

OTHER THINGS TO DO/PLACES TO VISIT

THE NAPA WINE COUNTRY

Background - The Napa Wine Country, centered on Highway 29 north of Napa, is home to literally hundreds of wineries, from the large, well-known ones to small producers who sell wine by the bottle or case only from the winery itself. Years ago, wine tasting in the area was offered for free, but now most wineries charge a small fee for tasting their current offerings. Rather than trying to visit a large number of wineries, take your time, enjoy the scenery, have a nice lunch, and enjoy the ambiance of the area. Unless you have a designated driver, only sip a given wine and/or sample only your favorite varietals. Be very careful about drinking and driving.

The Tour - To reach the Napa Wine Country, first head west on I-80 from Sacramento. About 45 miles from Sacramento (and beyond the I-680 turnoff), exit onto westbound State Highway 12/Jameson Canyon Road (Exit 39B). After approximately 5 miles on Highway 12, turn left at the traffic signal onto Highway 29 toward Napa. Divided Highway 29 eventually turns into a freeway as it bypasses the city of Napa. North of Napa, the highway will be following the tracks of the Napa Valley Wine Train. Wineries will line the highway north of Yountville. One website with a map of the wineries in this area is at the [Wine Country website](#); then click on “Napa Valley Interactive Map” under “Additional Resources” on the left side of the site.

If you are a newcomer to wine tasting, you might want to consider starting your tour at the [Robert Mondavi Winery](#) north of Yountville. Make reservations in advance for one of the tours, such as the “Signature Tour and Tasting”. There are several different tours available, but this one (approximately 75 minutes in length) follows the path of the grape from the vineyard to the cellar to the finished wine. Guests walk into one of the vineyards, visit the winemaking cellars (including fermentation and barrel aging) and receive a seated educational tasting of three wines with one of their wine education specialists. It is a very worthwhile tour and a great introduction to the Napa Wine Country.

There are numerous lunch options along Highway 29, including restaurants and places to purchase cheese and lunch choices. If you’d like to upscale your lunch, head back to Yountville which has a number of choices. Yountville has more Michelin Stars per-capita than any other town in the world—6 Michelin stars with a population of about 3,100. [The French Laundry](#) rated 3 Michelin stars, while [Bouchon](#), [Redd](#), and [étoile Restaurant](#) each rated 1 star. These restaurants typically require reservations up to a year in advance, but there are many more-affordable choices.

To combine your wine tasting with upscale shopping, stop by the [V Marketplace 1870](#) on Washington Street (turn off Highway 29 at the Yountville exit and then turn east onto California Drive and then left onto Washington Street; the Marketplace is about ½ mile north). The Marketplace has a number of galleries and other interesting shops including [Napa Style](#), a cooking and specialty shop. Opposite the front door to the Napa Style store is the upscale [Paninoteca & Wine Bar](#). Both the store and restaurant are owned by author and television cooking celebrity [Michael Chiarello](#), now with a cooking show on the Cooking Channel.

Time Allowance - Yountville, in the heart of the Napa Wine Country, is slightly over 2 hours from Sacramento.

Note - *These directions are fairly general. You should carry a good map and/or GPS.*