

THINGS TO DO □ TRAVEL

Weekend getaway: 48 Hours in Paso Robles with bikes, wine and more

The Central Coast's wine country offers the perfect romantic weekend away



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PUBLISHED: October 20, 2019 at 7:00 AM PDT

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Paso Robles is the wine country you didn't know you needed to visit. It has all the oenophile appeal of Napa, but with a kicked-back feel and mellow vibe. And with a drive time of less than three hours from the Bay Area, it's just the right distance for a romantic escape — or girls (or boys) weekend away.

Beat a retreat south before rush hour traffic kicks in, and you can be lounging by mid-afternoon on the patio at Paso's Allegretto Vineyard Resort, which makes a luxurious home base for the weekend. Start with an art tour of the hotel's collection of paintings and sculpture or a wine tasting on-site. Allegretto has its own label and its tannat will appeal to anyone who loves bold wines. Tannat is typically used as a blending grape, but here it shines all on its own, thanks to Paso's climate, warm during the day and cooled by evening breezes that flow in from the coast.

Then spend a couple of hours exploring Paso Robles’ bustling downtown. Pop into shops or continue wine tasting just off the square, where 24 local wineries have tasting rooms.

Friday evening

Grab dinner downtown at one of the fun, trendy restaurants that have taken root here in recent years. The lively Fish Gaucho cantina serves up Mexican dishes with a modern twist and plenty of tequila-based cocktails. The raw bar is especially delicious. Try the shrimp ceviche, cured in mezcal and topped with charred grapefruit and avocado, or oysters paired with a spicy apple- cucumber mignonette. Then head back to your hotel for sweet dreams.

Saturday morning

Awaken to sunrise over the vineyards — or sleep in. Either way, just be sure to order room service from the Cello Ristorante & Bar downstairs, so you can enjoy French press coffee in your room, along with buttermilk pancakes finished with caramelized bananas and fresh berries. Perhaps some bubbly too?

Explore Paso Robles’ wine country atop a tandem bike, like the author did with her boyfriend. (Courtesy Nora Heston Tarte)

Then go explore the hillsides of Paso Robles by tandem bicycle — the Allegretto’s concierge can set you up. Hop on a bright yellow bike-for-two with your boo and hit the road. Experienced riders can venture into town, but there’s less traffic, smoother roads and prettier views on the lanes and vineyards that surround the hotel.

Saturday noon

Ready for lunch? Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery lies less than 3 miles away, and offers everything from a Creston Valley Vineyard petite sirah to a Huerhuero Vineyard vermentino. There’s live music from noon to 3 p.m. on Saturdays, and alfresco lunch available on the Jardine Court.

Depending what time of year you visit, there’s plenty of music, too. The Vina Robles Amphitheatre hosts concerts from May through October — Jason Mraz and Sarah Bareilles, for example, are performing Oct. 26 and 27.



The Vina Robles Amphitheatre offers live music from May through October. (Vina Robles)

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Saturday evening

If all that winery hopping and byway biking has you tuckered out, head back to the hotel for dinner — there's live music on weekends — and a hot tub soak before bedtime.

Still got energy to burn? Head for the lively Hatch Rotisserie & Bar downtown for addictive rotisserie chicken, flat iron steaks with chimichurri and other tasty fare. And there's a speakeasy nearby — Eleven Twenty Two — for any late-night cocktail cravings.

Sunday morning

Niner Wine Estates' Sunday brunch, which is served until 3 p.m., is one you won't want to miss. Go sweet with French toast served with chocolate ganache and fresh strawberries, or savory with short-rib papas bravas. Pair brunch with a glass of Niner sparkling wine before your afternoon adventures.

The restaurant and patio at Paso Robles' Niner Wine Estates look out over the winery's iconic Heart Hill Vineyard. (Courtesy Jon Orlin)

And by adventures, we mean Eberle Winery cave tours. Eberle, which means small boar in German, is known for its award-winning, handcrafted wines, free tastings and free cave tours. The bar is always buzzing — free tastings will have that effect — but it's easy to find peace on the back patio, where bocce, corn hole and picnic areas await.

Wine cave tours are offered daily, and there's live music in the caves on select weekends in November and December. (Psst, those caves are haunted — and filled with scares and surprises — the last weekend in October. Get spooked, then pair your Eberle wine with grilled cheese sammies from the food truck parked outside.)

If You Go

SLEEP: Paso has many hotel options, including the Allegretto Vineyard Resort, where rooms start at \$209. There's a spa, swimming pool, wine tasting room (open from 11 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday and 2-6:45 p.m. Sunday-Monday) and amenities including tandem bikes. 2700 Buena Vista Drive, Paso Robles; www.allegrettovineyardresort.com.

SIP: Explore downtown Paso Robles' wine tasting rooms at

www.downtownpasowine.com.

Vina Robles Vineyards & Winery is open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Sunday and 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday at 3700 Mill Road; www.vinarobles.com.

Niner Wine Estates is open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily at 2400 Highway 46; www.ninerwine.com.

EAT: Fish Gaucho is open for dinner Monday-Thursday and lunch and dinner Friday-Sunday at 1244 Park St.; www.fishgaucho.com.

Cello Ristorante & Bar is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner daily at 2700 Buena Vista Drive; cellopasorobles.com.

Hatch Rotisserie & Bar is open for dinner daily at 835 13th St.; www.hatchpasorobles.com.

The Eleven Twenty Two speakeasy is open Tuesday-Sunday evenings at 1122 Pine St.; eleven-twentytwo.com