

this is the time for a wine-country escape

In late summer, the vines are loaded with grapes and the weather's just right. These five gorgeous getaways let you sip—and exercise. BY JESSICA MERRILL

Does the thought of a wine-tasting weekend bring to mind that slightly tipsy feeling you get from sipping for hours at one vineyard after another? Then it's time to give your body a workout along with your palate. After all, the elements that make for great grape growing (warm, sunny days and cool nights) are also ideal conditions for being outside. So try getting a taste of the wine-country life by bike, boat, board, and more. Head to one of these laid-back regions known as much for stellar outdoor adventures as for their vines' vintages.

SKATE, SURF, AND SIP

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

White sands, pounding surf, palm trees, and wine? It sounds too good to be true.

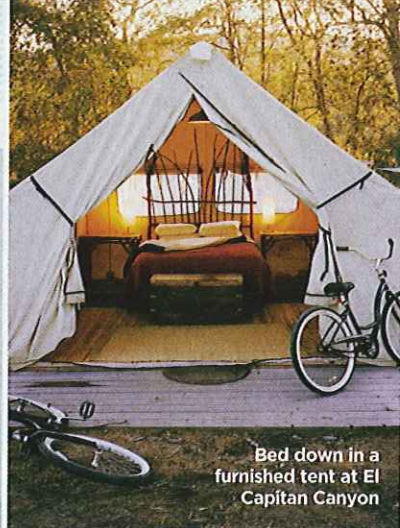
But spend a day in Santa Barbara and it's easy to see why this Pacific Coast paradise is often referred to as the American Riviera. On top of endless beaches and a picturesque waterfront, Santa Barbara is also graced with superb wine country—immortalized in the movie *Sideways*—just 30 miles north.

Vino made in these windswept hills benefits from the Pacific's cooling breezes, and you can too. Take a refreshing jog or skate on the Cabrillo Beachway, a three-mile recreation path that runs along the downtown waterfront (go early to avoid the crowds); skate rentals are available from Wheel Fun Rentals (\$12 for a half day; wheelfunrentals.com). This is Southern California, so it's no surprise that volleyball is a serious pastime. If you're up for a match, head to East Beach in the

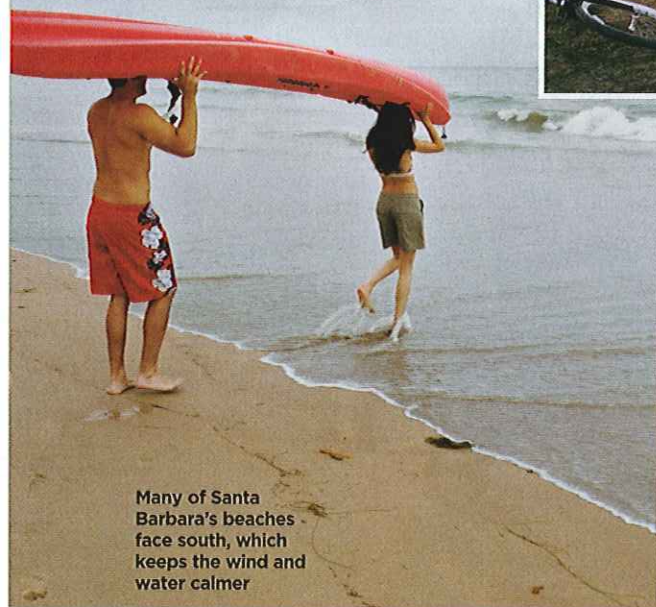
heart of downtown, where locals go to serve and spike. Another Golden State diversion—surfing—is also hot here. Beginners should start with the gentle rollers at Leadbetter Beach (book a four-hour lesson through Santa Barbara Adventure Company, \$110; sbadventureco.com); more seasoned surfers can gather at Rincon Point.

Time to taste It's hard to pull yourself away from the ocean, but the wines of the Santa Ynez Valley are well worth taking a beach break. Near the town of Los Olivos, Beckmen Vineyards produces Syrah and Grenache, while Zaca Mesa's 750-acre estate is an ideal spot for lunch—grab a seat at one of the picnic tables and pour yourself a splash of crisp Viognier.

Book it Hotel Andalucia, a stylish downtown boutique hotel, has a rooftop



Bed down in a furnished tent at El Capitan Canyon



Many of Santa Barbara's beaches face south, which keeps the wind and water calmer

pool (rooms from \$395; andaluciasb.com). Just north of Santa Barbara, El Capitan Canyon offers luxury camping on the coast, with fully furnished cabins and tents (from \$145; elcapitan.com).

