

OUR NEW TEST GARDENS, REVEALED!

# Sunset

## WINE LOVER'S GUIDE

WHERE TO GO, WHAT TO SIP, AND THE \$11 BOTTLE TO BUY NOW

FRANCIS  
FORD COPPOLA &  
GRANDDAUGHTER  
GIA TALK FAMILY  
AND VINES


FALL'S BEST  
COMFORT FOOD  
—  
HAWAII  
DREAM TOWN  
—

18


SPECTACULAR  
SPOTS TO  
CELEBRATE  
SONOMA  
COUNTY  
WINE MONTH

VISIT US AT [SUNSET.COM](http://SUNSET.COM) | OCTOBER 2016






ROAD TRIP



## SURPRISE! IT'S SONOMA

*Want a bit of adventure with your  
world-class Chardonnay?  
Treasures await in the heart  
of wine country.*

*By Christine  
Ciarmello*



*Where  
wine meets  
waves*

SONOMA COAST'S  
TIMBER COVE



THE DONUM ESTATE  
ART AMONG THE VINES

**“W**hen we installed the first one here, it looked a bit sacrificial,” says Anne Moller-Racke, pointing at a giant ox head speared atop an 8-foot bronze spike. Clad in a white T-shirt and overalls, the winegrower and I have just reached a crest of acreage on The Donum Estate in Sonoma Valley. Into view pops *Circle of Animals*, a dozen bronze animal heads staked firmly into the Pinot-loving soil of Carneros. This is esteemed artist Ai Weiwei’s reinterpretation of an 18th-century artwork, each animal representing the 12 cycles of the Chinese zodiac. And although Moller-Racke is responsible for growing the grapes behind some of the best Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays in the region, now and again her duties stray into the realm of art. She oversees the arrival and assemblage of sculptures, placement of each piece, and landscaping choices surrounding them. It’s been fascinating, she says, to learn a whole new language and even navigate customs.

In that field of fine art, in fact, rumor has it that tucked into a nearby Pinot Noir vineyard is the work of world-famous artist James Turrell, whose installations manipulate light and space. That hidden piece isn’t for public consumption, but Donum does encourage visitors to walk the vineyards and find 15 other arty secrets. Discovering them can be particularly surprising after finishing a tasting in the dairy barn—among lavender fields and olive trees, it’s startling to confront two 9-foot-tall contemporary terra-cotta warriors guarding vines. Their faces twist with laughter, sculpted by Chinese artist Yue Minjun. It’s amazing what pairs with wine, I think, as I examine Keith Haring’s *King and Queen*. The sculpture is made for absorbing slowly—like a Pinot.

Recently, exploring Sonoma County (whose landmass is bigger than Rhode Island) has felt more like a scavenger hunt—with great wines as the aside. Drinkers are traipsing to the vineyards to uncover the Sonoma stories that unfold into adventures that might last one hour or three. It’s like a liberal arts education with ample Chardonnay. You pick up tips on where to head next from those you meet, so don’t simply drink Sonoma County. Hunt for the treasures and allow for a little serendipity.

With that in mind, here are a few wine-soaked adventures to start your day, but be fluid. See where the wine takes you after that first taste.



Donum’s winegrower, Anne Moller-Racke



Choose your  
adventure:  
12 picks

## AROUND SONOMA TOWN

### 1.

#### ALFRESCO ART SHOW

It's not just grapes you'll encounter in the vineyards of **The Donum Estate** in Carneros, but very large art pieces. In addition to terra-cotta warriors and bronze animal heads (see page 20), you'll confront the 40-foot-high face *Jaume Plensa*. Incredible Pinots and Chardonnays are then poured either in the former dairy barn or in a room overlooking local mountains. \$50 tasting; [thedonumestate.com](http://thedonumestate.com).

### 2.

#### SCORING WINE TO MUSIC

Can a musical composition change how wine tastes? That's for you to uncover at **Buena Vista**, the historic 1857 winery now owned by wine mogul Jean-Charles Boisset. The Frenchman restored the location a few years ago, adding his signature (whimsical) flourishes, like the music-and-wine experience. Two choices for your taking: symphony music, recorded or live. You can also join a tasting that invites you into an animatronic museum of wine-making tools (\$25). Tasting from \$20; [buenavistawinery.com](http://buenavistawinery.com).

### 3.

#### A HIKE WITH CABERNET

The word "park" in **Bartholomew Park Winery** is to be taken literally. The tasting room is in 400 acres of old oaks and madrones, surrounded by the Cab-friendly Mayacamas Mountains. A museum includes Victorian photographer Eadweard Muybridge's photos documenting viticulture back in the day. \$10 tasting; [bartpark.com](http://bartpark.com).



FROM TOP Garden tasting table at Three Sticks Wines; Three Sticks mural by artist Rafael Arana.



