

Hiking & Biking In Sonoma Valley

Sonoma Valley, cradled between the Mayacamas and the Sonoma Mountain Range, encompasses some of California's most picturesque landscapes, from wineries and farmlands to the Sonoma Mission and the General Vallejo home and barracks. A wonderful way to experience Sonoma Valley's many charms is by taking to its hiking and biking trails, which offer an in-depth view of the beautiful 17-mile valley -- including the City of Sonoma, named a "Bicycle-Friendly Community" by the League of American Bicyclists.

Sonoma Valley offers an unparalleled variety of routes with unique stops and sites, ideal for any level of hiking or biking skill -- from adventuresome mountain bikers, sport road riders and avid trail runners to more casual explorers such as wine aficionados, foodies, or dog lovers. Sonoma Valley paths weave through wine country vineyards, mountain ranges, California State Parks, and all the way into the center of town to Sonoma Plaza.

While hikers and bikers can choose from a virtually endless array of trails, a few suggested favorites include:

- *Sonoma's History & Wines* – This walking route is an easy 2.5 miles while the bike route is a difficult 9.7 miles. Both begin at The Plaza and reflect the evolution of the Real Wine Country with stops at notable and newer wineries, The Mission, founded in 1823, and the adobe barracks, which housed Mexican army troops during the mid-1800s, the charming gothic revival house "Lachryma Montis" ("Tear of the Mountain"), historic *Vella Cheese Company* and *The Patch*, offering farm-fresh produce.
- *Sonoma's Overlook Trail* – This moderate walking hike is 3,800 steps or 1.9 miles. Winding along wooded hillsides all the way up to a lookout point that gazes out upon Sonoma Valley, the Sonoma Overlook Trail showcases a diverse array of native plants and animals along with spectacular panoramic views.
- *Sonoma Valley Regional State Park* – the 162-acre park is explored on foot during a moderate three-mile hike or by bike during an easy 2.5-mile ride along paved and dirt trails. The area features picturesque oak woodlands and beautiful wildflower displays in the spring. It also offers picnic areas with tables at the trail head and Elizabeth Anne Perrone Dog Park, a one-acre dog park.
- *Jack London State Park* – A memorial to writer and adventurer Jack London, who resided here from 1905 until his death in 1916, the park's stunningly beautiful acreage was once part of the legendary author's Beauty Ranch. Walkers challenge themselves to a 9.25 mile hike while bicyclists complete a 3.75 mile route -- each passes by the House of Happy Walls Museum, Wolf House ruins, Jack London's cottage, The Pig Palace, and London's Lake and Bath House.
- *Sugarloaf Ridge State Park* – Sugarloaf Ridge State Park contains the headwaters of Sonoma Creek and boasts 25 miles of trails enveloped by redwoods and ferns or by oak woodland and chaparral. The park offers one of the best family hikes, Meadow Loop, which follows the valley

floor along upper Sonoma Creek. Alternately, Bald Mountain Loop, a challenging 7.25 mile hike, provides a view from the 2,729-foot summit that takes in everything from the Golden Gate Bridge to Mt. St. Helena.

- *Annadel State Park* – For wildflower lovers, Annadel Park offers a great variety of flowers from early spring until early summer, especially around Lake Ilesanjo. The park's highlights include 35 miles of trails, plus good black bass and blue gill fishing. Hikers traverse cool forests and open meadows for five miles on the Warren Richardson Trail while bikers embark on Canyon Trail past the lake on a 14.8 mile route.

Sonoma Valley is known as the birthplace of the California wine industry. In addition to wine tasting and winery tours, many Sonoma Valley wineries now allow visitors to enjoy hiking trails through their vineyard grounds. These include:

The Kunde Family Estate, family owned and operated for five generations, offers guests guided hiking options through its sustainably farmed vineyards in northern Sonoma Valley's Kenwood area. Kunde's Hike & Taste in the Vineyards is a fun, casual and up-close hike through the 1,850 acre volcanic and vertical Kunde Family Estate. The dog-friendly Eco-Tour Hike is a moderately strenuous three-mile hike that climbs from the Sonoma Valley floor to 1,400 feet in the Mayacamas Mountain range. Both hiking options include vineyard site tastings of Kunde's award-winning wines.

Moon Mountain Vineyard offers summer hiking excursions through its hillside vineyards, located high on the Sonoma Valley side of Mount Veeder at nearly a 2,000-foot elevation. The excursions, offered April through October by appointment, include a guided hike, catered lunch in a shaded picnic area, barrel tasting in the natural volcanic rock caves, and wine tasting atop Moon Mountain with spectacular views of the vineyard property and Sonoma Valley.

Bartholomew Park Winery, located a few blocks east of Sonoma Plaza, welcomes visitors to its historic property that dates back to the 1830s, offering approximately three miles of marked hiking trails in the hills behind the winery. A variety of indigenous California vegetation – oak groves, manzanita, madrone, redwood-shaded fern grottos, and fields of spring wildflowers – provides hikers with a generous sampling of the visual delights and natural beauty of Sonoma Valley. On a clear day, the view from Bartholomew Park's trails extends to San Francisco.

A variety of Sonoma Valley tour operators including *Goodtime Touring* and *Sonoma Valley Bike Tours & Rentals* offer winery tours on bikes and bike rentals as well. Deemed “the cycling mecca,” Sonoma Valley is a favorite of elite cycling teams and athletes as well as amateurs.

For information on Sonoma Valley's hiking and biking routes including a downloadable map, visit www.sonomavalley.com. Complimentary pocket size hike and bike guides are available at the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau locations.