



## Paradise for wine lovers

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If you're planning a trip to California wine country for harvest this year or just knocking the trip off of your "bucket list" make sure you budget some time to explore Sonoma County. This incredible region lies just to the west of Napa Valley and is an easy day trip from San Francisco.

Sonoma County's history began in 1812 when Russian colonists planted the first grapes along the coast. The famed **Buena Vista Winery** was founded in 1857 by Hungarian Count Agoston Haraszthy, who is considered to be the father of the modern California Wine industry.

By 1920 there were more than 250 wineries with more than 22,000 acres in production. A post-war grape glut slowed things down a bit in the late 1940s and proration programs were instituted by the government as wineries worked to rebuild their businesses.

Hanzell Vineyards planted the first Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in the region between 1953 and 1954. These varietals became the hallmark grapes for Sonoma as the region continued to evolve and grow into the esteemed region it is today.

Sonoma County has so much to offer today's wine lover with amazing wineries, fantastic restaurants and some remarkable views along the roads that wind through the vineyards. If you prefer a more country feel that's a little more laid back, then Sonoma County is for you.

Sonoma County is one of the most diverse wine regions on the planet, and that diversity provides incredible opportunities for winemakers and wine lovers alike. It is home to 17 distinct AVA (American Viticultural Area), including the famous Russian River Valley, Chalk Hill, Alexander Valley Carneros, and the Dry Creek Valley.

You can see a good portion of the region on a day trip, but to really do it justice, its best to plan at least a full weekend so you can soak it all in. One of the nice things about Sonoma is it is typically less crowded than the Napa Valley, so you can spend less time in traffic on the roads and more in the tasting rooms.