growth, has allowed Sonoma County to retain the rustic, small-town roots and pastoral beauty that charms visitors. Today, Sonoma County and its wine country have turned into a top Northern California getaway destination.

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### **Hotel Insights**

Time to relax and rejuvenate. Since its turn-of-the-century heyday as a hot springs retreat, Sonoma hotels have offered peaceful oases for vacationers wanting to get away from it all. Sonoma lodging options vary from tucked-away cottages to Victorian bed-and-breakfasts to luxury hotels, with many offering on-site spas and pampering services. Many hotels and inns are housed in historic buildings and blend a rustic country charm with modern renovations and new amenities.

Sonoma Valley is home to luxury resorts, as well quaint bed-and-breakfasts and even a few budget options. For those seeking some spoiling, the beautifully landscaped and historic MacArthur Place offers a cozy county atmosphere with four-star amenities. The Lodge at Sonoma – Renaissance Resort& Spa provides similar luxury in a more contemporary setting. Sonoma's many bed-and-breakfasts combine intimacy with location. Just steps from the Sonoma Plaza, the elegant Cottage Inn& Spa offers

a restful oasis, while lush gardens surround The Victorian Garden Inn, housed in a 1870s Greek Revival farmhouse. For value in the center of town, the Inn at Sonoma and Best Western Sonoma Valley Inn stand as excellent budget-friendly choices that don't sacrifice quality or service. Sonoma's surrounding towns offer even greater intimacy. Literally amid vineyards, resort The Kenwood Inn& Spa exudes oldworld charm in the heart of the Sonoma wine country. Romance abounds at the creekside cottages of The Glen Ellen Inn, equipped with fireplaces and Jacuzzi tubs built for two. A Glen Ellen bed-andbreakfast, The Beltane Ranch is housed in a historic ranch house with a view of vineyards.

To the North, the Russian River area is filled with tucked-away bed-and-breakfasts. Healdsburg hosts the romantic and restful Raford House Bed and Breakfast Inn, and the gem Honor Mansion, an ideal getaway where service shines. You'll feel like family at Forestville's Farmhouse Inn, which also features a top-rated romantic restaurant. Guerneville has the several value options, including the West Sonoma Inn and Sonoma Orchid Inn. For a little more pampering, head to luxurious Hotel Healdsburg; for more bang for your buck, Best Western Dry Creek Inn makes a great option.

Along the coast, Bodega Bay Lodge& Spa offers a luxury hideaway with stunning ocean views. To the North, Sea Ranch and the encompassing Gualala provide seaside value at The Surf Motel and Seacliff on the Bluff, as well as bed-and-breakfasts like Whale Watch Inn by the Sea, which boasts a private secluded beach.

Sonoma's largest cities, Santa Rosa and Petaluma, make for more affordable stays, mostly at big-name chain hotels like Hilton, Quality Inn and Best Western. The plus is that you're among all the conveniences of a city but only a short drive from the wine country. But with all the intimate and unique Sonoma lodging options, stays here are not recommended.

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## **Restaurants Insights**

Sonoma County's long culinary tradition is yours for the tasting. From award-winning bakeries to chef-owned restaurants with



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# Sonoma Snapshot continued

extensive wine lists, Sonoma restaurants deliver the ultimate California dining experience. California cuisine reigns supreme, along with Italian, French and various fusions. Most of Sonoma's restaurants use locally grown produce, compliments of Sonoma County's mild Mediterranean climate and fertile soil, while many feature the gourmet breads, artisan cheeses and olive oils for which the area is known. Four restaurants in Sonoma County have received coveted Michelin Guide stars, while six are included in the San Francisco Chronicle's Top 100 Restaurants. You'll encounter al fresco dining aplenty, with attire at Sonoma restaurants a comfortable vacation casual.

