

Tuesday, October 16, 2018

## Travel



## Pair wine with exercise in Sonoma County vineyards

Written by



*Katherine Rodeghier, Special Contributor*

The breeze rushes over my shoulders and the sun kisses my face as I pedal along a country road winding through vineyards an hour north of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. A hill poses a bit of a challenge for those of us who are not avid bicyclists, but no one complains. The promise of wine lies just ahead.

Tasting the fruit of the vine need not be a passive experience in the wine country around Healdsburg, Calif., where hiking and biking tours allow you to get in a workout and some fresh air between tastings. Smack-dab in the middle of three major wine appellations, Healdsburg makes a convenient base for exploring the wine country on the north end of Sonoma County. You'll find more than 100 wineries and tasting rooms, about 30 of them within walking distance of the charming downtown plaza.

## Riches in the soil

The Gold Rush brought Harmon Heald here in 1857, but he soon turned from panning for his fortune to cultivating crops. Farming flourished on soil so fertile it could grow almost any crop. Italian immigrants planted vineyards, but when Prohibition came along, farmers ripped up vines and planted prunes. It took more than a half-century for winemaking to make a strong comeback.



A 3-mile hike leads past vineyards at Jordan Vineyard & Winery near Healdsburg in California's Sonoma County. (Special Contributor/Katherine Rodeghier)

"This truly is one of the great spots of the world where everything grows," said John Jordan, second-generation proprietor of Jordan Vineyard & Winery. Standing at a glass pavilion at Vista Point, the highest spot on the 1,200-acre ranch, Jordan chatted up hikers gathered for the start of a 3-mile hiking tour the winery offers.

Three wine appellations can be seen from this spot: Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley and the Russian River Valley. Busy Napa Valley to the east may be better known, but it's smaller and more compact than Sonoma County's quiet, rural expansiveness.

Jordan's father founded the vineyard and winery in 1972, inspired by the great wine estates of France. Our hiking guide leads us past neat rows of vines in sustainably farmed vineyards, lush olive orchards and pastures where cattle raise their heads as we pass. Two rest stops for water break up our moderately strenuous hike, but the real relaxation comes after we pass the chef's garden and plop down on the patio of Jordan's Winery Chateau. We make a picnic lunch of a charcuterie spread paired with Jordan chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon.



Quivira Vineyards is committed to biodynamic farming, closely monitoring the soil to ensure it contains healthy microbiotic life. (Quivira Vineyards)

## Pedal, sip, picnic

For those who would rather explore the wine country around Healdsburg on two wheels, guides for Wine Country Bikes lead a daylong tour through Dry Creek Valley, giving a rolling narration of history and local lore between stops at three wineries. The ride covers 15 to 20 miles of rolling hills and country roads. A support van picks up anyone who poops out and transports any wine purchases made along the way.



Bikers enjoy a tasting at Quivira Vineyards, known for its biodynamic farming practices. (Katherine Rodeghier/Special Contributor)

Winery stops vary. Our first tasting at Quivira Vineyards comes with an explanation of the winery's commitment to biodynamic farming, closely monitoring the soil to ensure it contains healthy microbiotic life. The 110-acre property has a self-sustaining system that limits production but improves the quality of the wine.

After sampling a few vintages, paired with local cheese, we stroll past the winery's coops of free-range chickens, its garden of heirloom varietals and a pig pen where we're delighted by little squealers darting about. We see the silver backs of salmon flashing in the current of Wine Creek.

At Martorana Family Winery, we're entertained by a playful Portuguese water dog named Sauvignon Blanc as we sip chardonnay, zinfandel and, yes, sauvignon blanc. The tasting room is tucked beneath a hillside with an energy-saving living roof, so we take our glasses up top to drink in the view.

Martorana wines are certified organic, and our guide carries a few bottles to picnic tables for a gourmet lunch of sandwiches, sides and platters of big, freshly baked cookies.



Wine Country Bikes often stops at Quivira Vineyards on its one-day tours of northern Sonoma County wine country. (Katherine Rodeghier/Special Contributor)

Bikers pedal back toward town, making a final stop at Longboard Vineyards, where they relax in the casual Surf lounge reflecting the owner's twin passions: wine and surfing. Israel-born Oded Shakked surfed on four continents before settling in Sonoma County. He named his estate vineyard Dakine, a Hawaiian expression with multiple meanings, and here meant as "The Best."

Sip and see if you agree.

## Visiting Healdsburg

### Visitor information

**Healdsburg Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau:** 217 Healdsburg Ave., [707-433-6935](tel:707-433-6935), [healdsburg.com](http://healdsburg.com)

### Hiking

**Jordan Vineyard & Winery:** Guided hikes in spring, summer and fall, \$95. Estate tours in a comfy coach also available, \$120. [jordanwinery.com](http://jordanwinery.com)

### Biking

**Wine Country Bikes:** One-day tours, \$139 per person. Multiday tours and bike rentals, including tandems and baby trailers, also available. [winecountrybikes.com](http://winecountrybikes.com)

## Lodging

**Calderwood Inn:** Guests of the bed-and-breakfast receive complimentary tastings at nine wineries. [calderwoodinn.com](http://calderwoodinn.com)

**Haydon Street Inn:** Bed-and-breakfast in a 1912 Victorian-style house, offering a three-course breakfast. [haydon.com](http://haydon.com)

**Honor Mansion:** AAA four-diamond bed-and-breakfast. [honormansion.com](http://honormansion.com)

*Katherine Rodeghier is a freelance writer from the Chicago area.*

<https://www.dallasnews.com/life/travel/2018/10/16/pair-wine-exercise-sonoma-county-vineyards>