

COSMO BEACH HOUSE

Forestville California

Eat. Play. Live.

CONTACT:

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WHAT TO EAT:

RESTAURANTS: (in order by distance more or less) (* = great and ** are not to be missed)

Please note that you are not in Kansas anymore. Restaurants around here close early (9:00 or earlier except many taco trucks). Always call first if it's not summer or a winter weekend. Listed are only good places (food or atmosphere-wise). There are many many more options- but either I don't know about them or I think that they kinda suck.

Sonoma Pizza Co. is right on the main drag, route 116 in Downtown Forestville. Recently opened- it seems to be very good. They have a real Neapolitan pizza oven. They have take/bake options as well (not as good unless you have your own Napoli oven).

Bazaar Sonoma Also in Downtown Forestville is new and serves "Traditional Chinese food with untraditional values". Farm to wok cuisine. I've only tried it once, but I was definitely impressed.

****Nightingale Bakery** Awesome French bread (the best in the county by far – it is definitely better than Acme). Seeded Epi is their best item. Mini baguettes with stuff inside are always great. You can't go wrong with anything they make. Downtown Forestville.

A La Heart Kitchens Good take-away lunch items. They are caterers, so everyday they have different items.

Angela's Ice Cream in downtown Forestville. New, still untried by us. Supposedly it is good (but people up here are easy).

Corks at Russian River Vineyards Very good restaurant and winery in Forestville on Hwy 116.

****Farmhouse Inn** in Forestville, has incredible food and is considered the best restaurant in the county (or second best since Single Thread arrived?) - It is 3 miles away on river road. Michelin starred and \$\$\$\$

Rio Nido Roadhouse A funky dive for booze/food and local color, live music (and a pool and putt-putt!).

Russian River Pub is only a mile away on River Road is a funky dive bar with not awful food (decent by dive bar standards). A good place to park your truck, get sloppy drunk and watch other sloppy people do the same.

Rice and Noodle Etc in Guerneville. Chinese food. The food is way better than the name. May

***WillowWood Café** in Graton, is on the shortlist of best brunch places in the area- dinner too.

Underwood Bar and Bistro across the street in Graton, is a great dinner/drinking spot. There's an outdoor dining/bocce court and a great bar. The food is quite good especially if you've had one too many.

***Boon** Casual but great gourmet restaurant- highly recommended, on the main drag (River road) in Guerneville.

Big Bottom Café Main drag, Guerneville. Fantastic sandwich shop. [Update -downgraded to Very Good]

Nimble & Finn I feel pretentious just saying the name. This is an utterly delicious, cow-to-table ice cream shop. The pies are very good too. It is in a gorgeous old bank building on the main drag in Guerneville. Bring your high limit Visa card.

Stumptown Brewery A touristy but not faux riverfront rollicking funky brewpub BBQ joint. Go for the beer and vibe, not for the food.

Single Thread warrants a mention. Sonoma County's answer to French Laundry. Above my pay grade, but people rave about it including The Michelin Man. It is \$\$\$\$\$\$!

Cape Fear Great brunch place in Duncan's Mills- on the way to the coast.

****Wild Flour Bakery** Incredible rustic breads and scones full of fruits/cheeses/chocolate located in Freestone on Bohemian Highway. Go here. Seriously.

***Spud Point Crab Company-** On Bodega Bay. The freshest crab in the area. Chowder too. Take out only. Really good.

***Terrapin Creek** Fantastic seafood and then some. Michelin starred in Bodega Bay. \$\$\$

***Various Oyster joints on Tomales Bay near Point Reyes** Far, but the drive down the coast along Tomales Bay is magnificent. The oysters are really good and it is a fun (but crowded scene) to have an oyster picnic on the Bay.

A little further away:

Sebastopol (more down to earth and affordable) and **Healdsburg** (more formal, more splurge-worthy) have more/better restaurants than Guerneville and Forestville. FWIW, overall I prefer Sebastopol, but you can't go wrong in any of these places.