You could do just fine not leaving the city of Sonoma at all. Café Le Have serves perfectly prepared contemporary California cuisine in a casual, if cramped, setting. Della Santina's authentic Italian fare is beloved by locals, while the ever-popular The Girl and the Fig serves French Bistro cuisine on the Sonoma Plaza. Familyfriendly Breakaway Café s has traditional American dishes and features a kid's menu. Those seeking a more unusual culinary experience should head to La Salette for Portuguese food. Top take-out lunches can be found at the Sonoma Cheese Factory and the newer Basque Boulangerie.

Northern Sonoma County offers a handful of first-class restaurants. Sonoma County's most critically acclaimed restaurant is Healdsburg's Cyrus, which showcases exquisite cross-cultural California cuisine chef Douglas Keane describes as "contemporary luxury." Another California choice, Madrona Manor's surrounding garden provides much of the produce for its excellent dishes, to which wines are expertly paired. Forestville's romantic Farmhouse Inn and Restaurant makes a perfect evening for couples.

Santa Rosa boasts several good eateries, while Petaluma affords low-key and reasonably priced dining. Pizza-lovers will appreciate the thin crusts at Santa Rosa's Rosso Pizzeria& Wine Bar, while the happening Willi's Wine Bar features an eclectic California menu. Flavor Bistro is popular for breakfast and brunch. Locals love Old Chicago Pizza in Petaluma, as well as the Italian offerings at Cucina Paradiso; for bargain Mexican, head to Taqueria Mi Pueblo.

Bodega Bay's limited dining options include seafood at restaurants such as Lucas Wharf and Spud Point Crab Company. Terrapin Creek Café& Restaurants serves comfort food with warm service, while the restaurant at Bodega Bay Lodge& Spa provides the area's best fine-dining experience.

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### **Nightlife Insights**

Most visitors come to Sonoma in search of rest and rejuvenation. Suffice to say, the nightlife scene isn't exactly hopping, but fun activities are out there. Live entertainment can be found at a variety of historic venues in Sonoma County. Sonoma's Sebastiani offers a truly unique experience with its eclectic blend of cinema and live entertainment. Petaluma's McNear's Mystic Theater is often cited as the North Bay's premiere music venue, while the all-ages Phoenix Theater showcases edgier rock and hip-hop acts. To the North, Gevserville's River Rock Casino features live acts as well as 24-hour gaming. © NileGuide

# Things to Do Insights

It's not just about the wineries. From jazz festivals to balloon rides, hot springs soaks to African safaris(yes), Sonoma County offers the ultimate Northern California getaway. Rent kayaks along the Russian River, hike through Armstrong Redwoods State Reserve, cycle through Sonoma Valley. Gaze at stunning coastal views and dine at four-star restaurants. Browse farmers markets and quaint boutiques. Get cultured at art museums, galleries and film festivals. Golf at one of the luxury courses, explore the historic mission and barracks, or simply unwind at one of Sonoma County's many spas. And, yes, visit the wineries too.

Wine is a way of life in Sonoma County. Thirteen AVAs produce a wide range of varietals, from Russian River Pinots to Alexander Valley Cabs to Los Carneros Chards and Champagnes. More than 250 wineries and dozens of tasting rooms offer a wide range of wine-tasting experiences, from intimate cellars to large vineyard tours. Larger Sonoma wineries include Ravenswood Winery, Dry Creek Vineyards and Kenwood Vineyards, while eco-friendly Benziger Family Vineyards is the first biodynamic Sonoma winery. Wineries such as sustainable Kunde Estate offer fascinating tours of wine caves, which make for perfect aging conditions. Kenwood is home to two winery co-op tasting rooms, Family Winery and Tasting Room, which offer more obscure wines at reasonable prices. Get further off the beaten path at Sonoma's smaller wineries, such as family-owned Unti Vineyards and Quivira Vineyards. Wine tours companies include the highly regarded Beau Wine Tours and stylish Vintage Wine Tours of Sonoma.

Foodies delight in Sonoma's long culinary tradition. Aside from top-notch restaurants, Sonoma teems with markets like The Olive Press, Vella Cheese Company and North Bay Made. Almost every town and hamlet hosts a seasonal or year-around farmers market. Ramekins Sonoma Valley Culinary School offers quality hands-on and demonstration cooking classes. Sweeties will want to make a bee line for Glen Ellen's Wine County Chocolates, which includes a chocolate tasting room.

