



California's Sierra Foothills Wine Region

For many years, the Sierra Foothills wine region has been one of California's best-kept wine secrets. This region features small, distinctive vineyards and wineries, beautiful scenery, quiet country roads, fresh air and clear skies. Many communities in the Sierra Foothills feature a friendly, small-town feel along with rural ambiance. Visitors and residents enjoy cool pine forests, cozy little Gold Rush towns, rowdy whitewater rivers, ancient Native American ceremonies and relaxing campgrounds. The region is also a haven for painters, sculptors, designers and photographers. Sink your teeth into this region of vines and wines!

Description: These Hills Are Made For Winegrapes

The Sierra Foothills is one of the oldest wine regions in California. It is comprised of the counties of Amador (Plymouth), Calaveras (Murphys), El Dorado (Placerville), Mariposa, Nevada, Placer, Tuolumne, and part of Yuba. It is home to six American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) including the California Shenandoah Valley, and extends roughly from the town of Mariposa in the south to Paradise in the north. The total winegrape vineyard acreage in the Sierra Foothills is 5,700 acres.

History: A Golden History

The Sierra Foothills region has been called "Gold Country" since the mid 1800s when people from all over the world came to seek their fortune during the great California Gold Rush. Along with picks and shovels, the people who came to California for gold also brought grape vines and planted vineyards near the gold mines. Most of the grapes came from Spanish missions, though Zinfandel grapes came from the Adriatic region of Europe (Italy and Croatia). Zinfandel quickly became the most prominent wine of the region. These vineyards have operated non-stop, even during the Prohibition years. In fact, Amador County was the only county to expand its vineyard acreage during Prohibition, with the grapes taken to San Francisco and other cities for home wine makers.

Climate: Mountain High

The vineyards in the Sierra Foothills region are located between 1,500 and 3,000 feet where elevation creates a four-season climate. Generally, this area has warm days and cool nights. This climate creates a perfect situation for growing hearty grape varieties such as Zinfandel and Syrah which can withstand the varying temperatures.

Geography: Deeply Rooted

Most of the vineyards at the 2,000 foot elevation are planted in soil made of decomposed granite, a product of erosion from the Sierra Nevada range. At the higher elevations (close to 3,000 feet) the soil is composed of finely crushed volcanic rock thrown up some ten million years ago by volcanoes in the Lake Tahoe area. Both types of soil have good drainage and very few nutrients, forcing the vines to send their roots deep into the soil to hunt for food and water. The substantial root structure allows the grapes to take on the flavors of the specific vineyard site and produce richer, more deeply flavored grapes.

Varietals: A Zinful Variety

The Sierra Foothills specializes in full-bodied reds including Zinfandel, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon and distinctive white wines such as Chardonnay. Zinfandel accounts for the largest amount of plantings followed by Cabernet Sauvignon.

American Viticultural Areas

American Viticultural Areas or AVAs, are delimited grape growing areas distinguishable by geographic climatic and historic features – which are sometimes noted on bottles of California wine. AVA boundaries have been delineated in a petition field and accepted by the U.S. Government. Following is a list of the AVAs in the Sierra Foothills:

Amador County

California Shenandoah Valley
Fiddletown
Sierra Foothills

Mariposa County

Sierra Foothills

Placer County

Sierra Foothills

Calaveras County

Murphys
Sierra Foothills

Tuolumne County

Sierra Foothills

El Dorado County

California Shenandoah Valley
El Dorado
Fair Play
Sierra Foothills

Yuba County

North Yuba
Sierra Foothills

Explore the Sierra Foothills

Follow the links below to explore the Sierra Foothills:

Amador County Grape Growers Association	www.amadorwinegrapes.com
Amador Vintners Association	www.amadorwine.com
Calaveras County	www.visitcalaveras.com
Calaveras Grape Growers Assn.	www.calaverasgrapes.com
Calaveras Winegrape Alliance	www.calaveraswines.org
El Dorado County	www.visit-eldorado.com
El Dorado Wine Grape Growers Association	www.edwggga.org
El Dorado Winery Association	www.eldoradowines.org
Mariposa County	www.homeofyosemite.com
Murphys	www.visitmurphys.com
Nevada County Wineries Association	www.nevadacountywine.com
Placer County Wine & Grape Association	www.placerwineandgrape.org
Sierra Grape Growers Association	www.sierragrapegrowers.org