Town of SEBASTOPOL (10 miles SE on hwy 116) has lots of restaurants. Try ***La Bodega** Café (awesome), ****Ramen Gaijin** (utterly fantastic ramen- best I've ever had), ***Khom Loi** (incredible Neo-Thai), ***Psychic Pie** (really great pizza slabs). Also really good are **Piala** (Great Georgian food), **The Redwood** (food and natural wine bar), **Ginger Thai**, **Handline** (seafood), **KL Bistro**, **BBQ Smokehouse**, **Hole in the Wall**, **East West Café**, **Hop Monk** (live music), **El Farolito** and definitely **Screamin Mimis** for ice cream. Lets not forget about ***Patisserie Angelica** (precious but great). **The Barlow** is a converted giant industrial complex that has a ridiculous number of brew pubs, as well as wine bars, some restaurants and cool-stuff stores. The quality of just about everything is very good.

***Town of HEALDSBURG** (15 miles north on Westside Road) is teeming with great restaurants and wineries. Most have a very refined rustic vibe. Try **Low and Behold**, **Barn Diva**, **Madrona Manor**, **Dry Creek Kitchen**, **Valette**, **Scopa** or **Chalkboard** for fine dining. **Downtown Bakery** is famous for a good reason. Also **El Farolito** or **Bear Republic Brewery** are good, if you just gotta have some food instead of some cuisine. **Shed** sells great fancy fresh and prepared food. It is like Healdsburg in general - beautiful, refined, top quality, precious, a labor of love, a feast for the senses, expensive and understatedly pretentious. The drive to get there, on vineyard/winery-lined Westside road is a must.

SANTA ROSA has many many very good (but not awesome?) restaurants- I don't go there often. However, and I mean however, the (2nd) best taco truck in all Northern California is ****Delicias Elenitas** on Sebastopol road. Their carnitas tacos are sublime and they are open until 1:00am (and 3:00 on weekends).

Restaurant Delivery: A few places do

Online food delivery services: coming soon to West County.? Maybe here already? If not try R2T2 or Bill's taxi. They will deliver from many restaurants.

BARS: Other than wineries (see below), "real" river dwellers frequent dives like Russian River Pub, Pats, Rio Nido Roadhouse, Pink Elephant, or Stumptown. If you order anything other than beer or cheap whiskey, you will be ridiculed and shown the door. If you want nicer bars (wine, pink cocktails, polo shirts), go to Healdsburg (many very fine ones to choose from), Sebastopol, Santa Rosa or El Barrio or Agriculture in Guerneville. There are many supposedly great "gay bars" (the bars aren't gay but numerous clients are) in Guerneville. Willy's Wine Bar an institution in Santa Rosa. There are also bars in some of the aforementioned nice restaurants. Brew Pubs are around every corner. Note- I have only been to a handful of bars in the area, cuz I'm just not a bar kinda guy. I'd rather eat, play with dogs on the beach or edit this house manual.

FOOD SHOPPING

Farmers Markets: there are wonderful farmers market in one local town or another almost every day. Some are year round. Tuesday 4-7 in Downtown Forestville is great. The biggest and best quality food is Sunday market on the square in Sebastopol (10am-1:30pm). A local favorite is the Thursday market in Occidental (4-8pm). Super charming town amongst the redwoods, great produce (lots of trust-fund farmers), restaurant food stalls and music too. Great place for well-heeled hippy watching.
www.cafarmersmarkets.com/

Groceries in order of distance:

Berrys/Sam's "Market" short walk across the bridge. Good for beer, cigarettes and candy bars. Glorified liquor store. OK- actually no glory whatsoever.

Speers Small/local, but very useful store. It is up-scaling rapidly as we speak (River Rd and Mirabel). That is mostly a good thing.

Safeway supermarket in Guerneville. No explanation necessary. It is what it is. Open 24/7

Andy's on 116 in Graton. Very good produce, wine and many other groceries store. Their tomatoes suck even in September. Their house made tomatillo/avocado salsa is the best grocery store salsa I know of. There is a local/good Panizzera meats stall inside.

