

A New Beginning

Wandering through California wine country in the Genesis G80 Sport



California Route 128 is one of wine country's main arteries, passing wineries big and small on its way from the north part of Napa Valley through Sonoma, all the way to the Pacific coast. The road, which twists along the Russian River for much of its length, is also the perfect place to test the 2018 Genesis G80 Sport.

Korean automaker Hyundai launched Genesis as a luxury brand in 2015, and the G80 Sport is one of the marque's first models (though, in truth, the G80 is simply a derivation of Hyundai's existing Genesis luxury sedan). As such, it's a transitional car, a placeholder until Genesis debuts the fresh, original designs which will define its future.

That doesn't make it any less fun to drive, though. Propelled by a 265-horsepower twin-turbo V6, the Sport version of the G80—available in rear- and all-wheel-drive—is a comfortable, swift sedan that chews up the asphalt far quicker than the leisurely wine tasters we keep passing in the Alexander Valley probably care for. When we stop in Healdsburg, it's less to take a break from driving

A Genesis G80 Sport on the California coast

than to admire the dark chrome front grille, honeycomb air intake, and copper accents that distinguish the Sport from the other G80 models. While the interior styling is much the same as the previous generation Genesis, Hyundai has added carbon fiber trim and contrast stitching. The sport bucket

seats enhance our comfort all day, with heat for the foggy morning and ventilation for the sunny afternoon.

On the whole, although it's sportier than its stablemates, the G80 Sport remains most adept at luxurious cruising—the perfect driving mode for a day in wine country.

The Essentials

The Car
Genesis G80 Sport, \$55,250

The Hotel
• Located on the north side of St. Helena, **Las Alcobas Napa Valley** features a beautifully renovated 1905 Victorian mansion surrounded by 68 modern accommodations styled by design firm Yabu Pushelberg. The best part? Roughly half the rooms overlook the Beringer Estate vineyards next door. Be sure to book a reservation at the on-site restaurant, Acacia House, from *Top Chef Masters* winner Chris Cosentino. lasalcobasnapavalley.com

The Winery
• On the site of the original Alexander Valley general store in Healdsburg, **Soda Rock Winery** is a historic landmark that dates to 1869, and has been a site for winemaking since 1880. In the early 2000s, the property was renovated, using largely green and recycled materials, and today Soda Rock focuses on Bordeaux varietals, especially merlot, malbec, and cabernet sauvignon. You can't miss it as you're driving on 128—just look for the 32-foot-wide, 20-foot-tall steel boar sculpture, Lord Snort. sodarockwinery.com

The Accessory
• Preserve the natural taste of your Napa and Sonoma wines with the **Üllo Wine Purifier**. This little gadget filters out sulfites and aerates your wine, breathing life into reds and maintaining the balance of whites. ullowine.com