Arts and cultural events flourish in Sonoma. Local and national artists are featured at Sonoma Valley Museum of Art. while Peanuts fans find heaven in Santa Rosa's the Charles M. Schulz Museum. Popular local artists such as Michael Holland and Beverly Provost maintain galleries and studios that bear their names. Sonoma County hosts several festivals throughout the year, most featuring wine and food tasting. Music and art fans appreciate Sonoma Jazz+ and Sonoma International Film Festival, while foodies feast on all things olive at the Sonoma Valley Olive Festival. History lovers experience Sonoma County's hometown tradition at Valley of the Moon Vintage Festival, a century-old parade that features vintage fire engines; car enthusiasts have a blast at the Vintage Race Car Festival. Held the first weekend in October, Sonoma County Harvest Festival is the area's biggest wine event of the vear. Passport to Dry Creek is arguably the most raucous of the festivals; hosted by popular wineries. limited ticketing ensures an intimate experience.

Sonoma County is an outdoor lover's paradise, with activities that range from active to romantically laid-back. Cyclists will enjoy both Sonoma Cyclery, which offers affordable bike rentals, and Goodtime



# Sonoma Snapshot continued

Touring Company, which provides bike excursions at various levels. Burke's Canoe Trips on the Russian River leads canoe and kayak trips through the redwoods; Bodega Bay Kayak provides tours and rentals along the coast. Golfers have over a dozen courses to choose from, from the luxurious Sonoma Golf Club to the coastal Links at Bodega Harbor. Hikers encounter a variety of trails, from coastal hikes to redwoods walks. Experience Sonoma from a bird's eye view with Up& Away Hot Air Ballooning's unique and romantic rides, or with Vintage Aircraft Company's exciting excursions. Rejuvenate at one of the many spas, from Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn& Spa's healing thermal baths to pomegranate and fig oil massages at MacArthur Place's Garden Spa. Or have it all at Morton's Warm Springs Resort, featuring picnic sites, warm mineral swimming pools, trails and sports fields.

And it's not just a playground for adults; Sonoma County is home to plenty of familyfriendly fun. Children and adults alike enjoy Train Town, a scale railroad with over a mile of track. Families also enjoy educational Audubon Canyon Ranch, a marshland preserve for native plants and animals, as well as exotic Safari West, an African-style safari and reserve featuring African wildlife. For older kids, Macdougald Skate Park is located just 10 minutes south of Sonoma Plaza.

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### **Travel Tips**

Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport serves Sonoma County, with direct flights from Los Angeles, Seattle, Portland and Las Vegas via Horizon Air. Nearby international airports include San Francisco, Oakland and Sacramento.

Most visitors opt to rent a car, as the sights of Sonoma County are spread out and often not serviced by mass transit. Highway 101 and 116 runs through the heart of Sonoma Valley, while the everspectacular Highway 1 hugs the curves of the Sonoma Coast. Truly off-the-beatenpath, the city of Sonoma has no freeways

or major highways running through; the closest is Highway 12 from Napa, Petaluma or Santa Rosa. Highway 116 takes you to Guerneville, on the northern edge of the county. Once in Sonoma, bicycle rental is a pleasant option and makes for a fantastic day trip. Sonoma Valley Cyclery(707 935-3377) rents bikes at approximately\$6 per hour.

Mass transit is an option in Sonoma County, although bus service is limited and often infrequent. Sonoma County Transit(www.sctransit.com) connects Sonoma County's cities and towns, with limited local service in Santa Rosa, Sonoma, Sebastopol, Windsor and Guerneville. Golden Gate Transit(www.goldengatetransit.org) serves Sonoma County's larger cities of Santa Rosa and Petaluma along Highway 116, with connections to San Francisco, Marin and Contra Costa Counties. Taxis, airporters and car service are also available.

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