



## GENERAL FACTS

### **Overview & Contact Information**

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Overview:	Located in the heart of Northern California wine country, Sonoma Valley is a 17-mile long valley within Sonoma County that encompasses the city of Sonoma and the villages of The Springs, Glen Ellen, Carneros, Bennett Valley and Kenwood. A year-round destination, Sonoma Valley is home to more than 100 premium wineries; a variety of lodging options ranging from luxury hotels to charming bed and breakfasts; award-winning olive oil producers; breweries; artisan shopping; delicious dining; 13,000 acres of state and regional parks; world-class spas and endless discovery. The town of Sonoma is the birthplace of the state of California, as well as the state's wine industry. Sonoma Valley is home to the state's oldest commercial and oldest family-run wineries, and 85 percent of wineries within Sonoma Valley are family owned. The destination, which is easily accessible from all major Northern California airports, encourages all visitors to partake in its wine country lifestyle and enjoy a vacation that is fun, friendly and beautiful.
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### **Quick Facts**

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Location:	Sonoma Valley is located 45 minutes north of San Francisco, by way of Highway 12. Bordered by the Mayacamas to the west and the Sonoma Mountains to the east, the 17-mile long valley begins in the north at the edge of Santa Rosa, and extends 17 miles south to Carneros.
Towns:	Sonoma Valley is comprised of the towns of Sonoma, The Springs, Glen Ellen, Carneros, Bennett Valley and Kenwood.
Accolades:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <i>US News &amp; World Report</i>: Sonoma named "Best Small Town to Visit in the U.S."</li><li>○ Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index named Sonoma County "Happiest Place in California"</li><li>○ TripAdvisor named Sonoma County "Number One Wine Destination"</li><li>○ From the "Most Romantic," "Best Town for the Holidays," "Best Small Town for 4<sup>th</sup> of July," "Happiest," "Quirkiest," "Friendliest," "Prettiest," "Greenest," "Slowest," "Most Historic," "Best Wine Destination," "Best Place to Start a Business," and more by publications and groups including Gallup-Healthways the Well-Being Index, Trip Advisor, Travel + Leisure, Cities Journal, Nerdwallet and more -- Sonoma is no stranger to major awards and honors.</li></ul>
Access:	Sonoma Valley is easily accessible via all major airlines to all major Northern California airports, including San Francisco International Airport (SFO), Oakland International Airport (OAK); Sacramento International Airport (SMF) and Charles M. Schulz Sonoma County Airport (STS).

There are two private FBOs located just outside Sonoma, including Sonoma Valley Airport and Sonoma Skyport.

**Climate:** An ideal year-round destination, Sonoma Valley has a Mediterranean climate. Averaging just 29 inches of rainfall per year (typically November through April), it is one of Sonoma County's driest regions. Temperatures in the Valley rarely drop below freezing during the rainy winter months; in the summertime, coastal fog and breezes bring cool evenings even after very warm days.

## History

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**Name Origin:** The phrase "Valley of the Moon" was first recorded in an 1850 report by General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo to the California Legislature. According to famous writer Jack London, who had a ranch in Sonoma, the Native American word "Sonoma" means "valley of the moon." London later used the term for his book, *Valley of the Moon*, penned in 1913.

**Spanish Rule:** In 1823, Mission Solano was the sole California mission established under the rule of Mexico. Located within the town of Sonoma, today, Mission Solano marks the end of the California Mission Trail – a 600-mile journey that stretches from San Diego to Sonoma, and provides access to 21 missions built when Spain controlled California.

**Mexican Rule:** Soon after the Sonoma mission was built, it was secularized by the Mexican government, and under the orders of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, el Pueblo de Sonoma was laid out in the standard form of a Mexican town, centered around the historic plaza, which is still the town's focal point.

