

San Francisco Chronicle

One Day, One Place: Yountville, Napa Valley



Yountville, Wine Country people will tell you, used to be normal.

Those days, it's safe to say, are long gone. Stroll across this tiny town (population: 2,924), and you're more liable trip over Michelin stars, 90-point wines and designer shoes than anything middle-class or normal. Tucked away off Highway 29, the town doesn't feel busy like St. Helena or constantly under construction, like Napa proper. Here, under the oak trees, is a place for some high-end rest and relaxation.

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Still, you don't have to be a Saudi prince on holiday to enjoy everything Yountville has to offer. From white table clothes to picnic blankets, this town has everything you need for a wine country day out.

Midday

If you're still recovering from a day of wine tasting or just looking to do something besides drink, walk the half mile down Washington, over the wooden bridge until you reach The French Laundry.

Chances are you don't have a reservation — because you have better things to spend the price of a prix fixe on, like your mortgage — but the restaurant's public gardens, just across the street, are worth perusing. Try not to nibble on fresh greens right from the ground or take a picnic to the nearby tables.

Continue down Washington to V Marketplace. The historic building was once part of a large winery in the 1870s and now holds all sorts of shops, from home goods at Domain Home and Garden to “resort wear” for men at Kane, and, of course, plenty of wine.

Lunch options abound nearby, from patio dining at Spanish Coqueta or a truly impressive spread of meats and cheeses to go from Atelier Fine Foods.