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Weekend Escape

Boonville a wine town with rustic charm



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[Dining and Drinking](#)[Lifestyle and Leisure](#)

You'll find charm in Boonville unlike any other Northern California wine country town. The Boonville Hotel is reminiscent of something you might see in the European countryside. Visiting Anderson Valley? It's home to fine wineries, such as Roederer Estate, and an award-winning brewery.

Boonville, at the beginning of the Anderson Valley appellation (the wine-growing region that stretches along California Highway 128) sometimes feels like a place beyond the frontier. It even has its own dialect, known as "boontling." Yet you'll find charm in this Mendocino County outpost that you can't find in any other Northern California wine country town. The tab: \$410 for two nights at the Boonville Hotel, \$77 for dinner and \$5 for a tour and tasting of Anderson Valley Brewing Co.

The bed

Boonville makes no bones about being a no-frills destination, and the Boonville Hotel (14050 Highway 128; [707] 895-2210, <http://www.boonvillehotel.com>) backs that up. Guest rooms lack phones and televisions, and "Internet service is unpredictable," according to the hotel. From the street, it looks just like another small-town Main Street hotel, but inside a welcoming retreat awaits, reminiscent of something you might see in the European countryside. No two rooms are alike, and there is a larger stand-alone bungalow with its own yard, as well as a casita with a private deck. Table 128, the hotel's restaurant, features local produce and a menu that changes weekly.

The meal

Going with the no-frills theme, Lauren's (14211 Highway 128; [707] 895-3869, <http://www.laurensgoodfood.com>) is a three-minute walk from the Boonville Hotel and looks like your everyday diner. A glance at the menu, however, reveals items that your everyday diner lacks, such as caponata, a distinctly Sicilian dish, with goat cheese from Pennyroyal, Boonville's own cheese farm. Head over at 5 p.m. on a Friday and you can enjoy happy hour, with \$2 fries and \$1 off beer and wine, most of which are local.

The find

You may not hear people speaking boontling, but you will see it written on some of the beers at Anderson Valley Brewing Co. (17700 Highway 253; [707] 895-2337, <http://www.avbc.com>). Heelch o' Hops Double IPA is named for the boontling word "heelch," which means a large quantity. The taproom is open daily during regular business hours; the distillery is open for 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. daily tours. Its flagship (and first beer) is Boont Amber Ale, which has won numerous awards. Visitors can make a day of it because the brewery has its own 18-hole disc golf course.

The lesson learned

Boonville is home to a burgeoning wine scene. The Anderson Valley appellation is home to more than 20 wineries, some of which are among the top wineries in America. Roederer Estate, just 10 miles north of Boonville, was the first California sparkling wine to be produced by the famous Champagne house Louis Roederer. www.visitmendocino.com.