

This CORK & FORK sample itinerary has been developed based on a group of 12 individuals and is provided merely as a glimpse of the sort of customized travel experience CORK & FORK would delight in developing for independent travelers and groups.



California: Wines of the Central Coast

Highlights:

- 7-day/6-night wine travel program focused on the spectacular California Central Coast including the Monterey Peninsula, Paso Robles and Santa Barbara County, to provide exposure to the range of outstanding varietals that thrive in this region
- Three customized private guided wine tours featuring private tastings, tours and winemaker/owner meetings at some of the finest boutique wineries in California
- Luxury accommodations including Bernardus Lodge, an intimate 57-room hideaway with a strong epicurean focus, Hotel Cheval, a boutique, 16-room property just off the charming grassy town square of wine boom town, Paso Robles, and the Ojai Valley Inn, a classic resort property that sparkles thanks to a recent \$100-million expansion and refurbishment
- Ojai Valley Inn resort activity (golf, spa and many more from which to choose) or optional interactive epicurean experience including lunch with a local chef at an Ojai culinary studio
- A complete set of recommended activities for time at leisure, ranging from shopping to cultural visits, etc.
- A customized fine dining program that will expose you to the outstanding range of cuisine and fresh local produce available year round on the Central Coast.
- Transfers via luxury minicoach throughout the program



Contact Jim Dondero at CORK & FORK to discuss this itinerary.

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Day One: Arrival to San Jose International Airport at or before 2:30 p.m. Private transfer 1 hour 30 minutes to the Carmel Valley. Late afternoon at leisure at Bernardus Lodge. Wine dinner on property at Marinus, the award-winning fine dining restaurant at Bernardus. Your private group dinner, held in the Magnum Room at Marinus, will feature a four-course tasting menu paired with exceptional Central Coast wines. The Marinus sommelier will provide commentary on each wine selected from their 1,800-bottle cellar, and, based on availability that evening, you will meet Marinus's standout chef, Cal Stemenov. Accommodations: Bernardus Lodge, an intimate getaway deep in the Carmel Valley

Day Two: Morning at leisure at Bernardus or transfer to Carmel Village, where shopping and charm are abundant. Lunch in Carmel (lunch pricing not included, but CORK & FORK will provide lunch venue recommendations). Afternoon customized private wine tour of the Santa Lucia Highlands featuring exceptional Pinots and Chards of this cool-climate appellation (see wine country overview section for recommended wineries). Visits with private tastings and at least one winemaker meeting are included in this program. A viticulturist and consultant to the local agricultural industry will lead the tour. That evening, you will be certain to enjoy a private group dinner in the 4500-bottle wine cellar of L'Auberge Carmel's restaurant, Aubergine. Your four-course dinner will feature wine pairings, which the sommelier will review with you. Accommodations: Bernardus Lodge

Day Three: Your private transfer will depart Carmel in late morning, perhaps stopping for lunch at Nepenthe, a CORK & FORK favorite on the coast at Big Sur that features a million-dollar coastline view. Continue on the highly-scenic Pacific Coast Highway 2 hours 15 minutes (and many more views) to San Simeon where you will enjoy a tour of Hearst Castle. We recommend the "Experience Tour." This 1-hour 45-minute tour includes highlights of the main house and Casa del Sol, the 18-room guesthouse overlooking the Pacific, as well as the sensational esplanade and gardens featuring marble sculptures and seasonal flowers. Following the tour, your driver will take you into the booming wine town of Paso Robles (45-minute transfer). In the evening, enjoy a horse drawn carriage ride through the town of Paso, courtesy of Hotel Cheval and Chester, followed by dinner at Villa Creek, a Sonoran-style, relatively informal restaurant that is extremely popular with area winemakers and the wine trade. Accommodations: Hotel Cheval, a new, 16-room boutique property that quickly has made a name for itself as one of the premier small properties in the Central Coast.

Day Four: We've scheduled day four as a leisurely day in the Paso area. Following a continental breakfast in your room, enjoy the morning at leisure in Paso Robles. After a picnic lunch in wine country, relish a customized private wine tour of some of the finest boutique Rhone and Zin producers of Paso Robles (see wine country overview section for recommended wineries). In the evening, walk to dinner at Artisan, another top Paso restaurant. This acclaimed spot, which specializes in Contemporary American Cuisine, is more formal than Villa Creek, but Paso is only so formal! Accommodations: Hotel Cheval

