

Get Lost: 72 Hours In California's Underrated Wine Region, Sonoma Valley

CALIFORNIA'S TRUE HIDDEN GEM IS LOCATED IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RIGHT NEXT TO NAPA — SONOMA VALLEY.



BY KIMBERLY WILSON · SEPTEMBER 8, 2020

When you think about California wine, you probably envision the rolling hills of Napa Valley, or Santa Barbara's off-road luxury vineyards estates as some of your preferences for discovering all that wine country has to offer. And while both are great, California's true hidden gem is located in Northern California right next to Napa — Sonoma Valley.

Located just an hour and a half drive from San Francisco, and 7 hours north of Los Angeles, Sonoma is perhaps Northern California's most "underrated" region, featuring over 400 wineries, sprawling vineyards and plenty of breweries and restaurants to keep you busy as well.

Now, because of social distancing practices and limited tour, dining and vineyard operations, visitors can tour wine country on their own, tasting and sipping at their leisure through the valley. Whatever you're looking for in a getaway, Sonoma has it, so here's a guide to help you plan your next visit.

Day One

First things first, in addition to limiting time spent in Ubers (in order to be practice safe, social distancing), you'll want a car to get the most of the area's attractions, so rent one and head north on Highway 101.



Once you arrive in Sonoma, lodging on the town square or within walking distance of it will be the most convenient. If you're looking for a high end retreat, that is lowkey meets luxe, checking in at MacArthur Place will be the start to your weekend. Less than a five-minute walk away from Sonoma Plaza, the property, which features socially distanced suites and cottages, is an ideal spot for a relaxed, easygoing trip to wine country. Their safety protocols include required masks throughout the property, private (distant) dining by the pool and plenty of cozy nooks on property to distance from other guests.

Once you're properly checked in and unpacked, move on to an al fresco lunch and tasting at [Hanson of Sonoma Distillery](#). Hanson makes delicious high-end organic vodka distilled from grapes. Yes, vodka. In wine country. At Hanson, cocktails anchor the menu—pick your cocktail first, and then your pairing to go with it. Or if you're really up for it, try a tasting of all the vodka samplings. They even serve brick oven pizza (since COVID) to accompany their delicious cocktail menu. Vodka infusions include ginger, mandarin, lemon, and they're all pretty yummy!



If you're looking to grab a quick coffee or a snack while running around Sonoma, or perhaps want an electric bike to get around the valley and through the Plaza, stop at MacArthur Place's "The Porch." Biking is one of the best ways to take in the scenery, while also getting a lay of the land. Popular in the valley, add this to your "must-do" list.

Before the night ends (if you're not already exhausted), make sure you stop by [OSO](#) for dinner and a nightcap. An intimate yet casual small-plates eatery serving up meals chef David Bush, prepare your palate for modern food in a rustic setting. Not to mention, it's just minutes from your hotel in Sonoma square. Menu items include poutine with roasted potatoes, cheese curds and a red wine gravy and their mole-braised pork shoulder tacos.

Day Two

You'll want to get an early start for an exciting full day in Sonoma.

After having breakfast, you'll be in for quite a treat at your first activity of the day. Centrally located just a turn-off highway 121 in Sonoma Valley's wine country, [The Donum Estate](#) is easy to get to, but enough off the beaten path to feel worlds away. Farmhouse-chic tasting rooms, and outdoor art monuments embrace a peaceful, serene landscape for an art-fused intimate wine tasting experience. What's even more exclusive about the experience, is that tastings are appointment-only. When we say it's absolutely a must-see in Sonoma, we are not lying.



Next, head north almost an hour to [Seghesio Family Vineyards](#). The collection has produced the region's famed zinfandel since 1895, and is a staple within the Sonoma Valley region. The estate has a bocce court, shaded picnic grove, and tasting room featuring flights and food and wine pairings.

Need a break from all the wine? Or simply looking to infuse more wellness into your Sonoma getaway? Experience a relaxing wine country getaway "at home" with a curated selection of products from MacArthur Market for an at-home spa retreat. While curling up in a plush MacArthur Robe, take in the scents of the property with Lola James Harper's custom candle or purify the air with the portable Campo Essential Oil Diffuser.

Once you've worked up an appetite (by eating and drinking away the day), it's only right that you get dressed up for a nice dinner (on property to make it easier). Layla, features Mediterranean-inspired cuisine and is filled with lots of fresh, local ingredients, with plenty of options for any kind of eater—there's even a vegan bolognese, which we recommend even if you're not on a plant-based diet.



Day Three

Your final day in Sonoma will take you to [Sunflower Caffé](#) after checking out. Offering simple breakfast items made from locally sourced ingredients, it's a signature restaurant for those visiting Sonoma and looking for some *good* local food. Order a blackberry mimosa and a waffle with bacon in the batter, and take your meal outside on the patio. Last but not least, before heading to SFO or OAK, make your final Sonoma stop at [Gloria Ferrer Winery](#), a winery that specializes in sparkling wines, as well as Pinot noir and Chardonnay wine. Order a flight (and grab a bottle to-go) and sit on the outdoor Vista Terrace while taking in the final views.