Pacific Market on 116 in Sebastopol. Good wine and prepared foods selection. Open 7-9

Whole Foods Sebastopol. Typically the best produce/meat/cheese in the area (other than Farmers markets). Good wine selection. Use my Amazon Prime phone # for discounts 415-252-0200. Fuck Jeff Bezos but I still shop there.

Community Market in Sebastopol Local version of Whole Foods. Very good quality but more crunchy and even more spendy. Than Whole Foods. Not owned by Jeff Bezos.

Safeway in Sebastopol. No explanation necessary. It is what it is. Open 24/7. I go for their "house made" plain cheesecake.

Healdsburg: Big John's supermarket, Olivers supermarket, Safeway, Shelton's natural foods. None are anything special. Also local/ high quality Journeyman Meats (charcuterie done right)

WINE STORES (in no particular order)

Willibies, Sonoma Wine Shop, Wine Stars, Wine Stop

FARM STANDS:

Farm stand on River Road near Hwy 101: Warning- It looks authentic-ish and it's cheap, but it SUCKS. Most of their produce is commercial and not local. They are probably a little better than many supermarkets and are locally owned, so there is that.

***GREEN STRING FARM** (awesome and cheap)
3571 Old Adobe Road, Petaluma, CA 94954 Phone 707-778-7500

***TIERRA Farm Stand** (also really great- much closer, but not as cheap). Strawberries to die for.
651 Airport Blvd (@Hwy 101) (707) 544-6141

HONOR SYSTEM Fruit Stands Many scattered throughout the county. Take produce, leave money. Karma applies.

WHAT TO DO

(other than sunbathe, eat, cook, drink, swim or boat). Included is what to do with your dog, cuz it's their vacation too:

Wineries: There are scores of great wineries in the immediate area. For starters, there are dozens of great wineries on Westside road, which starts 1 block away from here and meanders its way to Healdsburg. Some of our favorites: **Gary Farrell** at 10701 Westside road, **Porter Creek** at 8735 Westside and **Twomey** at 3000 Westside Road. Also close to home: **Joseph Swan** on Trenton Road, **Copain** on Eastside road, **Iron Horse** on Ross Station Road and **Russian River Vineyards** on Hwy 116. In Healdsburg, check out **Quivira**, **Michel Schlumberger**, **Dry Creek Vineyards** and **Rochioli**. Also highly recommended for places with good wines with beautiful views: Armida, Landmark, Macrostie, Quivera, Cast, Reeve, Bella, Sbragia and... Many of them are dog friendly. There are a ton of Brew Pubs in Sonoma County, but like I said, you need to find your own way.

Canoe, Kayak and SUP Rentals: See section below regarding paddling the river. Burke's, Soar and SUP odyssey rent vessels and provide transport for self guided downstream trips. **Kings Sport** in Guerneville rent boats but doesn't do trips.

Tubing/Floating: You can slowly float your way down the river in an inner-tube or raft, your belly or a floaty shaped like a swan or Bart Simpson. Figure a speed of 1 MPH, so have reasonable expectations of how far you'll go. There is a **River Shuttle** that runs between **Sunset beach** (walking distance from Cosmo) and **Steelhead Beach** (a few miles upstream). I suggest walking to Sunset beach with your deflated gear. Once there, follow path signs pointing to River Shuttle (in the parking lot). The shuttle will take you upstream to Steelhead Beach where you can inflate then put your floaties and your bellies in the river. Float downstream 2 miles to Cosmo (takes 4 hours-ish). The shuttle runs every 30 min from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Alternatively, you can use **R2T2 or Bill's or Monte Rio Taxis** to shuttle around on your own schedule. Note that none of these shuttle options can accommodate kayaks, canoes or Russian yachts. Do not tube or float or boat or swim if you can't swim. Note that we don't provide floaties. travelingspud.com has a good guide of what, where, how and when.

