



THE VINEYARDS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

California is not all about Hollywood - the mecca for artists and beautiful beaches along the Atlantic Ocean. It is also renowned for its fertile vineyards that extend from the area around San Francisco to lesser known places in the northern part of the region of Santa Barbara.

The first Californian vineyard was founded in 1697 by a Franciscan priest Father Junipero Sierra, in the catholic mission of San Diego. At present, in the whole state there are more than 1,500 vineyards, spreading over the area of 200,000 hectares, which makes

California the fourth largest wine maker in the world. The region of Santa Barbara is situated on a south-facing section of coastline, while the wine-producing valleys stretch from east to west, which allows for the beneficial effect of the cool ocean breeze on the vines that grow here. Inter-

estingly, almost all grape varieties can be grown successfully in the area. The vineyards that are closer to the ocean produce the best Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Lower regions have favourable conditions for growing Zinfandel and Bordeaux varieties. The warm climate of California produces



wine that is rich in taste, has distinctively fruity character and high alcohol content.

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY

The 300,000-acre Santa Ynez Valley occupies the stretch between Santa Ynez and San Rafael mountain ranges. The American Riviera of Santa Barbara is only 50 kilometres away, while LA and San Francisco, 200 and 500 kilometres respectively. In the past, the area was inhabited by Chumash people. Then, in the 18th century it was conquered by Spanish conquistadors, who established here the first mission. Later, the region became a part of Mexico, and as a result of the gold rush of the 19th century, Santa Barbara saw a flow of settlers coming here from Europe.

The whole wine-making region comprises six adjacent towns whose history and character resemble single fruits in the

bunch of grapes. Los Alamos, Los Olivos, Buellton, Ballard and Santa Ynez - all form the most charming tourist region, soaked with the multicultural history, picturesque landscapes, architecture, numerous museums, art galleries, restaurants, bars and pubs. The area is inhabited by about 20,000 people. Solvang is an example of a local homeland of Danes, who established here their settlement back in 1911. Now the place is known for chic bars where you can taste various wines from Santa Barbara. Buellton with its Windmill Motel and Hitching Post II restaurant run by Frank Ostini, has gained its popularity after it was one of the shooting locations for the film "Sideways" directed by Alexander Payne.

Santa Ynez Valley and other town can be easily reached by car via Highway 101 and State Roads 154 and 246. You can also take an Amtrak coach to Solvang or a private jet

Recommended wineries

IN SANTA BARBARA AND SANTA YNEZ

in Santa Rita Hills:

Sanford & Benedict

in Santa Maria:

Cottonwood Canyon

Kenneth Volk Vineyards

Ovene

Addamo

J. Winkler

Au Bon Climat

Santa Ynez Valley has its own Top 10:

1. Sunstone Vineyards and Winery
sunstonewinery.com

2. Fess Parker Winery fessparker.com

3. Demetria demetriaestate.com

4. Andrew Murray Vineyards

andrewmurrayvineyards.com

5. Buttonwood Farm Winery & Vineyard
buttonwoodwinery.com

6. Zaca Mesa Winery zacamesa.com

7. Alma Rosa Winery & Vineyards

almarosawinery.com

8. Ken Brown Wines kenbrownwines.com

9. Rusack Vineyards rusack.com

10. Foxen Winery & Vineyard foxenvineyard.com

More info at visitsyv.com

visitsolvang.com

visitbuellton.com



Expert consultation: Tomasz Prange-Baczyński, editor-in-chief of "Magazyn Wino", Danielle Laundon, marketing director at Santa Ynez Valley

to Santa Ynez (IZA). Other nearby airports are located in Santa Barbara (SBA) and Los Angeles.

FOUR WINE AREAS

From 1 January 1983, similarly to French AOC (Appellation Contrôlée or protected designation of origin), the USA have developed the national scheme called AVA (American Viticultural Areas) that indicates the geographical origin of the produced wine, but without much quality assurance. California has four AVAs. Visiting the central area, which comprises Santa Barbara with sub-regions of Santa Maria Valley, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Rita Hills and Los Alamos, you can either admire their picturesque towns, stunning architecture and landscapes, or take part in the greatest adventure of all, which is undoubtedly a tour of vineyards and wineries combined with tasting of fine wine. There are more than 120, small, boutique wineries there, which produce a total of one million boxes of wine each year. You can choose from a great variety of red wines (syrah, cabernet sauvignon) and white ones (viognier, chardonnay, pinot grigio, pinot noir or sauvignon blanc). If you are with a group of friends, you had better

book a guide who will give you a tour of the best vineyards and wineries in the neighbourhood. Obviously, you can also make the choice yourself or use one of the many local travel agencies who can organize for you various unconventional tours, e.g. wine tastings and horseback riding. In Los Olivos such tours are offered by Estelle Vineyard or Fess Parker Winery. Also, quite a lot of people go for a biking tour combined with wine tasting.

FOLLOWING THE TRAILS OF FILM CHARACTERS

Undoubtedly, the biggest attraction of the region is the Sideways Wine Trail, where you can follow in the footsteps of the film "Sideways" set in Santa Ynez Valley. The characters of the film spend their time primarily on eating and drinking wine, visiting local wineries and bars. In 2004, the film won an Oscar award for the best screenplay, and after its release, the sale of the local pinot noir doubled. After you arrive at a winery, you are invited to visit its bar or canteen, where you will taste delicious wines produced there. You can, of course, drink them or spit them out into special spittoons. Amateur visitors do not care much about the tasting

ritual, but simply try to enjoy each glass of the wine they are served. Interestingly, in some of the wineries it is possible to observe the entire production process.

In Poland, enotourism (wine tourism) is also slowly picking up, but compared to European and American standards, we are still in the infant phase. Fortunately, here it is also a very conscious, elegant and high-quality trend.

Californian wines are quite popular in Poland, but they are mostly known thanks to large manufacturers that produce less refined wines, such as Gallo or Sutter Home. Every year, "Business Traveller" in collaboration with "Magazyn Wino", organizes the "Sky Vineyards" competition for the best sparkling, white, red and sweet wines served in economy, business and first class. However, among the wines offered on board major airlines I have not noticed any wines from California. I hope this will change soon.

I asked one of the judges of our competition - Tomasz Prange-Baczyński, the editor-in-chief of "Magazyn Wino", who visited Santa Barbara and Santa Ynez Valley, to recommend a few interesting wineries.

Katarzyna Siekierzyńska



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