

instinct

Travel Thursdays - Sonoma & Napa Valleys. Wine All You Want. It's What They Do Here.

Adam Dupuis | April 13, 2017

When planning my trip to Napa, California, I was unsure which of the two wine valleys I desired to experience. Napa? Sonoma? My thought was, why not both? A valley a day? Could this be done?

Fueled up, we proceeded to the [Buena Vista Winery](#). I wanted to see some historical aspects of the wine industry and this place had it. As you walk up the path to the winery, there are chances to learn not only about the Buena Vista, but just about all of California's history by reading the signs and viewing the cut outs share with visitors along the trail. Once into the first building, my friend and I commented at the character of a man dressed as the "*Count of Buena Vista*," Agoston Haraszthy. We knew we were going to be in for a good tour and it was just that. I recommend this tour for anyone and everyone for it was an easy walk with educational as well as fun banter with "The Count." He took us into a couple of the original caves carved into the hillside, talked about the multi million dollar reconstruction and retrofitting that occurred to save this landmark from total destruction and of course tasting wine along the way.



The second day found us looking to experience Napa Valley and another winery and a couple of eateries. [Raymond Winery](#) was our choice for the day. We arrived very early in the area for our tour so we hunted down the Clif Family Bruschetteria to enjoy not only their hospitality (yes the Clif bar is their's, too) but also their phenomenal bruschetta served out of their food truck. Seating was available behind the winery.



Arriving at the Raymond Vineyards, we noticed the huge difference from the Buena Vista Winery. Even though both are owned by Jean-Charles Boisset, the Boisset Collection, there is a palpable difference. The Raymond family has great history of its own, coming to Napa Valley in 1933 and starting their family winery in 1970, but the Raymond property has a newness to it. The embellishments given to the Raymond Vineyards and its tasting rooms are an experience in themselves. From the mannequins wearing boas and wings in the Crystal Cellar, to the "Le Cabaret" room which houses the largest collection Baccarat crystal, mainly in the form of chandeliers, to the experience of being a winemaker for a day, taking your time at Raymond is a definite need. There's a little bit of flamboyance, opulence, and imagination all over the venue and in each room, and it shouldn't be any other way. People in town know to try and get to one or more of annual parties, especially New Years and Halloween.



Le Cabaret - one of my favorite rooms in the collection

Before leaving Raymond Vineyard, we walked along the Theatre of Nature where we learned why there are goats, chickens, and well taken care of bat and owl houses on the property.

We'd like to thank the Count, Megan at Raymond, Lloyd at Corner 103, Gary with Out in the Vineyard, and all the other people we met on our journey. A great many new friendships were made during our wine-filled quick two days in Sonoma and Napa Valley. The quality of people, the views, and of course the wine are just three of the several great reasons to book a trip to California's wine region. See you there!