



Walla Walla

WILL TRAVEL FOR FOOD

Wine and dine your way through a more mellow and affordable wine country.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ALLISON ARTHUR

If you have ever had the non-pleasure of sitting in San Francisco traffic trying to get to the wine country, you have felt my pain. Instead of sipping on sauvignon blanc, you are sitting in an often sweltering car. Then, once you have arrived, the crowds don't dissipate. The town square in Healdsburg is bustling, and the restaurants and many of the vineyards require reservations. Who has time for all that?

If you are like me and really want to unwind, you don't want to deal with traffic on vacation. Or a tight schedule or firm plans. What you want is a place to relax, where you can have that extra glass of wine without fear the restaurant will fill up. Somewhere that you can see the scenery, and not through the lines of people in front of you.

For a wine trip, Walla Walla, Washington, could be just what you desire. Lovely inns and B&Bs reside near fields of grapes with tasting rooms dotting the landscape. Complete with a downtown to shop and enough restaurants to keep your taste buds satisfied, this emerging area has plenty to keep you busy for days. Here is how we recently filled ours.



INN AT ABEJA



DON'T MISS DINNER: Not only can you stay at The Barn B&B, they offer family-style dinners a couple nights a week.



INN AT ABEJA

dream

INN AT ABEJA
As soon as you pull through the gates at Abeja you are swept into a lush, luxurious European-style estate. A former farmstead, the buildings have been restored to create private guest suites and larger accommodations on the 35-acre estate. Relax with one of the Abeja wines from grapes grown on the property while you explore the gardens and creeks around you. Breakfast on the open-air patio is a treat, with specials every morning and freshly baked scones.

THE BARN B&B
Each of the eight suites at The Barn B&B is a lovely, private oasis complete with outdoor showers, mountain views and other special touches. Owners Naina and Anand Rao have been in high-end hospitality their entire lives and traveled all over the world before building this unique property last year. They have created an environment that is welcoming and where every detail is designed to ensure a perfect guest experience. Choose your own soaps from the soap “bar” and let them know whether you prefer a firm or softer mattress. The included three-course breakfast is the perfect start to the day, and if you can arrange your stay to coincide with one of the evenings when family dinner is served, don’t dare miss out.

do taste wine

TESLA WINERY TOURS
This guide service will have you arriving in style in a teched-out Tesla and with some inside information. Proprietor Chris Wood has lived in the area long enough to get familiar with the owners and winemakers at many of the most interesting wineries in the area. Let him map out a plan for your day, or ask to stop by one of our favorites below.

DOUBLEBACK WINERY
Owned by famed quarterback Drew Bledsoe, who “doubled back” to his hometown after retiring, this winery is the perfect spot to stop on a nice day. Bring a picnic for the rooftop deck with sweeping vineyard views, or grab a partner to play a game of bocce ball. Most of what the vineyard produces is organic, and the new facility is top-notch.

SLEIGHT OF HAND CELLARS
This rockin’ spot is a fun diversion from more formal tasting rooms. Browse their expansive record collection and pick out some tunes before you settle in to taste some reds that have been made famous by its followers, who include Neil Patrick Harris and Pearl Jam.

VALDEMAR ESTATES
Bringing a bit of European flair, the owners of Valdemar are a family of winemakers originally from Rioja, Spain. The head winemaker is from France, so a lot of tradition and experience goes into the wines they produce in their impressive facility. Plan to stay for tapas on the elevated deck and browse some of the artifacts on-site, like an ancient wine press.

WATERBROOK WINERY
This winery is not only complete with a full restaurant, but it also offers events like summer concerts and more. If you can plan your day around dining here, you should. The sandwiches and salads are fresh and beautiful. And don’t leave without tasting, and then buying, the cheese that is a collaboration of Waterbrook wines and Walla Walla Cheese Company.

MARK RYAN WINERY
Find a wide variety of wines to taste at this room in downtown Walla Walla. The owner and winemaker grows in several areas of Washington and is primarily self-taught. The critics love these premium wines. Save a little time to shop around town after your tasting.



WATERBROOK WINERY



ORCHIDACEAE



VALDEMAR ESTATES

dine

Escape downtown and head to **ERITAGE RESTAURANT AND BAR**. While it isn't a long drive, it does feel like you are in the middle of the farms and vineyards that surround the area. The menu highlights local wine, beer and spirits and is fueled by ingredients from neighboring farms.

Located in the historic train depot, **WALLA WALLA STEAK CO.** is a comfortable spot to feel like you are part of the scene. On the adjacent side you will find a brewpub attached. Bring your appetite for a decadent steak dinner with plenty of sides to choose from and desserts not to be missed.

Don't be turned off when you pull into the gas station that houses **ANDRAE'S KITCHEN**. The casual (to say the least) space houses one of the best restaurants in town. Find a fast-casual dining spot that smokes meats, makes everything from scratch and where the chef is classically trained. Tacos, gyros, burgers and more will leave you stuffed and wanting to come back for more the next day.

Whether you plan to picnic at a winery or dine in and walk around downtown, **WALLA WALLA BREAD COMPANY** is a must. A display of freshly baked pastries and breads will lure you in, but save room for the seasonal salads and pizza made by the Italian chef. Much of the menu is made with ingredients grown on neighboring farms.

HATTAWAY'S ON ALDER brings a bit of the South to the Northwest. The eatery uses regional ingredients and offers items like halibut cheeks paired with grits and grilled oysters with a Southern barbecue butter. An extensive drink list is complete with local wines and beers. Even the wait staff offers Southern charm in this new addition to downtown.

divert for an hour

When in farm country, why not visit a farm or a farm stand? **FROG HOLLOW FARM** is a family project that grows heirloom organic produce and offers classes, events and more. Explore their charming fields of tomatoes and cucumbers that reside just behind their 100-year-old farmhouse and next to all the usual farm animals.

If you are interested in flowers, **ORCHIDACEAE** is a grower of an array of incredible orchids. Using sustainable farming techniques, the greenhouse hosts a complex process of cultivation and growth. Take a tour and be awed by all the color and science behind the operation.



ERITAGE RESTAURANT AND BAR



ANDRAE'S KITCHEN'S GRILLED CORN SALAD

12 EARS CORN
 1/4 CUP PARMESAN CHEESE, SHREDDED
 1 TABLESPOON CAYENNE PEPPER
 1/2 CUP AIOLI OR HIGH-QUALITY MAYONNAISE
 LIME JUICE, TO TASTE
 SALT AND PEPPER, TO TASTE
 TORTILLA CHIPS
 CILANTRO, FOR GARNISH

Shuck and grill the corn, turning regularly and making sure each side has some char on it. Remove from grill and cut the kernels off the cob. Place the grilled corn in a large bowl and mix in the cheese, cayenne pepper and aioli or mayonnaise. Taste and adjust seasonings to your desire. Add lime juice and season with salt and pepper. To serve, place tortilla chips on a plate and top with several spoonfuls of the corn mixture. Garnish with sprigs of cilantro.



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