

Wine Spectator

A Convertible & a Corkscrew

A wine tour of California's Central Coast



Day 2 - Paso Robles

Today's destination, Paso Robles, is two hours' drive north, up 101. Once best known for its outlaw element (the town was founded by Jesse James' uncle Drury), Paso Robles now ranks as one of the most dynamic wine regions in California.

Bistro Laurant, on the town square, features a broad assortment of local wines. Frenchman Laurent Grangien offers lunch and dinner menus heavily weighted with bistro classics. The wine list has about 140 choices, most of them local bottlings, Bordeaux and Rhône Valley wines.

After lunch, the French theme continues at L'Aventure Winery, one of the rising stars of the region. The property is hidden at the end of a rugged road about 15 minutes drive from the town square (passing the cattle guards on Live Oak Road means you're on the right track).

Owner Stephan Asseo started the estate in 1998, after 15 years of winemaking in Bordeaux. He has a strong accent and the stained hands and seemingly perpetual sunburn of a working vintner. The winery is a not-so-glorified warehouse. But Asseo doesn't cut corners in the winemaking, and the wines are consistently ripe, rich and concentrated.

12. L'Aventure Winery

2815 Live Oak Road, Paso Robles **Telephone** (805) 227-1588 **Web site** www.aventurewine.com **Open** By appointment only **Owner/Winemaker** Stephan Asseo **Founded** 1998 **Annual production** 8,000 cases

Stephan Asseo's outstanding red blends, produced in an unassuming warehouse/winery, are at the forefront of the quality revolution in western Paso Robles.