

*run your
way through*

WINE COUNTRY

Pack your running shoes and head to Sonoma County to race through blossoming vineyards while drinking in gorgeous views.

By Jayme Otto / Illustration by Tyler Hildebrand, Hilde's Gallery

Millions of tourists head to Northern California's wine country every year. A little less crowded and a lot more laid-back than its Napa neighbor, Sonoma County supports 300 wineries, 40 spas and hundreds of gourmet restaurants. While many travel to the region to examine the "legs" of various vintages, one of the best ways to enjoy wine country is with your own two feet.

One of Sonoma County's best-kept secrets is its vibrant running scene. Each day, before the winery-hoppers take to the streets, you'll find locals lacing their shoes in the morning fog. They head out on the 1,400 miles of secondary roads linking vineyards to the many different villages, or the 250 miles of forest, mountain and coastal trails spread among 45 regional parks. Follow the locals lead to experience the sportier side of Sonoma, while leaving your afternoons open for all the wine tastings, spa sessions, and fine dining your heart desires. Think of it as a vintner's perfect blend.

CITY OF SONOMA

Dine: The Girl & The Fig

Fresh American cuisine and an award-winning wine list.

thegirlandthefig.com

Dream: Bungalows 313

An intimate luxury inn just a half block from the town plaza.

bungalows313.com

Unwind: Sonoma Mission Inn

The best full-service spa in Northern California. fairmont.com/sonoma

The birthplace of winemaking in California, dating back to Franciscan mission vineyards founded in 1823, the city of Sonoma is a hamlet by today's standards. Fewer than 10,000 people call this historic town home, and a good number of these residents belong to **Murphy's Irish Pub Running Club**. This local club meets the first Monday of every month, April through October, at its namesake pub (sonomapub.com) for a three-mile run through the vineyards and back to the pub for a pint. Guests are always welcome.

Sebastiani (sebastiani.com) is the big-name winery in town. The family has been growing grapes and making wine in Sonoma for over a century. You can walk to their vineyard and tasting room, or you can run past it on a popular five-mile route that mixes trail and pavement. Starting at the town plaza, head north on 4th Street to Sebastiani and hang a right on Lovall Valley Road, running past the rows of vines. Turn left on Gehricke Road and run a half mile to **Ravenswood Winery** (ravenswoodwinery.com). Spin around and take Gehricke back down, turning right on Brazil Street to catch some new vineyard scenery on your way back into town.

Another must-see winery just a few blocks off the town plaza is **Bartholomew Park** (bartpark.com), nestled at the base of the Mayacamas Mountain range. Founded in 1994, this 34-acre vineyard was certified organic in 2005. Its handmade, micro-lot premium wines are available exclusively through its tasting room and wine club. In the hills be-

hind the winery, three miles of marked trails open to the public (and their dogs) make for a rejuvenating run or hike. On a clear day, the view from Bartholomew Park's trails extends 30 miles to San Francisco, lending a sweeping panorama of Sonoma and its fertile valley.

SANTA ROSA

Dine: Willi's Wine Bar

Offers 30 small plates for sharing and pairing with local wines.

williswinebar.net

Dream: Hotel La Rose

A 100-year-old historic landmark with all the charm you'd expect.

hotellarose.com

Unwind: Avanti Day Spa

Local favorite with spa packages named after Sonoma's fertile valleys.

avantispa.net

The biggest city in California's wine country, Santa Rosa, is also home to **Empire Running Club** (empirerunners.org), the oldest and largest running club in Sonoma County. Empire holds training sessions every day of the week except Friday, and hosts nearly 20 races in Santa Rosa each year.

A favorite running spot in Santa Rosa is the 5,000-acre Annadel State Park on the southeast edge of town. With 40 miles of trails through oak woodlands and meadows, you could run for days and never see the same tree twice. But many agree that the best route includes a dip in Lake Ilsanjo, tucked away in the heart of the park. One such jaunt, clocking in at about six miles, starts at the auxiliary dirt parking lot on Channel Drive. Jump on the narrow, woody Cobblestone Trail and run two miles until it dead-ends at the Rough-Go Trail. Turn left and run about a

half mile to the lake. Go left on Lake Trail, running around the lake until you intersect Warren Richardson. This wide-open, well-maintained trail will take you through a forest of Douglas fir, bay and redwood trees on a gentle 2.5-mile downhill to the picnic area, where you can run back to your car in the auxiliary lot.

As the urban center of Sonoma County, you won't find any wineries within walking or running distance of Santa Rosa. But it's worth a drive to **Copain Wines** (copainwines.com), located about 13 miles north of the city. Perched on a hill, the winery offers shockingly beautiful views of the Russian River Valley, and a variety of elegant, nuanced reds.

