

*The secrets of
exploring
great wine
destinations!*



A tour of any of the great wine country regions of the world is a relaxing and peaceful opportunity to explore local culture, history, innovative cuisine, and of course, wine, all in a single trip. No matter what region you choose, the people are friendly, the land around you will take your breath away, and the wine? Nothing short of phenomenal.

So what exactly *is* a wine tour? These tours lead you through a region which has fully developed a local presence of vineyards and wineries, producing exceptional bottles of light or full-bodied wines. Normally a tour consists of visiting the individual wineries and tasting rooms to sample their current wines, and often paired their current vintages are perfectly paired with succulent dishes. Occasionally a tour of the winery itself is included, and visitors can see for themselves where the grapes for the wine is grown, where they are processed into juice, barreled and fermented, aged, and eventually bottled for consumer consumption.

When people think of fertile wine-producing regions, they tend to recall areas such as the Napa Valley region of California or the Burgundy region of France off-hand, with good reason as their reputations are second to none. Vineyards are not just limited to the United States or Europe; for the majority of US travelers, many wineries and notable wine producers are within a few short hours of their own homes, or a quick plane ride away. If you're looking for a truly great epicurean vacation, many visitors are pleasantly surprised that a winery or vineyard tour can become about so much more than just wine.

There are many tour operators out there, far and wide, that specialize in tours of the greatest and lesser-known wine regions of the world. Our travel consultants have access to a wide range of these tours, for budgets in the more modest Barefoot category to the extravagant Dom Perignon. In many wine regions, local wineries have gotten together to create "wine trails" for visitors to use so they can travel and sample all the different wines in the area. Most of the time your tour operator will be able to offer you a discounted pass to any of these wineries' tasting rooms, allowing you to sample as much vino on your tour as possible. Along with a fantastic travel consultant, you can be sure to find new experiences you would never have been able to find on your own.

The best tours will take you to the smallest and more modest-producing vineyards, and if you're truly lucky, you'll get a special invitation to the home of the vigneron. Top tour operators have access to provide the opportunity for guests to receive VIP treatment at these estates and savor their hospitality - just one example of the sort of event difficult to find if you travel on your own, even if you visit the same cellars. However, many tour operators even have the ability to arrange self-drive opportunities with all the same privileges and perks as their group tours.





In the world of wines, whether you love the lightness of a good Zinfandel or the rich body of a Cabernet Sauvignon, there are certain regions that are considered the pinnacle of wine production, and lauded across the world. These areas produce stellar barrels of wines year after year, and for many that tradition has held up for millenia.

Tuscany, Italy - Italy's most famous wine region holds over 157,000 acres of vineyards throughout its picturesque countryside. The Italians have held the tradition of winemaking close to their hearts for thousands of years, so its little wonder that Italy is the largest producer of wines in the world. The Tuscan soil and climate are ideal for grape crops, with the region's most famous export being Chianti, a red blend wine that can only be grown in the Chianti area of Tuscany.

Bordeaux, Burgundy and Rhone, France - France has plenty of different wine-rich regions, and each is well worth the time to visit. The tradition of winemaking dates back to the Roman occupation thousands of years ago. The Burgundy region is especially popular for producing both legendary red and white wines. Guests can tour both well-established and newer wineries and watch as they create popular wines such as Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Beaujolais.

Australia - In only the past few decades, Australia has emerged as one of the fastest growing wine regions in the world. Although many of the oldest wineries have been producing for well over a hundred years, the public has only recently taken a serious interest in wines originating Down Under. More than 70 different wineries alone are located in the New South Wales region, just a few hours from Sydney. These wineries have created a name for themselves in producing exquisite Shiraz and Sauvignon Blanc.

