

travel
itinerary
wine country

CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY ROADS LESS TRAVELED: SIP & SAVOR FROM SANTA CRUZ TO THE SIERRAS

A 10-day road trip exploring under-the-radar wine destinations in the Golden State, traveling northeast from coastal **Santa Cruz** through the **Central Valley** to the **Sierra Foothills** and **Gold Country**

visit
California

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- Day 1: **SFO/SJC to Santa Cruz**
 - Day 2: **South Santa Cruz Wine Country**
 - Day 3: **Santa Cruz Mountains to Silicon Valley**
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 - Day 5: **Livermore Valley to Lodi**
 - Day 6: **Lodi**
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 - Day 8: **Murphy's to Plymouth**
 - Day 9: **Plymouth to Lincoln**
 - Day 10: **Grass Valley**

WINE COUNTRY

Itinerary overview

This wine-centric itinerary is for curious travelers keen to find hidden gems and feel a sense of discovery. Wine aficionados who know Napa and Sonoma and have done Paso and Santa Barbara will delight in this journey to lesser-known wine regions that offer equally deep roots, rich agricultural heritages, delicious wines, small town charms and hyper-local culinary delights. Start in the Santa Cruz Mountains, one of the state's oldest

wine-growing regions dating back to the 1870s, and make your way inland to the warmer climes of Livermore Valley and Lodi. In Gold Country, trace the foothills as you delight in character-rich historic mining towns from Murphy's and Plymouth to Lincoln and Grass Valley. All along these roads less traveled, expect uncrowded tasting rooms, unpretentious experiences and unforgettable days.



● Day 1: SFO/SJC to Santa Cruz

- Arrive in seaside **Santa Cruz**, check into your hotel and head out for an urban wine tasting expedition on the westside of Santa Cruz.
- Drop into **Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard** to taste their namesake line of wines as well as secondary brand **Quinta Cruz**, dedicated to Spanish and Portuguese. Walk around the block to **Stockwell Cellars** for another urban tasting in the winemakers converted metal shop.
- Watch the sunset at **Natural Bridges State Beach** nearby before going downtown to feast on creative hyper-local fare at Michelin-endorsed **Alderwood**.
- Overnight in **Santa Cruz**.

● Day 2: South Santa Cruz Wine Country

- Head south on CA-1 for a day of tasting in the southern portion of Santa Cruz County wine country along the rural **Corralitos Wine Trail** (45 mi/72 km roundtrip).
- Start at historic **Bargetto Winery in Soquel**, dating back to 1933, and carry on to **Lester Estate Wines** or **Storrs Winery & Vineyards**.
- En route to your last winery stop, indulge in **Corralitos Market & Sausage Co.**, known for exceptional sandwiches and hot dogs prepared with meats from the in-house butcher and locally sourced ingredients.
- Soak up the ambiance **Windy Oaks Estate**, a premier pinot noir producer, and retrace your path back to Santa Cruz.
- Delight your inner child with an evening in the fresh sea air at the legendary **Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk**.
- Overnight in **Santa Cruz**.



● Day 3: **Santa Cruz Mountains to Silicon Valley**

- Hit the road for a day of driving through the woods to reach notable wine producers north of Santa Cruz en route to **Los Gatos** (70 mi/112km).
- Stop at **Beauregard Vineyards** (via CA-1 N and Bonny Doon Road) to taste in a cabin-like setting surrounded by redwood trees.
- Continue north, eventually turning onto CA-236 S to reach organically-farmed **Big Basin Vineyards Estate & Tasting Room**—you can detour to **Big Basin Redwoods State Park** before for a hike to “earn” your wine tasting!
- From Big Basin, take CA-236 N and CA-9 N to **Ridge Vineyards**, the legendary winery that produced the cabernet sauvignon that put Santa Cruz wines on the map at the 1976 Judgement of Paris tasting. Sample their single vineyard wines by appointment at the **Monte Bello Estate** in Cupertino.
- Make the affluent Silicon Valley town of Saratoga your last stop for dinner steeped in elegance at Michelin-starred **Plumed Horse**, a community staple dating back to 1952.
- Overnight at **The Inn at Saratoga Tapestry Collection by Hilton**; neighboring **Los Gatos** offers more lodging choices.



● Day 4: Silicon Valley to Livermore Valley

- Head to **San Jose** for some memorable urban wine and food experiences en route to **Livermore Valley** (45 mi/72 km).
- Visit the historic **J. Lohr San Jose Wine Center** for an informative tasting of the pioneering California winemaker's vintages and have a grazing style lunch at the vibrant **San Pedro Square Market** featuring a diversity of globally-inspired cuisines.
- Get back on the highway to **Livermore** and take your pick of tastings at a few of California's oldest wineries established in the 1880s—**Murrieta's Well**, **Concannon Vineyard** and **Wente**—and offering some of the most beautiful tasting environments in the area.
- Enjoy a spectacular dinner at **Range Life**, a top-rated neighborhood restaurant and bar.
- Overnight in **Livermore**.



