



A Perfect Day in Livermore: All the Country, Wine, and Cocktail Bars

By [Kristen Haney](#) Nov 13, 2018

Hidden on the outskirts of the East Bay and long known as cowboy country with killer wine (and not much else), Livermore has ripened into a day-trip destination worthy of a weekend jaunt.

Drive out for the city's signature outdoor adventures and farm-fresh eats—and yes, the wine—but stay for Livermore's hidden charms, including third-wave coffee, a burgeoning live-music scene, and a nightlife pop-up concept that you'd expect from the city...but never the suburbs.

Morning in Livermore: Hikes, Cowboy Gear, Comic Books + More



Breakfast + Coffee

To fill up without feeling weighed down, hit [The Press](#) (2470 First St., Ste. 110) for coffee swirled with made-in-house flavorings, plus seasonal menu favorites such as the Straus yogurt bowl with house-made granola, fresh fruit, coconut, and edible flowers, or the avocado and egg "toastini" on Acme bread. Prefer to live like the king? Opt for the Elvis version with peanut butter, honey, bacon, and banana. // For grab-and-go, [Casse-Croûte Bakery](#) (50 S. Livermore Ave.) doles out coffee and decadent French pastries baked with organic ingredients—the chocolate croissant makes for an ideal late-morning indulgence. // If you really want to throw caution to the wind, plunk down into one of the booths at [Denica's Real Food Kitchen](#) (2259 Las Positas Rd.) for a cookie-dough waffle, giant cinnamon roll, or overstuffed breakfast burrito.





Exercise Alfresco

Once you're properly fueled and caffeinated, explore the great outdoors at [Del Valle Regional Park](#) (7000 Del Valle Rd., \$6 vehicle entrance fee), a 10-mile drive south of town. Rent a kayak or paddleboard from the [Outdoor Sports Center](#) (weekends through October) to get out on the park's five-mile-long lake, or opt for an hourly bike or picnic game rental if you'd prefer to stay landlocked. The park also houses a number of hiking trails that rarely top out above 1,500 feet in elevation: The three-mile out-and-back East Shore Trail rewards with some nice views of the lake as it winds along a ridge from the Arroyo Staging Area, with plenty of opportunities to add on difficulty from one of the adjoining trails. // [Brushy Peak Regional Preserve](#) (Laughlin Dr.) also boasts plenty of dog- and family-friendly trails, with the roughly 4.5-mile Brushy Peak Loop to West Side Loop a local favorite for its views of the surrounding valley at the top. In spring, the hills are particularly verdant, making for good wildflower—and cow—spotting.

Pay Your Respects to a Lightbulb

Only in Livermore would a common household object warrant a visit, but it's not your ordinary light bulb the town has decided to revere. The [Centennial Bulb in Fire Station 6](#) (4550 East Avenue) is reportedly the world's longest running light bulb—with an entry in the Guinness Book of World Records to prove it—burning for more than 116 years and looked after by the Centennial Light Bulb Committee. Your level of access will depend on the good nature of the firemen on hand (make sure to stop by after 10am for your best shot), but you can usually still spy the bulb through the back window of the fire station.

Stroll and Shop Downtown

Livermore's stores run the gamut—from old-school western wear to comic books to wine—making downtown an ideal stop for window shopping and boutique browsing. For a taste of old school Livermore, swing into [Baughman's Western Outfitters](#) (2029 First St.) for all your cowboy needs, from an extensive selection of embroidered boots to classic Wranglers. // [B Inspired Designs](#) (2222 Second St., Ste. 2) specializes in "farmhouse-chic" homewares and design pieces, with an eye toward curating a selection dominated by local, organic, and environmentally friendly options. Reclaimed wood signage, restored rustic furniture, and smell-good essential oil room sprays are a few of the highlights. // Adjacent boutique [Rustic Beauty](#) (2222 Second St., Ste. 1) is the place to go for pieces you won't find in big-box stores or mega-retailers, with the thoughtfully curated selection of women's clothing and accessories ranging from cheeky slogan tees to boho dresses to flouncy palazzo pants. // While you'll find no shortage of wine throughout Livermore, [First Street Wine Company](#) (2211 First St.) is the stop not only for bottles of the fermented grape juice, but also meet-the-winemaker nights, thoughtful tasting



flights, and friendly staff that won't sneer when you attempt to pronounce "gewurztraminer." // Livermore has long had bragging rights to its own place for nerd culture worship (before it was cool) at [Fantasy Books and Games](#) (2247 First St.). In business for almost four decades and stuffed to the gills with comic books, card games, sports figurines, and collector items, the store also buys old comic books and games as it continues to beef up its collection of classics, meaning a quick stop in can reveal surprise scores.

