



Sonoma's Spell

A FASCINATING BLEND OF ART, VITICULTURE, AND BUCOLIC CHARM, THIS NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNTY IS PURE MAGIC BY AMBER GIBSON

B Brilliant fall foliage and the vibrant energy of harvest season make autumn the perfect time to visit Sonoma County. Not only can you taste ripe grapes right off the vine and see the winemaking process in full swing, but there's a myriad of things to do beyond winery visits, too, from hiking among majestic redwoods to exploring the rugged Pacific coastline. The surrounding region is dotted with countless idyllic villages to discover, including Healdsburg, Bodega, Geyserville, Petaluma, Sebastopol, and Windsor. Sonoma is certainly one of the country's hotspots for foodies and oenophiles, but new openings like the Montage Healdsburg and Bricoleur Vineyards are making Sonoma more family-friendly than ever before.

Expect more intimate experiences at Sonoma's smaller family-owned vineyards, where it's easy to make friends. Often winemakers are available to answer questions and proprietors welcome patrons with open arms, eager to share their personal stories and love of the land.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

More relaxed and typically less pretentious than Napa Valley, Sonoma County is just west of its more famous sister and equidistant from San Francisco. Sonoma wineries make great cabernet sauvignon and chardonnay along with world-class pinot noir and zinfandel. There are more than 425 wineries sprinkled across the region, ranging from rustic farmhouses to regal chateaus. With great chardonnay and pinot noir, there's naturally also excellent champagne method sparkling wine, most notably from Inman Family Wines, Ultramarine, and Benovia. Most of the best wineries, like Inman and Jordan Winery, are open by appointment only, so plan ahead to reserve your spot.

Fly into Sonoma County Airport (STS) in Santa Rosa to save yourself the two-hour drive from San



San Francisco International Airport. Alaska, United, and American all operate commercial flights, and private charters are common, too. Healdsburg is the most convenient home base with the highest concentration of luxe lodging, shopping, and restaurants, including world-renowned Single Thread, a three-star Michelin restaurant with five rooms by husband-and-wife team Kyle and Katina Connaughton.

ATTRACTIONS

THE DONUM ESTATE

Enjoy single estate pinot noir at Donum accompanied by one of the biggest private art collections in the world. The 43 sculptures scattered artfully across the



property include a Yayoi Kusama polka-dotted pumpkin and pieces by artists Fernando Botero, Richard Hudson, and Ai Weiwei, many of which were commissioned for the estate. After a wine tasting paired with light vegetable-forward bites by new chef Aaron LeRoi, take an RTV tour through the world-class outdoor art museum, vineyards, and biodynamic farm. This autumn, Donum releases their first-ever sparkling wine, a blanc de blancs made in the traditional champagne method with Carneros chardonnay. **24500 Ramal Road, Sonoma, thedonumestate.com**

BRICOLEUR VINEYARDS

New this year, this expansive family-friendly tasting room and estate is just ten minutes from the Santa Rosa airport. The family-owned winery makes just 5,000 cases of wine per year, but that includes a dozen different varietals, offering an array of options for pairing with delectable meals by chef Shane McAnelly, best known for his fresh pasta. McAnelly gets much of the fresh produce for his dishes from the organic fruit and vegetable garden on the property. There's also a rose garden with 85 rose varietals, a fishing pond, and bocce court. Bring the whole family for Friday pizza night, or order a picnic and find a peaceful spot to watch the sunset. Wine club members even have the option of booking an overnight stay in the beauti-

fully renovated milk barn. **7394 Starr Road, Windsor, bricoleurvineyards.com**

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL HEALDSBURG

Ideally located right on Healdsburg Plaza, Hotel Healdsburg is within walking distance of all the shopping and dining in Sonoma County's most charming town. Explore the picturesque streets on the hotel's eight-speed chartreuse green bikes before relaxing at the pool. All 56 guestrooms and eight suites are comfortably appointed with custom organic bath amenities scented with local lavender and rosemary or Meyer lemon and sage. Complimentary valet parking and breakfast are included for all guests, and in-room dining is available from Dry Creek Kitchen and Pizzando during restaurant hours. **25 Matheson Street, Healdsburg, hotelhealdsburg.com**

