

## TRAVEL

## 10 Reasons to Visit Paso Robles Now

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There is something about Paso Robles. Time seems to slow down...the air feels better. Life seems less hectic and business owners in California's Central Coast are working hard to make their dreams come true. Just a 3-hour drive north from Los Angeles or south from San Francisco, Paso Robles feels worlds away from city life. Easily accessible from Highway 101, daily flights into San Luis Obispo County Regional Airport on Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, and United are about 30 miles away.



This unpretentious laid-back countryside with 246 wineries dotting the landscape grows over 46 varieties due to the proximity to the Pacific Ocean, varying topography and diversity of soils. Due to the high level of calcium and magnesium carbonate formed from sea life when the area was under water thousands of years ago, marine life lived and died, depositing calcium carbonate to form rock-like sediment which adds intensity, minerality, and other complex flavors to their wines. The same soil (calcareous Limestone) that is found in France's well-known wine regions including Champagne, The Loire, Southern Rhone Valleys, Burgundy, Chablis, and Saint Emilion in Bordeaux, is found in Paso Robles.





Framed by two mountain ranges, the region enjoys a Mediterranean climate with warm days and cool nights, producing mostly Cabernet Sauvignon followed by Merlot, Syrah, and other red varieties like Grenache and Mourvedre. The world-renowned wines put Paso Robles on the map starting in 1983. Many new wineries have popped up in recent years along with a booming craft beer and spirits scene coupled with numerous live music venues.



*Cass Winery*

Personalized Paso, from wine country to historic downtown, brings small-town charm with world-class sips. Most establishments encourage you to interact and really get to know the makers because they are often the ones pouring your drink. If you want to leave the driving up to someone else in your Paso Robles exploration, the new convertible Mercedes Benz Sprinter vans are available in the area through Grapeline Wine Tours. There are only 30 of these sleek open-air rides in America.





Although we have loved staying at Mediterranean styled Allegretto Vineyard Resort in the past due to their extensive art collection, culinary creations, fitness class in an abbey, outdoor fire pits, and sonic labyrinth, another high-end hotel option will be available by mid-August 2019. Owned and adjacent to the Paso Robles Inn, the four-story Piccolo Hotel will be the first rooftop bar space in downtown Paso Robles. Starting at \$450 per night, the dog-friendly 24 luxury suite rooms with exposed brick walls will face a peaceful courtyard with Juliet balconies, native plants, and murals painted by local artists. The property is steps away from restaurants, shops, distilleries, olive oil tasting, and wineries.

Below are our newest Paso Robles discoveries that one should not miss on their next trip to Paso.

## **Ten Reasons to Visit Paso Robles Now Field of Light at Sensorio**

While the super blooms in California have faded in the hills and valleys, now you can witness a more unusual bloom in peaceful Paso Robles nature. Step into the multi-acre fairy fields and tiptoe around the color morphing blooms. Get there before sunset to watch the ethereal light-based landscape change before your eyes. I felt like an alien may come down to smile at us crazy earthlings.



Internationally-acclaimed British artist Bruce Munro created this illuminating ever-changing sea of lights (spheres in the ground) in the rolling hills. His largest work to date is open to the public now until January 5, 2020, at Sensorio in Paso Robles. Powered by solar, the 58,800 stemmed spheres lit by fiber optics, illuminate the undulating countryside and take you on your own inner journey.



“This is art you feel, rather than art you view” is how The Guardian describes Munro’s past sculptural land compositions. The Field of Light at Sensorio was constructed by groups of volunteers in one-hour shifts and similar iterations were recreated previously in other remote locations like Uluru Rock in Australia (which will shine until 2020) and Munro’s home in Wiltshire, UK. After Munro took a camping trip to the red desert

center of Australia in 1992, he was struck by the thought of how deserts are infertile until it rains and flowers bloom. Munro dreamt of a field of lights that like dormant seeds in a dry desert, would quietly wait until darkness to bloom with gentle rhythms of light.



Before entering the field, refreshments can be purchased and a special terrace option offers viewing while dining. To learn more and reserve tickets: <https://www.sensoriopaso.com/>





## **Vina Robles Amphitheater**

Nestled in an oak-dotted hillside, this mini outdoor concert venue draws some big acts. Like a mini-mini Hollywood Bowl, guests can watch their favorite artist up close and personal with just 3,300 people total. Lawn seats are just a stone's throw away from the stage. Some of the acts coming this summer include Chicago, Kacy Musgraves, Ringo Starr Band, and Foreigner. From May to October, there are 30 concerts a year and the average ticket price is \$65. Craft beer and of course the best wines are available in various locations at the amphitheater. The Vina Robles Winery sits adjacent to the theater in case you want to sample their Estate Series and Limited Estate Collection wines pre-concert in their tasting room. For \$15, select five wines that showcase the diversity of the varieties grown in Paso Robles.