WHEEL AROUND TOWN

SONOMA, CALIFORNIA

Although Sonoma County is home to more than 250 wineries, it retains a relaxed, small-town vibe. Vine-strewn rolling hills combined with a network of rail-to-trail bike paths (former railroad tracks that have been turned into bike routes) and off-the-beaten-track back roads have solidified the region as a destination for cyclists as well as oenophiles.

Stick close to the town of Sonoma and pedal to any of the dozen wineries located within a five-mile radius. If you're in the mood for a longer excursion, take the Joe Rodota Trail from Santa Rosa to Sebastopol and link to the West County Trail; the roughly 13-mile ride takes you through vineyards and

farmland. Feeling less independent? Hook up with an outfitter like Getaway Adventures for a 15- to 20-mile "Sip N Cycle" excursion through and around the town of Healdsburg (from \$125 per person; getawayadventures.com).

Time to taste Matanzas Creek is a charm-filled stop, thanks in part to its lavender fields. Ravenswood specializes in red zinfandel, a local classic.

Book it The Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa offers luxe surroundings and a world-class spa after a day in the saddle (rooms from \$259; fairmont.com). Hotel Healdsburg serves up chic accommodations—think Frette linens and 6-foot soaking tubs—in the center of town (rooms from \$340; hotelhealdsburg.com).

HIKE HISTORIC HILLS

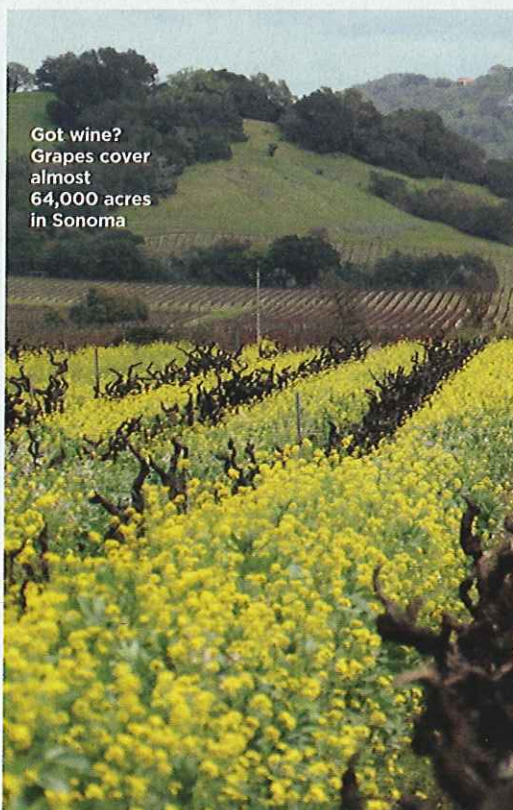
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

"I do not believe that nature is so favorable to growing vines in any other country as this." So said Thomas Jefferson's Italian winemaker after surveying the state's landscape in 1773. Now, after a 200-year lull, Virginia's wine industry is roaring back with more than 100 wineries. Chardonnay is

the most widely planted varietal, and Norton, which yields an earthy red wine, is Virginia's native grape.

For the easiest access to wine, history, and local trails, stay in Charlottesville, in the center of the state. It's close to landmarks like Jefferson's Monticello estate and about an hour drive to Shenandoah National Park's 500 miles of trails in the Blue Ridge Mountains. To get to Shenandoah, take Skyline Drive, which runs 105 miles along the crest of the mountains. If you go north on Skyline, you can take one of several waterfall hikes from a trailhead near Byrd Visitor Center: Dark Hollow Falls Trail is a steep, 1.4-mile round-trip trek to a 70-foot waterfall; Lewis Falls Trail, a moderate, two-mile round-trip, takes you to an 81-foot waterfall. You can also access a portion of the Appalachian Trail (AT), which traverses the park for 101 miles, from the parking area near milepost 42. Veer off the AT onto Stony Man Trail for a 1.6-mile round-trip hike that will lead you to an awe-inspiring overlook.

Time to taste The setting for Jefferson Vineyards, near Monticello, is on



Got wine? Grapes cover almost 64,000 acres in Sonoma

TOP: STEVEN LAH; BOTTOM: SCTB/SONOMACOUNTRY.COM

land once owned by the country's third president. At the Italian-inspired Barbourville Vineyards, you can walk to the ruins of one of only five homes designed by Jefferson.

Book it Boar's Head Inn is a full-service country inn with a golf course, tennis court, pool, and spa (rooms from \$169; boarsheadinn.com).

