

Paso Robles Wines & Hotels: Suzy Gershman's Latest Postcard

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Dear Peter,

I have discovered Paso Robles for its wine culture, but found the New America""a place where young people in their 30s and 40s are moving to raise their families and a must-consider village for Baby Boomers who are thinking about retirement.

Since few of us will have the retirement that we planned for, I know there is, or will be, a big search for the good life at a low (or, at least, reasonable) price.

C'mon over, I've found it, my dear: We all should consider a move to Paso Robles, California.

WINE & FOOD

I timed my move here to coincide with the [28th Annual Wine Festival](#), held in the town square on the third weekend of May (this year May 20 and). There's tastings and foodie events and all sorts of celebrations with about 90 participating vineyards. There are almost 250 wineries in the Paso Robles area""most of them are five years new.

There are a handful of old-timers, but it's only been in recent agricultural history that lands used for nut trees and grains have been plowed into vines and the crush has begun. I'll drink to that.

Paso Robles is halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, just north of San Luis Obispo and 45 minutes from the beach (Hearst Castle is nearby!). This valley has hot weather in summer and cold days in winter (it may even snow once or twice in winter); weather wise, it is very much like the Cotes du Rhone in France.



The vineyards specialize in Rhone varietal blends and the winemakers call themselves the Rhone Rangers (Hi ho Silver!). They do not follow "the rules," especially the rules laid out in France; a few even came over from France to get away from the established way of making traditional wines.

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The blending is the magic: Only four of the vineyards in the area are owned by corporations; the rest are family owned and operated "; and blended. When you look at a wine list in any of the downtown restaurants, there is an entire category called "Interesting Reds""these are the Paso blends the likes of which you will not find anywhere else in the world.

While you can find a really good \$50 bottle of wine (try Treana), the specialty here is what they call Super Reds "; and you can find terrific super reds at \$10-\$25 a bottle (try Candor). Tastings at area vineyards are usually \$5 for six pours or \$10 for six pours of reserve wine. The style of the wineries and the wines vary because of the expertise in blending, so it's much fun to sample numerous labels.

I found the best thing to do was buy up bottles since I didn't want to drink and drive. We did all our tastings at home and were amazed at the bang in the bottle. Don't miss Adelaida, l'Aventure, Hope Family and the talk of the town, Saxum""the one that made the TV news. Our friends Patricia and Walter Wells said to look at Tablas Creek because the owners come from the Chateauneuf du Pape!

Naturally, where there's wine there's food ... and foodies. Paso Robles has attracted a number of interesting chefs and the number is growing. [Bistro Laurent](#), downtown on the Square, is the leading contender, but there are a handful of others that are gaining in reputation""from [Artisan Restaurant](#) (two blocks from the Square) to [Enteca Restaurant & Bar](#), in [La Bellaserra Hotel](#).

Don't forget chocolates as part of the equation. Many vineyards offer wine and chocolate pairings. At [Meridian](#), I had the best Cabernet-filled chocolate truffles of my life. Just put the entire bonbon in your mouth, or there will be wine all over your face and clothes.



Love wine? Don't miss Suzy's "Bottle

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- [Bottle Blogs, Pt. 3: Sonoma County's Rodney Strong](#)
- [Bottle Blogs, Pt. 4: Napa's Jordan Vineyards & Winery](#)
- [Bottle Blogs, Pt. 5: Cakebread Cellars](#)
- [Bottle Blogs, Pt. 6: Beringer Wines](#)

DOWNTOWN ROCKS

About five years ago, Paso Robles suffered a 6.5 earthquake that left downtown in sorry shape. Instead of going to pieces, the town banded together and rebuilt and re-created a dream of small town America. There's a big central square (with Victorian bandstand) and new storefronts that are spanking clean and bright and up to code but built with the feel of the turn of the 20th century architecture that tumbled down.



There's a hefty mix of wine-tasting showrooms (about two dozen of them), with a technologically advanced wine room where you buy an electronic card and then pay for each class as if you were at the automat.

The boutiques are bought with the same style as the chain Anthropologie (my favorite is called **Firefly** right on the corner of Park and 13th Streets) for a mix of hand-made and cute clothing.

Next door to Firefly, there's [Kaya](#) and next to that, [We Olive](#), one of the best stores I have ever researched. Behind it stands [Thomas Hill Organics](#).

There's also food purveyors""tons of gourmet stores selling cheeses, olive oil, etc. Oh yes, did I mention all the art galleries? There is also a small farmers market, although locals flock to the Saturday morning market in nearby **Templeton** where there are more than 40 local growers. Templeton feels like the set of a Hollywood Western and is adorable without any hint at being fake or too cutie-pie. A new market has just opened at the truck stand north of Paso called **SanPaso**.

MORE DREAMS AT HAND

There are several hotels in the area that add up to the perfect weekend away. My first night I actually stayed at the [Carlton Hotel](#) in Atascadero because I wanted to see what was going on in this famous town (nothing, is the answer) and test this hotel that had once been so famous for celebrities staying over at Hearst Castle.



Then I moved into town and stayed at La Bellaserra which is in a great location at the junction of Highway 46 W""which leads to many of the vineyards "| and to Hearst Castle. I had a suite that was so deluxe I invited my entire family to join me and we packed up all the bathroom amenities, scented with orange and cinnamon. This is certainly the fanciest and most comfortable place to stay in town.

But wait, I am now at the [Paso Robles Inn](#), right on the Square, and in a spa room that connects to the Hot Springs. I have a fireplace, a hot tub on the terrace and a view to the gardens. And the yummy smell of rotten eggs to tell me those hot springs are doin' their thing. I've rented a cute little house and am going back to the Bay Area to pack.

Hot Bubbling Kisses,
SuzyKG

By Suzy Gershman for PeterGreenberg.com. Visit Suzy on the Web at www.suzygershman.com, and learn about her journey from Paris to Paso Robles at www.borntoshoplady.blogspot.com.

Posted by Peter Greenberg at 10:51 AM

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