



Introducing the hidden gems and happening hamlets rising to prominence like that ol' water tower on the horizon. From favorites blessed with a double scoop of Main Street momentum to lesser-known towns undergoing sidewalk-to-steeple revitalizations, you'll find a host of places where you can slow your pace. Plus: More ways to embrace the charms of little-town living

PRODUCED BY *Leigh Crandall*  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY *Jill DeHaan*

### General Stores Worth a Stop

Step back to simpler times at these delightfully old-fashioned small-town emporiums.



#### Old Village Mercantile

You'll find 600 varieties of old-fashioned candy and 24 flavors of fudge at this circa-1909 Caledonia, MO, shop.



#### F.H. Gillingham & Sons

Family owned and operated since 1886, this Woodstock, VT, standby stocks its shelves with local fare like cheese and maple syrup.



#### The Floyd Country Store

Browse local crafts, sip a fountain-poured root beer float, then dance to live music at this Floyd, VA, shop's Friday Night Jamboree.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) DAVID HILLEGAS; COURTESY OF LOADED FOR BEAR (3).



**White's Mercantile**  
The town's old service station now houses this modern general store owned by CL contributor Holly Williams.

**Wilson Cafe**  
Chef Roberto Barth helms the kitchen at Wilson Cafe, where regional staples like fried catfish and shrimp and grits are on the menu.



### Wilson, AR POPULATION: 1,013

**MOTTO:** "Small town, big ambitions"

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Everyone loves a comeback, and Wilson's is one for the ages. Founded in 1886 as a hub for timber and cotton production, the town fell into

disrepair in the 1950s as agricultural work declined and residents moved elsewhere. Then, in 2010, the Lawrence Group acquired it as part of a larger land purchase. "It was an opportunity to not only restore Wilson to its former glory, but make it a hub of food and culture in the Delta while staying true to its roots," says Norbert Mede, who heads up the town's development. The past few years have seen a renovation of the square's Tudor

Revival buildings, now home to stylish shops like White's Mercantile, Southern restaurant Wilson Cafe, and the Hampson Archeological Museum.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** This month, Wilson will host its first competition for aspiring Arkansas chefs. Slated for summer: a classic car rally and a live music series. Spa in the Delta recently opened its doors downtown, and a new 16-room boutique hotel on the town square is also in the works.

#### Word of Mouth

"I'd drive 100 miles for the collard greens and buttermilk pie at Wilson Cafe. Luckily, it's just a few steps away on the square."

—Holly Williams,  
owner of White's  
Mercantile

#### The Grange at Wilson Gardens

Wilson's agricultural and culinary venue hosts a weekly farmers' market, wine tastings, and more.



**The Wilsonian**  
The design of the quarterly town newsletter was inspired by a vintage local yearbook. Free copies are available in shops on the town square.





## Joseph, OR

POPULATION: 1,200

**NAMED FOR:** Chief Joseph, the 19th-century leader of the Niimípuu (Nez Perce) tribe

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Joseph sits in northeast Oregon's Wallowa County, renowned for both its natural beauty and remoteness (there are no stoplights, and it's a four-hour drive to Boise, Idaho, the closest big city). While Joseph may be best known for its community of bronze artists, summer rodeo, and the Wallowa Lake Tramway (among the steepest on the continent, which takes riders to the top of Mt. Howard), it's also attracting a growing group of entrepreneurs. "I fell for the landscape and wanted to figure out a way to make my home here," says Greg Hennes, founder of the Prairie Mountain Folk School as well as the design-forward Jennings Hotel and artist residency. Nearby, Arrowhead Chocolates serves small-batch sweets like dark chocolate truffles made with award-winning blended whiskey from Stein Distillery, a short stroll away. Main Street newcomers include the Gold Room, a spot for wood-fired pizzas and cocktails from former Portland chefs Ross Effinger and JoMarie Pitino.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** Starting in April, artists can apply to the 39th Annual Wallowa Valley Festival of the Arts planned for September.



**Chief Joseph Days**  
This year marks the 75th anniversary of the summer rodeo, which kicks off with a horse parade down Main Street.



