

Trail of the week: Bartholomew Memorial Park trail

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Some days all you need is a little walk through the woods, with enough ups and downs to make the blood pump and enough shade to keep you cool. If it comes with a little refreshment at the end, who could complain?

That's the formula for this "only in Sonoma" hike, the 2.4-mile Bartholomew Memorial Park trail. It packs a workout into a 90-minute loop, takes you through a deep oak woodland and, in the process delivers postcard-worthy views of the Sonoma Valley, two historic wineries and, when the weather cooperates, the Golden Gate Bridge.

Turn the outing into an occasion by packing a picnic to eat on the landscaped grounds and pairing it with a bottle of wine from Buena Vista Winery or Bartholomew Park Winery. Both maintain tasting rooms within each reach.

The entire park was once home to Hungarian Count Agoston Haraszthy, who planted grapevines there in 1861 and built the Buena Vista winery to process them. A villa for his family soon followed.

Less than a decade later, the vines were wiped out by Phylloxera and Haraszthy abandoned them. He died in 1869 in Central America, and his villa later burned. It was replaced by a replica.

The overgrown property was purchased in 1943 by a war correspondent named Frank Bartholomew and his wife, Toni. They eventually sold the winery. After Frank's death, she created the memorial park and built a replica of the count's villa. It now holds the Bartholomew Park Winery's tasting room.

Visitors can park near the villa and hike the loop in either direction. About midway, Benicia's Lake is a natural shady rest stop. During wet months it is filled with pollywogs, singing frogs and mosquitoes.

Benches are located on either end of the loop, providing another chance to stop and drink in the scenic landscape below.