

# GREAT ESCAPES

## Warming Up In California's Sonoma County

(NAPSA)—Sometime between Thanksgiving and Easter break, those living in certain northern latitudes will daydream of lush golf courses, ice-free country roads and fresh fruits and vegetables—all while gazing at a wet or snowy front yard through a frosty window.

Relief is on the way. Warmer winter vacation destinations, such as California's Sonoma County, offer year-round appeal with a budget-friendly twist: value-season rates that go even lower mid-week.

Offering a mild, four-season climate and a vintage blend of accommodations, attractions and activities just 35 miles north of San Francisco, Sonoma County is a rich, rewarding destination for travelers of all itineraries and interests.

Sonoma County's varied landscape encompasses the magic of northern California. The Pacific Ocean breaks along the county's wild western edge. The scenic drama extends through bright green foothills to soaring forests of ancient redwoods and the sparkling Russian River. Charming cities and towns with historic plazas, bountiful hotels, inns and spas, unique shops, bakeries and restaurants, general stores, farms, natural hot springs and enchanting gardens cover the area's 1,600 square miles.

Sonoma County is the heart of California's wine country, and winter is a great time to visit. In fact, wine tasting is perhaps best enjoyed during the winter, when the wineries are relatively quiet, tasting room service is at its most attentive, special wine events decorate the calendar and visitors may find that the person serving wine in the tasting room is also the winemaker. The winter celebration of wine involves wineries all across the county and is a wonderful opportunity to sample varietals—some of exceptionally limited availability.

All across the county, special events and festivals are a winter pastime. The Old Time Fiddle Contest, Art of the Olive and Citrus Fair are just a few of the region's



Photo credit: Osmosis of Sonoma County

### **Sonoma County offers year-round enjoyment of many of life's pleasures.**

fun and eclectic happenings.

As mild as the winters are in Sonoma County, there's still the possibility that you might want to feel a little warmer. Do you prefer your heat wet or dry? Whirlpool tubs, saunas, salt glow scrubs, herbal body wraps and thermal mineral waters flow freely.

On the dry side, there are spas practicing the Japanese art of enzymatic baths—where you plunge into large, wooden tubs filled with warm, fragrant blends of cedar fibers, rice bran and plant enzymes. These ingredients heat naturally, by fermentation, creating a warm, bioactive substance that is said to work wonders on sore muscles and joints. Hot stone therapy—the application of deeply penetrating heat from hot stones and gems—is another wonderfully healing bodywork experience.

Golf stays in play all year in rain-or-shine Sonoma County. The region's mild climate gives it four-season status and golf courses stay open all through winter. Many feature sandy soil that drains remarkably fast in the event of a passing winter squall, making the course playable the minute the sun returns.

For the official visitor's guide, calendar of events and a list of "Vintage Winter Values," call the Sonoma County Tourism Program toll-free at (800) 380-5392 or go to [www.sonomacounty.com](http://www.sonomacounty.com).