**The Jennings Hotel**  
Owner Greg Hennes worked with a different designer for each of the rooms in his boutique sleep on Joseph's Main Street.



### Word of Mouth

"Head to the Joseph Fly Shoppe for gear and info on Wallowa's world-class fishing."

—Tyler Hays, owner of M. Crow and BDDW



**Prairie Mountain Folk School**  
Students show off their hat-making efforts at this school for artisan crafts.



**Wallowa Lake**  
Wallowa County is home to the lakes, mountains, and prairies of the Eagle Cap Wilderness.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) GREG HENNES (3); COURTESY OF JENNIFER PIPER/WALLOWA COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE; M. CROW, COURTESY OF M. CROW.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) MOLLY WANTLAND; COURTESY OF CHRISTINE MARIE BAILEY/KINDRED FARM; ALYSSA ROSENHECK; COURTESY OF LITTLE NEIGHBORS.

## Papers with Personality

Read all about it!  
Here, a few very memorable monikers of long-running local newspapers

### THE DeQueen BEE

*De Queen, AR*  
Arkansas's *De Queen Bee* has published a weekly edition since 1897. For the latest community news, consult their "What's the Buzz?" section.

### The IRREGULAR

*Kingfield, ME*  
Serving the western mountains of Maine, the paper's name stems from the irregular publishing schedule when it first appeared in 1968. It's now bimonthly.

### THE NOME Nugget

*Nome, AK*  
This award-winning independent weekly is Alaska's oldest paper, first appearing in 1897. It still sells for just 50 cents.



**Hattie Jane's Creamery**  
This small-batch ice-cream shop serves up seasonal scoops at Public Square.



**Kindred Farm**  
The Bailey family hosts dinners at their 17-acre farm and sells food and flowers from their farm store.



### Word of Mouth

"Start with coffee at Muletown Coffee Roasters at Public Square, then go to Marcy Jo's for the amazing cinnamon rolls."

—Susan Leach, co-owner of Needle & Grain



**Little Neighbors**  
Newly opened in a building from the 1800s, this shop carries kid essentials, books, and toys.



**Two Lanes Guesthouse**  
Mike Wolfe's Airbnb sits above his bike shop, Trek, and looks out to the Maury County Courthouse.



## Columbia, TN

POPULATION: 40,000

**NICKNAMES:** Mule Town and Dimple of the Universe

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Columbia natives Susan and Bryson Leach hadn't expected to move back to their hometown, but when they decided to buy a house and open their homewares shop Needle & Grain, "we realized

Columbia was everything we wanted," says Bryson. "It's very affordable and has lots going on culturally, plus a revitalized downtown." Small businesses surround Public Square, including Bleu 32 Vintage Marketplace, Duck River Books, and Trek Bicycle Shop, co-owned by *American Pickers*'s Mike Wolfe and housed in a circa-1857 building. "Columbia is focused on preserving its architecture and history, while at the same time supporting new businesses,"

Mike says. A vibrant Arts District, greenspaces like Yanahli Park along the Duck River, and annual festivals, including Mule Day (which celebrates the town's history as a mule-trading center), add to the appeal. Sheryl Crow even owns property around town.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** Mike's next project is transforming a 1947 Chevy dealership in the Motor Alley District downtown into retail space. Music venue Mule-house plans to open this spring.



## More to See Around Wallowa

### BOUTIQUES

Shop for handmade ceramics, clothing, and more at M. Crow, furniture designer Tyler Hays's mercantile in historic Lostine.

### BACKCOUNTRY

Hit the trails on horseback with Del Sol Wilderness Adventures in Wallowa, or take in the countryside from a seat aboard the Eagle Cap Excursion Train in Elgin.

### BARNs

Love a barn and an idyllic country backdrop? Wallowa County has *lots* of both. Visit [traveloregon.com](http://traveloregon.com) for a self-guided tour and map to 31 photogenic barns.



» **Windmill Island Gardens**  
Springtime sees more than 100,000 blooms popping up across this garden's 36 acres.



⬆ **Tulip Time**  
Holland's Veldheer Tulip Gardens has more than 5 million flowers blooming each year.



