

# THE P R E S S

## Dry Creek Valley: Sonoma's Rustic Side

By Esther Mobley

A trek through northern [Sonoma County](#) is a study in microclimates, including Dry Creek Valley. One moment, you're engulfed in a veil of fog on [Westside Road](#), and the next you emerge into Dry Creek Valley's relentless sun. A few hundred yards in Healdsburg can be the difference between [Pinot Noir](#) country and [Zinfandel](#) country.

While [Russian River Pinot](#), and Westside Road, claims much of Healdsburg's wine-tourism glory, it's Dry Creek Valley's diverse tinkering with [Zinfandel](#), [Cabernet](#), [Sauvignon Blanc](#) – not to mention some compelling plantings of Cinsault, Montepulciano, Roussanne, Mourvedre – that offer a more laid-back, and possibly more exciting, route for the Wine Country visitor. Tiny by American Viticultural Area (AVA) standards, Dry Creek Valley is longer (16 miles) than it is wide (2 miles), bisecting both the Russian River and Lake Sonoma.

Dry Creek Road, running parallel the eponymous tributary, is the main thoroughfare connecting this area's wineries to downtown Healdsburg. And if you cross over the creek at Lambert or Yoakim bridges, you'll find yourself on West Dry Creek Road — where the speed limits are slower, and the turns windier. You're more likely to encounter bicycle traffic than tour-bus traffic. Virtually all wineries are open without appointments. It's a reminder that not all of Wine Country has been mined for \$50 tasting fees. I'd be remiss to direct you to Dry Creek Valley without imploring you to stop at the [Dry Creek General Store](#): for a coffee and blueberry scone in the morning or a sandwich at lunchtime. Overpriced Sonoma County memorabilia notwithstanding, the Store offers a palette of local colors not likely to be glimpsed in the boutiques or [bistros of downtown Healdsburg](#). Below, each winery has a linked review from one of our expert staff. Use them as our curated trip or create your own. —Esther Mobley



### Overview

[Lambert Bridge](#): For Bordeaux wines that you won't find anywhere else, head to the high-ceilinged Lambert Bridge. Their wines are as elegant as their mountain lodge tasting room.

[A. Rafanelli](#): A. Rafanelli is one of the oldest wineries in Dry Creek Valley. A visit here requires an appointment, unlike many nearby tasting rooms.

[Quivira](#): Call ahead to schedule a walking tour of this organic vineyard and gardens. (It will help you walk off the wine you drank at Lambert and A. Rafanelli.) You can also take a self-guided tour.

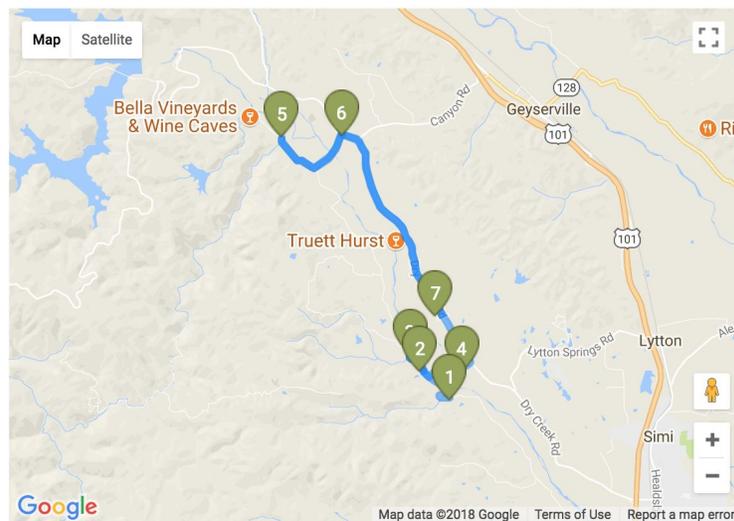
[Yoakim Bridge](#): There's no way to avoid it, you'll be accosted with cuteness here. This tiny tasting will feel more like you're visiting an aunt or uncle.

[Preston](#): With bocce, organic gardens and homemade olive oil, Preston exemplifies the casual, laid-back, bucolic vibe of Dry Creek Valley..

[Unti](#): You're going to get some of Sonoma's most unusual wines here, including lots of Italian-style bottlings. Don't miss their Fiano.

[Dry Creek Vineyard](#): It's hard to imagine Dry Creek Valley without Dry Creek Vineyard. Founded by David Stare in 1972, this was the first new winery built in Dry Creek Valley post-Prohibition. The property is nestled within never-ending rows of vines, surrounded by thickets and the area's eponymous creek.

Trip Length: 7 hours 23 minutes



## [Directions](#)

### [Lambert Bridge Winery](#)

You won't have seen Lambert Bridge in wine shops, nor in many restaurants. Which means that the tasting room is its public face, and the charming wines are worth discovering here.

### [READ REVIEW](#)

Address:

4085 W Dry Creek Rd  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

HOURS TODAY:

10:30AM TO 4:30PM DAILY

### [A. Rafanelli Winery](#)



A. Rafanelli Winery is one of the oldest in Dry Creek that's also something of an anomaly.

#### [READ REVIEW](#)

Address:

4685 W Dry Creek Rd  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

HOURS TODAY:

RESERVATION ONLY

### [Quivira Vineyards & Winery](#)

Farming is the focus at Quivira, which owns 93 acres of vineyards around Dry Creek. The ecologically conscious estate is lush, practically humming with fecundity. Gardens, ponds, beehives, pigs – it's enough to tempt you to drink the Rudolf Steiner Kool-Aid

#### [READ REVIEW](#)

Address:

4900 W Dry Creek Rd  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

HOURS TODAY:

10AM TO 4:30PM DAILY

### [Dry Creek Vineyard](#)

Whether or not Zinfandel is your style, the different bottlings of Dry Creek nicely demonstrate the varietal's specific characteristics when grown in these parts.

#### [READ REVIEW](#)

Address:

3770 Lambert Bridge Rd  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

HOURS TODAY:

10:30AM TO 5PM DAILY

### [Preston Farm and Winery](#)

The tasting room is casual, designed for standing at the bar or grabbing a glass (or bottle) to bring outside. There are bocce courts and picnic tables, so plan accordingly.

#### [READ REVIEW](#)

Address:

9282 W Dry Creek Rd  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

HOURS TODAY:

11AM TO 4:30PM DAILY

[Yoakim Bridge Winery](#)

If not for the cuteness, a visit to Yoakim Bridge can also be a very hands-on experience.

[READ REVIEW](#)

Address:

7209 Dry Creek Rd  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

HOURS TODAY:

FRI-SUN 11AM TO 4PM

[Unti Vineyards](#)

The tasting experience here is by appointment only, but it has a casual, standing-at-the-bar style.

[READ REVIEW](#)

Address:

4202 Dry Creek Rd  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

<http://thepress.sfchronicle.com/trip/dry-creek-valley/>