**Birthplace of California:** The raising of the first California Bear Flag and Vallejo's arrest in 1846 by a band of Americans claiming acting on the orders of Colonel John C. Fremont, was the initial act that founded California, the Bear Flag Republic. Vallejo later transferred his allegiance with U.S. statehood (1850), and with his amassed land holdings guided the development of the town of Sonoma and created large ranches throughout the valley. Today, guests can still visit Vallejo's former home, the Vallejo Estate which is part of the Sonoma State Historic Park, as well as that of his daughter – a private event space and pop-up restaurant named, The General's Daughter.

**Birthplace of California Wine:** California's first wineries were established in Sonoma. Some of the Valley's wineries survived the phylloxera epidemic of the 1870s as well as the impact of prohibition in the early 20th century.

Sonoma is home to California's oldest commercial winery, Buena Vista Winery, founded in 1857, as well as its oldest family-run winery, Gundlach Bundschu, founded in 1858. It is also home to the first fully biodynamic winery in the state, Benzinger.

**Early Tourism:** The other communities in the valley, such as Kenwood, Glen Ellen and Boyes Hot Springs were founded later in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These towns were home to many resorts offering access to the geothermic hot springs: Boyes Hot Springs and Agua Caliente were popular health retreats for tourists from San Francisco until the mid 1950s.

**Noted Natives & Residents:**

- Jack London, author
- Brandon Morrow, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher
- Charles Schulz, cartoonist behind "Peanuts"
- John Alan Lasseter, chief creative officer of Pixar Animation Studios, Walt Disney Animation Studios and DisneyToon Studios
- Kurt Hamlin, guitarist of Metalica
- Robert Kamen, screenwriter and winemaker (Taken, Transporter, Karate Kid)

## Wine

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Wine Production:	As the world's fourth-largest wine producer, California generates 85 percent of the wine from the U.S., and Sonoma and Napa Counties are the state's primary wine-related tourism hubs – garnering more than 24 million visitors to the combined areas annually.
By the Numbers:	<p>Sonoma Valley is home to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Vines initially planted in 1824</li><li>○ 80+ tasting rooms</li><li>○ 100+ internationally renowned, award-winning wineries; 85 percent of which are family owned</li><li>○ 14,000+ acres of vines (from 5 AVAs listed below)</li><li>○ 25 types of wine (including varietals)</li><li>○ 5 million cases of wine produced each year</li></ul>
Wine Varietals:	Of the dozens of grape varietals grown in Sonoma Valley, it's most known for producing excellent Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.
Terroir:	Sonoma Valley wines radiate the region's remarkable natural diversity. There are steep mountains, rolling bench lands and fertile plains. Cool coastal fog in some locations is tempered by abundant warm California sunshine in others.
AVAs & Noted Varietals:	<p>Sonoma Valley is both the name of the region, as well as its largest AVA, winning the status in 1981. The five AVAs within Sonoma Valley, and noted varietals for each, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Sonoma Valley:</b> Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot</li><li>○ <b>Sonoma Mountain:</b> Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon flourish in this high-altitude environment.</li><li>○ <b>Los Carneros:</b> Classic cool-climate varietals including Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are most popular here.</li><li>○ <b>Bennet Valley:</b> Chardonnay rules in Bennett Valley, along with Pinot Noir, Merlot and Syrah.</li><li>○ <b>Moon Mountain District:</b> While home to the historic Monte Rosso Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon is now dominant on these hillside vineyards.</li></ul>
Harvest/"Crush"	Grape harvest or "crush" takes place each year in September and October. Every year guests are invited to partake in the crush, tasting grapes, enjoying tours of wineries, as well as tastings alongside the opportunity to talk with some of the Valley's best winemakers.
Notable Winemakers:	<p>Margo Van Staaveren, Chateau St Jean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Margo is celebrating her 37th harvest at Chateau St Jean.</li><li>○ She was named "Winemaker of the Year" by <i>Wine Enthusiast</i> in 2008</li></ul> <p>Phil Cotturi, Enterprise Vineyards, Winery Sixteen 600</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For 50 years, he's been at the forefront of sustainable agriculture, including biodynamics</li></ul> <p>The Bundschu Family, Gundlach Bundschu Winery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For six generations and over 150 years, the Bundschu family has farmed their estate vineyard at the crossroads of the Sonoma Valley, Carneros and Napa Valley appellations. Few can offer as much perspective on where the valley has been and where it is going.</li></ul> <p>Richard Arrowood, Arrowood Vineyards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The title legend fits Richard well. His Sonoma Valley roots go back to 1974 when he established a pioneering vineyard designate program for Chateau St. Jean. With his own Arrowood Winery and now Amapola Creek, Richard's reputation as a true winemaster is, well, legendary.</li></ul> <p>Mike Benziger, Benziger Family Winery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Since purchasing his first Glen Ellen property in 1980, Mike and his family have established Benziger Family Winery as a true leader in quality wines and a globally recognized trailblazer in nurturing a healthy natural environment for winegrowing.</li></ul>