NEW TREE RANCH

A sanctuary where you can find peace without judgment, New Tree Ranch is a place of healing, where tech executives and busy professionals often arrive by helicopter to unplug and reconnect with nature. An all-vegan diet prepared by a private chef helps the body detox while the Wim Hof method (a mindfulness practice that involves breathing tech-



niques and cold exposure in an ice bath) strengthens the body's capability to heal itself. Do yoga among redwoods, paint in the garden, or help harvest potatoes and carrots from the biodynamic farm. **3600 Wallace Creek Road, Healdsburg, newtreeranch.com**

MONTAGE HEALDSBURG

The brand new Montage Healdsburg is the largest luxury resort in Sonoma with 130 bungalow-style guestrooms and suites across 258 acres. All rooms include spacious balconies with outdoor fire pits and half the bungalows also feature outdoor showers. The sprawling resort is adjacent to both Jordan Winery and Seghesio Family Vineyards and there are 13 acres of sauvignon blanc and Bordeaux varietals planted on property, overseen by winemaker Jesse Katz of Aperture Cellars. Montage will be perhaps the most family-friendly property in Sonoma, with separate adults-only and family pools, along with the famous Montage Paintbox children's program. Environmentally conscious design pays homage to the majestic oak groves on



property and 60 homesites have also been released for sale. **100 Montage Way, Healdsburg, montagehotels.com/healdsburg**

DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

WINE PATHS

The premier luxury international wine

travel agent, Wine Paths works with local experts to curate unforgettable vacations in dozens of wine destinations around the globe. In Sonoma, sunrise hot air balloon journeys, horseback rides through private vineyards, ATV vineyard tours, or kayaking down the Russian River (to a wine tasting, of course) are just a few of the romantic adventures on the menu. **winepaths.com**



PHOTO BY MARTHA GRONAR

THE BARLOW

This outdoor marketplace is a gourmet amusement park, overflowing with local wines, beer, spirits, and crafts made on site by Sonoma County artisans. Formerly an applesauce cannery, the Barlow is now a pet and family-friendly destination with more than 30 makers and merchants. The venue is brimming with gustatory treasures, from Taylor Lane Organic Coffee and the Nectary juice and smoothie bar to Crooked Goat Brewing, Fern Bar, and newcomer Blue Ridge Kitchen, so plan to arrive hungry and thirsty. A highlight for wine lovers is Region, a new co-op wine bar showcasing dozens of Sonoma County wine producers with wines available by the taste, glass, or bottle. **6770 McKinley Street, Sebastopol, thebarlow.net**

DINE AND DRINK

SPOONBAR

The market-driven menu at Spoonbar perfectly embodies the light, bright flavors of California wine country. From Moroccan spice marinated chicken with couscous and chermoula to herb-roasted Pacific king salmon with gnocchi and sweet corn, everything is creative yet approachable. This hip hangout is as

popular among locals as it is with visitors. Start with fancy Jell-O shots on the garden patio before a craft cocktail or glass of local wine with dinner. **219 Healdsburg Avenue, Healdsburg, spoonbar.com**

JORDAN WINERY

Through October, Jordan Winery has transformed their patio into a pop-up French brasserie, dubbed Paris on the Terrace. A multi-course lunch at the ivy-

covered, French-inspired chateau will transport you across the Atlantic, accompanied by Jordan's famous Russian River Valley chardonnay and Alexander Valley cabernet sauvignon. French music drifts through the air as guests munch on a generous charcuterie and cheese platter with house-marinated olives. Vegetables for crudité and the extra virgin olive oil drizzled over freshly baked bread all come from Jordan's own gardens. **1474 Alexander Valley Road, Healdsburg, jordanwinery.com**

VOLO CHOCOLATE

Sonoma County's only bean-to-bar chocolate company produces just 1,200 bars a week, each hand-wrapped and infused with local ingredients. Husband-and-wife team Jeff and Susan Mall source cacao beans directly from farmers in Guatemala and Haiti, and several regional pastry chefs use their chocolate in desserts. Call ahead to arrange for a personalized chocolate and cheese pairing. Their storefront is open by appointment only and visitors can breathe in the intoxicating aroma of freshly roasted beans and taste liquid chocolate straight from the melanger. **399 Business Park Court, Windsor, volochocolate.com** ■

