

## Description of the Anderson Valley

Dec. 17, 2016

Anderson Valley is a community of roughly 5000 people nestled in the mountains of the Pacific Coast Range. Its four villages are dotted along a 50-mile stretch of Highway 128, a route which connects Highway 101 (the old El Camino Real, California's historic north-south pathway) with the coastal Highway 1. Of Anderson Valley's four villages, Boonville is the largest town and is home to a fairground, the community's elementary and high schools, and the Anderson Valley Health Center. East of Boonville are the ranches and farms of Yorkville, while to the west are the villages of Philo and Navarro. By car, the Anderson Valley is reachable in around 2 hours from the San Francisco Bay Area and around 30 minutes from the Mendocino coast.

While Anderson Valley used to be known for producing timber and apples, in the last 25 years it has become famous for its wines, particularly Pinot Noir and Alsatian varietals. The Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival is held every year in May and draws wineries from all over the world. Local farming is greatly supported by the region's Mediterranean climate, and with milder winter temperatures, rare snowfalls are confined to higher reaches of the hillsides surrounding the valley. In summertime, the Anderson Valley's proximity to the ocean cools the air, contrasting with the heat in Cloverdale and Ukiah in the Russian River valley.

The Anderson Valley is small and has much to offer. It supports several fine dining restaurants as well as several great delicatessens, a year-round farmers' market, shops with local art and products, and a variety of lodgings and other services. Anderson Valley is also the home of Hendy Woods State Park, offering hikers and visitors a chance to experience two old-growth stands of ancient redwoods in its 816 acres. The Navarro River runs through much of the valley and serves as a spawning ground for steelhead and an important water source for the valley's abundant wildlife.

Most importantly, Anderson Valley is a community in the true sense of the word. Recently, two young residents developed severe medical problems at around the same time, with one man falling while pruning a tall tree and another young man suffering a sudden stroke. Within weeks, the community came together and threw a fundraising party that raised over \$43,000 for these two men. On Halloween night, residents of all ages entered the doors of the Anderson Valley Grange Hall, site of many community events, through the rabbit hole from *Alice in Wonderland* and into a world of tilted teacups, silly games, and outrageous costumes. Every March locals pack the Grange to capacity for two successive nights for the Anderson Valley Variety Show, legendary for the wide range of talent demonstrated there.

The strength of the community of Anderson Valley derives from the large variety of people who call it home - old-time valley residents whose families have lived there for generations; "back to the landers" who arrived in the 1970's and stayed to raise children; Latino families drawn to the

farmlands early on and now a firmly established, integral part of the community; young people who have come here to grow their own food and revive a simpler way of life; retired folks from all around California withdrawing from the rat race; and many others, all devoted to the Anderson Valley, its diverse people, and the enticements of the natural landscape..