

NAPA GETAWAY, TRIP IDEAS, WHAT'S NEW IN WINE COUNTRY

12 Unique Winery Experiences in Sonoma and Napa Wine Country

Medieval fortresses and parterre gardens, swimming pools and outdoor art galleries, riding horses and trolleys — there's plenty of reason to venture outside the tasting room in Wine Country.

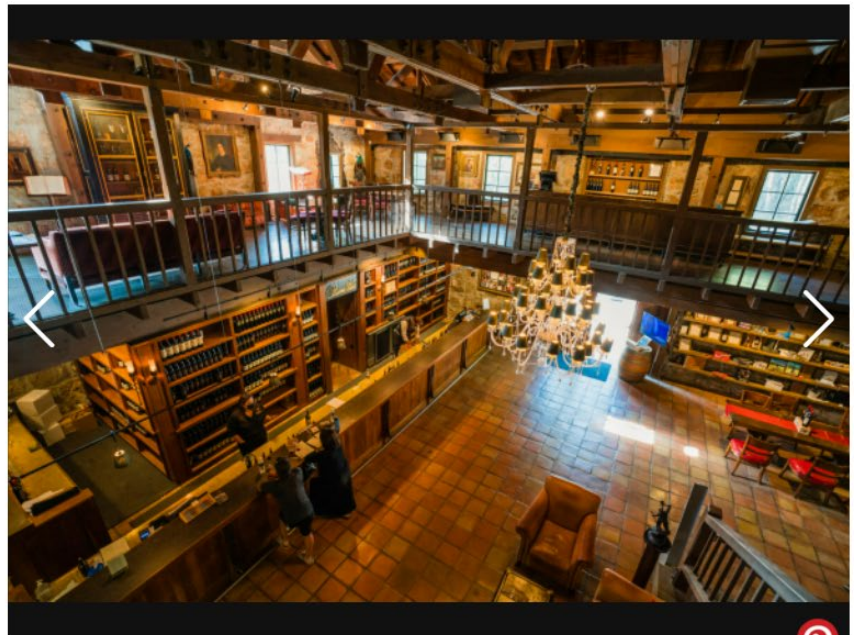
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Weary, somewhat bleary of the spin-sniff-sip-swallow-or-spit wine tasting experience? These Sonoma and Napa wineries offer a little something extra to pair with your cabernet.

Medieval fortresses and parterre gardens, swimming pools and outdoor art galleries, riding horses and trolleys — there's plenty of reason to venture outside the tasting room on your next Wine Country trip.

Click through the above gallery for a peek at 12 unique winery experiences in Sonoma and Napa counties.



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The best way to get a taste of Buena Vista's history (and some wine) is to reserve the Barrel Tasting and Winery Tour (\$50), which takes visitors on a stroll through the winery grounds and into the Champagne Cellar for a taste of current release wines. Next, the tour continues into the wine caves where guests can sample wine from the barrel. (John Burgess/The Press Democrat)

Living history at Buena Vista Winery

Founded in 1857 by Agoston Haraszthy, Buena Vista is the second-oldest winery in California and is often referred to as the oldest premium winery in the state. (The oldest winery in California is D'Agostini Winery, which was founded in 1856.)

Haraszthy, a vivacious and eccentric pioneer, immigrated from Europe in 1840 in search of the good life. Following in the footsteps of the forty-niners, he found the perfect terroir for "purple gold" and, as the self-proclaimed "Count of Buena Vista," he established a reputation as an experimental vintner, a shrewd businessman and a flamboyant evangelist. (He died as he had lived — dramatically — in an alligator-infested river in the jungles of Nicaragua.)

The legend of Haraszthy and his winery is now recreated by Buena Vista owner Jean-Charles Boisset, a modern-day version of the eccentric count. The best way to get a taste of the winery's history (and some wine) is to reserve the Barrel Tasting & Winery Tour (\$50), which takes visitors on a stroll through the winery grounds and into the Champagne Cellar for a taste of current release wines. Next, the tour continues into the wine caves where guests can sample wine from the barrel.

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