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t's Sunday morning at Dawn Ranch in Guerneville, California. Guests sit on blankets under a canopy of century-old redwood trees. They close their eyes, listening to the birds singing

and water flowing in the nearby Russian River. They breathe in the fragrance of the forest. Feel the breeze on their skin and the earth beneath them. They welcome the calmness.

"When we're immersed in the natural world, our body goes into a more relaxed state," says Jenny Harrow-Keeler, a Sonoma County-based nature and forest therapy guide.

Harrow-Keeler partners with Dawn Ranch and several other hotels and wineries to offer forest bathing, a type of mindfulness practice called *shinrin-yoku* in Japan, where it originated. The idea is to focus your senses on your surroundings in a way that bolsters mental and physical health.

Sonoma County may be best known for its world-class wine, but this scenic slice of Northern California racks up a lot of points on the wellness front, too. At least 40 spas and wellness centers are sprinkled across the geographically diverse county, a region more than twice the size of neighboring Napa. It boasts 425-plus wineries and offers countless ways to relax in Mother Nature's bounty, from strolls along the dramatic coast to peaceful hikes among towering redwoods.

All of it makes Sonoma County an ideal spot to recharge and unwind—something that's increasingly important to the growing ranks of wellness-minded travelers.

"I've seen a huge shift in tourism in recent years," Harrow-Keeler says. "More people want their vacation to be restorative. They want to learn how to slow down."

CHEERS

TO YOUR HEALTH

Wine and wellness make the perfect pairing for a vacation in California's Sonoma County.

By Lori Rackl



Dry Creek Vineyard

COURTESY OF SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM

Hot Springs and Cool Concepts

Those wanting to forest-bathe in the more literal sense can book time in the outdoor soaking tubs at Dawn Ranch. The 22-acre resort is a convenient place to stay if a trip to the ocean is on your wine country to-do list. The meandering 15-mile drive from the ranch to the Pacific follows the famed Russian River to the seaside village of Jenner and sandy Goat Rock Beach. They're just a couple of gems peppered along the county's hiking-friendly coastline.

Dawn Ranch got a major glow-up in 2023. Cottages and cabins were modernized with cushy, custom furniture and rain showers—but there are still no TVs, in keeping with the rustic, unplugged vibe. A previous owner's pine-paneled living quarters were turned into a tranquil spa with a wood-burning fireplace.

Last summer, the resort's restaurant, The Lodge, also upped its game with an expanded wine program and new tasting menu served in the cozy dining room. The multicourse feast features showstopper dishes like sea urchin bucatini, polenta topped with black truffle, and tapioca and cheese squares modeled after a popular snack in co-executive chef Juliana Thorpe's native

Brazil. Thorpe estimates about 85% of the restaurant's ingredients are locally sourced.

That's an easy benchmark to reach in this fertile county. See for yourself at the Sonoma Valley farmers market, held year-round Friday mornings in the Arnold Field parking lot near downtown's Sonoma Plaza. Pick up some picnic fixings and head for the leafy plaza, from which it's an easy post-lunch walk to more than two dozen wine tasting rooms. One of the newest kids on the block is Sol Rei Wine, which debuted its sunny 20-seat venue in December. Sol Rei's wines are low in sulfites

and histamines—things that might cause headaches and other health issues in wine drinkers, especially later in life.

"As I got older, I couldn't seem to tolerate the big, bold reds anymore," says Sol Rei founder Katherine Kitzmiller. The retired tech executive went on a quest to find winemakers who could produce a "cleaner" product without sacrificing quality. "It's great to have fewer irritants, but if it doesn't taste good, why bother?" Sol Rei Private Reserve Blend and Sol Rei Syrah won gold and double gold, respectively, in the 2025 *San Francisco Chronicle* Wine Competition.



Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn

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Jordan Vineyard & Winery Estate Tour

COURTESY OF SONOMA COUNTY TOURISM



COURTESY OF OSMOSIS DAY SPA SANCTUARY

Osmosis Day Spa Sanctuary is a Japanese-inspired wellness retreat offering treatments and a tranquil garden.



PHOTO BY TRINETTE REED PHOTOGRAPHY

Sol Rei and Sonoma's historic plaza sit less than a mile from AAA Four Diamond MacArthur Place, an elegant-without-being-stuffy hotel with a stellar spa and free yoga classes for guests on weekend mornings. The 16 farmhouse-style cottages give the property a residential feel, and the chef's garden supplies much of the organic produce used at the hotel's seasonally focused Layla Restaurant.

On the outskirts of town, the AAA Four Diamond Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa enjoys a prime location atop ancient hot springs that have drawn wellness-seekers for centuries. Waters rich in calcium, zinc and other minerals feed the resort's geothermal pools. You could spend the better part of an afternoon jumping from one body of water to the next, popping into the sauna and steam rooms, and slathering your skin with grapeseed exfoliant. Non-hotel guests can buy spa passes.

Another rejuvenating day at the spa awaits on the west side of the county, in the blink-and-you'll-miss-it town of Freestone. Osmosis Day Spa Sanctuary has existed as a Japanese-inspired oasis in this historic hamlet for roughly 40 years. Osmosis is one of the few places in North America where you can get a cedar enzyme bath, a Japanese heat treatment that cocoons the body in a warm mix of rice bran and finely milled cedar and

Douglas fir. The spa's founder credits this moist sawdust concoction with healing his sciatica in Japan, so he wanted to bring its therapeutic benefits back home to California.

Vintage Escapes

Osmosis happens to be tantalizingly close to Black Kite Cellars, where you can (and should) book an appointment to sample this family-owned winery's sublime pinot noir and chardonnay in the homey tasting room. Elsewhere, in the hot spot of Healdsburg, Medlock Ames puts a twist on typical tours with its Bell Mountain Immersive Sound Experience. Visitors wear headphones to listen to sounds of nature recorded on-site as they take a leisurely self-guided walk past the Alexander Valley property's ponds, olive trees, and tidy rows of cabernet sauvignon, sauvignon blanc, malbec and merlot vines.

Another Alexander Valley jewel nabbed the top spot among North American contenders in the most recent World's 50 Best Vineyards awards. Jordan Vineyard & Winery produces cabernet and chardonnay in a storybook setting complete with a French-inspired chateau. You can try plenty of both varietals—along with Jordan's olive oil—during the Estate Tour and Tasting. The three-hour experience culminates with a wine-paired lunch on the highest hilltop of Jordan's 1,200-acre grounds.

Nap time? The AAA Five Diamond Montage Healdsburg and its luxe spa are a short drive away. Guests staying in the 130 bungalow-style accommodations can practice yoga poses among the resort's grapevines, which acclaimed winemaker Jesse Katz of Aperture Cellars uses to produce Montage Estate wines. A new rosé and sauvignon blanc are slated to join the collection this spring.

Alexander Valley borders another of the county's hallowed winegrowing appellations: Dry Creek Valley. One of its stars is Dry Creek Vineyard, a pioneer in the region's sauvignon blanc scene—and sustainable farming. The Healdsburg winery's Vineyard Stroll & Tasting includes a stop at the insectary garden, where plantings attract the good insects that keep away the bad ones.

Back in the town of Sonoma, leave the walking to the horses on a 45-minute trail ride through one of the oldest vineyards in California: Bartholomew Estate. This picturesque winery is nestled within an equally pretty park that offers more than 3 miles of trails. It's also one of the other wineries where Harrow-Keeler leads forest-bathing sessions, followed by a flight of wine made from grapes grown on the estate.

"I'm a believer that a big part of wellness is being more joyful and celebratory," she says. "That's why wine makes a really sweet complement."