Day Five: Start the day with continental breakfast in your room at Hotel Cheval. Depart mid-morning via a private, two-hour scenic transfer to Santa Barbara. Enjoy lunch in Santa Barbara at The Wine Cask (lunch pricing not included) followed by a visit to and tour of their fabulous wine shop that features one of the most outstanding selections of Burgundian wines from Santa Barbara County and the rest of the world. Tastings may be arranged. Take some time for shopping in Santa Barbara, and we would be happy to coordinate an optional historical architectural walking tour of the Spanish-inspired downtown district and perhaps the old mission, located above the downtown. When ready, your driver will transfer you 45 minutes to the impossibly beautiful and majestic Ojai Valley for check in at the Ojai Valley Inn, a landmark resort property established in the 1920s. Late afternoon will be at leisure. Enjoy dinner on property at the Inn at one of several restaurants. Accommodations: Ojai Valley Inn

Day Six: Morning will be at leisure at the resort. Included in your program is a resort activity such as a spa treatment or another activity such as golf (rental clubs have not been included in the pricing), kayaking, fishing, etc. Another option for all or part of the group is to schedule a half-day epicurean experience with Chef Laurence Hauben. Born in France, Laurence has lived in Santa Barbara for more than 20 years. She formally directed the Santa Barbara Farmer's Market and operated a very successful restaurant in town. One possible venue for this experience is a culinary studio in Ojai. A morning cooking lesson featuring local ingredients would be followed by lunch. This option has not been included in the program pricing. After lunch, you will enjoy a private guided wine tour of Santa Barbara Wine Country (see wine country overview section for recommended wineries). Visits with private tastings and at least one winemaker meeting are included in this program. Return to the Inn by 6:30 p.m. Dinner will be either on property (at a different resort restaurant than the previous night) or at Suzanne's Cuisine, the pinnacle of fine dining in town where you will enjoy inventive French-Italian fare, the freshest local ingredients and their attentive staff. Accommodations: Ojai Valley Inn

Day Seven: Departure from Ojai. 90-minute transfer to Los Angeles International Airport for return flight.

Whats included:

- 6 nights accommodations based on double occupancy in higher-end room categories: 2 nights Bernardus Lodge-Carmel Valley (Premium Croquet room), 2 nights Hotel Cheval-Paso Robles (Deluxe room category), 2 nights Ojai Valley Inn (Shangri La Fireplace King room category - new construction)
- 3 deluxe wine tours with winemaker meetings, private tours and tastings as specified
- 6 high-end dinners, most of which feature wine pairing menus or sommelier-led discussion of the pairings. Wine pairings and ½-bottle of wine per person are included.
- 6 breakfasts including 2 continental breakfasts at Hotel Cheval
- 1 wine country picnic in Paso Robles
- Ojai Valley Inn activity: 1 round of golf, spa treatment (up to \$150 treatment) or other resort activity
- Admission to Hearst Castle ("Experience Tour")
- Horse-drawn carriage through downtown Paso Robles from hotel to dinner
- All transfers (airport transfers, private wine tour transfers, dinner transfers, transfers along the Central Coast, etc.) for activities included in this program
- All taxes, CORK & TEE fees and gratuities. Please note that this program does not include a group escort. CORK & TEE will coordinate arrangements and provide detailed program notes/schedules/contact information for a group leader.

Price Per Person (based on a group of 12/double occupancy): \$4,295

We would be happy to develop a personalized itinerary to accommodate your budget. Pricing and arrangements are subject to availability and price fluctuation. Pricing will be guaranteed prior to final booking.

Central Coast Wine Country Overview:

Monterey Wine Country

Until the release of "Sideways," which showcased the beauty of Santa Barbara wine country, other California wine regions such as Monterey were overlooked due to what many in the Central Coast consider to be the marketing dominance of Napa Valley (but the initial market interest in Cab and Merlot had something to do with that too!). But in fact, nearly half of the crush from Monterey makes its way to Napa and other regions. In recent years, the region has received deserved acclaim for its exceptional cooler-climate varietals like Chard and Pinot Noir.

As with other parts of California, the cultivation of wine grapes in the Monterey area was introduced in the 18th century by Franciscan friars, who established a series of missions throughout the state, such as the one at Soledad located about 50 minutes from Carmel. Wine at that time was used for sacramental purposes. Commercial production began in Monterey County in 1960 and soon producers such as Chalone, J. Lohr and Wente established operations in the region. Today, more than 45,000 acres are under cultivation, making Monterey one of the largest appellations in California. Within the region, 8 sub-appellations (such as the Santa Lucia Highlands and Carmel Valley) have been classified based on unique microclimates and other growing conditions that contribute to a unique terroir. Some of the vineyards in the highlands, such as Sleepy Hollow and Gary's Vineyard, are particularly well known for their outstanding Chard and Pinot.