## **Rava Winery**

A must visit on your Paso journey is a stop for sparkling wines at Rava Winery where wines are crafted using time-honored methode champenoise techniques. Did you know it takes 2-4 years to get the grapes to your glass to enjoy the bubbles? Situated on 505 acres, enjoy a sparkling wine flight or an impressive charcuterie outside on the stunning peaceful vineyard grounds with a lake. Located on the sloping hillside of the Santa Lucia mountain range, the vineyard enjoys foggy mornings and warm days followed by late afternoon coastal breezes and chilly nights. These cool temperatures allow the grapes to ripen slowly over a prolonged growing season, resulting in expressive aromatic fruit.



Owned and farmed by a third-generation farming family, the gorgeous venue started as a wedding and event space, complete with olive grove, old-world courtyard, and indoor ballroom, before expanding into their first winery in 2017. Take a private wine tour with beautiful sweet Lauren Rava to witness the state-of-the-art equipment and learn about the sparkling wine process, or find out when a patio concert is happening on their outdoor stage. Admire the hip neon artwork inside, linger until sunset, play Bocce ball, swing on the charming swings, or just don't leave. You can rent out the three-bedroom Villa Giada on site that overlooks the grounds, lake, and vineyards and sits atop of the tasting room.

Besides the delicious sparkling wines, don't miss Rava's 2016 Humble Red and Albarino.

## **Parrish Family Vineyard**

Not even one-year-old (even though they had a tiny winery downtown for years that fit 15 people), this bucolic newly built tasting room feels like a charming New England home with lengthy porch, golf putting area and exceptional red wines. Come for their elegant 3-course food and wine pairing with their new Estate Chef Rachel Ponce who concocts dishes like sweet peppers stuffed with chicken and feta with a bittersweet chocolate pesto. Today Parrish Family Vineyards host special events like wine and cigar pairings, Father's Day fondue and filet, and soon pop-up music brunches on Sundays. Vegan offerings are possible like a delicious walnut and lentil pate with crostini and wild mushroom and olive tapenade. Although 90% of their fruit is sold, some is kept for you and me to savor here and can be found in some restaurants in town. Don't miss the 2015 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon.





While sipping wine, learn about the history of the land and the four-generation Parrish Family or say hello to their daughter, Cessely, serving the wines. Seventy years after David Parrish's grandfather was one of the first people to plant grapes in the region, David Parrish tried grape growing and was inspired to create new kinds of trellising systems that resulted in 24 patents for trellis design. Robert Mondavi even recruited David to re- trellis his vineyards in Napa. Not until 1995 did David return to his grandfather's roots in Paso to make wine and we can now appreciate those endeavors in this enchanting setting.



## Cass Winery

Make a stop for fresh healthy outdoor lunch at boutique family-owned Cass Winery, which features estate-grown Rhone-style wines. Located in a small low elevation valley on 145 acres, the cool temperatures in the fall help to keep the grapes on the vine several extra weeks, adding to the maturity and ripeness of the fruit. The Cass Café open every day from 11 am – 5 pm offers gourmet plates in a relaxing vineyard setting next to their chef's garden and romantic old oak trees. Slow down with a food and wine pairing or savor your vino with a crab cake salad, strawberry, and feta salad, or cold tri-tip sandwich. We adored Cass Winery's new releases – the 2018 Viognier and the 2018 Oasis Rose while the highly rated 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon should not be missed.



Snap an Instagram-worthy photo in the [Game of Thrones](#) wine chair made from deconstructed wine barrels. Private parties can be held in the Barrel Room, intimate Wine Library, or outdoor vineyard. Soon guests will be able to sleep on the property as 8 bed and breakfast style rooms in elevated recycled steel shipping containers will don the vineyard landscape in 2019. Expect private bedroom decks, ultra-modern amenities, and interior and exterior elements blending with the landscape. Guests can participate in educational and private “inner farmer” experiences like making your own apple cider, riding through the vineyards, or delving into beekeeping from a Cass hive.

## Halter Ranch Vineyard

A good place to start your Paso exploration is the winding roads to Halter Ranch for tasty estate grown Bordeaux-style and Rhone-style wines in their beautiful facility with floor to window ceilings providing panoramic vineyard views. When you enter the ranch spanning over 2000 acres with 281 acres of SIP (Sustainability in Practice) wine grapes, you arrive at a covered bridge with silos to your right, now used for wedding preparation. From 1885-1942 the land was once used as a hog farm where hogs were sold to San Francisco, but after the railroad came, business suffered. Next came a grain ranch and flash forward more years, Ronald Reagan announced his second presidential term here. An airport strip and hanger were built for family and friends, visible now from the tasting room. The 83-year-old Swiss owner developed medical devices for orthopedic surgeons and sold the company in 2013. The property is an ode to his mother, Alice Halter, her maiden name. In keeping with his philosophy, the owner will donate a billion dollars to land conservation in the next few years.



