

A Wine Expert's Guide to Napa Valley

For more than two decades, Travel + Leisure wine expert Ray Isle has been visiting Napa to uncover the best of the region. Here's his short list.

By [Ray Isle](#)



The City of Napa

When I first started going to [Napa Valley](#), the city itself was a place you zoomed through on your way to the wineries. There used to be a traffic signal where Highway 29 met Trancas Boulevard — now the highway swoops right under the intersection — and you'd often hit a stoplight. That gave you time to consider whether you needed any of the things the city had to offer back then: a bag of mulch, for instance, or windshield-wiper fluid.



Instead of a sit-down lunch, opt for a wine tasting that includes food pairings — something more and more wineries now offer — and save the blowout meals for dinner.

That's changed — big time. It probably started with the opening of Oxbow Public Market, at the end of 2007, which brought restaurants, shops, and buzz to downtown. Napa started to feel like somewhere you might actually want to linger. The 2017 opening of the stylish [Archer Hotel](#) was another pivotal moment. Today, Oxbow is still going strong. Its latest addition is [Moro Napa](#), a delectable Moroccan street-food joint from San Francisco star chef Mourad Lahlou, who's made his first venture into wine country.

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