

# 6 Reasons to Uncover Hidden Paso Robles in Central California



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December 21, 2016

*Taking the path less traveled has been Caitlin's mantra and now it describes her travels as a contributor for Johnny Jet. From representing her dream clients in travel and hospitality at a top global marketing and PR agency and spending 10 years on the agency side, she's uncovering inspiration on the other side of the table. She's an east coaster at heart but enjoys living the beach life in Los Angeles, laughing loudly and singing in her Mini convertible. Follow Caitlin as she chronicles inspirational places and faces she meets along the way. She can be found on Twitter at @caitlinmartin or email at caitwrites@gmail.com.*



KROBAR in Paso Robles, California (Credit: Caitlin Martin)

Once a sleepy town in California's central coast, [Paso Robles](#) is now beaming with character for travelers searching for a more authentic experience. Haven't heard of it? It's located exactly halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, 3.5 hours away from each city along highway 101. It's about 30 minutes from the ocean and it makes a perfect stopping point for anyone doing the coastal drive on PCH.

Besides being a relaxed, approachable California town of 19 square miles, Paso Robles is home to small-batch vineyards, tasting rooms, farm-to-table restaurants, beautiful rural scenery, art galleries, shopping boutiques, and a charming, walkable downtown. It holds an authentic central California experience that maybe you hadn't thought about visiting. I first heard talk of Paso Robles when driving up PCH after a stop at Hearst Castle ([worth it!](#)). I was chatting with a friendly stranger who suggested I drive 30 minutes inland to this little place he called "Paso." While I didn't have time to make the stop that time, I wanted to get there at some point because I was intrigued. Now that I've made it, here are six reasons why this charming town deserves your visit.

**1. Young, personality-filled—and world-class—wineries** If you're a wine-lover that wants to taste famously great wine and also discover some new loves, Paso is definitely your place. Here you'll find world-class wines, a relaxed atmosphere and reasonable prices. Paso is currently home to more than 250 vintners. Some are located in the scenic countryside and some have their tasting rooms in the cute, walkable downtown area (along with excellent boutique shops and restaurants).

Paso has several different wine regions, each with their own distinct microclimates. Don't worry about driving; there's an awesome tour company called [Uncorked Wine Tours](#) that will handle the transportation. They do customized tours of the area's wineries, vineyards or breweries and can include lunch to make it easier to consume more wine and beer. The drivers are fun and energetic. Why wouldn't you want an awesome designated driver with you all day as you get to know the area's wine, beer and spirit options?

A very unique winer called [Field Recordings](#) cannot be missed. Their wines dazzle with personality and even include a few in a can, like the well-known Fiction Red that can be found in stores around the country. They even make a great Pinot Noir for the area, Nouveau, fermented as whole clusters and pressed prior to bottling. I heard earlier this year that they even made a hopped rose in a can (yes, you heard that right—hops and wine!). I like winemaker Andrew Jones' style. If as a winemaker you have the guts to try to produce a hopped rose, you clearly love to experiment, and that's awesome. They also do a spin on the "wine club" they call the "can club," wherein members get to try some of Andrew Jones' other canned wine experiments. Talk about personality! Other great wineries include [Parrish Family Vineyard](#) (try the Silken Reserve 2012 and if you're a white fan the 2015 Sav Blanc), [DAOU Vineyards](#) (try the Cab Sav) and [San Antonio Winery](#). All are part of the [Paso Robles CAB Collective](#). These wineries produce high quality red Bordeaux varietals that are helping to highlight the Paso wine country.

**2. The Paso Robles Distillery Trail** Who would have guessed that Paso Robles would have a trail dedicated to the tasting of distilled spirits? The [Paso Robles Distillery Trail](#) showcases distilleries in the San Luis Obispo county area. Many of them are young and full of energy and have beautiful country views! The craft distillery movement here is gaining great momentum as there are now many distilleries in the area. Check out [KROBAR](#) for a tasting of Neutral Brandy, Barrel Rested Gin, Rye Whiskey Bourbon Americana, and more. Don't forget to try out their special craft cocktail menu on select days. Perhaps the most unique distillery I visited was [Bethel Rd Distillery](#). Bethel Rd has been doing small-batch production since 2013 and their brand new tasting room is set to open in early 2017. In a special preview, I sipped grappa and enjoyed the view for a bit. I was even invited to sample a test batch of what will be Neutral Brandy passionfruit. I predict more good things here.



