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## Going Green

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# Escape to the Napa Valley

STARTED THINKING ABOUT YOUR 2006 TRIP TO CALIFORNIA'S PREMIER WINE COUNTRY?  
HERE'S EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO.

By Anthony Head

One of the most significant events in Napa Valley history took place in 1976. And it happened in Paris. There was a tasting that matched California wines against spectacular world-class offerings from Burgundy and Bordeaux. But—and this is the significant part—this was a *blind* tasting; the judges didn't know which wines were in their glasses. When the tasting was over, the French judges, who were certain that they were praising their own country's wines, had actually chosen a Chardonnay and a Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley as the best in show. The world of wine has never been the same.

Since then the area just north of San Francisco has developed quite rapidly, with hundreds of wineries dotting the numerous towns, and acres upon acres of vineyards carpeting the gentle contours of the valleys. While some attention has

recently turned toward other California appellations (like those in Paso Robles or Santa Barbara), Napa Valley remains the place with the most recognition. There are good reasons, too. While I could go into great detail about topography, *terroir*, and tannins—not to mention microclimates, meso-climates, and an apparent unlimited number of soil types—I don't want to intimidate you from going. Wine is meant to be enjoyed, so just remember there's a real sweet spot here for Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay grapes.

This special travel section contains the kind of information you need to finally put together that wine country getaway you've been just thinking about for too long. We found some wonderful wineries to visit, restaurants to indulge in, and places to lay your head after a long and enjoyable outing. It's *805 Living's* guide to the Napa Valley. (Corkscrew not included.)