

## How to Safely Visit California's Bucolic Wine Country This Fall



Here's how to sip in the sun while practicing social distancing.

By Jonathan Cristaldi on July 30, 2020

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When things are falling apart, and the center cannot hold, go to the place where an eternal sun holds court over teal blue skies, and [wine is the center of attention](#)—something you can hold (or swirl) in your glass. [California wine country](#) is a place of gorgeous, wide-open spaces, hiking and biking trails, and fewer people to obstruct the views everywhere of rows upon rows of lush, green manicured vines that sway gently amidst coastal breezes.

Related: [How to Spend 24 Hours in Napa Valley](#)

Daily life is anything but ordinary during this worldwide pandemic, but there's still plenty of extraordinary things to do and see from Napa and Sonoma south to Santa Barbara County. The rules are being re-written in real-time, and new opportunities to wisely experience wine country are waiting.

Here's how to safely visit and what you need to know about hotel accommodations, Michelin-star dining, tasting opportunities, and a few truly elevated experiences:

# Napa Experiences



*Sara Sanger/Courtesy Silver Oak*

Every restaurant has had to turn up the dial of creativity, including Michelin-rated ones, and following suit, resorts are introducing new partnerships with local wineries. [Calistoga Ranch](#), part of the Auberge Resorts Collection and an [American Express Fine Hotels & Resorts](#) property, has teamed up with [Chateau Montelena](#), best known for their first-place victory over French wines in the Judgement of Paris tasting of 1976. Anyone who has seen [Bottle Shock](#) has been witness to actor Bill Pullman playing a character based on Montelena founder Bo Barrett.

“We’re currently offering three distinct [tasting experiences](#),” explains Montelena winemaker Matt Crafton, “one of which is hosted by myself, or Bo.” The tastings include an in-depth flight of wines spanning five decades, special access to large format bottles, and very limited bottlings. Two of the options also incorporate a private dinner prepared by Calistoga Ranch’s Chef Chris Ludwick, paired with Montelena wines from the tasting. “These are really on another level,” adds Crafton. On an exceptional level, if you’re really missing the spa, you could [buy out the entire spa](#) at Calistoga Ranch.