» **DeZwaan Windmill**  
Tour five stories of Holland's iconic windmill, the only authentically Dutch one operating in the U.S.



## Holland, MI

POPULATION: 34,000

**NICKNAME:** Tulip City

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Founded by Dutch settlers in 1847, this town along Lake Macatawa celebrates its heritage with attractions typical of the Netherlands. There's Windmill

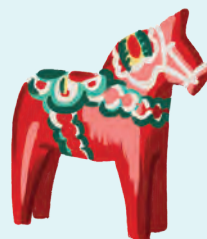
Island Gardens, Nelis' Dutch Village filled with fun rides for kids, and, most famously, the annual Tulip Time Festival in early May, when Holland is awash with millions of blooms. May also sees the long-running Fiesta, a celebration of West Michigan's Latino culture and community. Stroll the downtown shopping district for a mix of longtime, family-run businesses rooted in the town's Dutch heritage, like DeBoer's Bakery (try the *saucijzen-*

*broodjes*, Dutch pigs in a blanket) and newer offerings like garden and home-goods shop Gezellig. Holland is also on the water, so there's beach time, too, at spots like Holland Beach State Park, home to the iconic Big Red Lighthouse.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** This year's Tulip Time Festival will include a new immersion garden in Dunton Park with raised tulip beds that make it so visitors feel surrounded by bright blooms. (Calling all Instagrammers!)

## More Spots with a Far-Flung Feel

Enjoy European flavor without the airfare.



### Lindsborg, KS

Nicknamed "Little Sweden USA," this town's Scandinavian roots run deep. June's Midsummer's Festival features Swedish food, music, and dancing around the Midsummer Pole.



### Leavenworth, WA

This town in the Cascade Range is styled after a Bavarian village. Like Munich, Leavenworth throws a grand Oktoberfest each fall; this year marks its 25th anniversary. *Prost!*



### New Glarus, WI

Visitors can follow the New Glarus Cow Parade map to find all 16 of the hand-painted, Zurich-made cow statues stationed at businesses around "America's Little Switzerland."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) DOMINIQUE TOL; COURTESY OF FERRIS COFFEE & NUT CO.; COURTESY OF EMILY BRANCA/HOLLAND CVB; COURTESY OF HIGH HAMPTON.

» **The Great Outdoors**  
Visit Highland Hiker on Main Street for gear and info about exploring the trails of Nantahala National Forest.



⬆ **The Ruffed Grouse Tavern**  
Sit down for a meal or a well-mixed cocktail at this recently opened restaurant at Highlander Mountain House.



⬆ **Rosebay Cottage**  
Antiques-lovers will want to set aside time for hunting the well-curated shops.



« **Old Edwards Inn and Spa**  
This Relais & Châteaux property is a favorite base for exploring town and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

## Highlands, NC

POPULATION: 982

**MOTTO:** "The Height of Happiness"

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Highlands has long been a favorite getaway for city folks in the South. "But there have been more and more young families moving here to live full time, too," says Margaret Shutze, who moved with her own family in 2019 to create Flat Mountain Farm, a workshop and events venue. "It's really become a year-round town," adds Jason Reeves, owner of the new Highlander Mountain House hotel and the Ruffed Grouse Tavern. "Highlanders are a dynamic bunch who care about Southern hospitality, and they've been very welcoming." Despite changes, beloved parts of Highlands (like its many antiques shops) remain the same. There's a vibrant arts community nurtured via local institutions like the Bascom visual arts center, as well as outdoor adventure aplenty in the Blue Ridge Mountains. "The town really is idyllic, like a throwback to a simpler time," Jason adds.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** In April, Highlands hosts its first-ever Bear Shadow Music Festival with live outdoor performances of folk, blues, and bluegrass.

## <<<< Meanwhile Up the Road >>>>

### CHECK OUT CASHIERS, NC (POPULATION: 137)

Cashiers is the subject of buzz now that the team behind Tennessee's famed Blackberry Farm has helped make over High Hampton, a beloved getaway for nearly a century. The retreat opens its doors this month with renovated guest rooms, plus new cottages, dining options, and a spa. A swimming pool overlooking 35-acre Hampton Lake and activities like kayaking and a kid's camp make it a fit for visitors of all ages.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) DOMINIQUE TOL; COURTESY OF FERRIS COFFEE & NUT CO.; COURTESY OF EMILY BRANCA/HOLLAND CVB; COURTESY OF HIGH HAMPTON.