Osmosis Japanese Spa gets rave reviews (but I know nuthin' about spas). It's in Freestone, which is gorgeous and has an absolutely awesome bakery, **Wildflour** (which I know all about- see above). **Boon** has a spa too, I think. I can ask my wife. I'll get back to you about that.

RIVER BEACHES:

Hacienda Beach (under the bridge), **Sunset Beach** (my fave) and **Mom's Beach** are all within walking distance. Nice beaches that are further away are **Villa Grande Beach** (my 2nd fave- small, pretty and chill), **Vacation Beach** and **Steelhead Beach**. These beaches forbid off leash dogs, but mostly tolerate it. But hey- Why bother going to other beaches? You have your own beach in the backyard. Cosmo beach obviously allows off-leash dogs. Always. Forever; My beach, My rules, bitchez. That said, all the beaches named above get really crowded on Summer weekends, so it's recommended that you leash your dog when there are crowds.

OCEAN BEACHES: (NOTE- the coast is typically 10-20 degrees cooler than inland, so dress warm). Look out for Whales!

Blind Beach, Russian Gulch, Pinnacle Gulch and **Salt Point** beaches are all gorgeous. Russian Gulch is our favorite; intimate and very uncrowded. Pinnacles is our much larger number 2. Dogs allowed on-leash and tolerated off-leash on all of these beaches.

Goat Rock Beach shares a parking lot with Blind Beach. On the north end is a sea lion rookery. Not to be missed if you like fat, lazy, giant, gentle and cute barking sea mammals and their adorable pups (who doesn't?). Absolutely no dogs or dog pups allowed. There are many many other gorgeous small coastal beaches nearby- you can't go wrong. They are not to be missed if you like fat, lazy, giant, barking tourists (though only when they are in season). Dogs aren't allowed off leash on many/most of them (including Goat Rock).

Bodega Head, Bodega Dunes and Salmon Creek: Further South but really beautiful and good for whale watching (bring binoculars). No dogs.

Dillon Beach Further away, but actually allows dogs off-leash (That's cuz it is in dog-friendly Marin county, not Sonoma).

GAS STATIONS:

Rotten Robbies at the corner of Hwy 116 and Mirabel road in downtown Forestville (4 miles SE of here). They have the only car wash in west county. There are also several gas stations on River Road in Guerneville (6 miles W of here).

HIKING and WALKING:

Sunset Beach Merely a block away, but a few nice short trails and a cool large fluvial gravel bar that is made of nothing but pebbles, willows and driftwood (and a few lounge chairs and pink flamingos flushed down from upstream). Easy to walk around- the river naturally cuts paths through the soft willows. Explore and you will find a few hidden beautiful little beaches. The best ones are far downstream.

Willow Creek Road Easy (mostly paved) and super beautiful. An approximately 7 mile stretch of the road is permanently closed to vehicles starting near Coleman Valley Road in Occidental and ending in Jenner at the coast at the mouth of the River (and just behind Russia House restaurant). Dogs allowed on-leash and totally tolerated off-leash.

Armstrong Woods/Austin Creek Parks Gorgeous! Old growth redwood forest (milleniums old giant trees). Flat walking trails through the awesome valley of redwoods and great hiking trails on the adjacent slopes. Pool Ridge trail is a sweet hike and is walking distance from the (free) main parking lot. Note that dogs are only allowed on paved roads. More serious hikes start from Bullfrog pond.

Willow Creek People Powered Park (not to be confused with Willow creek Rd above). The Islands in the Sky Trail has fantastic scenery and is rarely used. Permit required, but if asked (you probably won't be- there seems to be no enforcement), tell them that your host (me) is a member of **Landpaths**. The trailhead is on Freezeout road (near Moscow road) in Duncans Mills. There are several gorgeous short loop hikes, but the main trail terminates near Shell Beach on the coast (7 miles away). Dogs allowed on-leash and tolerated off-leash.

Foothill Park in Windsor- Really nice, super easy walks, but highly used park with multiple lakes. Dogs allowed on-leash and tolerated off-leash.

