

Wine Rail Excursion blends wine with trains

Riders get different view of county from train



Heather Young/VINO

Central Coast Railroad Festival Director Curtis Reinhardt and excursion hostess Maureen Jones sit in the observation car on the Coast Starlight train from San Luis Obispo to Paso Robles.

Heather Young
VINO

The Central Coast Railroad Festival offers monthly Wine Rail Excursions, which bring together a ride on the railroad with visits to wineries that have a train theme or are located near the train station.

An excursion in April began at 11:30 a.m. in Anglim Winery at the Paso Robles Amtrak station.

After tasting wine and talking to the winemaker, 26 participants boarded a Ride-

On bus driven by Raymond Andrade.

From Paso Robles the bus headed to Pomar Junction Winery east of Templeton for wine tasting and lunch.

Pomar Junction owner Dana Merrill gave the participants a brief tour of the winery and its history. The winery has a boxcar and caboose just below the tasting room, next to unused train tracks and crossing lights.

Merrill poured wine for those tasting wine and answered questions about the wine and his winery.

From Pomar, participants returned to

the bus for a ride to the San Luis Obispo Amtrak station. In San Luis Obispo, riders boarded the 3:33 p.m. train and got a different look of the route from San Luis Obispo to Paso Robles.

Reinhardt said that the excursions were first offered once a year on National Train Day, May 12, but had become so popular that they began offering them once a month in December 2011.

"We starting to do extra trips," Reinhardt said. "I wanted to blend both of the concepts together. A lot of people have wine tours."



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Anglim Winery winemaker Steve Anglim pours a glass of wine for Mary Schrader of San Luis Obispo.



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Wine Rail Excursion attendees sit in the observation car and take in the scenery between San Luis Obispo and Cuesta Grade.



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Nancy Peyton of Atascadero and Steve Meixner of Paso Robles relax in the observation car of the Coast Starlight train.



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Central Coast Railroad Festival Director Curtis Reinhardt, right, talks to, from left, Irene and Jerry Calvillo and Linda and Michael Banales, all of Bakersfield, at Pomar Junction Winery.

He said that the excursions have been pretty easy to sell, even without a lot of publicity.

Many of those on the trip said they found out about it online — through Facebook or a tourism website — heard about it through a friend or relative or on the radio.

Rachel Enevoldsen of Ventura said she was camping in Morro Bay and went to the Paso Robles visitors website and found out about the excursion that way.

"I'm really happy this event happens," Enevoldsen said.

Reinhardt said that those that go on the

excursions usually do it because they're train people or wine people or are celebrating something, such as a birthday or anniversary.

A group of six women from the Atascadero area went on the excursion to celebrate one woman's 60th birthday.

"What a great way to spend a Sunday afternoon," said Nancy Peyton of Atascadero.

The excursions alternate between San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles. The ones that start in Paso Robles will take the train from San Luis Obispo to Paso Robles and those that begin in San Luis Obispo will take the

train from Paso Robles to San Luis Obispo. Because of the train schedule, starting times will vary.

The general adult cost is between \$49 and \$55; for children the cost is \$39. The regular cost of an adult to ride the train between Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo is \$14.

For more information, call 805-773-4173. To make reservations, go to www.ccrf.com.

To get on the Railroad Festival's newsletter mailing list, sign up on the website.