

Photo by Mara Balagtas

# The Perfect Road Trip Through California Wine Country

by MARA BALAGTAS  
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*It may be a 280-mile trip, but on a sunny summer day, with the keys to the new Porsche 911 Carrera, Northern California has never looked better.*



It's not every day that Porsche comes knocking on your door—and when it does, you say, why yes, I *will* test drive the latest and greatest in German engineering, if you insist. (This job is not awful.) The 2017 Porsche 911 Carrera made a very buzzy debut at the Frankfurt Motor Show this past fall with its newly turbocharged engine, and it was on me to find the perfect setting to put the updated technology through its paces. The destination: Northern California wine country which is, with its winding roads and narrow passes, a slice of some of the best driving on the West Coast.

The car company's new Porsche Communications Management system (PCM) proved to be a crucial tool for mapping out my day-long road trip through the Calistoga region, north toward the Pacific coastline, inland, and back again. Using its integrated Google Earth and Google Street views, I was able to plot pit stops along the route, including lunch with a view (of gray whales migrating!); and I can't complain about the extra horsepower—20 more than the Carrera's older, non-turbocharged brothers. Improvements to traction, driving stability, and turn-in response meant I didn't kick the tail of the car out too much while hugging the lines through the

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## Follow my route

**START AT: Hotel Solage Calistoga**

*755 Silverado Trail North, Calistoga; (707) 266-7534*

Only 27 miles from Napa, wooden cottages fill the hotel's property, serving as guest quarters. The best part? Each cottage is equipped with bicycles for a leisurely ride anywhere in the resort.

### **Yorkville Mini Market**

*26701 CA-128, Yorkville; (707) 894-9456*

The best pit stop on the route. Stop here for the best homemade and local treats: ice cream from Cowlick's in Fort Bragg, and blueberry muffins, oatmeal raisin and chocolate cookies made every day from scratch.

### **Navarro River Redwood State Park**

*Elk; (707) 937-5804*

It helps to hit the cooler asphalt beneath the shade of the Redwoods. With the sun peeking through the leaves, you catch just the right amount of temperate air, which is ideal to feed into that spooling turbo.

### **Albion River Inn**

*3790 North Highway 1, Albion; (707) 937-1919*

One of the most scenic lunch spots on the coast. From the restaurant's Pacific overlook, you may be able to see whales migrating if you time it right (the gray whale's migration is northward from March to May). If you find that the 280-mile trip is a bit much to take on in one day, I suggest staying overnight at one of their gorgeous bungalows.

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### **Town of Mendocino**

The small town of Mendocino, formerly an old whaling village in the 1970s, is just over seven miles from Albion. Quaint shops and more scenic views await in this coastal town. Make sure to get out and stretch your legs. There's a white wooden fence on the edge of town and just past it are wooden stairs leading down to the shore.

### **Tank Garage Winery**

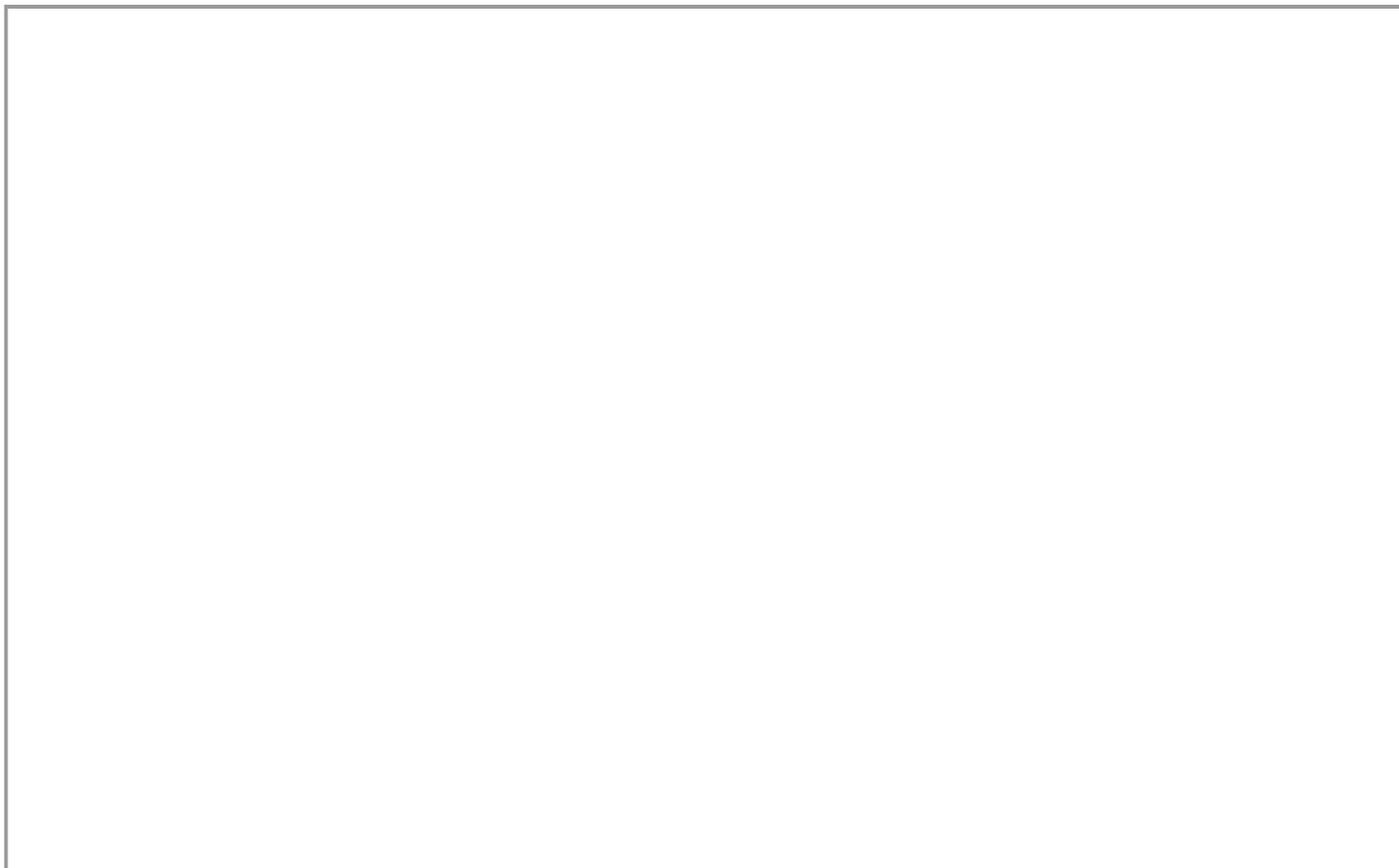
*1020 Foothill Blvd, Calistoga; (707) 942-8265*

On my drive back to Calistoga, I spotted this gas station and repair shop turned winery. With the right car to fit the scene, I pulled up to the vintage gas tanks and made my way inside. It's decked out in car and motorcycle memorabilia: Indian Motorcycles, neon clocks, and used oil cans refurbished into guitars. What's not to love? Just be sure to find a designated driver before you sit down for a taste.

## Sinegal Estate Winery

2125 Inglewood Ave, St. Helena; (707) 244-1187

After a full day of driving, this is the perfect place to unwind. Sip on the Sinegal cabernet or head out to the private lake on the winery, but make sure you call ahead—they're only open by appointment.



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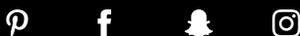
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