## Lodging & Activities

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- Lodging:** Sonoma Valley features more than 60 lodging properties and more than 850 rooms, providing a range of offerings from luxury hotels, to quaint inns, to charming bed and breakfasts.
- Arts & Culture:** Visual, performing, musical and literary art is abundant in Sonoma Valley. Expressions of Sonoma Valley's artists can be found in local galleries, restaurants, wineries and retail shops. Sonoma Valley is home to:
- **Art Galleries:** Many of the Valley's galleries are located within Sonoma Plaza, making it easy for guests to peruse multiple shops at once.
  - **The Arts Guild of Sonoma:** Also located in Sonoma Plaza, this is one of the oldest, continuously operating artists' cooperatives in the state of California. It showcases and sells works from a variety of Sonoma Valley artists, including large and small art, ceramics, photography, textiles, handmade jewelry and one-of-a-kind gifts.
  - **The Sonoma Valley Museum of Art:** Founded in 1998, the museum exhibits works by regional, national and international modern and contemporary artists.
  - **California Mission Trail:** Also known as El Camino Real, this 600-mile stretch of California connects 21 Spanish missions beginning in San Diego and ending at Mission Solano in Sonoma.
  - **Transcendence Theatre Company:** Broadway Under the Stars series founded in 2011, Transcendence's "Broadway Under The Stars" is a series of award-winning concerts featuring accomplished Broadway and Hollywood performers under the stars in the majestic open-air winery ruins in Sonoma's Jack London State Historic Park. Recently named "Theater Of The Year" for the second consecutive year and "Best Special Theatre Event" for the third consecutive year by Broadway World San Francisco, as well as the No. 2 "Outdoor Concert Venue You Shouldn't Miss" in the United States by USA Today's 10BEST; this concert series offers sensational evenings in wine country you'll never forget.
- Dining:** More than 40 restaurants are scattered throughout the valley, ranging from casual bakeries and cafes to celebrated chef-owned restaurants. The numerous restaurants offer enticing menus made from fresh, regional ingredients.
- Makers:** Beyond the delicious cuisine, visitors can meet with a variety of producers and makers within the town. Highlights include:
- **Cheese:** Located in a small, brick building in downtown Sonoma, Vella Cheese Co. is one of Sonoma's most notable cheese makers. Since 1930 the Vella family has been making cheese, including its famous variety of Monterey Jack cheeses. Among other clients, the family sources its cheese to acclaimed restaurateur, Thomas Keller.
  - **Olive Oil:** While many wineries in Sonoma Valley also produce their own olive oil (and offer olive oil tastings) a few also have tasting rooms downtown. One such location is Figone's of California Olive Oil Co. The Figone family retains the distinction as one of the "pioneers" in California's olive oil industry.
  - **Chocolate:** Sonoma Valley is home to several chocolatiers, including Wine Country Chocolates, which infuse wine into chocolate and truffles, while CocoaPlanet Chocolate Factory and Tasting Room, located just a few blocks from the Sonoma Plaza, pairs chocolates with local wines or local brews.
  - **Coffee:** Barking Dog Roasters is Sonoma Valley's only coffee roaster. Located in Sonoma, the shop also makes its own pastries in house.
  - **Bread:** For the past 20 years, the Basque Boulangerie Café has become the town's gathering spot, where locals meet for coffee and fresh pastry or sandwiches. It offers an extended café style menu available all day, which is authentic and healthy and features homemade specialties that are made fresh daily. The Basque specializes in light crumb, crisp sourdough breads and assorted sweet French or Parisian style breads, Danishes, morning rolls, cookies, pastries, desserts and cakes.