USA - In the United States, the most popular region is, bar-none, California's Napa Valley, coincidentally one of the world's newer wine regions. Its wine making history dates back less than 200 years, but during those short centuries more than 260 wineries have been born, producing excellent Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc. Not to be outdone, California's neighbors in the Union: Oregon, Washington State, and New York, all boast bustling wine industries and vineyards. Smaller regions include the Texas Hill Country, as well as vineyards in Connecticut, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

Germany - German wines have historically been of the mostly white type, made from Riesling grapes which were hardy enough to withstand the Northern climate. German wines are produced near the Rhine river and its tributaries, and the vineyards are sheltered by mountains so steep that while they do catch quite a bit of sunlight, they are difficult to harvest mechanically. Germany's 13 wine regions include Ahr, Baden, Franken, Hessische Bergstrasse, Mittelrhein, Mosel-Saar-Ruwer, Nahe, Pfalz, Rheingau, Rheinhessen, Saale-Unstrut, Sächsische Weinstrasse and Württemberg.

South Africa - Cape Town is the trailhead of the South African vineyards, and another up-and-comer in the wine producing world. The local wine industry has become a global force to be reckoned with, producing approximately 3% of the world's wine production, and ranking as 9th largest producer in the world. New wineries are opening at a fast clip, with Pinot Noir and Reislng varieties among the most popular exports.

But this list is far, far from complete or comprehensive. Chile, Spain, Portugal, and dozens of other countries also have robust wine economies, where local innovate vineyards have adapted their growing techniques to suit their climates and produced truly localized vintages.

Top Wine-Producing Regions

Before You Leave

Make sure you let us know if you would prefer to travel on your own, independently, or in a group setting on your upcoming vineyard tour. If you would prefer to travel by yourself, we can create an itinerary for you of which wineries to tour, special events you just can't miss, your transportation arrangements, and your accommodations for your tour. You will then have the flexibility of simply following the itinerary on your own at your leisure.

However, a fully-guided tour will provide you and other travelers with insider knowledge and insight of the entire region and the wineries you'll be visiting. Transportation will be included so you won't have to worry about picking up a car, and your itinerary will include fixed times to visit local wineries and other nearby attractions, as well as free time explore the wineries and area on your own. A fully-guided tour is a perfect choice for those going to regions so massive that the options can be more than overwhelming, or for those who would rather leave transportation and other logistics to someone else to worry about. In addition, most tour companies provide you a multilingual tour guide fluent in both English and the local language of the region.

Remember that there are more creative travel options than just a car or a tour bus out there. Hiking or biking your way through will bring you face-to-face with sights you could never see from the passenger seat of a bus, and immerse you fully into the natural landscape of the region!

Take the time to study up on the region you're about to visit before your trip, either through good quality travel guides or knowledgeable websites. We will pick up any materials from the host company, including brochures, itineraries, and maps, and pass them along to you. If you're heading to a region where you don't speak the native language, learn a few choice phrases before you go as a courtesy to your hosts and the country who will be hosting you while you sample their wines.

If you are planning to purchase a significant amount of wine on your trip and wish to ship it back home, research your home country's laws concerning importing alcohol internationally from outside the country. Your wine could sit in customs for days or weeks before delivery, and in the heat of summer, wines could go bad while they wait to arrive at your front door.

Some of the larger wine regions throw huge festivals when the season rolls around to introduce the new wines. Bigger wineries will hold their own celebrations, while smaller wineries will often team up with others in the area and have a carnival where guests can taste all the new offerings from each of the wineries in one place. Travelers who time their wine tours perfectly might have a chance to experience a true cultural celebration during their tour. Many wine regions also offer outside activities such as spa treatments, cooking classes, museum tours, arts and crafts festivals, musical events, and other performances - just ask us what's available.

Most wine regions also offer restaurants which showcase both the local cuisine and wineries. Be sure to take note the growing trend for restaurants that allow you to bring a bottle of your own; visit wineries during the day and choose a favorite bottle to savor with your meal in the evening.



Benefits of Wine Tours

It's impossible to come away from any wine tour without also receiving a lesson in the local culture. Most winery owners are not just passionate about the wine they create; they are also passionate about the land and region that supports their lives and their families. It is not unusual to hear about an immigrant family who bought a piece of property years ago, taunted by their neighbors that they could successfully operate a winery on the land - only to prove those same neighbors wrong.

Those who choose the experience of a wine tour come away with much more than just a few new bottles of global wine. They leave having experienced and soaked in a deeper cultural appreciation of wine, and especially for those who make it.



Give us a call today!