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Travel: Yadkin Valley – Take a trip to this Southern wine gem

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The vineyard has tours and tastings every half hour. Opened in 2000 by brothers Charlie and Ed Shelton, Shelton Vineyards occupies 400 acres of the Yadkin Valley on what was once, among other things, a dairy farm. It is now one of the largest family owned vineyards on the east coast and is home to a restaurant, winery, and outdoor concert series (Dove for Charlotte Magazine)

You don't have to venture too far from the South to end up in wine country.

By LaTria Garnigan >> Photography by Sam Dean Photography and Surry County Tourism

Just a quick one-hour flight or a serene five-hour drive will land you in the **Yadkin Valley** region of North Carolina — comprising the cities of Elkin, Dobson, Mount Airy and Pilot Mountain.



This region is a wine lover's dream and has been growing by leaps and bounds since Shelton Vineyards helped put the region on the map in the early 2000s. While you'll more than likely venture here for wine, you'll stay for the historical attractions and the many chances at outdoor adventures.

WINE NOT?

Jones von Drehle Winery

Jones von Drehle Winery has been steadily gaining ground and racking up awards since planting the first grapes in 2009. They produce about 3,000 to 5,000 cases of wine a year on the 30-acre property. Helmed by **Diana & Chuck Jones** and **Ronnie & Raymond von Drehle**, the winery offers a great selection of vino to taste and a real family atmosphere. I would recommend the

Dulcimer, which has a light strawberry and floral essence. It's sweet and carbonated and is available on tap at the winery. One of their more popular is probably the Rock & Rail, a full-bodied red with hints of dark cherry and would be great with a steak. Regular tastings are \$10 and include eight selections and a memento wine glass. For the reserve tasting, it is \$16 and features eight of the reserve and estate wines.

www.jonesvondrehle.com

JOLO Vineyard

While they have some amazing wine, their view is second to none. In my opinion, JOLO Vineyard has the most picturesque view of any winery or vineyard in the Yadkin Valley. What began as a single-family home has morphed into a bustling wine empire. The first vines were planted in 2010, with the first harvest in 2013. There are 12 acres of grapes — French and American hybrids — and the wines are made old world style, according to owner and winemaker **J.W. Ray**. The winery's 2015 Pilot Fog (the first dry red wine I've liked) won "Best In Show" in the 2016 Mid-Atlantic Southeastern Wine Competition and was instantly one of my favorites to taste, along with the 2014 and 2015 Crimson Creek — a rich medium-bodied wine with hints of cherry and mocha. Tastings are \$15 and include eight selections and your glass to take home.

www.jolovineyards.com

Shelton Vineyards

The grandfather of the Yadkin Valley wine region — Shelton Vineyards — is in a class all its own. The Shelton brothers, **Charlie** and **Ed**, have curated the largest privately-owned vineyard in North Carolina. Known for their successful business ventures, it was perhaps this foray into wine making that has topped the list. A whopping 136,000 vines produce grapes for their expansive selection of wine, which you can have with your dinner on the property's flagship restaurant Harvest Grill. You can also stay at the property-owned Hampton Inn & Suites and have a shuttle take you to the vineyard location. Their No. 1 seller is the light-bodied and tasty Yadkin Valley Riesling. They also produce some great tasting Chardonnay, Bin 17 and Estate. You can do a tasting for \$6 or you can choose the tasting and tour option for \$6.



www.sheltonvineyards.com

One more pour: *The above mentioned wineries and vineyards aren't the only game in town. There are more places to add to your wine itinerary — head to **Brushy Mountain Winery** for a \$7 tasting. The most notable wine there is the Booger Swamp White, a 2013 blend with hints of tropical fruit. Also head to newcomer **Herrera Vineyards** — the 42-acre property features a restaurant attached to its main building. Even with only being a year old, Herrera's 2014 Dry Riesling won "Best White" at the North Carolina State Fair. | brushymountainwine.com & herrervineyards.com*

DINING OUT

Hittin' the Sonker Trail

You may be asking yourself, ‘what is sonker?’ as did I. Besides being a deliciously sweet treat, I best describe it as Surry County’s version of cobbler. You can only find this dessert around these parts and no two are alike. Sonker is made with fruit and depending on the season, the ingredients can vary. **The Living Room** (www.thelivingroompm.com) has a refreshing pear version with ginger. Meanwhile, **Roxxi and Lulu’s Bakery** (roxxiandlulusbakery.webs.com) has more of traditional version made with berries.

Southern on Main

New to Surry County, **Southern on Main** takes traditional Southern fare and adds in a twist. Recommendations: the deviled eggs, fried okra, brussel sprouts with caramelized onions and bacon and the lump crab cake with red cabbage, apples and corn and black eyed pea relish. Small plates are available.

www.southernonmain.com

Harvest Grill

The best of fine dining can be found at **Harvest Grill**. From the white tablecloth service to the expansive wine selection — much thanks to its location on the property of Shelton Vineyards. Get dressed up (or not) in your nicest outfit and go for an elegant bite.

www.sheltonvineyards.com/harvest-grill

CULTURE & ACTIVITIES

Andy Griffith

Did you know that Andy Griffith was from the Yadkin Valley area? Neither did I. He was raised in Mount Airy (or Mayberry to some) to be exact. You can visit the Andy Griffith museum and see life-size statue (courtesy of TVLand) of Andy and Opie from the TV show. And for \$35 you can take a squad car tour of the town and learn all about Andy's life, see the home he grew up in and learn the history of the area. The tour lasts about 40 minutes and is a 7-mile trip.

www.visitmayberry.com

More to explore

There's so much more to the area also. You can learn all about the first set of Siamese Twins in the world, who eventually set up a home in the area, take a nice trip down the Yadkin River in a kayak and attend one of the live radio shows at the Earle Theatre, home to the 2nd longest running radio broadcast in the country.

yadkinvalleync.com

MORE INFORMATION



Food: the way to my soul