HEALDSBURG

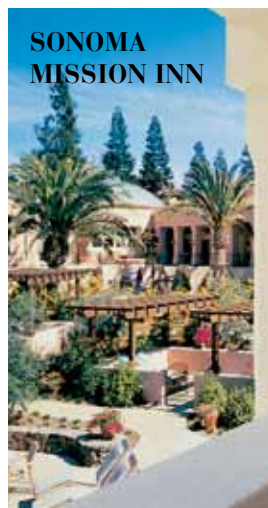
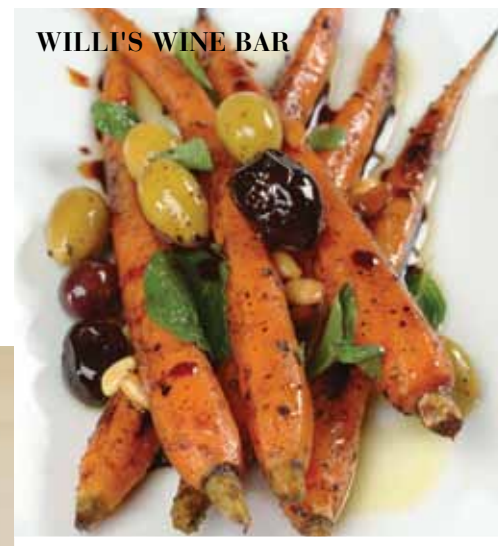
Dine: The Ravenous Café and Lounge

Contemporary Californian cuisine with an ever-changing seasonal menu.

theravenous.com

Dream: h2hotel

Ultra-modern eco-chic boutique hotel. h2hotel.com



Unwind: Hotel Healdsburg Spa
Tranquil, resort-style setting with 100 percent natural products.
hotelhealdsburg.com

Healdsburg (pronounced heeldsburg) has a charming small-town feel, anchored by a central plaza. Known for its foodies, Healdsburg has a high concentration of upper-echelon dining, including the Michelin-two-star **Cyrus Restaurant** (cyrusrestaurant.com) and the one-star **Madrona Manor** (madronamanor.com). Healdsburg also has the greatest density of in-town tasting rooms, which means you could sample nearly every wine Sonoma County has to offer with a casual stroll. The wineries themselves are spread out in the surrounding rural areas, which means lots of long country roads radiating out of town for you to run. Both the **Healdsburg Half Marathon** (runhealdsburg.com), and the bike portion of the **Vineman 70.3 Triathlon** (vineman.com) are

held on these idyllic paths.

A shining jewel in Healdsburg's crown is **Michel-Schlumberger** (michelschlumberger.com), a 100-acre, organically-certified, hillside vineyard and winery known for excellent Bordeaux varieties. Michel-Schlumberger also provides an almost perfect half-marathon length route when done as an out-and-back from the town plaza. This is also one of the best tours you can take of gorgeous Dry Creek Valley. Bring your camera and be sure to leave in the morning before traffic increases. From the plaza, head south to scenic Dry Creek Road and hang a left. Run three and a half eye-popping miles and turn left on Lambert Road. Go nearly a mile and turn right on West Dry Creek Road, then turn left on Wine Creek Road. When you get back to the town plaza, you'll be good and ready for the best blueberry scones on earth at the **Downtown Bakery and Creamery** (downtownbakery.net).



THE NAPA TO SONOMA WINE COUNTRY HALF MARATHON

There may not be wine at the aid stations, but on the rolling course from Napa to Sonoma, you can expect a breathtaking mix of mountain and grapevine scenery found at no other race in the United States. Now in its 8th year, the **Napa to Sonoma Half** (napa2sonoma.com) sold out in 17 days. Registration for next year's race, planned for July 15, 2012, will open Thanksgiving Day 2011.

800-acre Armstrong Redwoods State Park Preserve, two miles north of town. A living reminder of the majestic primeval redwood forests that covered this area before logging began in the 19th century, Armstrong's well-marked dirt trails weave beneath ancient giants. The stillness, the silence and the thick fragrance of these trees, which grow over 100 feet tall, make for an incomparable running experience. Get there by running up the bike path from town. There is no need to plan your route, as you can choose from a handful of trails at the park entrance, ranging from one to nine miles in length, across valleys or up in the hills, and so well-marked it's nearly impossible to get lost.

For an only-in-Guerneville tasting experience, drive or run along River Road to **Korbel Champagne Cellars** (korbel.com), located two miles east of town. Founded by Czech immigrants, Korbel vineyards have operated in Guerneville for 130 years, producing an inviting selection of award-winning bubbly.

Jayne Otto, award-winning freelance journalist, writes about the people, places, ideas and events that are changing the way we think about our world. Find her at jayneotto.com.



APPLEWOOD INN

GUERNEVILLE

Dine: Applewood Inn

A Michelin-star restaurant in a cozy French barn setting.
applewoodinn.com

Dream: Dawn Ranch Lodge

Luxury cottages, cabins, and chalets on the banks of the Russian River.

dawnranch.com

Unwind: Osmosis

A day spa in a five-acre sanctuary devoted to healing.
osmosis.com

More a settlement on the Russian River than a town, Guerneville, population 2,500, has more redwoods than residents and a 25-to-1 ratio of humans to wineries. Here you'll find more granola than gourmet. The river draws many San Francisco weekenders in the summer, when it's dammed to create Johnson Beach, just a short walk from town, giving the area an old time resort feel.

Runners love Guerneville for



OSMOSIS