The dominant geographic feature of the region is Monterey Bay, which has a cooling influence over the entire region. In June and July much of the region is shrouded in fog during morning hours. Due to this and other factors such as an early bud break, the growing season is particularly long in Monterey County. This longer "hang time" results in the more concentrated and intense flavor that is characteristic of Monterey wines, as well as a very attractive sugar-acid balance. The southern portion of the wine growing region is less affected by the Monterey Bay and generally is warmer, making it suitable for Cab, Merlot and Zin.

From a touring perspective, we like the River Road area of Santa Lucia Highlands, which features a cluster of fine, limited production wineries such as Marilyn Remark, Pessagno and Hahn Estates. This area has a very strong agricultural and undiscovered feel. The wineries sit along a ridge of the Santa Lucia range and are quite simple compared to the opulence of Napa Valley.

Paso Robles Wine Country

Located halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco in the heart of the Central Coast, Paso Robles (Pass of the Oaks in Spanish) is one of our favorite wine regions anywhere. "Paso," which has just come into its own in the last 20 years, is literally booming. Today there are more than 170 wineries in the region, up from just 50 in 2000. Visitors quickly get a sense that the Paso region is on the move. Many California wine industry veterans say the region is what Napa was like in the 1970s. The appellation, which was formally established in 1983, is characterized by diverse microclimates and extreme temperature variations. As a result, nearly 40 varietals flourish here. Cabernet dominates in terms of crush volume, but we strongly believe that it is the Rhone varietals and Zinfandel that are the real stars of the Paso wine scene. As is the case throughout the Central Coast, most of the wineries are quite simple and unpretentious.

Rhone varietals include Syrah, Grenache, Mourvedre (the principal reds) as well as Viognier, Roussanne and Marsanne (the principal whites). In 1989, the Perrin family (of the Rhône Valley's Chateau de Beaucastel, a revered producer of Chateauneuf-du-Pape) and the American importer Robert Haas established their international joint venture, Tablas Creek Vineyard, in the calcareous hills of the Adelaida region northwest of town. With 80 acres planted to the traditional varieties of Chateauneuf-du-Pape (Grenache and Syrah), Tablas Creek imported exclusive clonal material from the Rhône Valley, and made those clones available to other interested growers around the state. Today the region features more than 2,200 acres planted in Rhone varietals, making Paso the epicenter of Rhone wine production in the U.S. As host of Hospice du Rhône, the world's largest Rhône wine celebration, Paso Robles now plays host each year to more than 3,000 Rhône wine enthusiasts, international media and an A-list of Rhône producers from all over the world. Our favorite Paso wineries include Tablas Creek, of course (we love how completely unpretentious this winery is and general manager Jason Haas could not be more accommodating), Garretson Winery, Adelaida Cellars, Linne Calodo Cellars and L'Aventure. For great Zins, we like Turley Wine Cellars and Tobin James Wine Cellars. Eberle Vineyards, a Paso pioneer and producer of numerous varietals, is also a favorite.

Santa Barbara Wine Country

Those familiar with the Napa Valley will find Santa Barbara wine country to be more casual and relaxed. The region, which includes the Santa Ynez Valley, the Santa Maria Valley and the Santa Rita Hills, is located approximately 45 minutes northwest of Santa Barbara and produces some of the finest Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in the U.S. It is considered the southernmost portion of the larger Central Coast viticultural area that also includes Monterey County and Paso Robles to the north. We particularly like the rural feel of the area and the contrast between the lush vineyards and the oak-studded hills of the region. You will find a number of quaint small towns in the county (Los Olivos and Santa Ynez are our favorites). It's quite easy to go off the beaten path here and your private tour will incorporate some of the finest scenic drives the region has to offer. The terroir here is characterized by wide temperature variations during summer months - long, hot and dry summer days and relatively cool evenings. The east-west orientation of the mountain range brings cool air, fog and breezes directly off the Pacific - a perfect combination for cool weather varieties such as Pinot and Chard.

While Fess Parker and Firestone are the most popular vineyards, we prefer to focus clients on some of the exceptional boutique producers in the acclaimed Santa Rita Hills, which is located closer to the Pacific, resulting in a longer growing season. Winery favorites include Foley Estates, Melville Vineyards and Winery, Babcock Winery and Vineyards and Fiddlehead Cellars, located in the nearby Lompoc "wine ghetto." While the area is best known for Pinots and Chards, you'll find great Syrah here and we love Fiddlehead's Sauvignon Blanc.

For More Information:Contact :Jim Dondero at CORK&FORK to discuss this itinerary: 919.536.3200, jim@CorkandFork.net