A Racing and Tasting Afternoon in Livermore



A meal at The Restaurant at Wente Vineyards.

Indoor Thrills

Before you indulge in the valley's biggest draw (wine), get behind the wheel at [Umigo Indoor Kart Racing](#) (6538 Patterson Pass Rd, \$20/race with weekday specials and bulk pricing), which provides plenty of coaching—and encouragement—for newbies to the indoor track. Make sure you have closed-toe shoes, and Umigo will provide a racing suit, helmet, and neck brace, along with the indoor racing kart. After a five-minute intro video, you'll be unleashed on the track to battle against your best buds for time or position.



Burnt Ends or Bocce

Although [Sauced BBQ and Spirits](#) (2300 First St.) has since expanded to Petaluma, Sacramento, and Walnut Creek, the OG Livermore location for this down-home barbecue chain still retains its local feel. If the burnt ends—which frequently sell out—are available, nab them before they're gone as part of meat plate with your choice of sides, or try them atop the loaded sweet potato, which also comes doused in beans, bacon, sour cream, and cheese. Sauced also offers house-brewed beers, boozy lemonade, an extensive whiskey collection, plus live music every Saturday night. // For a meal with a little competitive edge, pair a classic lawn game with Italian at [Campo di Bocce](#) (175 E. Vineyard Ave.), where \$15 secures 90 minutes on one of eight indoor bocce courts. Pizza and calzones are perfect for splitting with a crowd, whereas the caprese salad, antipasto plate, and salmon carpaccio make for a light lunch.

Vino Around the Valley



It wouldn't be a visit to Livermore without wine tasting, and you'll find it easy to tailor your sipping experience to your preferences—but you can't miss the two biggies. For petit sirah, you can't beat Livermore stalwart [Concannon Vineyard](#) (4590 Tesla Rd.), credited with first bottling this grape in the 1960s, although the winery's influence on cabernet looms just as large—80 percent of all California cabernet sauvignon can be traced back to Concannon clones imported from Bordeaux in 1883. The winery also hosts frequent "sommimar" wine education events, if you're into learning more than just history. // [Wente Vineyards](#) (5565 Tesla Rd.) serves as a one-stop shop for an ideal outing in Livermore wine country. The grown-on-site vegetables and wine-raised cows feature heavily into The Restaurant at Wente Vineyards (5050 Arroyo Rd.), best experienced as part of the three-course wine and dinner experience at The Vineyard Table. In terms of wine tasting, sip within estate walls; embark on a behind-the-scenes walking and driving tour of the vineyards for an insider's look at harvest; or learn the art of wine pairing, identifying aromas, or blending your own wines at Wente's Winemakers Studio. The winery's summer concert series draws some of music's biggest names year after year—grab a bottle of Riva Ranch Chardonnay and prepare to rock out.

Other can't miss includes [Eckert Estate Winery](#) (5963 Graham St., Ste. D), which also houses a distillery that turns out killer small-batch spirits; [Nottingham Cellars](#) (2245 S. Vasco Rd.), which produces wines with three distinct focuses under three distinct labels, all of which you can sample at the tasting room; [Steven Kent Winery](#) (5443 Tesla Rd.), where Livermore-sourced cabs reign supreme; and [Murrieta's Well](#) (3005 Mines Rd.), a limited-production winery with scenic grounds and reservations-only tastings. // For a quaint way to experience the valley's breadth, book a guided tour on the open-air [Livermore Wine Trolley](#), which runs rain or shine. // For a more active approach, both [McGrail Vineyards](#) (5600 Greenville Rd., \$30) and [Retzlaff Vineyards](#) (1356 S. Livermore Ave., \$30) offer frequent yoga and wine-tasting events.



