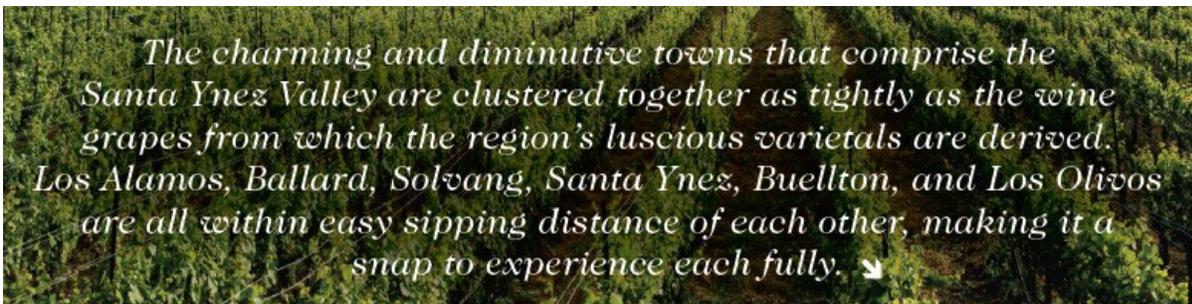




THE VINOUS WONDERS OF THE SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

FEBRUARY 8, 2022

NVLIFE+TRAVEL+ 1



A two to three-night stay is optimal and allows for ample sampling of the delightful hospitality found within this region that is often overlooked in favor of the higher-profile Santa Barbara, Paso Robles, and San Luis Obispo. Here, vineyards and horse farms coalesce for a California 'olden days' vibe, well-illustrated by Los Alamos' historic seven-block main street that reflects as much Old West heritage as any small town along California's Central Coast. Ballard's historic Little Red Schoolhouse, where young Ballard residents have received their elementary school education since 1883, shines additional light on the area's past.

History aside, this valley – home to more than 120 wineries – is all about the vino. Los Olivos alone boasts more than 30 wine tasting rooms within its five walkable blocks. And just outside Buellton, perhaps best known for its appearance in the movie *Sideways*, is the iconic Sta. Rita Hills AVA, where some of California's best Pinot Noir is produced. And for those who believe Cabernet is purely a Napa product, a visit to Crown Point Vineyards in Santa Ynez's Happy Canyon AVA proves otherwise.



Crown Point Estate Selection

WHERE TO SIP

Crown Point Vineyard proprietor Roger Bower, winemaker Simon Faury, and consulting winemakers Philippe Melka and Michel Rolland are intent on making some of California's tastiest Cabernet Sauvignon; this all-star team is proving that their Happy Canyon AVA-located vineyards are ideal for growing Bordeaux varieties. Make a wine tasting appointment and accept the offer of a jeep tour to experience expansive views from the winery's hilltop vineyard. // www.crownpointvineyards.com

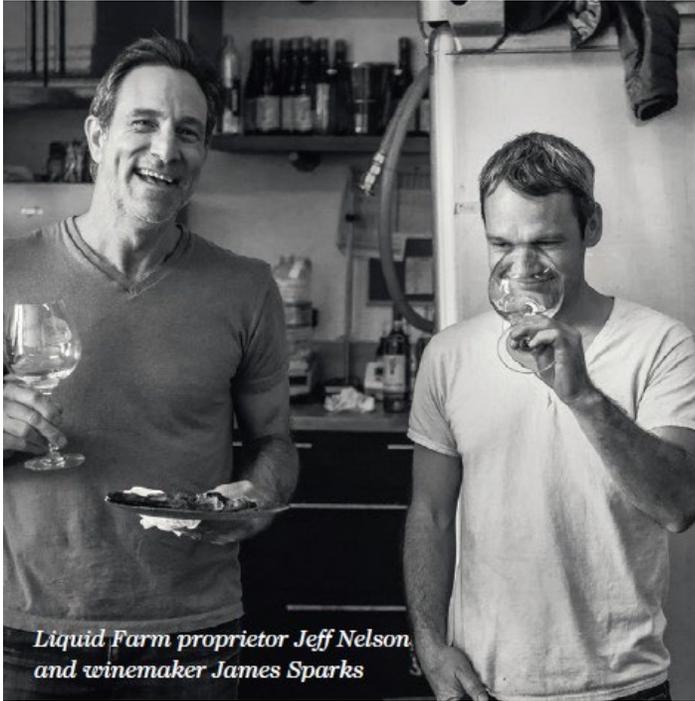


*Alma Rosa Winery Tasting Garden
Photo by Fran Miller*

Alma Rosa Winery varietals reflect the terroir of their iconic Sta. Rita Hills vineyards. Bosnian born and raised winemaker Samra Morris crafts beautiful Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs, and Sparkling wines that can be enjoyed by reservation either in the winery's vibrant downtown Solvang tasting room with a large outdoor patio or at the label's 628-acre hillside estate where guests can select from a variety of private experiences. // www.almarosawinery.com

