

## SUMMER GETAWAYS

BY AMY PATUREL

Established in 1859, Temecula is one of the most historic and charming communities in Southern California



Photo courtesy of Temecula Valley CVB

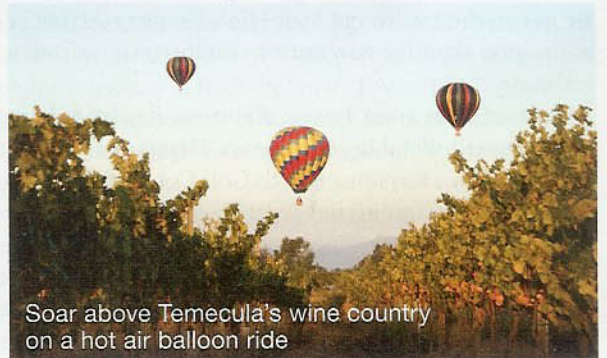
# Temecula, California

Nestled among the hilly slopes of California's avocado and citrus groves lies the place "where the sun shines through the mist." Temecula, sandwiched between the Anza-Borrego desert to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west, boasts a climate that suits everything from wine to hot air balloon rides.

### Wine and Romance

Temecula Valley — Southern California's wine region — is quieter, calmer, and decidedly less pretentious than some of its Northern California counterparts, but that doesn't mean you won't swirl and sip high-quality wines here. More than 30 wineries thrive in this diverse appellation, many of which have garnered prestigious accolades for their quality vintages. In fact, some of Temecula's most popular wineries — Callaway, Ponte, Thornton, Wilson Creek, and South Coast — are located on Rancho California Road, the area's easily navigable main thruway. Tastings range between \$1 and \$12 each.

Wilson Creek Winery's almond "Oh My Gosh" champagne and its Angelica Cream Sherry, conveniently served in a shot glass made of chocolate, are award-winning favorites. And, chocolate lovers shouldn't miss Thornton Winery's chocolate tasting flight — a series of chocolate wines ranging from dark, red port-style wines to cream-based varieties (think: adult milkshakes). Ponte Winery



Soar above Temecula's wine country on a hot air balloon ride

© Steve Amaon

is another standout with revered reds, whites, sparkling varieties, and a few fruity wines that feature such ingredients as peach, strawberry, and boysenberry.

Unlike other regions, where wineries are, in many cases, separate from restaurants and hotels, Temecula wineries often include an on-site restaurant, a robust assortment of activities and events, and even a hotel or spa in some cases. For a truly indulgent experience, check in to one of South Coast Winery's 76 private villas with hot tubs, fireplaces, and private terraces that extend right up to the vines. Need to relax after a busy day of tasting? Unwind at the property's full-service Grape Seed Spa, which features a saltwater pool, 11 treatment rooms, and specialty classes, including *Vino Vinyasa*, a wine and yoga pairing experience.

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Before you depart, take a sunrise hot air balloon ride, provided by one of several companies, including A Grape Escape Balloon Adventure, California Dreamin', and Magical Adventures. Flights start at \$125 per person and offer breathtaking views of the vineyard-covered rolling hills and the 11,000-foot-high mountains that surround the valley.

### Old Town Charm

Established in 1859, Temecula is one of the most historic and charming communities in Southern California. With wooden plank sidewalks, white twinkling lights, and uplifting tunes playing from speakers on the streets, Old Town Temecula offers the perfect mix of old-fashioned charm and modern, upscale shopping.

The 12-block stretch is home to more than 60 boutiques, antique stores, galleries, and one-of-a-kind food purveyors, including The Old Town Sweet Shop, the perfect stop for retro candy and homemade fudge; The House of Jerky, which sells every type of jerky imaginable; Old Town Root Beer Company, the best place to revisit the bygone ice cream float; and Temecula Olive Oil Company, which serves 100 percent sustainably grown extra virgin olive oil and offers free tastings.