Surprising Sips

If wine isn't your thing, take a walk on the wild side with another beverage. Beer is booming in the valley, with [Altamont Beer Works](#) (2402 Research Dr.) and its signature IPAs; family-run [Eight Bridges Brewing](#) (332 Earhart Way) and its oft-changing European beer-inspired lineup; and innovative [Shadow Puppet Brewing Company](#) (4771 Arroyo Vista, Ste. B), where you'll often find unusual ingredients snuck into the suds. // [Luna Tea Co.](#) (21 S. Livermore Ave. Ste. 113), in Blacksmith Square, not only excels at tea lattes, souped-up cold brews, and hand-blended loose-leaf options (available in test tubes to take home), but also offers tea-infused cocktails, made with fermented spirits, that you can pair with a tarot reading on Wednesdays. // At [The Steam House Coffee & Kava Bar](#) (1935 Second Ave.), you'll not only find your typical lattes, but also CBD kombucha on draft, live music and meditation events, and tea made from kava, a plant purported to lower anxiety and aid with sleep.

Dinner, Entertainment, and Drinks in Livermore

Try a New Restaurant

It's sometimes hard to make a splash when there are Livermore dining stalwarts like the Restaurant at Wente and Posada to contend with, but [Range Life](#) (2160 Railroad Ave.) has been garnering buzz since it opened in April, bringing a combination of airy interior design, a seasonally and locally focused menu, and craft mixology to downtown. The oft-evolving menu—changed daily and uploaded to the restaurant's website—means you'll never have to order the same thing twice (sometimes even if you want to), with choices ranging from grass-fed sirloin steak with roasted mushrooms, to burrata and heirloom tomato salad, to a seasonal cobbler topped with fresh ice cream for dessert. The wine list veers international, but a few local wines are available by the bottle or glass, and the cocktail selection shares the same emphasis on fresh ingredients, with spices and fruit featuring heavily. The restaurant also serves brunch.

Get Your Music and Arts Fix

In addition to Wente's concerts, Livermore has a growing music and arts scene that makes it easy to stumble across live music and entertainment most days of the week. [Shadow Puppet Brewing Company](#) (4771 Arroyo Vista, Ste. B) frequently pairs live music with beer releases, plus hosts stand-up and magic show events. // Over in [Blacksmith Square](#), grab a pint from [Tap 25](#) (25 S. Livermore Ave.) or a glass of wine and a small plate from [Swirl on the Square](#) (21 S. Livermore Ave.) and listen to live music Fridays through Sundays. // For something less homey and more high brow, hit [Bankhead Theater](#) (2400 First St.), home to performances from local groups such as the Livermore Valley Opera and Valley Dance Theatre. Lest opera and dance aren't your thing, Bankhead also serves as the Tri-Valley stop for touring musical heavyweights ranging from OK Go to Lisa Loeb, so keep an eye on the calendar for the opportunity to see your favorite artist in an intimate setting.



Discover a Bar Within a Bar

If you're looking for a nightcap in Livermore, there's only one place to go: [The Last Word](#) (2470 First St.). When The Last Word opened in 2014 slinging speakeasy-style cocktails (ask for a lemon drop at your own risk), no one expected a bar in sleepy Livermore to garner national attention. Now, owners Rick and Theresa Dobbs are bucking expectations yet again by transforming their popular downtown hang into a new bar every six months, kicking off with the Cuban-inspired *Revolucion* at the Last Word this past August. Theresa transformed the interior and menu to give the gastropub a California-meets-Cuba feel, and Rick tackled the drinks menu, bringing a rum focus to the carefully crafted creations. The transportive atmosphere and libations go down especially smooth knowing its one of the few places you can grab a cocktail worth drinking until midnight on weekdays, and till 1am on Friday and Saturday. Go now for *Revolucion*, and plan a return visit in February, when the bar will transform yet again into something entirely new—and entirely unexpected in Livermore.