Designed in 2011, the winery took 4-5 years to develop including 15 acres of walnuts and 10 acres of olives. The certified sustainable vineyard sells only 15 % of the grapes today while the rest are used for their 14+ wines. You can get to know Halter Ranch more by signing up for a tour or excursion. Tour their underground wine caves and learn about their sustainable practices. See if you can spot a bat or owl box on the land or the raptor stands that control the rodent population. Experience the vineyard in a Land Rover while sipping wine, circumnavigate the property on a horseback ride, take a guided hike or walk with lunch, or reserve a food and wine pairing in their Ancestor Room. Three times in summer a special dinner with soft acoustic music is offered on their covered bridge with 80 other people and a local chef prepared meal.





Don't miss the 2016 Ancestor, a blend of [Cabernet Sauvignon](#), Petit Verdot, and Malbec.

## **Epoch Estate**

### **Wines**

Voted best vineyard designs around the world by Architectural Digest, Epoch represents a moment in time, an era. A winding countryside road brings you to this modern concrete structure set in the rolling hills. Founded in 2004 by geologists who understand the importance terroir plays in making world-class wines, Epoch is revitalizing Paso's century old winemaking roots. Producers of estate-grown wines from Rhone, Tempranillo, and Zinfandel varieties, the fruit comes from three vineyards the owners purchased and planted themselves.



Sample history in the making by sipping their 2014 Veracity (a Grenache, Mourvedre, Syrah blend) in their Tasting Room, the restored and repurposed York Mountain Winery built in 1882. Marvel at the original bricks and stones from late 1893 and a wine press on top of the ceiling from 1889. Bring an Epoch bottle outside for a picnic or relaxation in an Adirondack with lush scenic views for miles. Tastings are by appointment only, so book from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM or schedule a historic tour and tasting on the first Sunday of each month.



## Tin City Cider

Tin City is an evolving industrial makers' market nestled amongst the oak trees where friends can socialize over smaller winemakers, local artisans, and craft breweries. Find light sensationally developed beers in Tin City at Tin City Cider tap room where the best California apples make cider like juicy tropical Parrothead, infused with pineapple. Try a beer flight to sample concoctions, such as the green apple citrus champagne-y tasting Original Dry Hopped Cider, the rose watermelon Polly Dolly, or Templetucky, a cider aged in bourbon barrels with a touch of blood orange. To cleanse your palette, head on over to next door Negranti Creamery with ice cream made from sheep's milk.



## Silva Brewing

Newly opened since 2016 in the town center, the brewmaster came from Green Flash Brewing Co., among the nation's top 50 craft breweries in San Diego. Find beer trailblazer Chuck Silva creating beer now in Paso Robles downtown at small-batch Micro-Brewery called Silva Brewing, offering hop-centric IPAs, clean crisp traditional styles, farmhouse ales infused with locally grown ingredients, and barrel-aged brews. Saisons, stouts, Kolsch, Pale Ales, Kettle Sour Rose, Belgian-style influenced beers, and the best beer we've ever sampled called Vanill-O-Boros, a fine stout infused with Madagascar vanilla and aged in whiskey barrels for 2 years. This \$17 hand-bottled corked and wired stout makes for a nice after dinner drink for 2-3 people. Be sure to take this specialty beer home. The tasting room has 11 unique beers on tap and beer to go in cans, growlers, and bottles. They are open Wednesday through Sunday. <https://shop.silvabrewing.com>





## Il Cortile Restaurant

The Downtown Paso Robles rustic Italian restaurant Il Cortile sits near the new Piccolo Hotel. Chef Santos from Honduras started his career at LA's famed Giorgio Baldi as a dishwasher being mentored by Chef Baldi before working at many LA restaurants including Via Veneto, Locando de Lago, and Koi. The ten-year-old restaurant provides a community feel where all are welcome. In January and February, a 3-course dinner is available on Wednesday evenings designed around the bottle you choose at the restaurant. The seasonal menu changes but the antipasti, pasta, and the mozzarella sections are menu musts. The chef tantalized us with returning in November and December for the best white truffles since he exclaimed he has the best hookup. Hmmm wine with white truffle carpaccio. The chef also owns the Latin-centric La Cosecha in Downtown Paso.