



**Above:** Korb & L Winery  
**Right:** Mendocino at sunset

mal—the tasting room experiences are more comparable to what you'd find in the Willamette Valley. This is especially true in the AVAs (American Viticultural Areas) that emanate from the town of Healdsburg, 15 miles northeast of Guerneville: the Russian River Valley, Dry Creek Valley and Alexander Valley. You'll likely have the most fun if you focus on three or four good vineyards each day—my favorites include Porter Creek, Michel-Schlumberger, Merry Edwards, Seghesio and Passalacqua. In the upscale Healdsburg, superb restaurants abound (Cyrus, Bovolo, Barndiva), and you'll also find some outstanding luxury accommodations, among them Honor Mansion ([honormansion.com](http://honormansion.com)) and—overlooking the leafy town square—Hotel Healdsburg ([hotelhealdsburg.com](http://hotelhealdsburg.com)).

The small city of Santa Rosa lies 15 miles south of Healdsburg and makes a handy base for exploring the entire region. Most of the county's chain hotels are here—I like the Hyatt Vineyard Creek ([vineyardcreek.hyatt.com](http://vineyardcreek.hyatt.com)) downtown, partly because concierge Ramon Meraz knows so much about Sonoma's wineries, restaurants and gay scene. It's also an easy walk to several very good restaurants. On my trip with Pennie, we enjoyed a particularly stellar meal of contemporary California-Mediterranean fare at the brand new Petit Syrah Bistro. Nearby, Stark's Steakhouse has a great food-oriented happy hour, and Aroma Roasters coffeehouse is a favorite hangout of the city's LGBT community. On this most recent trip, we stayed east of downtown at Flamingo Resort ([flamingoresort.com](http://flamingoresort.com)), a reasonably priced, retro-hip hotel that's been handsomely renovated and has rooms set around a fabulous pool.

From Santa Rosa you're close to several other appealing towns. You can drive southeast along Highway 12 through the Sonoma Valley, a swath of vineyards that includes some of the most storied wineries in the country, among them St. Francis, Kunde and Benziger. Be sure to spend time strolling around the historic square in the actual town of Sonoma as well as the village of



Glen Ellen, both of which abound with tony boutiques and fine restaurants. And up in Kenwood, the Vineyards Inn is one of the county's most dedicated practitioners of farm-to-table cooking, with a menu focused on Spanish recipes.

And then there's Mendocino ([visitmendocino.com](http://visitmendocino.com)), the stunning coastal village that stood in for the fictitious Maine town of Cabot Cove in *Murder, She Wrote* and still feels like the sort of folksy, enchanting hamlet you might see Jessica Fletcher snooping around (albeit without frequent murders). Pennie and I spent a night here on our way driving back up the coast—it's just a 90-minute, beautiful drive from northern Sonoma County. Our room at the handsome Little River Inn ([littleriverinn.com](http://littleriverinn.com)) looked clear across a rolling lawn and Van Damme Beach to the Pacific. For dinner that night, we noshed on burgers and an artisanal cheese plate at the dapper MacCallum House Inn.

If you're still unconvinced of the wisdom in driving 600 miles from Portland to Sonoma and home again, consider the convenience of hauling several cases of wine with you back to Oregon, which Pennie and I did on this trek. I'm already running low, and plotting my next adventure. ☐

Read more about the frequent travels of ANDREW COLLINS at [thecountyhunter.com](http://thecountyhunter.com) and [gaytravel.about.com](http://gaytravel.about.com).

140 NE Broadway • 503.257.0488 • [www.mobilewestpdx.com](http://www.mobilewestpdx.com)

# MOBILE WEST

SINCE 1975

*PDX Car Audio Experts*

Mobile West takes PRID in your car stereo.

## RADIO CAB

portland 503.227.1212 vancouver 360.694.1234

RADIO CAB  
Your #1 Choice 24/7/365

# Lincoln City

Central Oregon Coast

October - May  
**Finders Keepers**  
Glass Floats on the Beach

exercise free will

October 15 - May 2012 November 12  
Finders Keepers Chowder Cook-Off  
Glass Floats on the Beach

Lincoln City  
on the Central Oregon Coast

541-996-1274 / 800-452-2151 [www.oregoncoast.org](http://www.oregoncoast.org)