

TERRA FIRMA

# SONOMA COUNTY

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**WHETHER YOU ARE DRAWN  
TO ITS PROMISE OF IDLE  
INDULGENCE, ENJOY SIPPING  
FINE WINES, OR HAVE A  
PENCHANT FOR VISITING  
WORLD-RENOWNED  
RESTAURANTS, SONOMA COUNTY  
IS THE LATEST 'IT' DESTINATION  
FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR A  
COUNTRY-CHIC WEEKEND**



01

01

Madrona Manor

02

AutoCamp  
Russian River  
Guerneville

03

Healdsburg

04

Timber Cove  
Resort

**SONOMA COUNTY HAS  
FACILITATED A MARKED  
INCREASE IN THE SUPPLY OF  
STYLISH & COMFORTABLE  
ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE  
BETTER-HEELED TRAVELER**



If you were considering a long-weekend escape to California's wine country, Sonoma County might not be the first area that comes to mind. Sandwiched between the better-known Napa Valley to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, Sonoma County has long been home to celebrated vintners, but a recent culinary influx has left the once sleepy county rivaling its better-known neighbor. The two wine-growing regions offer a very different welcome to visiting oenophiles. Acclimatize to Sonoma County's laid-back lifestyle with a stop in Healdsburg before heading west, working your way along the Russian River that flows through the county all the way to the ocean. Along the way are wineries for tastings, quaint places to dine, and plenty of natural wonders to explore.

#### Pillow talk

From winery-owned guesthouses to luxury boutique hotels, the influx of upscale San Franciscans to Sonoma County has led to a marked increase in the supply of stylish and comfortable accommodations for the better-heeled traveler. If you can visit during the start or end of Cabernet season (harvest) when the weather is still warm, you will have your choice of rooms, tables, tastings and spas.

Spend a few nights in the historic 19th century town of **Healdsburg** in the north of Sonoma County. Flanked by the **Dry Creek**, **Russian River** and **Alexander Valley**, the town is a popular destination for oenophiles and has become a hub for wine-country fare.

Set in the historic town square, **Hotel Healdsburg** is a welcoming and contemporary boutique hotel. Go for one of their oversized rooms with décor details that complement the property's picturesque surroundings.

If you are planning a spring visit to Sonoma County, then try and coincide with Charlie Palmer's annual **Pigs & Pinot** event – a charity event hosted at the hotel's on-site restaurant, **Dry Creek Kitchen**. For those looking for 19th-century grandeur, the Victorian mansion **Madrona Manor** is just a few minutes from downtown Healdsburg. Set in eight wooded acres overlooking Dry Creek Valley, the hotel is suffused with character and charm. Book into one of the **Schoolhouse Suites**, on the edge of the property, complete with Jacuzzi and private deck area. In stark contrast to its antique furnishings and décor, the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant delivers a contemporary menu, inspired by the estate's garden produce.

For those looking to get closer to nature on the shores of the Russian River, **AutoCamp** is camping without sacrificing a whit of comfort (glamping in its highest form). Custom-designed Airstream trailers and spacious tents the size of small buildings blend beautiful design and luxury with nature.

The **Timber Cove Resort** has always been a sought-after retreat and a few years ago the 1960s property was respectfully renovated, keeping many of the original features and combining them with contemporary design touches. Perched on the Pacific Coast just outside the small town of **Jenner**, this coastal retreat boasts stunning sea views and is surrounded by more than 25 acres of rugged coastline and a backdrop of redwood trees. After a day exploring, foraging, hiking (guided), or even kayaking, retire to the property's restaurant, **Coast Kitchen**, one of the best on the North Coast.

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### Eat, Drink & Dance

Drinking wine is obviously *de rigueur* when in Sonoma County, and the choice of vineyards and tastings are plenty. Wineries have deep roots in the valley's culture; it is, after all, where California's wine industry began. Vineyards sprawl across foothills and ridges, backed by parklands. Sip a dry rosé while seated in the vineyards by the winemaker's home, sample zinfandel by the vats from which it was produced, taste chardonnay from aged barrels or pinots by the river; Sonoma Valley is made up of varying terrain, diverse soils and microclimates with several stunning varietals grown for a broad portfolio, making it a haven for oenophiles.

Hungarian-born Count Agoston Haraszthy first launched the **Buena Vista** winery in 1857. Listed as a Californian Historic Landmark, Buena Vista's tasting room pours several varietals, but the best way to soak up the atmosphere is to enjoy a tasting with the winery's delicious picnic hamper in the cobblestone courtyard.

For a chilled afternoon tasting, fans of cabernets should drop by **Gundlach Bundschu**. The family-run winery has a low-key atmosphere and tastings are offered in the stunning picnic grounds of the winery. If you are lucky enough to be in the area in June, you might find yourself sipping chilled gewürztraminer while listening to Coachella-style bands at the **Huichica Music Festival**, hosted by the fifth generation of the Bundschu family on the grassy hillside of their 300-acre farm.

Set in the foothills of Sonoma Mountain, the **Benziger Family Winery** is one of the most successful biodynamic vineyards in California. The farm follows biodynamic principles to produce rich red blends from the estate-grown grapes. The sister winery, **Imagery Estate**, also is worth a visit for its award-winning wines from rarely grown grapes.

For a smaller vineyard tour, sip away at the stunningly restored 19th-century homestead **Scribe Winery**. Reserve your wine tasting late afternoon and follow on with a lavish dinner paired with the estate-grown chardonnay.



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For a break from the grape, there are a number of cocktail venues in Sonoma County, including the **Geyserville Gun Club Bar & Lounge**. Here, six-guns and Winchester rifles have been traded for frosty Gibson cocktails in this rustic lounge bar just north of Santa Rosa.

