

Decanter

Downtown Napa for wine lovers

Discover an alternative to Napa Valley with Decanter's guide to Downtown Napa for wine lovers – no car required.



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Cadet Beer & Wine Bar Credit: Photo courtesy of Alexandra Harner of Cadet Beer & Wine Bar

Napa Valley is one of the most-visited destinations for wine-loving travellers, and it's no surprise why. Home to 16 AVAs, 18,000+ hectares of vineyards, and over 450 wineries within a 30-mile radius, the region is both a bountiful and beautiful choice for curious wine lovers worldwide.

However, those familiar with wine region travel are no strangers to the downsides of this style of visit. Extensive time in the car, pre-scheduled appointments, and the need for a designated driver can create massive headaches while trying to enjoy the best that wine travel has to offer. Thankfully, there is a solution.

Situated at the base of the region's prestigious valley, Downtown Napa is a safe haven for wine lovers looking for a food-and-booze soaked weekend, no car or pre-scheduled appointments required. Home to a slew of tasting rooms, world-class restaurants and delightful places to drink, this small-yet-fierce urban centre is ideal for wine-loving travellers looking for an easy, laid-back getaway. Check out our perfect three-day itinerary for taking in all that this delightful city centre has to offer, no car required.

Thanks to the region's spectacular year-round weather, planning a visit to Napa promises a great time during any month of the year. Peak seasons take place from March to May, as well as August to October (harvest time) – the latter of which is arguably the most beautiful time of year.

Although Napa is best known for its full-bodied **Cabernet Sauvignon**, there's so much more to discover. In addition to flavour-packed **Chardonnay**, **Merlot**-based blends, and powerful **Syrah**, a slew of other wine grapes are cultivated in this diverse growing area. With regards to food, the region doesn't necessarily boast a signature dish – however, the taco trucks on Soscol Avenue offer some of the area's most authentic cuisine.

Stacking the days with tasting room appointments can quickly run up a high tab, as wine tasting flights are generally always the pricier option. Instead, opt for a simple glass or bottle option at places where you may only be interested in one or two wines. Save the wine flights for tasting rooms that truly pique your curiosity – that's to say, have a larger number of wines that spark your interest.

My perfect weekend in Downtown Napa

Sunday



Chateau Buena Vista. Credit: Dylan Elliott

Evening

Prior to heading out, end your trip on a luxurious note with a visit to **Chateau Buena Vista**'s tasting room. Located just a few steps away on First Street, this decked out tasting room focuses on 'Four Cs': Champagne, Caviar, Cabernet, and Chocolate. Simply pick your poison – or hey, why not spring for all four – and dive in (and don't forget to grab some delicious, hand-painted Earth & Sky chocolates to take home with you).