Honesdale, PA

POPULATION: 4,280

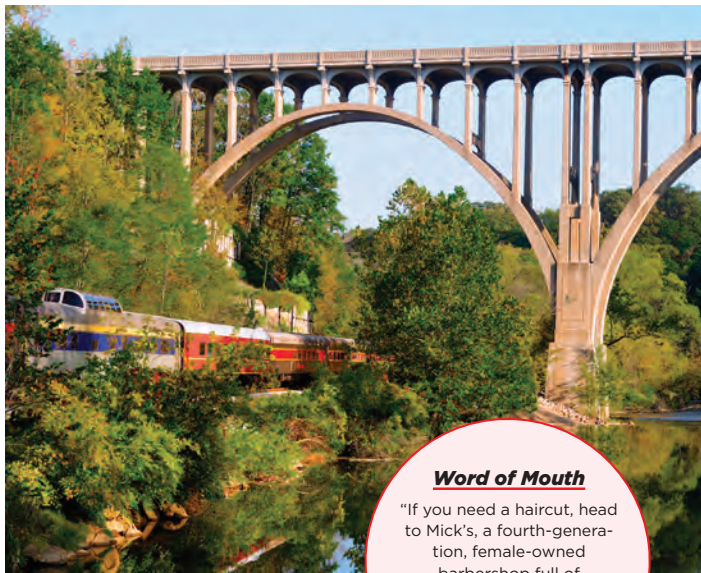
**MOTTO:** “A great place to visit, a better place to live”

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** It’s easy to make the case for Honesdale’s charm. The town has been the headquarters for children’s magazine *Highlights* since 1946, and its quaint streets inspired the Christmas carol “Winter Wonderland.” But there’s plenty to sing about these days, too, with a new generation starting businesses here and around the

Poconos. “Honesdale is progressive, but it maintains a slower pace and has a tight-knit community that wraps you up like a warm hug,” says Allaina Propst, owner of Here & Now Brewing Co., which she opened in 2017. “Young entrepreneurs are taking notice.” Bean-to-bar chocolate maker and coffee roaster Moka Origins also opened that year in a repurposed dairy barn, where they offer free tours and tastings alongside education about ethical production.

“Honesdale businesses are focusing on small volume, high quality,” says cofounder Jeff Abella. Caleb and Alex Johnson, who left the Philadelphia restaurant scene to start their farm-to-table restaurant Native on Honesdale’s Main Street, agree. “In Honesdale, people just look out for one another,” says Alex.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** An extensive new trail system is in the works along the Lackawaxen River.



**Word of Mouth**

“If you need a haircut, head to Mick’s, a fourth-generation, female-owned barbershop full of old-school charm.”

—Caleb and Alex Johnson, owners of restaurant Native



**Moka Origins**

Jeff Abella and Ishan Tigunait headquartered their chocolate and coffee company on the grounds of the Himalayan Institute, a yoga and meditation retreat.



**Stourbridge Line**

This historic railroad offers rides along the Lackawaxen River Valley in restored 1920s train coaches.



**Maude Alley**

Just off Main Street, Maude Alley features gift shops like Olivia Santo’s Gather, which sells home goods and clothing.



**Main Street**

Honesdale’s commercial strip is lined with historic buildings, many dating back to the 1800s.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) KENNETH SPONSLER/DEAMTIME.COM; NATALIE CHITWOOD; JEFFREY ISAAC GREENBERG/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF DJ PIERCE/MOKA ORIGINS; JIM THORPE LANDSCAPE, ANDREW F. KAZMIERSKI/GETTY IMAGES.

**Mottos That’ll Make You Want to Move**

These slogans make quite a first impression.

