

USA – CALIFORNIA'S WINE COUNTRY

Available year-round

6-days / 5-nights inn-to-inn **SELF-GUIDED** cycling from Napa Valley to Bodega Bay



Like the bouquet of a spicy Zinfandel, the wine country of California, north of San Francisco, opens up to reveal many delights and pleasures. Stags Leap, Clos du Val or Youngs are just three of the over 400 wineries in this region. Of course, where there is wine there are usually a host of interesting places and cycling options.

Napa Valley and Sonoma County are synonymous with great wine and fine dining. Discover by bicycle back roads and country lanes, towering redwood groves, a surprising Russian history, delightful vineyards and wine chateaus of every conceivable design and a spectacular wildlife coastline.

These self-guided tours are ideal for independent travellers. You have the freedom to cycle at your own pace, and you decide whether you want easy or challenging cycling, using the supplied route maps, notes and guidebook for direction. Bicycle hire is included and support is available in case of emergency, just a phone call away. Your luggage is transferred to each night's accommodation, reserved and prepaid. You choose where to eat – bring provisions for a simple picnic lunch or discover a hidden café en route; have dinner at a Michelin-starred restaurant or relax at a casual eatery – it's entirely up to you.

Cost from: US\$2925 per person twin share Single room supplement available on request.

Departs: Daily on demand year-round from San Francisco

Includes: 5 nights' accommodation in characterful 3 and 4-star hotels and inns with breakfast daily; hire of 21-speed hybrid bicycles; inn-to-inn luggage transfers and wine collection service; return transfers from/to downtown San Francisco; emergency support and on-call roadside assistance; detailed maps, route notes and guidebook (1 set per room); introductory briefing and bike fitting on Day 1 of tour.

Not included: Lunches and dinners; excursions, activities, entrance fees and tasting fees; transfer from end of tour; travel insurance, gratuities and personal expenses. Transfers from or to San Francisco Airport can be arranged at extra cost, and transfers to wineries that are not along your cycling route can also be arranged at extra cost – ask for details when booking.

Level of Difficulty: Easy to challenging. Each day you are offered a choice of routes, from as little as 6 miles (10km) over flat terrain, to 80 miles (130km) with 5000 feet (1525 metres) of ascent. On average cycling routes are 20 - 30 miles (32-49km) daily over flat or gently rolling terrain.

When to go: This self-guided cycling tour is offered year-round. The Napa Valley enjoys a Mediterranean climate – abundant sunshine, pleasant temperatures in spring and autumn and hot sunny summers. Winter can offer warm days with clear skies, as well as wet days and morning frosts.

Extra nights: We highly recommend spending a few nights in San Francisco either before or after your tour – ask for details of accommodation and costs.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details and reservations



Suggested itinerary:

Day 1: Cycle Napa to Calistoga

Cycling @ 20 miles (32km)

Meet in downtown San Francisco for the 90-minute transfer to Napa and collect your bikes. The cycling route meanders up the Napa Valley, mostly along the Silverado Trail, once a wagon trail connecting Napa and Calistoga. The Silverado Trail gives easy access to nearly 40 wineries, including Clos du Val and Stag's Leap.

We suggest you plan a picnic in the grounds of one of these picturesque vineyards. Many cellar doors are open for drop-ins but some are by appointment only, so you may like to plan your stops ahead of time. Your destination today is Calistoga, a laid-back town, known for its geothermal hot springs and mud baths. Accommodation is at a boutique hotel with a heated outdoor swimming pool and Jacuzzi with mountain and vineyard views. Calistoga has many wonderful dining options including the Michelin-starred Solbar.

The cycling today is easy over mostly flat or gently undulating terrain. There are many options for a more challenging ride – perhaps add a 10-mile (16km) loop including a tough but scenic ascent, or start in Glen Ellen, in the Sonoma Valley, for a challenging climb over a mountain pass before descending to Napa to join the Silverado Trail – up to 50 miles (81km) with up to 2700 feet (825m) ascent.

Day 2: Calistoga to Healdsburg

Cycling @ 10 to 20 miles (16 - 32km)

After breakfast at your hotel the cycling is mostly in the Alexandra Valley today. You pass through forest and woodland and many vineyards where the vines stretch as far as the eye can see. Robert Young Winery, a family-owned vineyard, now operated by the 5th generation of Youngs, is a pleasant stop for a picnic lunch.

