



Touring Sarver Winery

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

## ROLL DEEP IN WINE WEATHER

*Cruising wine country safely, in style*

With summer comes the weather we all love here in Oregon. Raincoats are removed, flip-flops are slipped on and outdoor patios open up. No one knows this last part better than local winery patrons. Summer is wine time.

And Oregon is wine country. But wine contains alcohol, and this does not mix well with driving unless you want to leave pieces of yourself scattered along our state's scenic byways or spend a night in the clink. Sure, you could motor out to one of the many wineries and have one, maybe two glasses of excellent Oregon pinot, then safely drive your sweetheart back home. Certain occasions, however, call for more than one glass of wine; more than one bottle of wine; hell, maybe even more than a few bottles. Sometimes the circumstances of celebration call for excess (as well as safety) — and nothing says excess like a limousine.

"Hey, if you wanna bump, you can plug your iPod right into here and it'll play through the stereo," Whit Hogard, limo driver for Sunshine Limo Service, says to me from behind the wheel. "The DVD player controls are right here and there's orange juice to go with that champagne if you want mimosas."

Hogard is dressed to the nines in suit and tie. With his shades on he could be a Secret Service agent, though his demeanor is far too amicable. The limo he pilots seats 14 people. It comes

equipped with everything I wish I had in my living room, and then some.

"Everyone wants to do wine tours in the summer when the weather is better," says Hogard. "A DUI is more expensive than a limo."

The price of a limo ride ranges from \$165 for a three-hour tour for four in a Lincoln Town Car, to \$750 for 6 hours in a 16-passenger Cadillac Escalade. Tip and fuel not included.

Seated in a giant SUV stretch limousine and watching wine country blow by you through tinted windows is certainly a stylish way to enjoy a summer celebration. With enough wine in you and the music turned up loud, it can feel like you're pursuing happiness in your own personal Kid Cudi music video. And the best part is, you can sit back and enjoy the ride. Someone else is driving.

Hogard is Sunshine Limo Service's veteran driver, and you can tell from his almost statesman-like rapport why he's the man.

With his hands at 10 and two on the steering wheel, Hogard explains the various reasons his clients cruise the wineries — weddings, engagements, anniversaries, birthdays, proposals, graduations, bachelor parties, the list goes on.

"Six hours is probably the perfect amount of time for a wine tour," Hogard says. "That way you can hit up about four wineries and have lunch at one of them."

This leisurely impression of a wine-limo tour could suggest that Hogard's job is a piece of cake, but a deeper look into his duties reveals otherwise.

"You have to be a little bit of everything," Hogard says, after which he runs down a quick list of situations he's handled on the job. One of these includes a bachelor party where Hogard was forced to step between the soon-to-be groom and a "much larger angry man." Another story details his on-the-spot cleaning of the limo's exterior after a disgruntled homeless man hurled what appeared to be oatmeal at the windshield. "That was in downtown, though. Not out on a wine tour," Hogard clarifies.

As he's motoring me in comfort and style to the nearby Sarver Winery, Hogard explains that his primary goal is to make sure his passengers are having fun, no matter how much wine is involved. Of course, there are rules, like, what goes on in the limo stays in the limo, and if you throw up inside the limo, it's going to cost extra. As to this, Hogard adds, "Always let me know if you need me to pull over, for any reason."

Despite some of his hairier encounters, Hogard is unwavering when it comes to what he most loves about driving a limo. "People do these wine tours to celebrate things, and that specialness of the occasion is contagious," he says. "I realize how important these occasions are to people, and I love being a part of it." — Dante Zuñiga-West

For more info on Sunshine Limo Service Wine Tours, go to [sunshinelimoservice.com](http://sunshinelimoservice.com)

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