

Spotlight on Sonoma Parks: Bartholomew Park



SLIDE 1 OF 3
Tables in Antonia's Garden picnic grove in Bartholomew Park, Sonoma. (Photo by Julie Vader/special to the Index-Tribune)

JULIE VADER
SPECIAL TO THE INDEX-TRIBUNE
June 7, 2021, 5:00PM | Updated 7 hours ago

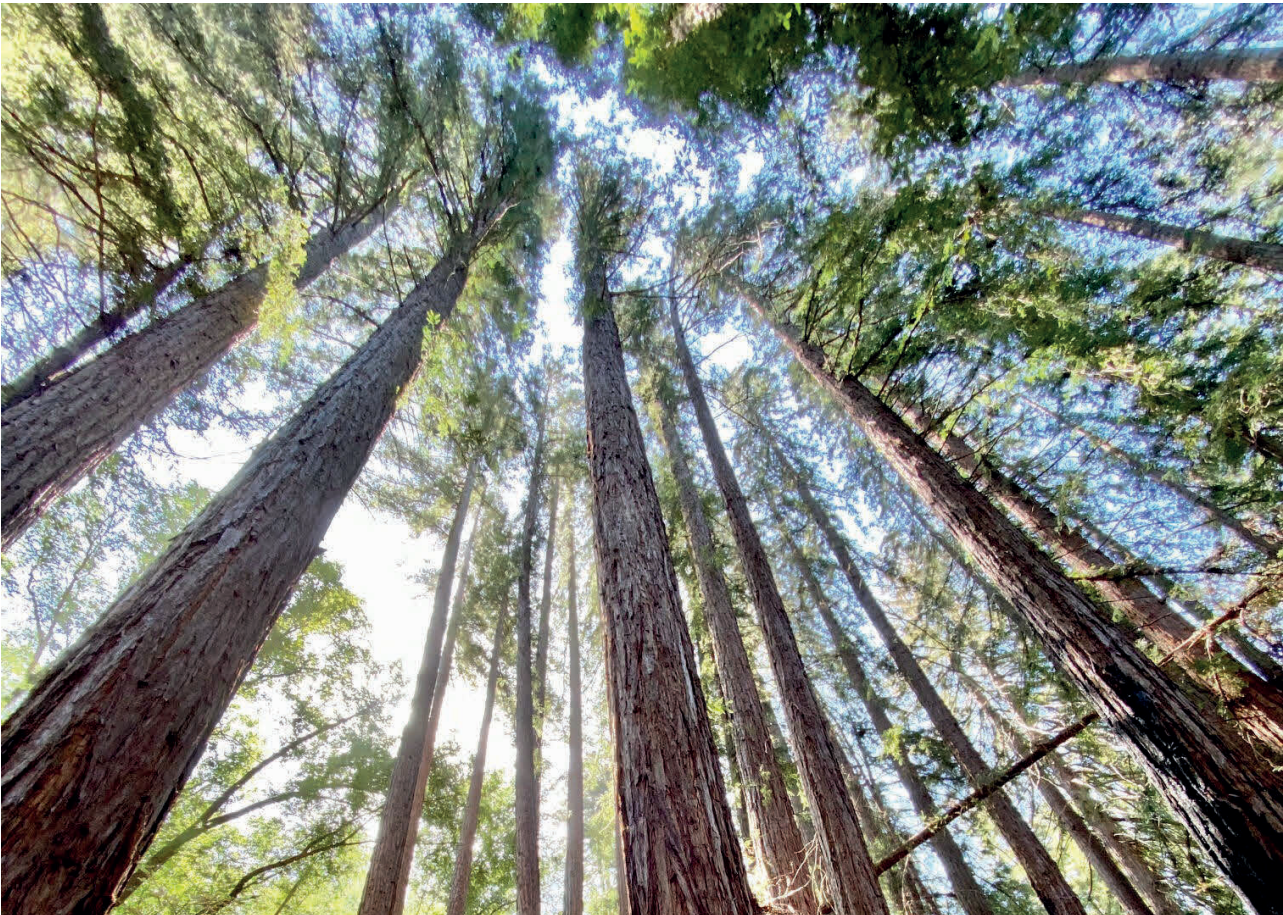


In this series, the Index-Tribune guides readers through every regional, county and city park in Sonoma Valley.

Bartholomew Park is a private park, which makes it somewhat different from county, state or city-owned properties. For one, the park keeps bankers hours, opening at 10 a.m. and not admitting anyone after 4:30 p.m. For another, most public parks forbid alcohol. But Bart Park not only allows it — signs put up by the foundation that runs the place urge you to buy a bottle right there.

Those indifferent to wine will also find the park worth their time, especially trekking enthusiasts. The trails are for hikers (and leashed dogs) only. A trailhead sign warning “CAUTION! Hiking Trails are Challenging” is understated — the paths are not for the faint of foot. Steep climbs and rocky surfaces lead to nice views, though, and downhill bits lead to a creek crossing in a lovely redwood grove. The canyon area with the hiking trails was thoroughly toasted in Sonoma’s 2017 wildfire, and charred tree bark and other marks of the fire will no doubt be visible for decades. But nature rebounded strongly and the paths are lined with robustly blooming California lilacs, wildflowers and resilient oaks.

The park is home to the elegant Haraszthy Villa, a reproduction of an 1861 estate destroyed by fire and resurrected in 1988, and is worth a look. You can also take a horse for a spin through the vineyards with Sonoma Valley Trail Rides, or simply stroll around the manicured lawns and admire some large and unusual trees, or visit the Bartholomew Estate Winery and sample a crisp rosé in a beautiful outdoor setting. The winery also has indoor exhibit space for fresh art and historical artifacts.



Bartholomew Park

- Highlight:** Superb picnic grounds
- Drawback:** Hiking trails are not easy-peasy
- Reason to visit:** Wine consumption is not only allowed, it’s encouraged
- Admission:** Free
- Open:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. No admission after 4:30 p.m.
- Dogs:** Allowed on leash
- Address:** 1695 Castle Road in Sonoma



Redwood grove on hiking trails at Bartholomew Park. Bark shows charring from 2017 wildfires. (Photo by Julie Vader/special to the Index-Tribune)

Clearly, though, the park's highest and best calling is the gorgeous picnic grounds — Antonia's Garden — with its tables under the oaks and views of vineyards, ponds and the Valley beyond. One could also have a really old-fashioned picnic and spread out a blanket on the lawn instead. As a bonus the park's bathrooms are really quite nice (something that can't be said for all local parks).

Bartholomew Park is peak Sonoma — wine and history and nature and fires and exertion and relaxation all in one, and well worth a special trip.