### 4.

#### WELCOME HOME TO THE 1840S

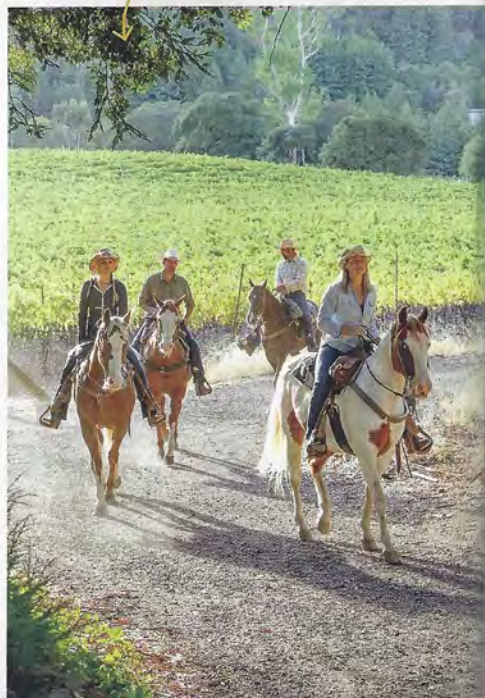
You'll be transported to old Mexican territory of Northern California from the moment you set eyes on The Adobe at **Three Sticks Wines**. The Sonoma town structure was built circa 1842, bought in 2012 by Three Sticks' owner Bill Price, and restored historically, with artful touches by designer Ken Fulk. Even better is what's to drink: Behind the bottles is winemaker Bob Cabral, who built Williams Selyem into a legendary label. This is his new gig. Tasting from \$35; [threestickswines.com](http://threestickswines.com).

### 5.

#### CAVE MEN AND WOMEN

You might be met with a moment of reverence when mentioning **Hanzell Vineyards** in Sonoma Valley. Its founder, James David Zellerbach, who was U.S. ambassador to Italy under Eisenhower, was a pioneer, first bottling from the hills of the Mayacamas Mountains in 1957; in subsequent decades, winemaker Bob Sessions built a legacy of wine quality unmatched in the county. Hanzell's heritage tour welcomes you into this world of caves, barrels, and exquisite Pinots and Chards. Tour and tasting \$45; [hanzell.com](http://hanzell.com).

#### TRIPLE CREEK HORSE OUTFIT ON THE TRAIL OF JACK LONDON





## 6.

### A LITERARY WINE GALLOP

**Jack London State Historic Park** is one of the most fascinating in the system, connecting nature to the area's storied literary past in Glen Ellen. **Triple Creek Horse Outfit** leads guided horseback riding tours into its 1,400 acres, ending at Benziger Winery for a tasting. Since 2016 is the centennial of London's death, a commemorative three-hour ride brings you to the place where a famed photo of the author was snapped. \$330; [triplecreekhorseoutfit.com](http://triplecreekhorseoutfit.com).

## NORTH OF SANTA ROSA

## 7.

### COCKTAILING AT A WINERY

**Medlock Ames** turns out some terrific dark reds, highly drinkable on an outdoor table next to its gorgeous tasting room in a quiet part of Alexander Valley. But come 5 p.m., the tasting room's back door opens onto the world of a dark-wood saloon. Herbs picked from the garden are muddled and slapped to concoct some original cocktails at Alexander Valley Bar. A brilliant transition to the evening—a winetasting. Tasting from \$15; [medlockames.com](http://medlockames.com).

## 8.

### TOUR DE FRANCE

Visiting **Jordan Vineyard & Winery** for an Estate Tour & Tasting (\$120) feels a little like having free run of a French-style *Downton Abbey*, especially when staffers wearing brass nametags welcome you into the foyer with fresh-cut roses and spa water. A full-time chef prepares tasty fixings for the 90-minute tour that ushers you from breakfast by the fountain to bento-box pairings near a lake, culminating in 360° valley views. About 80 employees are needed to maintain the apiaries, orchards, gardens, olive trees, animals (donkeys and cows), and the grapes. Tasting from \$30; [jordanwinery.com](http://jordanwinery.com).

## 9.

### BUBBLY PAIRING PAR EXCELLENCE

Wine drinkers are always on the hunt for a great pairing. They'll find the real spoils in The Bubble Room at **J Vineyards & Winery**, a five-course exploration of unexpected bites (lobster ravioli in nasturtium leaves, or watermelon

# TASTING PLUS IN SONOMA COUNTY

At nearly 1,600 square miles, Sonoma County is vast. Plan a getaway that lasts a day or week, with activities centered in different parts of the region (pages 22–24), and lodging options in each (page 26).





