

MCVGA - Monterey Wine Country Signage Priorities & Branding

Visitors to Napa Valley are welcomed by iconic signage featuring a Robert Louis Stevenson quote... “and the wine is bottled poetry.” These signs not only announce to travelers that they have arrived in the Napa Valley Wine Region, but it also provides a backdrop for one of the most photographed wine locations in the world. It is time for Monterey Wine Country™ to have a similar distinction by increasing the signage on some of the highly traveled corridors of the county.

A thriving wine industry enhances the Salinas Valley's and Monterey County's economic vitality. A considerable amount of the winegrowing and winemaking exists in the economically disadvantaged rural regions of the county, so these areas have even more to gain from a viable and thriving wine industry. Currently, we are not maximizing the opportunity to brand and promote the wine region to over 15.5 million vehicles driving through the Highway 101 corridor in the Salinas Valley and over 10.5 million vehicles travel on the Highway 68 corridor between Salinas and Monterey annually¹. The increased recognition of Monterey Wine Country™ by the drivers and riders in these 26 million vehicles will build awareness of the Monterey Wine Country™ and Monterey Wine Trail, grow tourism in the region, increase wine and grape sales.

MAPS & SIGNAGE NOW

The MCVGA currently provides a tasting room map – both in print and online – including *all* of the tasting rooms and visitor-serving wineries in the county. These maps are distributed to hotels, tasting rooms, and tourism centers and are available free of charge upon request. Generally they are updated and reprinted twice a year or more often if need dictates. This map was designed with input from hospitality. Others are discouraged from producing separate maps to represent and protect a clear brand identity.

Currently, twenty directional signs point to tasting rooms throughout the Salinas Valley in the area of the Monterey Wine Trail. They are the familiar signposts with tasting room/winery directional arrows. There are also eight Monterey Wine Country™ murals on the Highway 101 corridor. These are visually complex, although appealing and lack the simplicity needed for clear messaging from a drive by market.

In 2018, the MCVGA Board recognized the need for additional signage to more deeply brand our region as a prominent wine region and created goals, brand image, and location priorities. The two goals of this effort are to:

1. Build awareness and create a more personal experience (including Instagram moments) of Monterey Wine Country™ and the Monterey Wine Trail.
2. Drive traffic to tasting rooms by showing the directions to tasting rooms.

HISTORY

In 2010 and 2011, recognizing the need to promote Monterey Wine Country™, the Monterey County Vintners & Growers Association (MCVGA) commissioned artist John Cerney and mural master Dong Sun Kim to paint eight 12-foot-tall murals of prominent winemakers and grape growers. Cerney created two, and Kim painted six of the eight murals. These murals are located on Highway 101 in locations between five miles south of San Ardo through Gonzales.

MCVGA also installed 20 directional signage to tasting room off of the River Road/Monterey Wine Trail around the same time. These signs are located on inlets off of 101 and on the trail itself. Because Chalone (Soledad near the Pinnacles), Scheid Vineyards (Greenfield), and others are not directly on the River Road

¹ Caltrans 2016 Traffic Volumes on California State Highways

Wine Trail, it is more broadly referred to as the Monterey Wine Trail. Monterey County fiscally supported improving and updating the Monterey Wine Trail directional signage several years ago.

SIGNS ROLES & PLACEMENT LOCATIONS

Additional signage will provide directional guidance for the Monterey Wine Trail tasting rooms. On a broader scale, signage will also brand the following:

- a. Monterey Wine Country™
- b. Distinct AVA's (see definition of AVA in #2 of signage locations)
- c. Distinct wineries/tasting rooms (winery's choice)
- d. Distinct vineyards (vineyard's choice)

The MCVGA Board created a list of priority locations identified for the various types of signage.

1. Signage at Key Entrances/Exits to County
 - a. Monterey Wine Country™
 - i. 101 S
 - ii. 101 N
 - iii. 1 N
 - iv. Rest Stops in South County (north & south) – this would include more information about the history and characteristics of the region, similar to the information now shared in the display at the Monterey Regional Airport
 - v. Hwy 68 near Monterey Regional Airport – both ways
2. AVA Signs

Specific locations that are representative of each AVA will be identified. AVA stands for American Viticulture Areas. These are federally designated wine-growing regions that have unique terroir (or natural characteristics). There are nine AVAs within the 45,000 plus cultivated wine grape acres of Monterey County. The AVA's are Arroyo Seco, Carmel Valley, Chalone, Hames Valley, Monterey, San Antonio Valley, San Bernabe, San Lucas. and the Santa Lucia Highlands. (The Monterey AVA encompasses five other AVA's- Arroyo Seco, Hames Valley, San Bernabe, San Lucas. and Santa Lucia Highlands.)
3. Monterey Wine Trail Tasting Room Signs Directional Signs

Twenty of these signs are already on the wine trail. In addition to this, we need the following:

 - a. Off of 101
 - i. San Antonio Valley
 1. Jolon & 101 King City
 2. Jolon & 101 Bradley (watch out for cows)
 - ii. Scheid's winery location in Greenfield
 - iii. Soledad – Arroyo Seco
 - iv. Gonzales
 - b. Hwy 68 near River Road (both directions)
 - c. Every tasting room should also include their signpost pointing to other tasting rooms
4. Vineyard Signs:
 - a. Vineyard owners would decide if they want their vineyard to have a sign
5. Winery Signs

- a. Winery owners would determine if they wish their winery to have a sign. (Some do not because they are not open to the public.)

Branding

The signage will be brand consistent – with the same look, feel, and aligned messaging. It will be simple, dynamic, and have limited visuals. The size of the letters will be optimized using experts' recommendations (in general, it's 1 inch for every 40 feet of visibility; at least 6 inches in height). Sign verbiage will include Monterey Wine Country™ and as appropriate, the AVA and Vineyard/Winery/Tasting Room name.

MOVING FORWARD

This comprehensive Monterey Wine Country™ and Monterey Wine Trail signage program is an ambitious and essential project. We have and will continue to partner with the Monterey County Convention and Visitor Bureau, the County of Monterey, the cities of the Salinas Valley, and other critical stakeholders. The wine industry welcomes suggestions from the broader community on how best to brand our region.

The pathway to achieving this project includes the following overarching steps.

1. LOCATIONS: ID the ideal locations for signs (JAN - MAR 2020)
 - a. We are scheduling a Salinas Valley tour with county staff, Salinas and South County City Managers, MCCVB representatives, and any else who wants to join us.
2. SIGN PARAMETERS: Work with sign experts to finalize the design, determine size based on location, and develop approximate costs - utilizing preliminary design and verbiage concepts featured in the presentation. (MAR-APRIL 2020)
3. BUDGET: Create and continue to refine the budget. (ongoing) (MAR-APRIL 2020)
4. PERMISSION: Gain permission from property owners. (FEB - APR 2020)?
5. APPLICATION: Complete one application for the entire project (Monterey Wine Country™ signage) and submit to RMA. (MAY-JUN 2020)?
6. FUNDING: Work with County, CVB, members, and partners to find monies to fund signage. (JAN - JULY 2020)