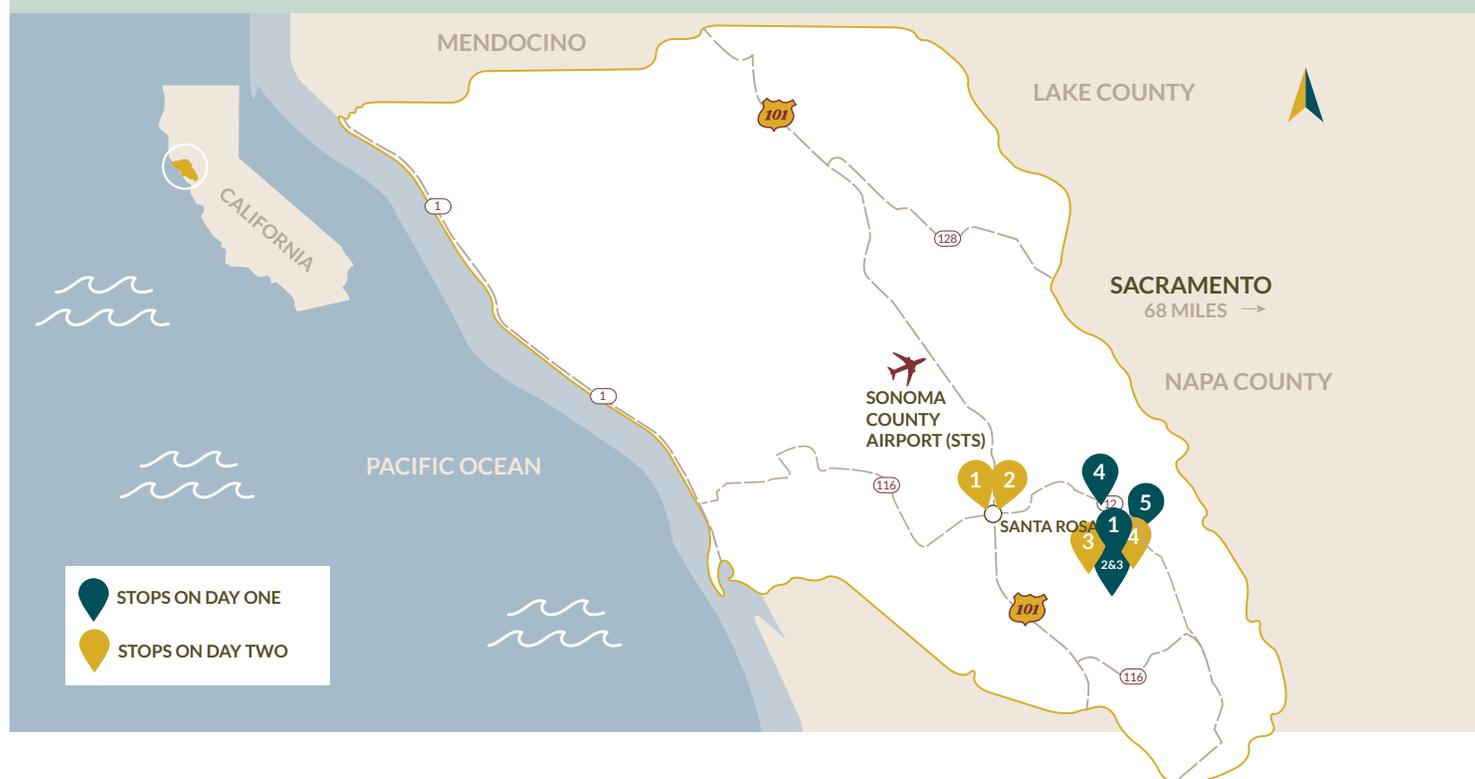


EXPERIENCE GRATITUDE

A two-day trip to reflect and appreciate



Day One

Stop One: Check in at Olea Hotel

It is more than a hotel—it's an oasis. Tucked amongst olive and oak trees, this elegant boutique hotel is the perfect place to unwind, explore, and escape. I stayed in one of their garden cottages right next to the swimming pool. One of my favorite features of this room was the indoor/outdoor fireplace and my own personal outdoor seating area.

5131 Warm Springs Rd, Glen Ellen, CA 95442

Stop Two: Horseback Riding with Triple Creek at Jack London State Park

One of the best ways to experience gratitude is to connect with nature or animals and this allowed me the opportunity to do both. As I followed my guide through a trail that circled through the lush trees of Jack London State Park, I could appreciate the quiet ambiance of nature, the sun on my face, and the steady beat of my horse's footsteps. I don't have much horse riding experience, and they considered this when choosing the perfect horse to gently guide me through the trail. My ride was borderline meditative as I took in the scenery and the beauty of nature—leaving me feeling grateful for the gift of life, health, and travel.