Day 5: Livermore Valley to Lodi

- Start the day with breakfast at **Denica's Real Food Kitchen**.
- If retail therapy is calling, bargain hunt at the **San Francisco Premium Outlets**, Northern California's largest luxury outlet center, before hitting the highway for **Lodi** (55 mi/89 km).
- Begin your education on the country's most diverse growing region (125+ varieties) at **Lodi Wine Visitors Center**, located at the **Wine & Roses** resort, to get the lay of the land with the option to book a seated tasting.
- Dedicate the rest of the afternoon to wellness and relaxation at the **Wine & Roses Spa**.
- No trip to California is complete without authentic Mexican cuisine—get your fix with a casual dinner at local favorite **El Paccifico Mexican Grill & Cantina**.
- Overnight in **Lodi**.

Day 6: Lodi

- Spend the day sampling Lodi vintages, starting at **Acquiesce Winery & Vineyards**, which exclusively produces white and rosé wines.
- Go five minutes down the road to **Peltier Winery & Vineyards**, started by a third-generation wine grower.
- Round out your tasting tour at **Michael David Winery**, a Lodi legend. Spend the afternoon enjoying the outdoor patio and hyper-local lunch at the café—meats are from the local 4H program and produce is grown onsite or from nearby farms.
- Do dinner at Italian staple **Pietro's Trattoria**, beloved by locals and visitors alike.
- Overnight in **Lodi**.



● Day 7: Lodi to Murphy's

- Head for the hills via CA-12 E and CA-49 S to reach historic **Murphy's** (56 mi/90 km) in **Calaveras County**.
- On your way into town, stop at the sprawling **Ironstone Vineyards** to sip wines and check out gold-mining paraphernalia and period photographs at the winery's impressive museum dedicated to local history.
- Stroll down Main Street to soak up the 1880s-era ambience (Mark Twain was among the town's famous guests in its heyday), browse the shops and visit **tasting rooms** pouring vintages from local family-owned wineries.
- Have dinner at **V Restaurant, Bar & Bistro** offering casual bistro dining as well as a more upscale experience Thursday through Sunday nights.
- Overnight in **Murphy's**.



● Day 8: **Murphy's to Plymouth**

- Start the day with an espresso and freshly baked goods at **Aria Bakery Café**.
- Drive CA-49 N to **Sutter Creek** (40 mi/64 km), known as “The Jewel of the Mother Lode” and a gateway to the **Shenandoah Valley AVA** area of **Amador Wine Country**.
- Browse the antique shops along Sutter Creek’s charming Main Street and sip at tasting rooms such as **Bella Grace**, **Uphill Vineyards** and **Baiochhi Wines**. Pick up picnic goods at **Sutter Creek Provisions** and **Sutter Creek Cheese Shop**.
- Carry on to the town of **Plymouth** (8 mi/13 km).
- Visit one or two of Plymouth wineries such as **Deaver Vineyards**, **Linsteadt Family Winery**, **Dillian Wines**, **Andis Wines** and **Karmère**.
- End the day in the tiny town of **Plymouth** and opt for dinner at sleek **Taste** or the more rustic **Plymouth Hotel Kitchen & Bar**.
- Overnight in **Plymouth**.



● Day 9: Plymouth to Lincoln

- Have a big comfort food American-style breakfast at **Marlene & Glen's Dead Fly Diner** before saying farewell to Plymouth.
- Drive to **Lincoln** in **Placer County** (48 mi/77 km) via La Trobe Road.
- En route, stop at **El Dorado Hills Town Center**, an emerging shopping and dining area in the Sacramento suburb, and take a fresh air break around **Folsom Lake**.
- Start your tour of the **Placer Wine Trail**, home to the **Sierra Foothills AVA**, at **Twin Rocks Estate Winery** in the upscale community of Granite Bay.
- Make your way to **Lone Buffalo Vineyards** or **PaZa Estate Winery**—both in rural Auburn.
- End the day in Lincoln at **Wise Villa Winery & Restaurant**, a Certified California Sustainable Vineyard & Winery with its own gourmet restaurant where you can enjoy dinner with wine pairings.
- Overnight in **Lincoln or Auburn**.



● Day 10: **Grass Valley**

- Depart for **Grass Valley** via CA-49 N (34 mi/54 km), stopping at **Lucchesi Vineyards & Winery** south of town.
- Wander around the artsy former mining town, browsing the shops and murals and tasting at **Sierra Star Vineyard**.
- If you feel like more exploring, head up the highway five minutes to check out neighboring **Nevada City**, with more charming shops and eateries as well as **Nevada City Winery** and the **Szabo Vineyards** tasting room.
- Have dinner at the **Golden Gate Saloon at Holbrooke Hotel**—it's the oldest operating saloon west of the Mississippi, and you'll once again be following in the footsteps of Mark Twain.
- Overnight at the impeccably restored **Holbrooke Hotel**.
(SMF is 62 mi/100 km away and SFO is 154 mi/247 km away)