

# ESCAPEES

*Sharing the RV Lifestyle*

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## A Unique Way to Enjoy the RV Lifestyle

Bob's motorhome is nestled among the vines at Longsword Winery in southern Oregon's Applegate Valley.

Photo by Bob Rogers #61636

## Harvest Hosts

By Bob Rogers #61636

Great deals are hard to come by. We've all learned that the hard way. It sounds good until you read the fine print or, oops, don't.

One ideal-sounding deal for RVers that more than lives up to its billing is the Harvest Hosts program. For only a \$30 annual membership, you can dry-camp at hundreds of wineries and farms across North America.

For many RVers, stopping to stock up at farmers' markets has become a habit that is both practical, economical and entertaining.

With a Harvest Host membership, you can go directly to the source, create a gourmet meal from your discoveries and sleep peacefully in the quiet, dark countryside.

A few decades ago, in the heady early days of the Oregon wine industry, my weekends were often spent making the rounds of the few wineries in the Yamhill and Willamette Valleys, learning about wine and enjoying the camaraderie of a small but growing

group of young winemakers with big dreams. I admired their energy and optimism, enjoyed their company and their brash new wines.

When my wife, Claire, mentioned we might consider joining Harvest Hosts, based on their marketplace ad in *Escapees* magazine, I immediately recalculated our route to Alaska to include western Oregon and as many wineries as we had time for.

Most of the original wineries are still going strong, but there is a new generation of small wineries emerging, with new ideas and newly bold and creative wines.

We found several good candidates on the Harvest Host list and went exploring, having a delightful time.

### Longsword Winery Applegate Valley

Our first new discovery was the Longsword Winery in the Applegate Valley of southern Oregon. Longsword is a small family-run operation with excellent wines and several significant awards.

We tasted a variety of their wines and bought their best, more pricey than usual for us, as a gift for special friends. So, our free night of camping cost us \$30. For that \$30, we got the excellent wine and a personal history of the winery from the weed whacker-wielding owner/winemaker.

We had a lovely sunset, quiet night and brooding but beautiful sunrise.



We mentioned that we liked to bicycle, and our gregarious pourer suggested we take the following day to ride the quiet roads of the Applegate Valley and stay a second night if we wished. We enjoyed a 44-mile ride to a lake at the headwaters of the Applegate River and a surprise discovery of a restored covered bridge. If memory serves me, we bought another bottle of wine for our second dinner and enjoyed another beautiful evening.

### **Emerson Winery Near Monmouth/Salem**

We made a special Harvest Hosts find further north in Oregon. Emerson Winery is located in a bucolic setting in the foothills of the Coast Range near Monmouth, Oregon, not far from Salem.

We parked with spectacular views of their 25 acres of grapes and beautiful, mature oak forest. We were also treated to a tasting like I remember from so many years ago, attentive and informative, friendly, with no pressure to buy.

Tom Johns treated us to a barrel tasting of Brother Red, a big, mouthy but complex red, slated for a fall release. It was so good in the barrel that we immediately planned on stopping southbound to see how it would do in the bottle.

We asked about bicycle routes in the area, and Tom helped us plan another wonderful day of hilly and beautiful riding, including, would you believe it, a covered bridge that we ducked into when a spring shower blew in from the coast. Another memorable experience we would not have discovered without Harvest Hosts.

We were inaugural year members of Harvest Hosts in 2010, and our only criticism was a smallish number of hosts, though we more than got our money's worth. With 263 (and counting) host sites in the lower 48, Alaska and Baja as of spring 2011,

that is no longer a concern. Membership includes a downloadable Hosts directory; maps of the Hosts locations with GPS coordinates; a forum to add your photos, reviews and comments about your travels and Hosts visits; and updates of new Hosts.

Food tourism is growing in popularity, and Harvest Hosts is filling a niche for the RV community. There is nothing quite like finding a great bottle of wine, fresh vegetables or fruit, boutique cheeses, even lavender,

right outside your RV door. As sunset washes the crops with warm light and a small herd of deer grazes past your rig, you uncork that wine and offer a toast:

"To the RV lifestyle and a new way to enjoy it." 🍷

Contact Harvest Hosts by calling 928-277-1661 or visit [www.HarvestHosts.com](http://www.HarvestHosts.com). When in the Oregon area, you can also make Timber Valley SKP Co-Op in Sutherlin, Oregon, your home base and discover other wineries and many fun and exciting places to visit.



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