Margarita Adventures (Credit: Caitlin Martin)

**3. Beautiful, rolling California country scenery** With its beautiful vineyards covered rolling hills, oak groves and scenic mountain views, Paso Robles is the place for taking in the splendor of California's Central Coast. It feels like wine country but a little more rural and undiscovered. Some may decide to sip a beverage to take in the view. Others looking to be active may try zip lining and horseback riding to see the vineyards from a different perspective.

Take a vineyard rail ride ([Central Coast Trail Rides](#) does a horseback tour around [Cass Vineyards](#)) and then have a fantastic tasting and lunch overlooking the vines. Whether it's your first time riding a horse or you're a pro, you will enjoy the view (and most likely the horse will cooperate!). [Margarita Adventures](#) takes adventurers zipping over vineyards at the historic Santa Margarita Ranch. With amazing views and a fun ride, there is something for every traveler in Paso Robles.

**4. Unique breweries** From IPAs to blondes, Paso has some great brews. At [BarrelHouse Brewing Co.](#) you can enjoy year-round small-batch or reserve beers while admiring the sweeping views of the countryside. Try their Sunny Daze and Snake Bite. BarrelHouse also has many sour barrel projects going on. You can sample those, too. Tour how they make their sour beer (and non-sour beer). Don't forget to check out the inspiration behind the BarrelHouse logo—a cross etched by Spanish Lt. Colonel Juan Batista de Anza—found in the brewery's trademark oak tree.

**5. Excellent, fresh dining options in a quaint downtown area** The area's richness of fresh seafood, vegetables, cheese, and wine has inspired many top chefs to open restaurants celebrating local California cuisine. You can find Italian, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, Continental, American, French, and Mediterranean cuisines. Have delicious farm-to-fork fare at Catch Seafood Grill & Bar or [Hatch Rotisserie and Bar](#) (the rotisserie chicken is to die for!). Or let [Thomas Hill Organics'](#) seasonal menu of locally sourced ingredients intrigue you (try the duck confit croquettes and Niman Ranch beef short rib).

**6. Accommodations ranging from charming boutique to high-end** The area offers all of the amenities of other well-known California wine regions, yet you'll find Paso Robles more approachable, with small-town sophistication and charm. The Italian/Mediterranean boutique hotel [La Bellasera](#) offers richly decorated guest rooms and category options from deluxe king suite to three-room suite with kitchen. The property also features an excellent restaurant, Enoteca Restaurant & Bar, and a wine cellar, with an extensive list of local wines. It also has a cozy lobby with fireplace, a spa, a swimming pool, and a fully equipped fitness center. Located just a mile away from the Pacific coast, La Bellasera is close to just about everything: vineyards, mountains and beaches, with easy access to the freeway.

Then there's the luxury [Allegretto Resort & Spa](#) is the way to go for a retreat away from it all. Resembling the Mediterranean and inspired by wine country, the Allegretto evokes images of an Italian vineyard estate on 20 acres of vineyards and fruit-bearing orchards. The property is massive compared to the smaller boutique hotels of Paso. With 171 guest rooms and suites, locally inspired cuisine and a wine bar featuring the resort's own private wine label, the Allegretto will leave you pampered with perfection. The Allegretto also has a full-service spa, a pool, manicured gardens, walking paths, a France-inspired Abbey, and hundreds of antiques, art and artifacts. As you tour the grounds, you will discover a plethora of meaningful stories that showcase the passion and love the managing family has for the property.

***In summary: Paso Robles is diverse and unpretentious. There's something for everyone!*** You could be a wine-lover that enjoys discovering new wineries before everyone knows about them, or you could be an adventure-junkie looking for a thrill. You could be a family looking for affordability and something for each person in the family. You could be a beer lover looking to taste something you've never tasted before or you could love to sip spirits while taking in rolling hills. You could also simply like the outdoors and the tranquility of a little town that doesn't have to try hard to bring the best of the area together with friendly people.