

THE PRESSES

SIX SONOMA VALLEY WINERIES THAT SHOULD BE ON YOUR RADAR

Sonoma Valley is also known as the "Valley of the Moon." The area lies between the Mayacamas Mountains to its east (which divide the valley from Napa Valley) and the Sonoma Mountains to its west.

It's a historical region, home to the oldest commercial winery in California. Cooler climate pockets like Los Carneros and Bennett Valley are places where white grapes thrive. Then, there's the low-lying valley floor that gets hot enough to produce heat-loving grapes like Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

The wineries of Sonoma Valley are easy to access from the city of Sonoma. There are plenty of great shopping, dining and lodging options. Check out the original Williams-Sonoma store and the impossible-to-miss Spanish mission on the town square. There are also many great restaurants (Girl & the Fig, El Molino Central and El Dorado Kitchen). —Esther Mobley

Overview

Scribe: The winery has accumulated an almost cult following among younger vino lovers. But enophiles of any age will enjoy passing an afternoon here. You'll taste at the "hacienda," which is a recently renovated 19th century mission-style home.

Gundlach Bundschu: If you try just one thing at Gundlach, it should be the Gewürztraminer. Jacob Gundlach brought the grape over from his Bavarian homeland and planted it on Rhinefarm in 1859. Today, it's the signature estate wine. This winery is also for the music buff. They host outdoor concerts frequently.

Buena Vista: California's oldest commercial winery was founded by Count Agoston Haraszthy in 1857. There's a definite amusement park vibe here, with a life-size labyrinth and tour guides dressed in period costumes from the late 1800s. There's even a sound and light show that revolves around a dining table of mannequins.

Hamel Family: You might think you're in Napa here. Why? There's a sense of modern formality that encompasses everything from the architecture to the lounge tasting. Spring for the reserve tasting: a three-hour experience that includes a barrel sample.

Westwood: The pride of the Annadel Gap, the site is carved into a narrow pass of the Sonoma Valley between Mount Hood and the Sonoma Mountains. Today, Ben Cane crafts the lineup of Burgundian and Rhone-focused varieties. The Pinot Noir is good, but don't miss the Roussanne-Viognier.

Kivelstadt: From orange wine to take-home growlers, Kivelstadt is Glen Ellen's answer to a Brooklyn-esque hipster watering hole. Guests can choose the size of their flights (\$15–\$20) or book a private vineyard tour. The pretense-free experience is highly enjoyable, and don't forget to taste the Wayward Son orange wine.