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THE **BARK** DOG IS MY CO-PILOT®

Here are some great Dog-Friendly Day Trips you can enjoy with your pet while visiting Napa Valley with special thanks to TheBark.com.

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Don't be surprised if Charlie or Tosca greet you at **RustRidge Ranch and Winery** in St. Helena. Charlie might even lick your hand, if you offer it. "They're the true hosts," Susan Meyer said of the two yellow Labrador Retrievers.

Tosca, named after the opera by Giacomo Puccini, and Charlie live on 442 acres that include the winery and a bed and breakfast. They aren't the only dogs allowed here, however. When you visit, your dog can come, too—even in RustRidge's tasting room.

"A lot of people have brought their dogs here through the years, so it's not really an issue," said Meyer, who owns the winery with her husband, Jim Fresquez. "Our dogs are excited to see them."

And I was excited to hear that my dog could join me. When I recently visited Northern California's wine country, I was determined to find places that would welcome my 3-year-old Golden Retriever/Chow Chow mix, Bailey. What I found were Napa Valley vintners and boutique inns that cater to dogs as much as to their owners.

Dogs are a fixture at several wineries. Take Harley, the resident black Lab mix at **Casa Nuestra Winery & Vineyards**, an artisan winery in St. Helena that produces 1,500 cases annually. While human visitors enjoy tastings offered in a yellow farmhouse, Harley leads what owner Eugene Kirkham calls the Canine Tour. "She's willing to show other dogs around to all of the place she likes," said Stephanie Trotter-Zacharia, the apprentice winemaker.

Other vintners, such as **Dutch Henry Winery** near Calistoga, allow dogs on the grounds but not in the tasting room. Niebaum-Coppola Estate Winery (now known as the **Rubicon Estate Winery**), owned by Academy Award-winning director Francis Ford Coppola, permits leashed dogs outside but forbids them inside its Inglenook Chateau, which includes tasting rooms and stone cellars. The chateau's Centennial Museum contains memorabilia from Coppola's films, including Vito Corleone's desk from *The Godfather* and costumes from 1992's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

A nice place to pause from wine tasting is the roadside town of St. Helena, bisected by Highway 29, the main artery through wine country. An upscale pet boutique on Main Street called **Fideaux** caught my eye and proved to be a treasure trove of specialty items and gifts that I hadn't seen elsewhere. I loved the dog-faced clocks, but defied temptation. Yet I couldn't resist a book about communicating with your dog.

Sleeping Dogs Lie in Napa

Sometimes finding a place that both Bailey and I like can be difficult. Not all places allow pets and I don't like to sacrifice creature comforts just because I'm traveling with a critter. Fortunately, several A-list inns in the city of Napa welcome well-behaved canine companions.

Visitors who want to stay in one of Napa's fanciful historic mansions should consider the **Beazley House**, a pet-friendly bed and breakfast on First Street, a district that was home to many of the city's most wealthy families in the early 1900s. The house was built in 1905 for Dr. Adolph Kahn, a surgeon. It later was owned by Joan Hitchcock, a flamboyant San Francisco socialite who had six husbands and who claimed she had an affair with John F. Kennedy. (She died in 1982 at age 49.) One room particularly worth requesting is the spacious "Enchanted Rose" in the carriage house. It includes a fireplace, two-person spa and an adjacent private garden.


The Napa Inn, a bed and breakfast in two Victorian houses, also allows dogs in two rooms, the Garden Cottage and Angelina's Garden Room. The Garden Cottage has French doors that lead to a private garden. Angelina's Garden Room has a private garden as well as a private patio and a whirlpool.

Travelers who prefer hotels to B&Bs might enjoy the **Napa River Inn**, one of the newest pet-friendly options. Opened in 2000, the inn hints of a bygone era during which the Napa Valley was famous for wheat. When Napa was founded in 1847, farmers sent wheat to San Francisco on schooners that came up the Napa River. This 66-room boutique hotel is in a restored 1884 mill and warehouse that, from the outside, retains the look of a mill. Guests with dogs receive a basket that includes a wine-colored dog blanket and Char-Dog-Nay Biscuits made with cabernet sauvignon.

Fetching Sights

Staying someplace historic is appropriate in Napa because much of the downtown looks as though it belongs in another era. In fact, Napa claims to have more structures built before the 1906 San Francisco earthquake than any other Bay Area city.

Efforts to save older buildings took hold in the 1970s, after preservationists became alarmed



by the demolition of several historic buildings to develop modern shopping strips, epitomized in Napa by Clocktower Plaza. Now, the city boasts that its redevelopment programs strive to “preserve the Victorian charm and historic character” of the city.

Downtown Napa proved easy to explore with a dog because I could walk almost everywhere. For \$2, the Napa Valley Conference and Visitor Bureau sells the 28-page Historic Walking Tours of Napa, an architectural guide to the city. It contains intriguing historical tidbits, such as the fact that some of the businesses built over Napa Creek in the 1860s had trap doors, which allowed merchants to fish while working.

The self-guided tour starts near the **Napa Valley Opera House**, an Italianate theater built in 1879 and reopened in 2003 after being dark for 89 years. The opera house, which had become an eyesore, was rescued by volunteers, who formed a non-profit group to raise money for its restoration. Now the exterior looks much as it did when John Philip Sousa's band played here.

Not far from the Opera House stands another handsome Italian design, the Winship Building, distinguished by ornate suns in its pediment. But my favorite spot was a little off the main route. The **First Presbyterian Church** on Third Street, opened in 1874, is an unmistakable example of Victorian Gothic architecture.

On the other side of the Napa River stands Copia: The American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts, designed by New York architect James Stewart Polshek, whose work includes Bill Clinton's presidential library in Arkansas. Bailey napped outside while I explored the three-year-old center's edible gardens and exhibits that include everything from Julia Child's copper pots to PEZ dispensers. I also sampled regional wines and gourmet chocolates after lunch at Julia's Kitchen, a restaurant named for the masterful cooking instructor who served as an honorary trustee until her death in August 2004.

After sniffing around downtown, I sensed Bailey's desire to frolic. We drove to **Alston Park**, which has a three-acre off-leash dog park called Canine Commons. Dogs also can walk off-leash in the 26-acre Cherry Orchard section in the southwest corner of Alston Park and leash elsewhere among the hills of the 157-acre open space on Dry Creek Road.

Bailey loved romping around the dog park. When it was time to leave, I tempered Bailey's disappointment with a reward—a dog treat shaped like a wine bottle. Bailey wagged his tail and licked my cheek. I didn't need my book to know that he was telling me that he was happy to be with me. I wouldn't have it any other way.