Enjoying the locally produced wines is the main reason for any visit to Sonoma County, but the area also is known for its world-class cuisine. Pioneering the farm-to-table ethos, a movement that has spread not just through America but worldwide, Sonoma County — in particular the small city of Healdsburg — has a gastronomic scene to rival that of nearby San Francisco and Portland.

Embracing Japanese hospitality and cuisine, **SingleThread** is a boutique property with a pilgrimage-worthy restaurant. Produce from the farm's own fields is used in three different tasting menus that have been thoughtfully conjured up by the owners who spent years learning their trade on the ground in Japan, only to return to their native California (via the Michelin-starred Fat Duck restaurant in Berkshire, England) to share their creations with Sonoma County.

**Dry Creek Kitchen** at Hotel Healdsburg is another of the town's restaurants that delivers an exotic menu using locally sourced produce. Chef/Owner Charlie Palmer is well known for his creative cooking spirit and unexpected combinations, accompanied by pairings of Sonoma County's best wines. If you're dining here for lunch, then secure a spot outside to watch Healdsburg society drift by.

If the farm-to-table ethos has taken your fancy, there are several one-day cookery classes at the Relish Culinary School in downtown Healdsburg. Choose from all manner of locally influenced courses, including cheese making and mushroom foraging.

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08



**05**  
Alfresco goodtimes  
Sonoma-style

**06**  
The vineyards  
of Benziger

**07**  
Single Thread,  
Healdsburg

**08**  
The Buena Vista Winery



## WINE ON BOARD

The decks of a superyacht are without doubt one of the best places to open a bottle of fine wine. When it comes to choosing wines to take on board for your charter, you don't have to travel around the world's best vineyards. Your Northrop & Johnson charter broker can liaise with expert wine suppliers on the best wines to accompany you on your yacht in your chosen cruising area. Pre-charter, you also will have the opportunity to liaise with the captain and chef on board to discuss how the cuisine and your favorite wines can be partnered.

Your wine selection will depend on the specifics of the destination and duration of your charter. Whether you are looking for great Champagne or Burgundy, or a wine specific to the region in which you are cruising, keep in mind that, even with the most sophisticated storage technology, wines that perform on land do not always work well on the ocean. This is particularly the case with red wines, which have a tendency to throw a natural deposit as they age. On dry land there is no vibration and the wine can easily be separated from the deposit by decanting it, but as a yacht is in a perpetual state of motion, if the wine is not stored correctly sediment will be suspended in the wine. Try and opt for lighter, younger wines or more forward vintages.

When it comes to the storage of wines on board, there are plenty of options and your charter broker can advise on your chosen yacht's facilities. Ideally, wine should be kept in a temperature-controlled cellar, free of vibrations in a securely attached wine rack, allowing bottles to lie on their side with no risk of movement. The cellar should be away from the engine room so that it is free of chemical odors, in the dark with no direct sunlight. Northrop & Johnson has a number of yachts in the charter fleet with dedicated wine cellars. Talk to your charter broker for further information.



### Do & Discover

The entire landscape of Sonoma County just begs to be explored. With 800-plus acres of massive centuries-old trees, the **Armstrong Redwoods State Natural Reserve** at Guerneville has a variety of hikes for all capabilities. Try and go in the morning before the atmospheric Pacific fog burns off. Take a dip in the redwood-lined Russian River or hire a paddleboat or kayak to venture up stream. Those with a head for heights should try zip-lining over the Redwoods. One zip-line is more than 800 feet long and rewards riders with panoramic forest views and flights over deep ravines.

A round of golf in the morning is another great way to work up a thirst for an afternoon at the wineries. Though the Californian wine country isn't the world-class golf it could be, since it is more profitable to use the land for vineyards rather than fairways, there are more than enough courses to satisfy even the most discerning golf enthusiast. From the Jack Nicklaus-designed **Mayacama** to the **Sonoma Golf Club**, and many more in between, each and every course has a stunning backdrop with Redwoods framing the course.

### See & Shop

Sonoma County shopping is all about the artisan; from locally produced cheese and olive oil to pottery, the once-sleepy towns have woken up to the demand from visitors for authentic local finds. There also is a movement for antiques as dot-com millionaires from San Francisco source pieces for their grand homes down the coast. The best antiques confluence in Petaluma and Healdsburg. Downtown Sonoma (not to be confused with Sonoma County as a whole) hosts a Friday morning market just off the main square. Local artisan produce (cheese, meat and jam) is all sold here; any would make a lovely accompaniment to the fine wines bought at the various wine tastings as a reminder for the senses of your stay in Sonoma County.

### A Vine Voyage

Many of the world's finest wine growing regions are located by some of the best cruising grounds, and for many, touring vineyards during a superyacht charter has great appeal as a way of varying your onboard activity. While chartering along the Côte d'Azur, why not step ashore to the plethora of vineyards along the stunning Provençal coast, or when cruising along the Amalfi Coast head inland and discover indigenous grape varieties and a handful of Italy's beautiful vineyards spread out over lush hills.

Further afield, most people that know their wine know Marlborough, in the north of New Zealand's South Island, as the sauvignon blanc capital of the world, and the area is like one giant vineyard. Lesser known but even better situated for visitors on superyachts are the vineyards at Hawke's Bay on New Zealand's North Island. And finally, the aforementioned Californian wine region is just an hour north of San Francisco and also can be discovered by yacht. The world capital of wine tourism, the vineyards of Napa Valley and Sonoma County have wine tasting down to a fine art, so you can step ashore and select your favorite grape to bring back to your yacht. ●

#### 09

Zip lining at Sonoma Canopy Tours

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Northwood Golf Club

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Leafy Healdsburg

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Easily accessible San Francisco

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