



Elevated Tastings

Three California Wine Country experiences that reach new heights

Napa and Sonoma are blessed not only with great wineries but also with spectacular scenery. What better way to combine the two than with a short flight to your tasting? Here are three ways to take in the terroir—both in a glass and from above.

By Plane

Aileron Estates really leans into the aerial theme. Aside from the name, its founder, Shannon O’Shaughnessy, is a pilot, and her business offers a one-of-a-kind tour in an open-cockpit Boeing PT-17 Stearman, a biplane model that was used for training during the 1930s and ’40s. Up to two passengers at a time can spend around 20 minutes buzzing over Wine Country. Whether you give your pilot (one of Vintage Aircraft Co.’s certified commercial flyers) the thumbs-up to do barrel rolls and hammerhead dives, or you simply want to feel the wind on your face, upon landing make your way to Brasswood Estate for a tasting of Aileron’s cabernet sauvignon and sauvignon blanc. *\$550 per person, aileronestates.com*

By Balloon

Hot-air balloons have long been a popular way to see Wine Country, and **Sonoma Ballooning** offers a couple of options to incorporate actual wine consumption into your ride. Oenophiles will be drawn to the Balloon & Blending package: Following a flight of about an hour, guests will join a blending seminar at Sonoma’s Meadowcroft Wines, where instructors provide everything you’ll need to combine cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, and merlot into a Bordeaux-style blend. Animal lovers might instead opt for a package that includes post-flight visits to the Charlie’s Acres Farm Animal Sanctuary and two vegan wineries, with La Belle Vie Tours. *Balloon & Blending package, \$380 per person; Charlie’s Acres package, \$434 per person; sonomabalooning.com*



From top: soaring over Wine Country in a hot air balloon; Aileron Estates owner Shannon O’Shaughnessy; the helipad at Paul Hobbs Winery



By Helicopter

The Russian River Valley’s beloved **Farmhouse Inn** and **Paul Hobbs Winery** combine to help guests live the high life with their Farm, Flight, & Field package. Start with a night at the cloistered hotel, which includes a seven-course dinner (with pairings from Paul Hobbs) at the property’s Michelin-starred restaurant. In the morning, head to the winery

in Sebastopol for a tasting, then board a helicopter—on the estate’s own helipad!—for a four-hour tour that will chopper you to the coast for a picnic at the remote Goldrock Estate, followed by a touchdown for a cocktail at the Inn at Newport Ranch, on the Mendocino Coast. The cliffs along the Pacific are the only thing that’s rugged about this ride. *Starting at \$10,000 for two nights, farmhouseinn.com*

courtesy of Sonoma Ballooning (balloon); Robert McClintehan (O’Shaughnessy); courtesy of Farmhouse Inn (helicopter)