## Parks & Notable Sites:

Sonoma Valley is home to a wide variety of outdoor parks and notable historic sites. A selection of these offerings include:

- **Jack London State Park:** With more than 29 miles of trails on 1,400 acres, this National Historic Landmark is home to the ruins of a 19<sup>th</sup> century winery, 2,000-year-old Redwood trees growing more than 14 ft. in diameter, as well as the cottage where famed author Jack London lived and wrote. Guests can walk, hike, bike, horseback ride, birdwatch and more here.
- **Annadel State Park:** Located on Sonoma Valley's northern edge, this park has volcanic origins, and as such, hikers enjoy searching for Obsidian stones as well as volcanic rock outposts. The park is especially beautiful from April through June, when wildflowers are blooming.
- **Sugar Loaf Ridge State Park:** Located in the town of Kenwood, Sugar Loaf State Park is not only home to 25 miles of hiking trails, beautiful vistas showcasing views to San Francisco and camping grounds, but it is also home to Robert Ferguson Observatory, Northern California's most active public observatory. It is also the largest observatory in the western United States, completely dedicated to public viewing and education. A new 40-inch telescope has been installed; guests can sign up for Night Sky Classes, followed by a discount on camping grounds in the park.
- **Sonoma Overlook Trail:** A nearly three-mile walking path set onto the hillside backdrop above the City of Sonoma, this gentle trail provides beautiful vistas of the town below. Docent-led hikes are available to guests many weekends.
- **Sonoma Valley Regional Park:** Paved and dirt trails for hiking, bicycling and horseback riding through oak woodlands and beautiful wildflower displays in spring. Picnic areas with tables and lawn, hiking trails around reservoir.
- **Sonoma State Historic Park:** Unlike most parks with a single plot of land and a continuous boundary, Sonoma State Historic Park is a scattering of historical attractions consisting of six midtown locations near Sonoma's Plaza. These include:
  - **Mission Solano:** The first Spanish mission built in California, located just off of the Sonoma Plaza.
  - **Blue Wing Inn:** A long, low adobe building just across from the Mission derives its name from its incarnation as the Blue Wing Inn, gambling room and saloon during the gold rush era. It is thought that portions of the building were originally constructed to house soldiers assigned to the Sonoma Mission.
  - **The Sonoma Barracks:** An adobe building also just off of the Plaza that was built to house Mexican soldiers traveling from San Francisco. The Barracks soon became the headquarters for John C. Fremont and his army during the Bear Flag Revolt.
  - **The Toscano Hotel & Kitchen:** A former inexpensive hotel which was primarily frequented by Italian immigrants, The Toscano Hotel & Kitchen today is furnished with period furniture and looks much the way it did around the turn of the century.
  - **Vallejo Estate:** The Former home of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who founded Sonoma and created the Sonoma Plaza, Vallejo Estate is a historic house that is one of the six sites that comprises the Sonoma State Historic Park.
  - **The Servants Quarters:** The last standing remains of La Casa Grande, which was the first home of General Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo.
- **The Historic Sonoma Plaza:** Measuring eight acres, Sonoma Plaza is the largest plaza of its kind in the state. It home to former Mexican army barracks and Mission Solano – a Spanish Mission built in the mid 1800s and the site of the Bear Flag Revolt, when California gained independence from Mexico.

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