



What Are the Best Times to Visit Sonoma and Napa Valley?

Wine Country Travel





Napa Valley and Sonoma are the two most iconic wine regions in California when it comes to experiencing California's wine industry. While the wildfires of the past few years have given many pause about coming to Wine Country, most wineries remain unaffected by the fires and Wine Country is truly beautiful in every season!

Related: [History of Napa Valley Wine](#)

Visiting Sonoma County and Napa Valley can be an elegant and inspiring experience. The [true Mediterranean climate](#) and geology of the land make the valley ideal for growing grapes required for producing some of the best quality wines.

One of the most common questions people ask when thinking about going to Napa and Sonoma is “When is the best time to go for a visit?” Luckily for you, we’ve got the answer.

When to Visit California Wine Country



The short answer to the questions is that there is no best time or wrong time to visit. Anytime you can get to Wine Country will be a great time. There are many wonderful things going on throughout Napa and Sonoma all year round that are sure to make any time of year the best time to visit.

You might be wondering, what are some of the best activities to do in Napa and Sonoma and how does each season impact what is going on in

Wine Country? Come along with us and we explore the seasons of Wine Country and our favorite activities.

Related: [Napa Valley Wine Country Tours!](#)

Wine tours



No matter what time of year you visit, experiencing the premium wineries of Napa and Sonoma are a must. With over 800 wineries combined in Napa and Sonoma, it is a daunting task to try to figure out which wineries to visit and know whether or not they will fit your style and budget. Utilizing a travel planning and tour company, such as [Wine Country Travel](#), is a cost effective way to take the stress out of figuring out where to go on your wine tour. Tour planners develop an extensive network of winery contacts in Napa and Sonoma and can arrange your visits for you. In addition, they will be well versed in the styles of wine and price points of each winery to ensure that the

wineries have the types of wines you enjoy as well as fit into your budget.

Another benefit of hiring a tour planner is that they will often drive you around on the day of your tour or can arrange transportation for you so that you can avoid drinking and driving. .

Spring



One of the most spectacular sights throughout Napa and Sonoma is the bright yellow mustard blooms known as “Mustard Season.’ They appear before bud break, usually January - March, while the vines are still bare. In a good year, it is a sight not to be missed, with yellow carpeting the vineyards as far as the eye can see and makes for great photo opportunities.

This can be a great time to visit as crowds still remain relatively low and hotel prices are still more affordable.

In spring, many of the wineries will release their new wines. Therefore, this is the ideal period for those who wish to visit the vineyards when there are fewer tourists. Spring is still considered to be in the rainy season for Wine Country as rainy season generally lasts from late October to May, with February usually being the wettest month so you will want to plan accordingly for the weather. Average temperatures will be in the 60's and 70's.

Some favorite springtime activities in Napa and Sonoma, besides wine tastings, include:

- The Super Bloom at Ferrari-Carano - this winery located in Healdsburg boasts five gorgeous acres of garden that come into full bloom in spring. There are over 10,000 tulips and daffodils as well as over 2,000 species of trees and shrubs.
 - Revitalizing with a Trip to the Spa - there are so many great spas throughout Napa and Sonoma Counties and spending a day at one of them is a great way to unwind after several days of wine tasting.
 - Hot Air Ballooning - perfect for any season in Wine Country, seeing the beautiful landscapes of Napa and Sonoma from high above on an early morning hot air balloon flight is truly something to behold.
 - Napa's Culinary Crawl (Feb, April, June, August, October, December) - walking food and wine tour featuring the best culinary destinations of downtown Napa.
 - Yountville International Short Film Festival (February) - a celebration of cinema with over 75 world class short films as well as some select VIP film and wine events with local wineries.
 - BottleRock Napa Valley (May) - Three-day music, wine, food and craft brew extravaganza taking place in the heart of Napa at the Expo Center.
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Summer



In Wine Country, summer starts in June and this starts the peak tourist season in Napa and Sonoma Valley. Veraison, the process of the grapes changing colors occurs during summer. From August onwards, the grapes in the vineyards become ripe and harvest will usually start in late August or early September.

Tourists who visit the wineries as part of their wine tour may get a chance to pick a few grapes during a vineyard walk and taste the ripening grapes. There are several grape-crushing and other related events that many wineries host once harvest gets into full swing.

During the summer months, there is usually no rain and the heat can easily be in 90's and will, at times, be over 100 so its best to plan accordingly and make sure to stay hydrated.

The summer season continues until September, and once harvest starts, many of the hotels are at their highest prices of the year and wine touring events in the area are fully booked. It can also be hard to get reservations at many of the popular restaurants in the area during this time of year. It is the most popular time to visit Napa Valley and Sonoma and making plans well in advance is highly recommended.

With the spike in visitors during the summer and harvest months, expect a lot of traffic. Most of the roads in the area on two-lane roads and long lines of traffic are not uncommon this time of year. It's essential to keep this in mind when planning tastings and allowing enough time to get from one winery to the next.

Although the summer may be a bit more difficult to plan for, [Wine Country Travel](#) makes it easy! With [customized itineraries](#) and professional advice on the region, history, and prices, Wine Country Travel does all the hard work of planning the perfect California wine tasting trip so you don't have to!

