

5 AWESOME WINERIES TO VISIT IN PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA

"Paso Robles is the wild west of California wine."



WINE WALL ART AT ALLEGRETTO RESORT IN PASO ROBLES

A couple of weekends ago, my hubby and I went on a long weekend getaway up to Paso Robles to relax, drink some wine, eat some good food, hike a bit (<https://www.foodielovesfitness.com/2018/02/27/7-california-trails-hiked-beginning-2018/>), and enjoy central California wine country.

I find that it's hard for people who haven't spent a lot of time around California to understand how massive it is. I remember when I moved up to the San Jose area from San Diego (and later, vice versa), family members of mine thought it would be a short drive away and were shocked when I told them it was almost a 10-hour drive!



But that's one of the many things that I think is so cool about California. We've gone on countless road trips while never even leaving the state. For a Jersey girl, that was a pretty wild phenomena that took me years to get used to!

Paso Robles is about 6 hours north from where I live. It's a bit of a lesser known wine country compared to Napa and Sonoma, but it has grown in popularity in recent years – and rightly so. It has so much California country charm, great weather for wine growing, and a downtown area that actually reminds me so much of Sonoma. In 2013, Wine Enthusiast Magazine named Paso Robles its Wine Region of the Year.



WINTER VIEWS OF PASO AREA VINEYARD EBERLE

In the 90's, there were less than 20 wineries in Paso Robles... Today, there are over 200 wineries (<https://pasowine.com/vineyards/>)! The varietals in the region span from zinfandel and cabernet sauvignon to Rhône reds and whites like viognier.

I hadn't spent serious time in Paso Robles in years simply because it's a bit far for a weekend trip, but we finally had the chance to go again last month. We broke it up by stopping in Santa Barbara for a night, heading to Paso the next day after brunch, staying there for a couple of full days, then driving back on a Monday. We also stopped in the Danish town of Solvang on our way back for lunch and a few of their famous Danish pastries.



SOLVANG IS KNOWN FOR ITS DANISH SWEETS - SO WE CAN'T PASS THE TOWN ON A ROAD TRIP WITHOUT STOPPING IN FOR SOME!

Besides the obvious reasons to love a California wine region (*delicious wine & beautiful views*), one of the things I adore about Paso Robles is its down-to-earth country flair. While it's expanded and grown tremendously in recent years - something that I heard concerns about from locals who appreciate the growth but don't want it to become too trendy - at many of the wineries, you can hang out with the owners themselves & some don't charge tasting fees.

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There are tons of boutique wineries, which I love. At some of the wineries you wind up chatting with the owners about their winemaking. And so many of the wineries have winery pets just roaming around. *What can I say, animal people are my kind of people!*

I thought it'd be fun to share 5 of my favorite wineries that I've visited when in Paso Robles, so let's get to it!



Wild Horse Winery. (<https://www.wildhorsewinery.com>) Located in the historic area of Templeton, Wild Horse Winery is named for the wild mustangs that used to roam the area, and was founded in 1981. Today, they have pet llamas – which we obviously visited with after our tasting there!



Pouring out of horse shaped spouts and selling cute llama products in the shop in its quaint tasting room, part of the winery's charm is its odes to its namesake and pets. We tried a pinot noir tasting flight as we talked with our server, who was happy to chat with us about everything from California road trips to Wild Horse's Austrian varietal, called blaufrankisch. We went on to try some other yummy varietals, and the winery was having a pretty nice deal on a few of their wines, so we left with bottles of mourvedre and grenache in hand.



Halter Ranch (<http://www.halterranch.com>). This winery had been recommended to me by multiple people, and we almost didn't check it out because it's one of the most western wineries in the region. But I'm glad that we went a little out of our way to visit, because Halter Ranch is an absolutely gorgeous winery!



From the road, it's hard to make out what the winery's buildings look like. But once you start to drive back its long road in, you begin to see that the winery has a beautiful, huge facility. It looks like one magical place to get married or have any special event! The tasting room is also a state-of-the-art facility with lots of space to relax and sip on their wines.



Featuring 100% estate-grown sustainably farmed wines, Halter Ranch makes red & white Bordeaux and Rhône wine blends. Their tasting room has these really large windows, so as we were trying the wines, the server was pointing out just where the grapes were grown outside.



The wines were delicious, and Halter Ranch will definitely be on my list to visit the next time I'm in Paso Robles. In fact, I was kind of mad that we didn't bring a picnic, because there's so much room to sit outside and enjoy wine country!



J Lohr (<https://www.jlohr.com>) This one simply had to make the list, because I drink J Lohr wines all the time and always make sure to visit the tasting room when I'm in Paso. They're one of the largest producers in Paso, but you wouldn't know it from their homey tasting room – where you can sample some wines that aren't available at stores all over the place.

Every time I visit J Lohr, the staff is super friendly (I've noticed that they're mostly older folks, which I think is kind of cute too!). The tastings are free and the winery is dog-friendly, so it's a great place to hang out on their patio, sip some wine, and check out the vineyard view.

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Barr Estate Wines (<http://www.barrestatewines.com>). This winery wasn't on my list before the trip, but I'm so glad that we popped in for a visit after it was recommended by the manager at another winery. Barr is a boutique family owned & operated 57-acre vineyard. When we walked in, the husband & wife owners, Greg & Tealy, were both there. Tealy herself poured our wines, telling us about the story behind their winery.

They make their own olive oil (it was tasty) and have a red blend named Dane Head after the breed of dog they've fallen in love with. We really liked their wines, including a summery white varietal, Albariño, which she explained to us was brought to Spain and Portugal by monks in the 12th century. Their wines are reasonably priced, and we walked out with a case of Albariño.

If you're a person that enjoys more of a personal experience at boutique wineries, Barr is a great place to visit.



Hansen Vineyards (<http://hansenwines.com>) – I've been drinking Hansen wines for years because my parents were wine club members for awhile. They visited the winery years ago because my maiden name is Hansen, and they couldn't resist checking out their namesake winery. The same happened to us when we drove past a sign for Hansen on this trip and decided to pop in.



Hansen's tasting room is a small, no frills, bar-like room – unique for its humorous signs (see above), Michigan flag (the state where the owner is from) & display of different types of barbed wires (interesting hobby). We sat down to taste, and the guy seated next to us turned out to be the winery owner Bruce. He insisted on us hopping in his golf cart to check out the work that had just been done to his vines.



MY HUSBAND SNAPPED THIS SHOT OF BRUCE HANSEN AND ME CHATTING ABOUT HIS VINEYARD.

We wound up hanging out at Hansen for hours tasting cabs and chatting with the winery manager. Their new stray cat James wound up taking a liking to me & not so shyly made himself comfy on my lap. And while the wines are pricey by my standards, Hansen wines are delicious & it was a fun tasting experience.



All in all, I adore Paso Robles! If it were closer, I'd be hopping over there every other weekend. I highly recommend making Paso a destination bucket list, and it's a great place to visit if you're doing a California road trip.

Tell me.. Have you ever been to/heard of Paso Robles? Have you gone on any weekend getaways this year, or have any in the works?