THE  
Sweetest  
place  
ON  
EARTH

HERSHEY, Pennsylvania

Where  
the ‘ODDS’  
ARE  
WITH  
YOU

PECULIAR, Missouri

857  
FRIENDLY • PEOPLE  
AND  
ONE OLD  
GRUMP

READLYN, Iowa

The  
TOWN  
without  
a  
FROWN

HAPPY, Texas

PEARL’S DINER; CEDRIC ANGELES; DOWNTOWN SCENIC; LAUREL MERCANTILE; AND PORTRAIT; COURTESY OF BROOKE DAVIS/LAUREL MERCANTILE CO.

**Word of Mouth**

“Go for a chili dog, fries, and a shake from PDI’s [Phillips Drive-In]. It’s a small place, but the food packs a huge wallop!”

—Mayor Johnny Magee



**Downtown Laurel**

Once empty, storefronts are now home to busy shops and restaurants.



**Laurel Mercantile**

The town’s general store sells American-made home goods and clothes.



**Pearl’s Diner**

Opened in 2017, Pearl Campbell’s popular restaurant serves up comfort-food favorites like fried chicken.



**Ben and Erin Napier**

For a town primer, tune in to HGTV’s *Home Town* starring these friendly Laurel locals.



Laurel, MS

POPULATION: 18,500

**NICKNAME:** The City Beautiful

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** It’s near impossible not to fall for the oak-lined streets of this south Mississippi hamlet, the setting for HGTV’s *Home Town*. Now in its fifth season, the show stars

Laurel locals Erin and Ben Napier, who have helped revitalize the town’s homes and businesses. “When we moved back from college, there was almost nothing in downtown,” says Ben. “Now it’s tough to find parking!” (The pair will soon bring their Main Street magic to Wetumpka, AL, in *Home Town Takeover*). There’s lots to explore, including the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, the oldest art museum in the state, and there’s no shortage of

good eating, from the sticky buns at Sweet Somethings bakery to crawfish étouffée at Cafe LaFleur. It’s also downright friendly (see the “Greetings from” and “Welcome to” murals). Mayor Johnny Magee says, “You’re here, you’re family.”

**LOCAL CHATTER:** If you’re a fan of Ben Napier’s new show *Home Town: Ben’s Workshop*, head to Scotsman General Store & Woodshop to watch the team at work, a glass-bottled soda from the walk-in fridge in hand.



<<<< Poking Around the Poconos >>>>

**FRESH AIR**

Mosey over to the mountain town of Jim Thorpe, nicknamed the “Switzerland of America,” for Victorian inns, shops, and the Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway.

**FARM LIFE**

Visit Quiet Valley Living Historical Farm in Stroudsburg for a peek into Pennsylvania farm life from the 1760s to 1913, then stroll the town’s historic Main Street.

**FALLS**

Hike the waterfall-filled trails of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in Milford, then recharge at the historic Hotel Fauchère, run by the town’s mayor.





### Word of Mouth

"Try Hudson Food Studio's spicy chicken noodles and lychee martini—heaven!"

—Jocie Sinauer, owner of Red Chair on Warren



### Flowerkraut

This design-focused flower-and-gifts shop sits on Hudson's commercial strip, Warren Street.

### Hudson Historic District

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this section of downtown is home to a treasure trove of architectural styles.



### Red Dot

This long-running restaurant and bar serves comfort-food favorites.



## Hudson, NY

POPULATION: 6,710

**NICKNAME:** The Friendly City

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** "Some say river towns ebb and flow. I think Hudson is always reinventing itself," says Jocie Sinauer, proprietor of antiques shop Red Chair on Warren. Case in point:

a slew of new businesses opening their doors in this Hudson Valley hamlet despite the challenges of the past year. Among them: the Maker, an 11-room boutique hotel spread across three historic buildings from the owners of Fresh beauty products, Lev Glazman and Alina Roytberg. "We were drawn to Hudson's diversity and creative energy," says Lev. Shoe-and-lifestyle boutique Intentionally Blank and Nikki Chasin's eponymous clothing store both offer new shopping

options, while Breadfolks bakery and Sonder Hudson natural wine bar provide new spots to dine and drink. Factor in longtime draws like excellent antiques and a top-notch farmers' market, and it's easy to see why more folks are calling Hudson home.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** There's a lot of excitement around Zio and Sons's recently opened rental This Old Hudson Maison, inspired by the French countryside and decorated with locally sourced antiques.