The Hilt Estate, producer of JONATA and The Hilt wines, recently opened a beautiful new Howard Backen-designed winery and tasting room in the far southwest corner of the Sta. Rita Hills. The state-of-the-art 50,000 square-foot gravity-fed winemaking facility is where long-time winemaker Matt Dees and his team produce the two labels' distinct wines. The stunning tasting venue – The Barn at The Hilt Estate – offers JONATA's portfolio of structured Ballard Canyon-grown Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Syrah, and The Hilt's vibrant Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. Tip: For those seeking something truly unique, ask for the

opportunity to try the Hilt's more avant-garde wines, ranging from Pét-Nat to Botrytis Chardonnay. // www.thehiltestate.com



*Liquid Farm proprietor Jeff Nelson
and winemaker James Sparks*

Liquid Farm's Los Olivos tasting room is an excellent spot to experience the varied flavors of the Santa Ynez Valley. Proprietor Jeff Nelson and winemaker James Sparks create Burgundian style Chardonnays, and elegant Pinot Noirs made with grapes sourced from sustainably farmed vineyards in Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Maria Valley, and Happy Canyon. In addition to their critically acclaimed wines, the boho farmhouse-chic tasting room, and mercantile feature fun and unique gift items. // www.liquidfarm.com

The Los Olivos tasting room for **Refugio Ranch Vineyards**, built c.1912, once served as a filling station for Pacific Coast Railway tank cars. It is now one of the largest tasting locations

in town, where visitors sample wines sourced from the **Gleason Family Vineyards** Santa Ynez Valley portfolio's 415-acre Refugio Ranch estate. Sister estate, **Roblar Winery and Vineyards**, features 40 acres of grand oak-studded grounds, including a 5,000 square-foot tasting room, multiple outdoor seating and event areas with vineyard views, organic Roblar Farm, and the portfolio's state-of-the-art winery. // www.gleasonfamilyvineyards.com

WHERE TO STAY

Fess Parker, star of the 50s and 60s television shows *Daniel Boone* and *Davy Crockett*, lived for decades in Santa Barbara County and ultimately reinvented himself as a respected vintner. Book one of the 19 rooms at Fess Parker's Wine Country Inn, and your stay includes complimentary wine tasting at both **Fess Parker Winery and Epiphany**, the Parker family's other label. Located in walkable Los Olivos, this Preferred Hotels & Resorts LVX Collection boutique inn offers luxurious indulgences such as a bottle of complimentary wine upon arrival, a heated pool, a lush garden with firepits, complimentary bike rentals, and plush beds and bedding. Family run, the inn is overseen by Parker's son Eli Parker and daughter Ashley Parker Snider, the stewards of their father's wine and hospitality visions. // www.fessparker.com



*Suite at The Inn at Zaca Creek.
Photo by Michelle Ramirez*

Originally built by the founding Buell family of Buellton, **Zaca Creek** is reimagined in the image of a 17th-century English countryside inn and tavern. Set amongst rolling hills with valley views, the boutique hotel's Old World

design is evidenced in the rustic shake roof and hand-carved alder doors. Six unique, host-free suites feature hand-troweled brick walls and artisan-crafted woodwork. Curated lighting illuminates the rustically romantic spaces that offer large-screen televisions and expansive bathrooms with rainfall showers, soaker tubs, or both. The Inn's luxurious bio-lagoon area, 'The Falls,' is an added perk on hotter days. // www.zaca-creek.com



*Wine tasting at Crown Point Vineyards
Photo by Dan Miller*

WHERE TO DINE

Chef Cullen Campbell showcases the best of the Central Coast's varied purveyors in an incredibly creative menu at **The Tavern at Zaca Creek**, where he features locally caught seafood items and a bold steak program (Filet, Ribeye, New York, and Wagyu Tomahawk). Don't miss the Caviar Lasagne (delicate sheets of chilled pasta, layered with chives, crème fraîche, and Calvissius Caviar) and the indulgent Escargot. A bespoke cocktail menu includes sought-after bourbons and ryes and region-centric agave flavors of tequila and mezcal. The highly curated and extensive wine list features local favorites as well as international selections.

For breakfast, try French-style bakery **Bob's Well Bread** in Ballard, where you'll find a decadent display of pastry as well as hot dish items to be

enjoyed on a sunny patio. Enjoy lunch at **Nella Kitchen & Bar**, adjacent to the Fess Parker Wine Country Inn, where Pinsas (Roman-style pizzas with flatbread-like crusts) are the starring attraction. In the Danish-settled town of Solvang, try Michelin level **First & Oak, Coast Range & Vaquero Bar** from a star-studded team of chefs and renowned winemaker/ sommelier Rajat Parr, and **Ramen Kotori** and its decadent bowls of ramen.



*Seafood special at The Tavern at Zaca Creek.
Photo by Danielle Honea*

WHAT TO DO

Don't miss the fanciful and whimsical J. Woeste home and garden store in Los Olivos where whirling wind ornaments, chimes, and every themed garden trinket imaginable can be found. Hike the wooded 1.3-mile trail in Solvang's charming Hans Christian Andersen Park, and then visit the Elverhoj Museum of History & Art, where the region's Danish culture and history are preserved and promoted. Visit the

ostriches and emus at Buellton's Ostrichland USA and feed them with an outstretched hand.

Story By: Fran Miller