GO FOR THE EXTREME

COLUMBIA GORGE REGION, OREGON AND WASHINGTON

Best known as an adrenaline junkie's playground, the Gorge, an 80-mile river canyon that runs along the Oregon-Washington border, is also an emerging wine destination. Dozens of wineries, producing everything from chardonnay and Riesling to Syrah and zinfandel, have sprung up over the past five years, taking advantage of the silty soil and marine air rushing through the canyon.

This rugged extreme-sports mecca is also prime territory for rafting, windsurfing, and rock climbing. Make your base the former lumber town of Hood River, Oregon, the country's windsurfing capital. Take a lesson or just rent



It's only 180 steps to the top of Jacob's Ladder in the Finger Lakes

equipment at Hood River Waterplay (beginner lessons start at \$189 for two three-hour sessions; hoodriverwaterplay.com). If white-water rafting is more your speed, take a ride down Washington's White Salmon River, a federally protected waterway fed by mountain glaciers. The eight-mile trip shoots you through Class III and IV rapids like Corkscrew and Stairstep, a series of 1- and 2-foot drops. At Husum Falls you can either get out and walk or take the 10-foot plunge (half-day trips from \$57; riverdrifters.net).

Time to taste Dry out at Cathedral Ridge, a lovely spot named for the ridge running along the summit of Mt. Hood and one of the region's earliest wineries. On the Washington side of the Gorge, sip Wind River Cellars' pinot gris, Syrah, and Tempranillo, and drink in the incredible views.

Book it The million-dollar vista from the historic Columbia Gorge Hotel—where Wah-Gwin-Gwin Falls tumbles 207 feet to the bottom—is hard to beat (rooms from \$199; columbiagorgehotel.com).

KAYAK VINE-RIMMED LAKES

FINGER LAKES, NEW YORK

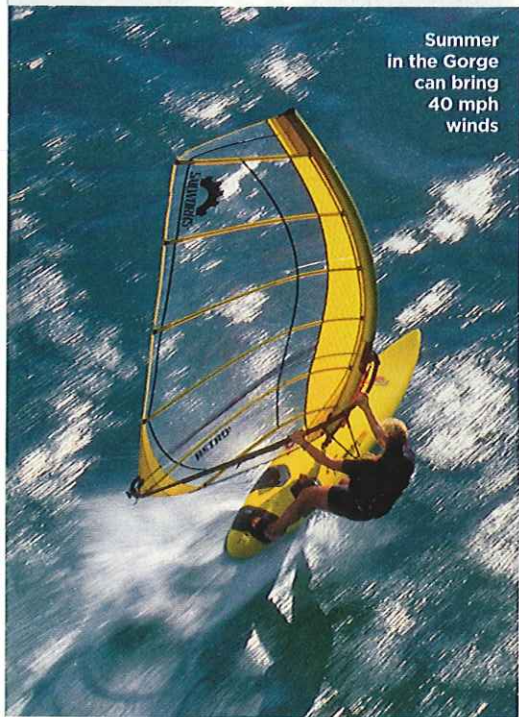
Thank the Ice Age for the magnificent setting in upstate New York. The gorges, waterfalls, and 11 bodies of water that make up the Finger Lakes were formed by receding glaciers. Today the area's 100-plus wineries are known primarily for ice wines and Rieslings.

Some connoisseurs have given the Finger Lakes a cool shoulder, believing the wines can't compare to their cousins on the Pacific Coast or in Europe, but that just means you can take advantage of this unspoiled country without having to battle throngs of tourists. The two best ways to see the sights? Kayaking and hiking. Geneva, on the northern tip of Seneca Lake, makes an excellent base for kayaking: Rent a boat at Roy's Marina (\$25 per day; roysmarina.net) and paddle up to 75 miles of vine-draped shoreline. About 35 miles from Geneva, on the southern edge of the lake, is Watkins Glen State Park, where Glen Creek descends over rocky cliffs for a mile and a half, generating 19 waterfalls. The Gorge Trail runs over and under the waterfalls, between rock walls, and over stone bridges, before leading up to Jacob's Ladder, a 180-step stone staircase.

Time to taste For a stunning tasting-room view, visit Lamoreaux Landing, a Greek Revival building on Seneca Lake. Shalestone Vineyards is a departure from many in the region, with a sign out front declaring "Red is all we do." Sample the cabernet franc, merlot, or pinot noir.

Book it Geneva on the Lake is a romantic villa on 10 landscaped acres overlooking the lake (rooms from \$197; genevaonthelake.com).

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Summer in the Gorge can bring 40 mph winds

TOP: FINGER LAKES TOURISM ALLIANCE; BOTTOM: HOOD RIVER WATERPLAY