

## Wine Travel Destination 2014

---

### 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations 2014



#### #1 Sonoma, USA

If a genie was to grant you three wishes and you chose great food, great wine and gorgeous surroundings, you'd land in California's Sonoma County. An hour north of San Francisco, with an enviable coastline to the west, Napa Valley to the east and rugged Mendocino County to the north, there's no better place to indulge your hedonistic tendencies. Sonoma County produces some of the New World's best cool-climate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, Rhône-inspired wines, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Its bounty of local fare ranges from oysters and Dungeness crab to spring lamb and Liberty duck, while the county can grow everything: fruit, vegetables and herbs. If that weren't enough, the region also has a longstanding reputation for fine artisan cheeses. —*Virginie Boone*

#### Where to Dine

Perpetual Michelin-starred restaurants [Madrona Manor](#) and [Farmhouse Inn](#) are the top choices for gourmet fare, while longstanding local favorite [Zazu Kitchen & Farm](#) has recently moved into swanky new digs. In Healdsburg, don't miss either of chef Ari Rosen's Italian eateries: [Campo Fina](#)

for lunch and bocce on the outdoor patio, [Scopa](#) for dinner and Winemaker Wednesdays. Nearby [Barndiva](#) celebrates the best of fresh, locally sourced food with an equally inspired cocktail list.

## Where to Stay

The largest concentration of upscale digs is in Healdsburg. Within walking distance are the eco-luxurious choices of sister properties, the [h2hotel](#) and [Hotel Healdsburg](#), both with restaurants. Just outside of town, Madrona Manor has gorgeous gardens and a classic Victorian vibe, while the Farmhouse Inn will provide refined accommodations after a big-time meal. In Jack London's backyard of Glen Ellen, the [Gauge House](#) is an Asian-inspired hideaway with full spa services.

## Other Activities

With tall mountains, rivers and an enviable stretch of coast, there's no shortage of outdoor activities here. Sonoma County Regional Parks is a good resource for all of them, including campsites run by Caryl Hart, wife of Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart.



## Budget Tip ;

Both the towns of Healdsburg and Sonoma feature friendly downtown squares, offering free concerts, farmers markets, arts and crafts shows and a great spot for picnics. They also serve as good distractions for the kids.

## When to Go

Blessed with good weather much of the year, the real magic happens during harvest, typically August through October.

## Local in the Know

Bill Price, a prominent local winery owner and investor, says, “The first place I always send people is one of our terrific vineyards, like Durell, Hyde, Monte Rosso or Gap’s Crown—they are the source of Sonoma’s greatness, and beautiful to boot. [Kistler](#), [Kosta Browne](#), [Chateau St. Jean](#) and [Gary Farrell](#) offer superb wine-tasting opportunities. For food, I love the [Glen Ellen Star](#), [Stark’s](#), [Girl and the Fig](#) and local spots like the [Fremont Diner](#) and [Juanita Juanita](#).”

## Where to Taste

The [Wine Road](#) unites wineries in Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley and the Russian River Valley. The Russian River Valley’s Westside Road makes a good starting point: consider [Arista](#), [Rochioli](#), [Thomas George Estates](#) and [Porter Creek](#). Along Highway 116 near the tiny towns of Occidental and Graton are [Iron Horse](#), [Paul Hobbs](#), [Merry Edwards](#), [Red Car](#) and [Dutton-Goldfield](#). In downtown Sebastopol, find tasting rooms at [The Barlow](#), Kosta Browne, [Wind Gap](#), [Freeman Winery](#), [La Follette](#), [Marimar Estate](#) and [MacPhail Wines](#), while [Spirit Works Distillery](#) produces handcrafted gin and whiskey. Experience the true Sonoma Coast in Fort Ross-Seaview, one of Sonoma’s newest appellations, by visiting [Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery](#) for ocean-enabled Pinot Noir and Pinotage, or the wilds of remote [Hirsch Vineyards](#) (by appointment). Slightly further inland, check out [Littorai](#) (by appointment) for a single-vineyard tasting or tour. Further north in Dry Creek Valley, it’s worth tasting Zinfandel at [Dry Creek Vineyard](#), [Lambert Bridge](#), [Pedroncelli](#), [Ridge Lytton Springs](#), [Mauritson Wines](#) and well-loved [A. Raffanelli](#) (by appointment).

## Prominent Wines

Sonoma County is a wine wonderland. It’s blessed with such diversity in soils and microclimates that it can grow nearly every grape variety well, from Alicante Bouschet to Zinfandel. But the real beauty of Sonoma County zeroes in on cool-climate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The two varieties define the growing world-class reputations of the Russian River Valley, Sonoma Coast, Fort Ross-Seaview and Carneros AVAs. In Dry Creek Valley, Zinfandel is the standout, so much so that a higher-elevation outcrop north of the valley, Rockpile, earned its own AVA designation in 2002. Farther inland, Alexander Valley and Knights Valley produce distinguished Cabernet Sauvignon.

<http://www.winemag.com/February-2014/10-Best-Wine-Travel-Destinations-2014/index.php/slide/Sonoma--USA/cparticle/6>