



## First Time Visitors to the Napa Valley

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First time visitors to the [Napa Valley](#) often can be overwhelmed by choices despite the fact that the entire valley is only about 32 miles long and several miles at the widest in places. There are approximately 900 wineries/producers, 60+ restaurants in the city of Napa alone along with many more up valley including a number that are Michelin starred as well as a plethora of accomodation options.

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Where to start?!

First, if your coming to Napa you probably are interested in at least wine - and the culinary aspects are probably not that far behind. It is wise to narrow your choices of wineries to certain parts of the valley rather than trying to drive all over. You can easily drive over an hour from one appointment to the next.

For perspective try to visit some of Napa's more well-known wineries including some of the larger ones - but then make appointments at smaller wineries. The smaller wineries typically offer a more personalized tasting experience rather than siding up to the tasting bar with crowds. Often you are actually meeting with the owner and or winemaker.

There are many wineries on the valley floor - but seek out some of the wineries in the hills. They often provide views and nearly all are small offering personalized tasting experiences.

If education is your goal - try to visit one of the following: Joseph Phelps, Merryvale or Robert Mondavi. You will need to make appointments ahead of time for their educational classes/seminars which usually last a couple of hours. Hendry Winery offers some of the best comprehensive vineyard, winery, and tasting tours (by appointment).

There are only two main north south roads in Napa, Highway 29/128 and the lesser traveled Silverado Trail. The city of Napa is the largest community in the valley (Pop: approximately 75,000) with all the other in valley towns located to the north including Yountville (culinary capital of the valley), Oakville (just a blip, known for the Oakville Grocery), Rutherford (again very small community), St. Helena (more of an arts and shopping town spread along main street) and Calistoga (known for its rustic laid back feel with hot springs and small day spas) in the north.

Are you looking for a Bed & Breakfast experience or a larger hotel? The city of Napa is the hub for B&B's although there are certainly a number of B&B's up valley especially in and around Calistoga.

During busy summer months its best to make your hotel reservations at least a few weeks in advance and more so if you are planning on visiting during holiday weekends.

Resources:

Legendary Napa Valley: official Napa visitor's guide - [www.legendarynapavalley.com](http://www.legendarynapavalley.com)

Napa Wine Project: one person's quest to visit, taste with and write about every winery in the Napa Valley - [www.napawineproject.com](http://www.napawineproject.com)

The Napa Vintner's Association: the largest association of Napa wineries - also provides destination information - [www.napavintners.com](http://www.napavintners.com)