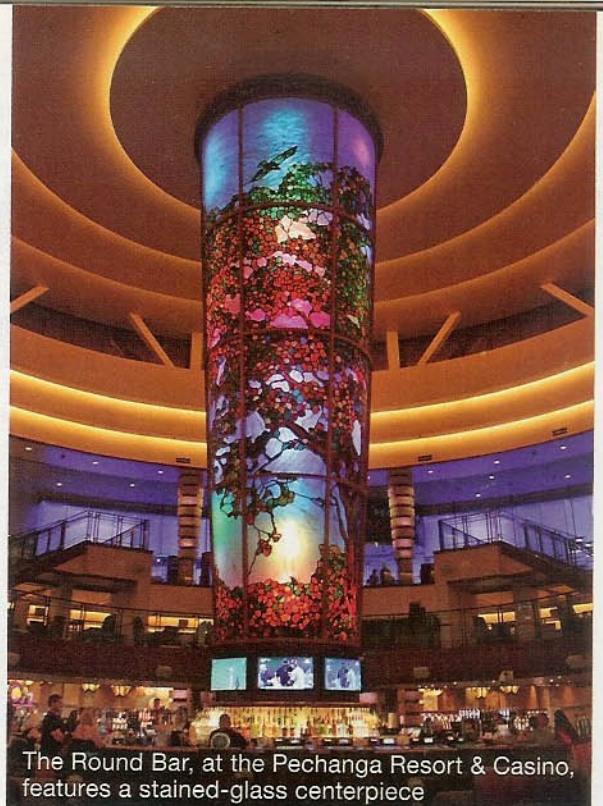
Home to the highest number of boutique farms in the nation (per capita) the city also hosts a Certified Farmers' Market every Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon in the parking lot on Sixth Street (between Mercedes and Old Town Front streets). Locals and visitors alike flock to the market to fill their reusable shopping bags with everything from seasonal produce and fresh cut flowers to baked goods and hand-crafted jewelry.

Family-friendly attractions abound downtown, including Professor Pennypickle's Workshop, within the Temecula Children's Museum, where children can participate in science-based experiments and exhibits.

### Golf and Gambling

With championship courses and a highly regarded golf school at Journey at Pechanga, it's easy to see why Temecula has become a burgeoning golf destination. Most of the area greens are studded with ancient oaks and sycamore trees, naturally occurring streams, elevation changes, and expansive views. And all have great course designs popular with golfers of varying skill levels for challenging year-round play.

Journey, for example, consistently earns high honors from top golf publications as one of the premier courses in California. The course features a signature Hole 6 with a spectacular 175-foot drop to the fairway — the largest course elevation drop in California. Journey also boasts a 62,000-square-foot clubhouse with high-end resort amenities, a pro shop, and a restaurant.



The Round Bar, at the Pechanga Resort & Casino, features a stained-glass centerpiece

© Skip Moore

But Journey isn't Pechanga's only coup. This resort is home to the largest casino in the western United States — bigger than any in Las Vegas — complete with high-stakes wagering and a smoke-free poker room. The resort also offers elite entertainment with superstar headliners, including Willie Nelson and Chris Rock. If it's nightlife you're looking for, Pechanga Resort & Casino is another worthy destination. Get your groove on at Silk, Southern California's largest nightclub. And, when you're finally ready to call it a night, retreat to Pechanga's plush, oversized beds with double pillow-top mattresses, floor-to-ceiling windows, and grand master baths.

AMY PATUREL is a freelance writer in Temecula, Calif., who pens stories about health, food, and travel.

## If You Go

**Getting there:** The airports in San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange County, and Ontario are all within a one- to two-hour drive from Temecula. Just keep in mind rush-hour traffic could tack on another hour (or more) to your drive time.

**What to do:** From tee times and trolley rides to festivals and hot air balloon flights, [temeculacvb.com](http://temeculacvb.com) is a great way to plan your visit.

**Di-vine transportation:** Temecula boasts more transportation options than most wine regions. Limos, vans, and even trolleys are all readily available. The Grapeline ([gogrape.com](http://gogrape.com)), Going Grape ([goinggrape.com](http://goinggrape.com)), and Temecula Cable Car Wine Tours ([temeculacablecar.com](http://temeculacablecar.com)) are three mainstays.

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