Annadel and Sugarloaf Parks Wonderful large State parks just east of Santa Rosa. No dogs allowed at all.

Hood Mountain Park Near Annadel- great too. Dogs allowed on-leash and tolerated off-leash.

Kortum Trail In Jenner-meanders along the coast on the cliffs just above the ocean. Spectacular views.

Grove of Old Trees in Occidental- Nice, small redwood forest. Dogs allowed on-leash and tolerated off-leash.

Point Reyes National Seashore 45 min away, but stunning coastal National Park. The Bear Valley trail and Estero trails are awesome. Shell, Hearts Desire and Kehoe are the best beaches. Dogs only allowed leashed on Kehoe, Limantour and Great beaches. Dogs are not allowed on any trails.

BIKING: Scenic roads: Westside road, Sweetwater Springs road (!), Armstrong woods/Austin creek park, Cazadero/Austin creek rd, Old Cazadero Road, Coleman Valley Road, I 16 near the coast. There are tons of beautiful places to ride in Occidental, Freestone, Graton, Bodega, Bloomfield, Valley Ford, etc... River Road nearby sucks: fast cars/no shoulder. The roads into the little towns along the river are very short and dead end into canyons. There are some good places to mountain bike, like Willow Creek road, People powered park (goes to the coast), Kortum and others. You can rent bikes (by distance): Russian River Bikes, Spoke Folk, Sebastopol Bike and Bike partners. Bike tours available too.

NOTE TO BIKERS- WESTSIDE ROAD IS CLOSED DUE TO A LANDSLIDE SO I THINK THAT YOU CAN NOW BIKE COMFORTABLY ON IT!!! The slide was partial so I think that bikes can get past it. The closure is from Sunset Ave. (yeah, that one) to Wohler Bridge. Only open for residents and there are very few. This is a great opportunity. It is pretty gorgeous.

DOGS:

Sonoma County is good for leashed dogs but unfriendly to off-leash dogs. There is literally no park, beach nor trail where dogs are officially allowed off-leash. However, there exists a combination of lack of enforcement and unofficial tolerance which de facto allows responsible dog owners to let our dogs act like real animals. See Hiking and Beaches sections for more info.

Please do not let dogs off-leash in parks, beaches and trails on summer weekends due to crowds and increased enforcement. Enforcement typically results in a warning- but if you are unlucky or an asshole, it can result in a very large fine (\$400-ish). I have never been fined in 6 years of regularly yet responsibly flouting the rules. No matter where you go, **pick up poop**, keep your dogs under complete voice control, keep them away from other people, dogs, wildlife and unpicked-up poop. There is a one nice enclosed dog play area at Ragle Park in Sebastopol where a nice group of pooches hang out, wrestle, play fetch and lament the lack of off-leash options elsewhere. There's nice little Laguna trail just behind dog run. There is a very small enclosed dog play area in quirky redwood covered Rio Nido on Canyon 7 Road. In Santa Rosa, there is a very large suburban park with a very large enclosed dog park. Also, Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery is beautiful, very old, wooded and huge. It seems to allow (or completely tolerates) off-leash dogs. Note that it is not rural, it is suburban, but very cool. Many Many wineries (and brew pubs) are dog friendly. See **Wineries** above.

PADDLING/FLOATING ON THE RIVER: OPTIONS:

1. The simplest option is to start at Cosmo beach and paddle up river, then turn around and paddle back downstream back to Cosmo. I suggest paddling upriver first, tire yourself out, eat a picnic by picnicking on someone else's beach - yes it's 100% legal (Karma applies), then float back home.