**IRON HORSE VINEYARDS**  
**INDULGE IN AN**  
**AFTERNOON OF SIPPING**  
**AND SLURPING**



topped with *unagi*) matched with a range of wines, hosted by a dotting staff. Take time to peek at the jars displayed at the Terrace; each contains a J soil with differing qualities, like fine sandy "Steinbeck" and gravelly clay "Arbuckle." Five-course pairing menu \$95, tasting from \$20; [jwine.com](http://jwine.com).

**10.**

**GET DIRTY IN THE FIELD**

By the time **La Crema's** estate tour (\$65) is over, you'll know how to decipher the strange notations on vineyard blocks, recognize distinct microclimates and ecosystems, and drink elegantly from a wineglass as you putter around the roughly 200 acres on a golf cart. The Russian River home once belonged to iconic local personalities Saralee and Richard Kunde, whose eccentric design choices included an elevator that mooed as it ascended from floor to floor, and, currently, a classic London phone booth and a retired cargo truck as garden art. While La Crema wines are widely distributed, visitors to the estate can taste special bottles that are poured only here. Tasting from \$15; [lacrema.com](http://lacrema.com).

**HEADING TO THE COAST**

**11.**

**OYSTER GIRLS PARTY**

You can't deny the pairing of bubbles and oysters, and **Iron Horse Vineyards** will not deny you either. Sunday is the day to reserve a picnic table beneath a redwood gazebo. The Oyster Girls are on hand, shucking the bivalves (\$3/oyster) for

purchase. The cost is \$35, the flat fee for a picnic table (which seats up to six), plus a minimum of one bottle (bubbles start at \$42). Govino glasses included. \$25 tasting; [ironhorsevineyards.com](http://ironhorsevineyards.com).

**12.**

**GEOLOGICAL PAIRING WITH AN OCEAN VIEW**

Take advantage of **Fort Ross Vineyard's** elevation, ranging from 1,200 to 1,700 feet above the sea with breezes and views from the balcony. A marker of the terrain here in one of the state's newest AVAs (approved in 2012) is the San Andreas Fault, which crosses the land 2 miles away at Fort Ross State Historic Park ([fortross.org](http://fortross.org)). A hike through the historic orchards will reveal telltale signs of geologic rumblings. At the Fort Ross-Seaview Wine Festival (from \$20; Oct 15; [fortross-sea-view.org/events](http://fortross-sea-view.org/events)), you can taste bottles highlighting the juice that grows in these AVAs. →

**S** **DIGITAL BONUS** Do a deep dive into Sonoma's wine regions with tips from our complete travel guide: [sunset.com/sonomaguide](http://sunset.com/sonomaguide).



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Tasting Bar at Iron Horse Vineyards; fresh oysters at Iron Horse; Buena Vista Winery.







TIMBER COVE  
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT  
INSPIRED THE DESIGN



TOP LEFT: L&M Motel. ABOVE: Timber Cove's ocean view and soaring lobby. BELOW: Jenner Inn.



#### SONOMA TOWN

Just blocks from the plaza's tasting rooms, shops, and restaurants, **The Inn at Sonoma** feels Victorian but is modern in style. The impressive breakfast is best lingered over on the veranda. From \$235; [innatsonoma.com](http://innatsonoma.com).

Thermal waters are the draw at **Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa**, where the resort is strategically positioned. They are funneled into the 40,000-square-foot spa, which lures in the stressed out for the bathing ritual, including a rain tunnel and salt dry sauna. From \$399; [fairmont.com/sonoma](http://fairmont.com/sonoma).

#### HEALDSBURG AREA

On oak-shrouded River Road, an 1872 farmhouse anchors **Farmhouse Inn**. The structure is the site for guest breakfasts, then, come dinner, a Michelin-starred restaurant opens to the public. Country-chic suites and cottages come with wine fridges and access to a personal somm. Rooms from \$545 (3-night min.), restaurant \$\$\$\$; [farmhouseinn.com](http://farmhouseinn.com).

**L&M Motel** may have modernized since it opened in 1950, but it remains in the family. The current caretaker's affinity for gardening is evident; a floral scent or color seems to surprise at every corner. It's a toss-up whether the best perk is the indoor pool and hot tub or the delicious home-made berry scones. From \$170; [landmotel.com](http://landmotel.com).

#### THE COAST

**Jenner Inn's** main asset has always been the waterside cottages. They're newly renovated but retain their quirkiness. Abalone shells hang in the new restaurant, which cooks up faves like fish 'n' chips, clam chowder, and steaks. Rooms from \$149, restaurant \$\$; [jennerinn.com](http://jennerinn.com).

**Timber Cove**, a grand 1963 A-frame, still sports a three-story rock fireplace. An August reopening added a tasting room, restaurant, and perks like in-room record players and a concierge who can arrange visits to nearby wineries like Hirsch. Rooms from \$250, tasting from \$20, restaurant \$\$\$; [timbercove-resort.com](http://timbercove-resort.com).