## When the Mayor is a Very Good Boy

These honorary officers share a platform: Less barking, more bacon.



### Mayor Max

Funds raised by this golden retriever's election went to Idyllwild, CA's Animal Rescue Friends. You'll find Max in the annual July Fourth parade.



### Mayor Wilbur

Wilbur, the French bulldog mayor of Rabbit Hash, KY, unseated the incumbent pit bull in the last election, a fundraiser for the Rabbit Hash Historical Society.



### Mayor Piper

Piper, a Greater Swiss mountain dog, holds the office in Divide, CO, where funds from her election benefited the Teller County Regional Animal Shelter.



## Paso Robles, CA

POPULATION: 31,800

**LOCAL LINGO:** "El Paso de Robles" (the Pass of the Oaks) is just "Paso" to locals.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** This Central Coast town has plenty to boast about, with more than 200 wineries and award-winning restaurants. Yet "it is completely unpretentious," says Alexis Negranti, founder of Negranti Creamery (far right). "There's a cowboy vibe. It's fine to wear boots and a hat to a five-star spot." Still, dressing up for a seat at, say, Les Petites Canailles, a recent addition from Michelin-starred chef Julien Asseo, wouldn't be out of place. "In Paso, everyone is welcome, any way you like."

**LOCAL CHATTER:** The new Paso Market Walk showcases local makers, farmers, and vintners.

**Rêves de Moutons**  
Spend the night in a retro camper at this goat-and-sheep farm in the heart of wine country.



### Negranti Creamery

This family-run sheep's-milk ice-cream company serves scoops from its shop at the Tin City makers' market and from its ice-cream truck.



**Wine Country**  
More than 60 wine-grape varieties are grown in Paso Robles.



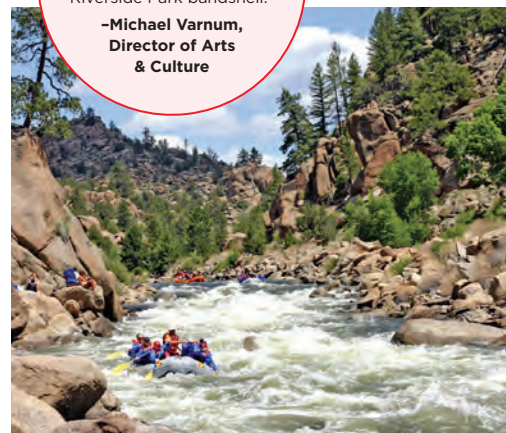
**Local Parking**  
If you live in this river town, you probably own a kayak.



### Word of Mouth

"In June, there are free performances by local musicians in our Riverside Park bandshell."

—Michael Varnum, Director of Arts & Culture



## Salida, CO

POPULATION: 5,800

**NICKNAME:** Heart of the Rockies

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** What do you get when your town is home to FIBArk, the biggest white water festival in the country? A bunch of former river guides running things. "We're everywhere," jokes Mike "Diesel" Post, Salida's Director of Parks and Recreation, who says the Arkansas River is central to town life. "You can ski Monarch Mountain, then kayak, and have time left for mountain biking," adds mayor P.T. Wood, who is—you guessed it—also a former guide. More of an artsy soul? Salida is also home to Colorado's first Creative District, with many artist-owned galleries to visit.

**LOCAL CHATTER:** Salida's Fourth of July is a grand small-town celebration with fireworks over Tenderfoot "S" Mountain.

**Historic District**  
First established as a stage-coach stop, Salida's downtown is the largest historic district in Colorado.

**Arkansas River**  
The Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area features 148 miles of river park for rafting and kayaking.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) ANTHONY D'ARGENZIO/ZIO & SONS; JULIEN CAPMELL; WINNIE AU; JULIEN CAPMELL.

PASO ROBLES PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) COURTESY OF EVAN BISHOP/FARM STAY; COURTESY OF CANA CREATIVE; COURTESY OF BREAD & BUTTER PR. SALIDA PHOTOGRAPHS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) SUSANNAH STORCH; H. MARK WEIDMAN PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF SCOTT PETERSON.