NOTE- DON'T paddle upstream through dangerous bottlenecks or crosscurrents (or

super shallow stretches of river) if you are a novice, weak paddler, drunk, or under the influence. If you are an experienced paddler, going upstream is pretty easy except at frequent bottlenecks. Brute force will get you where you need to go only if you know what you are doing. There are also numerous super shallow sections which make paddling difficult. The typical solution is to navigate through deeper waters, but in certain spots this can be tricky/dangerous too. The hardest thing by far are bottlenecks where the river narrows sharply and severely. This creates powerful crosscurrents that are difficult to maneuver. These bottlenecks can be dangerous if you don't know what you are doing. The crosscurrent wants to capsize you and push you into the riverbank. If you are an experienced paddler you know that you must always remain parallel to the current. If you go perpendicular, then you are fucked. The moral of the story is **DON'T paddle upstream through bottlenecks or crosscurrents (or super shallow stretches of river) if you are a novice, weak paddler, drunk, or under the influence.** The alternative for novices, weaklings or fearful types is when heading upstream, stop and paddle ashore before the bottleneck, then get out and portage (carry the damn boat) past the bottlenecks and difficult stretches. Then it is total smooth sailing. **PADDLE AT YOUR OWN RISK!** Note that you can reverse the course (go downstream then upstream), but note that the stretch upriver from home is less populated and quieter than downstream.

2. Go to Burke's (707-887-1222), Soar (dogs allowed) (707-433-5599) or SUP Odyssey (415-497-0179) and rent boats to take on a self guided trip. Each place has different length trips, boats and rules. They will pick you up at the end of your journey and take you back to their facilities where your car and a beverage concession awaits. Try to reserve in advance on Summer weekends and holidays.
3. Two cars are typically needed (or one car plus Uber, Shuttle, taxi for you, but not your boat): Drive one car and park it at one of the upstream launch points and paddle back to Cosmo, get your drink on, then use your second car (or get a ride) to drive back to the launch point to retrieve your first car. Actually go get your car first then drink (hosts don't let guests drive drunk). Launching your boat at Steelhead Beach makes for the shortest trip possible. It is about a 2 hour paddle to Cosmo (or as little as 1 hour if you paddle like you mean it). You can launch even further upstream, like Healdsburg, Del Rio Woods, Wohler Bridge (**CLOSED**), etc. However the distances between launch points are greater upriver.
4. Two cars needed (or one car + shuttle or taxi, Uber): Drive one car and park it at one of the launch points on the river downstream in Guerneville. Drive (or get a ride) back to Cosmo and put on a hat and sunscreen. Paddle from Cosmo to one of the launch points downstream on the river (ideally the one your car is parked at). The closest pull out spot is Johnson's beach in Guerneville, which is a 4-5 hr trip. Monte Rio, Willow Creek and the Pacific ocean are even further. Toss the boats on top of your waiting car, drive back to Cosmo, **LOCK UP THE BOATS**, then get your drink on and your BBQ on if you haven't already.
5. Explore distant stretches of river and paddle in that area. A great spot is out at the mouth of the river where it meets the ocean. The river is very wide and slow. The flora and fauna are very different from here due to the ocean water and its climate influence. I think that you can launch at Willow Creek beach (next to the environmental campgrounds). You can do a loop, or take out at the Sonoma State Visitors Center in Jenner. You can alternatively reverse the trip, but watch out for high tide and/or heavy winds- Both will forcefully push you Eastward/inland/towards Cosmo. **ONCE AGAIN, PADDLE AT YOUR OWN RISK!**

<https://www.sonomacounty.com/articles/boat-launches-sonoma-county-regional-parks> <https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Play/Boating-and-Paddling/Paddling-in-the-Parks/>

Note that while you are on the river, you are allowed, by law (Public Trust Doctrine) to stop on ANY beach to rest, eat, drink, sun worship or drink more. Along the river, you will see way scores of very ugly *Private Beach* and *No Trespassing* signs. (My pet peeve). Legally these are meaningless (but at least they look pretty!). Many beaches are privately owned (as is our beach), but the public is legally allowed to use ALL beaches per the Public Trust Doctrine. What you are not allowed to do is go from the beach up into people's private yards. The PTD is the reason that you are allowed to play fetch with your dog and do bong hits on Snoop Dog's private beach in Malibu. Do you see where I am going with this? Enjoy yourself but please be respectful; play no music, don't be noisy and leave no trash nor bodily discharges on or near the beach.