2400 London Ranch Rd, Glen Ellen, CA 95442

Stop Three: Glen Ellen Market and Lunch with the Transcendence Theatre Company

I had a picnic lunch planned with Maggie and Malloy from Transcendence Theatre Company. As a vocal performer myself, I was excited to learn about the work they do, so we decided to meet at Jack London State Park, where their performances take place. They say that Transcendence can't be explained, it can only be experienced.

www.transcendencetheatre.org

Stop Four: VJB Cellars

After a morning connecting with others and immersing myself in the fabric of Sonoma County, I was eager to experience what the area is best known for: The wine. A stop at VJB Cellars was on the top of my list. This family-owned winery has a sun-kissed courtyard with tables and umbrellas scattered about for you to sit and sip. They also offer a tasting room, boutique, country store, truffle shop, and more. It's an easy place to spend all day. I tasted my way down a list of wines—the Rosso Family Blend was a favorite—and enjoyed a caprese board with housemade mozzarella, tomato, and basil wrapped in prosciutto. The ambiance allowed me to savor each bite and really immerse myself in the experience.

60 Shaw Ave, Kenwood, CA 95452

Stop Five: Dinner at Sante

Located inside the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn, Sante was the backdrop of one of the most memorable meals of my life. I started with the grilled and glazed quail and could have made a meal out of that in itself. As my meal progressed, it became evident that Executive Chef Jared Reeves has a smooth touch when it comes to flavor combinations and transforming ordinary into extraordinary. Alongside each bite, I sampled a variety of wines. The most memorable was called Machete and it was from the Dave Phinney collection. It reminded me of somebody who was special to me and we are no longer in touch. I shared this story with a local Sonoma resident dining next to me, and he said, "It never hurts to let someone know something made you think of them, and it made you happy."

So I reached out after dinner with a quick text. And as the local wisely shared, they were happy to hear from me and grateful that I reached out to let them know I was thinking of them.

100 Boyes Blvd, Sonoma, CA 95476

EXPERIENCE GRATITUDE

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Day Two

Stop One: Rock Climbing at Session

I always love to experience adventure wherever I go, so it was nice to start my day with Mike at Session. He and his business partner Kevin Jorgeson have been part of Sonoma County's rock climbing community since 1995, and they recently opened this indoor facility to bring rock climbing to the masses. They offer memberships, but if you're in town for a visit, you can also take advantage of a day pass. It felt good to move my body in a way I hadn't done for awhile, and to learn about Kevin and Mike's experience as climbers in Sonoma County.

965 S A St, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Stop Two: Farmacopia

In Santa Rosa, I found Farmacopia nestled between a few small shops in a plaza. They offer an ever-expanding array of rigorously vetted herbal medicines, nutrients, and all-natural cruelty-free body care. The most interesting part of the shop was their Tincture Bar located in the back. They stock several hundred professional strength liquid herbal extracts to create tinctures that are specifically blended by their practitioners before being shipped directly to your door. I watched as they filled customer orders for specialized tinctures and explored the store. The staff was extremely knowledgeable and helpful as I explained certain things that were bothering me and they mixed up a special tincture just for me.

If you're curious to visit a natural apothecary, this is the place to go.

95 Montgomery Dr #90, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Stop Three: Belden Barns

Belden Barns has a barn for wine tastings, but as I explored the vines, I realized the focal point tucked down at the bottom of a hill--the Wishing Tree. Nate, the owner/winemaker, explained that when he and Lauren got married on that property shortly after they purchased it, their friends and family wrote wishes and attached them to the tree. That day they realized all of their own wishes had come true, so they invited everybody to write a wish for themselves--which is exactly what they did. And ever since, anybody who visits Belden Barns is invited to write a wish and attach it to the tree. I read wishes from people who wanted to have babies, conquer cancer, write a book, and have happy lives. I wrote a wish and added it to the branches.

I sampled my way through a few of the current releases and discovered some favorites. The complex and robust flavors of Serendipity and their 2019 Epiphany Grenache were on the top of my list.

5561 Sonoma Mountain Rd, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Stop Four: Dinner at Glen Ellen Star

When traveling solo, people often ask me how it is to dine alone. I find it peaceful. It's always a great time to put my phone away and review the pictures in my mind--the memories.

Chef Ari and his wife Erinn offer a cozy, welcoming atmosphere. The bustling, well-run kitchen makes good use of their wood-fire oven; it's not just pizzas and flatbreads that they produce. The menu was rich with wood-fired vegetables, fired meats, and charred seafood and starters. They also offer a variety of Sonoma County wines to go with your meal.

13648 Arnold Dr, Glen Ellen, CA 95442