Healdsburg itself also boasts a number of tasting rooms and cellar doors. Healdsburg has a picturesque town center square with a distinctive bandstand. Take time to browse the independent bookstore, visit the many antique shops or try a beer at the microbrewery. You stay for 2 nights in Healdsburg, at a charming B&B in a quiet area just a short walk from the town centre. Welcoming hosts and fabulous 3-course breakfasts await.

Today's cycling route is mostly easy, over rolling terrain. There are two challenging ascents even on the easy route – these can be avoided by catching a lift with the luggage transfer (if arranged the day ahead). The more challenging routes range from moderate to epic – anywhere from 30 to 80 miles (48 to 130km) with as much as 5000 feet (1525m) of ascent in the nearby mountains.

Day 3: Healdsburg loop rides

Cycling @ 20 miles (32km) or detour 80 miles (130km)

The Dry Creek Valley is the viticulture focus today, with smaller and less obviously commercial wineries than in Napa. Most cellar doors are open for drop-in visits. The easy cycling route follows the valley along winding back roads, past small farms and family-run vineyards, with the scenic Mayacamas Mountains in the background, returning to Healdsburg for another night at the B&B.

Those up for a challenge may like to cycle up into the Mayacamas where natural geysers are tapped for their geothermal energy – it's a detour route of up to 80 miles (130km) and up to 4200 feet (1280m) ascent.

Day 4: Healdsburg to Guerneville

Cycling @ 20 miles (32km)

A lovely cycling route takes you through the Dry Creek Valley and over a low pass into the Russian River Valley, where you cycle in the shade of California's world-famous giant redwood trees. There is an optional side trip into the Armstrong Redwood State Reserve, where some redwoods are over 1400 years old.

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There are many wineries to visit, including, on your final approach to Guerneville, the Korbel champagne cellars. The Russian River takes its name from the Russian-American Company, which explored this area in the early 1800s, with the aim of extending Russia's colonies southward from Russian Alaska. Guerneville, on the banks of the river, was once a logging town and is now a charming small tourist town. Stay 2 nights here in a 4-star hotel in the style of an Italian villa, set amongst redwoods and orchards just outside the town centre.

The basic route is easy, over mostly flat terrain with a few short ascents, but there are many challenging detours taking you high into the Coastal Range, along mostly traffic-free roads, for stunning views into the valleys and (weather permitting) as far as the Pacific Ocean. The challenging route is 40 miles (65km) with 3000 feet (915m) of ascent, while the epic route deep into the Coastal Range is 80 miles (130km) with 7400 feet (2260m) of tough ascent.

Day 5: Guerneville loop rides

Cycling @ 6 miles (10km)

Many cycling choices available today or take a rest from cycling as there are options (weather permitting, paid locally) to kayak along the Russian River to the Pacific or try zip-lining in the redwood forests.

The easy loop ride is to the Armstrong Redwoods State Reserve, where you can cycle or hike through the breathtaking redwood forest to the alpine meadows of the Austin Creek State Park.

There are stunning, scenic loop rides on quiet back roads through the forests to the bohemian town of Occidental (20 miles / 32km with 1200 feet / 365m ascent), or ride out towards the coast following the route of the *Tour of California* (45 miles / 73km with 2800 feet / 855m ascent).

Day 6: Guerneville to Bodega Bay

Cycling @ 20 miles (32km)

Start the day with a gentle descent following the course of the Russian River towards the Pacific. At the mouth of the river, near the small town of Jenner, a large sand spit builds up each spring creating an estuarine lagoon which makes a perfect home for Jenner's large colony of seals. From February to August they stay here to give birth, rear their pups and forage for food. Stop for lunch at one of Jenner's restaurants, or take a picnic to the beach. The route heads south through the scenic and protected Sonoma Coast State Beach and coastline.

The easy cycling route has short but steep climbs on the coast road, well-rewarded with stunning views. If you are travelling in April or May, keep your eyes open for Pacific gray whales on their annual migration. There are many options to make your ride more challenging – head into the Coastal Range through towering redwood groves to Cazadero, enjoy far-reaching views and then a fast, sweeping descent to the coast. The moderate and challenging rides are up to 45 miles (73km) with up to 3100 feet (945m) of ascent/descent.

Your destination is Bodega Bay, a small fishing port with a working fleet catching salmon, crab and shrimp from the waters of the Pacific. Much of Alfred Hitchcock's movie 'The Birds' was filmed here.

The tour ends in Bodega Bay with a pre-arranged transfer back to San Francisco, where your tour arrangements end. No accommodation is included tonight, though we can arrange San Francisco accommodation at extra cost.



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Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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