Some favorite summer activities to enjoy when visiting Napa and Sonoma include:

- Concerts in the park - many of the small towns throughout Napa and Sonoma counties have concerts in the park once a week throughout the summer months.
 - Napa Valley Jazz Getaway (June) - four days of top jazz performers
 - Festival Napa Valley (July) - world-class performances paired with excellent food and wine staged in iconic wine country settings.
 - Blues, Brews & BBQ (August) - in downtown Napa, features live blues music, over 30 hard to find microbrews, and fantastic BBQ.
 - Coastal Hiking/Horseback Riding - Sonoma County has some beautiful locations for coastal hikes/rides along the Pacific.
 - Redwoods Zip-Line - Sonoma Canopy Tours provide a first class 2.5 hour experience in the coastal Redwood forest.
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- Follow the California Cheese Trail - Sonoma County produces some of America's finest cheeses and you are able to visit many of the area's artisan cheesemakers.
 - Sonoma County Harvest Fair (August) - this food and wine event features over 100 wineries and award winning food. In addition, you don't want to miss the World Championship Grape Stomp! This event has been combined with the Sonoma County Fair in 2020.

Fall



Compared to the summer, the weather is much more pleasant in October-November with temperatures ranging from mid 60's to upper 70's, although the rainy season can start later in October. Some vineyards may still have grapes hanging as later harvests are wrapping up. Hotel

prices usually remain higher until about mid-November and crowd levels can vary.

For photographers, this is the ideal time to visit Napa Valley. They can capture photos of the leaves changing colors from green to golden brown. A beautiful and breathtaking experience to share with friends and family.

Some favorite activities to enjoy during the fall in Wine Country include:

- Safeway Open (October) - held annually at the Silverado Resort and Spa, this PGA tournament also has a concert series and food-and-wine festival.
- Napa Valley Film Festival (November) - premiers of films from small Indies to potential Oscar nominees.
- Napa's Christmas Parade (November) - kickoff the holiday season with this creative parade illuminating cars, trucks, people, and even animals!
- Weekend Along the Farm Trails (October) - with over 30 farms in Sonoma County participating, this is your chance to meet the farmers, visit pumpkin patches, harvest apples, meet the farm animals and sample delicious food.
- Healdsburg Crush (October) - a fun-filled day of wine tasting in the beautiful town of Healdsburg. Over 60 wineries participate as well as many local food vendors. There is also a silent auction that benefits the local Boys & Girls Club.

Winter



The winter season for Napa and Sonoma starts in December and continues until mid February. During this time period, it is possible that rain could be in the forecast, so expect temperatures to be a bit lower (50's and 60's). The vines are dormant until Spring starts, but in January the vineyards start to erupt in the beautiful yellows of "Mustard Season." This is the off-season for Napa Valley, for this reason, there are fewer tourists visiting the area, but it is no less beautiful.

Vineyards may be closed for wine tours for short periods during this time. However, this is the ideal period for people who do not like fighting crowds. Since many of the hotel rooms are vacant, the tourists can pay less for hotels and other facilities.

Some favorite wintertime activities in Napa Valley and Sonoma include:

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- Calistoga Lighted Tractor Parade (December) - the ultimate small-town holiday parade in celebration of Calistoga's agricultural heritage.
 - Reindeer Run (December) - A 5K/10K run/walk through American Canyon's Thompson Trail just south of Napa.
 - Napa Lighted Art Festival (January) - a spectacular walking path of artwork as light displays are projected onto a variety of buildings throughout downtown Napa.
 - Sip, Savor and Shop in Healdsburg (December) - a guided walking tour of Healdsburg with decorations, carolers, horse-drawn carriages and much more. You'll visit a few wineries as well as a couple of food stops. It's a great way to get into the holiday spirit in this charming downtown.
 - Handmade Holiday Crafts Fair (December) - with more than 90 local artists on hand, this is a great event held Finely Community Park where you can get a jump on your holiday shopping.
 - Winter Wineland (January) - with several wineries in Northern Sonoma County participating, this is a great way to sample wines and meet the winemakers. Each winery highlights a vintage, varietal, or a vertical tasting for the weekend.

Related: [What are Tannins?](#)

Are You Ready to Visit Wine Country?

Now you're armed with some knowledge regarding the seasons and what to do in Napa Valley and Sonoma, some questions to ask yourself before determining what the right time to visit Napa Valley and Sonoma is for you are:

- **Weather conditions:** Does the heat of summer or rain in winter make a difference to you?
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- Peak tourist season - Are you ok with crowds and increased summer/harvest hotel prices, traffic, and increased difficulty getting into restaurants?
 - What's your budget?
 - What is your interest activities outside of wine tasting and how much of these do you want to experience?

Luckily for you, [Wine Country Travel](#) has the information about where to go in Sonoma and Napa Valley. They will connect you with the best wineries, [luxury hotels](#), rental houses and [fine dining](#) for your trip to California's famous wine country!

Hope this helps! For more information about visiting [California's wine regions](#) visit our [blog](#)!
