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THE WORLD OF FINE WINE
TRAVEL

A SENSE OF PLACE, WHAT TO SEE, WHERE TO EAT AND STAY



ITALY'S OVERFLOWING CORNUCOPIA OF WINES

From the fresh, high-altitude wines of the Alps to the ripe lusciousness of those from the country's "boot" and its islands, and from lively Prosecco to silky Barolo—in Italy, the wine lover's cup truly runneth over

You could spend a lifetime visiting Italy and still not get to the bottom of its vinous complexity: the more than 2,000 grape varieties; the more than 500 IGTs, DOCs, and DOCGs; the fractured landholdings divided between thousands of wine growers; the sheer scale of the country's production in each of its 20 administrative regions—from the Alpine north, to the tip of the boot in Calabria, not to mention the significant contribution of the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. This is a country that is suffused with wine and has been for more than 2,000 years.

So, where to begin? A dream itinerary might involve entering the country from France, in the Valle d'Aosta, home to Europe's highest vineyards and to some of the continent's most charming villages, set amid the Alpine scenery. There is a strong French flavor to this province and its wines, as can be seen in the name of the website devoted to exploring its wine trail, www.routedesvinsdait.it, or, indeed, of the excellent local cooperative La Cave du Vin Blanc de Morgex et de la Salle, which has a tasting room open year-round for visits by appointment (www.caveduvinblanc.com). For accommodation and fine dining, few places offer a more spectacular setting or a better wine list than the luxury resort Hermitage Hotel & Spa (www.hotelhermitage.com).

Piedmont

Continuing southeast takes you into one of the big names of Italian wine, Piedmont. The two great Nebbiolo zones of Barbaresco and Barolo are often referred to as Italy's answer to Burgundy because of the small scale of production, the profusion of small producers, and the love of terroir. And like the French region, these one- or few-man (or woman) bands don't always have tourists high on their list of priorities. For many of the starriest of names, you'll need to book an

appointment well in advance of your visit. However, names such as Marchesi di Barolo, Bartolo Mascarello (www.barolodibarolo.com), and Cascina Fontana (www.cascinafontana.com) in Barolo and Cantina del Pino (www.cantinadelpino.com), Ca' del Baio (www.cadelbaio.com), and Cantina del Glicine (www.cantinadelglicine.it) in Barbaresco all have justified reputations for welcoming guests. The best time to visit is the fall, when the vineyards are draped in mist and truffle season is in full swing the ingredient infusing menus throughout the region. But there is gastronomic delight to be found at any time of the year, not least in Enrico Crippa's remarkable three-Michelin-starred Alba restaurant Piazza Duomo (www.piazzaduomoalba.it).

North by northeast

Continuing east from Piedmont takes you into the province of Lombardy, home region of arguably Italy's greatest sparkling-wine region, Franciacorta, in the rolling hills between Brescia and Lake Iseo. The local winemaking *consorzio* has a detailed wine route and plenty of information on who and how to visit (www.franciacorta.net), with one of the highlights being Ca' del Bosco, which offers a full tour and tasting, helping visitors get to the bottom of the traditional method of sparkling-wine making (www.cadelbosco.com).

To the northeast, another of Italy's mountainous wine regions, Trentino-Alto Adige in the Dolomites, is the mirror image of Valle d'Aosta but with a German (or Austrian) rather than Franco-Swiss accent. Stay in one of an abundance of comfortable inns dotted about the pretty scenery—such as Romantik Hotel Turm with its extensive wine cellar carved into the rock (www.hotelturn.it)—and make a beeline for the Elena Walch winery, which serves cold delicacies matched to

Opposite: Castello di Grinzane Cavour in Piedmont and its snowy Alpine backdrop. Next spread: The atmospheric hills around the village of Montepulciano in Tuscany.

Photography (this page): © iStockphoto (great spread); Jim Wyant



WINERIES TO VISIT

- ❖ **PLANETA** A key player in the modern renaissance of Sicilian wine, Planeta has impeccably tasteful visitor centers in three locations on the island: Noto, Etna, and Menfi, where it also has a stylish hotel and restaurant.
Contrada Passo di Gurra ex SS 115 sp 79, km 91, 92013 Menfi (AG), Sicily | +39 092 51 95 54 60
planetaestate@planeta.it | www.planeta.it
- ❖ **MASTROBERARDINO** One of the great, grand old names of Campania, Mastroberardino welcomes visitors to its fresco-decorated, classical winery for a variety of different tours, tastings, and wine-and-food-pairing lunches.
Via Manfredi 75-81, 83042 Atripalda (AV) | +39 08 25 61 41 11
www.mastroberardino.com
- ❖ **CASTELLO DI AMA** The 90-minute tour offered by this fine old Chianti estate is an immersive one, taking in cellars, the village of Ama with its ancient churches, two 18th-century villas and gardens, and a contemporary art collection.
Località Ama 55, 53013 Gaiole in Chianti (SI)
+39 05 77 74 60 31 | www.castellodiama.com
- ❖ **ANTINORI CHIANTI CLASSICO** With a fine restaurant, a multifaceted tour, and various options for tastings of the many different Tuscan wines in the family's portfolio, this is one of the best wine-tourism experiences in Italy.
Via Cassia per Siena 133, 50026 Località Bargino, San Casciano in Val di Pesa (FI) | +39 05 52 35 97 00 | www.visitantinorichianticlassico.it | www.antinorichianticlassico.it
- ❖ **MARCHESI DI BAROLO** The refined Piedmontese cuisine of the Foresteria restaurant is one of many highlights of a visit to the atmospheric old cellars and modern visitor center at this 200-year-old Barolo producer.
Via Roma 1, 12060 Barolo (CN) | +39 01 73 56 44 91
reception@marchesibarolo.com | www.marchesibarolo.com
- ❖ **CERETTO** A visit to the remarkable domed and glass-walled tasting room, with views out across the vineyards, is the culmination of a tour of Ceretto's farmstead winery.
Strada Provinciale Alba-Barolo, Località San Cassiano 34, 12051 Alba (CN) | +39 01 73 28 25 82
ceretto@ceretto.com | www.ceretto.com
- ❖ **CANTINA TERLANO** The headquarters of one of the world's finest cooperative producers is located high up in the Alto Adige, in the charming village of Terlano.
Via Silberleiten 7, 39018 Terlano (BZ) | +39 04 71 25 71 35
office@cantina-terlano.com | www.kellerei-terlan.com
- ❖ **LIS NERIS** One of Friuli's leading producers has a tranquil guesthouse in the heart of its estate, which makes a fine base for touring the region, though the winery also welcomes day-visitors for extensive tours and tastings.
Via Gavianna 5, 34070 San Lorenzo Isontino (GO)
+39 04 81 80 95 92 | lisneris@lisneris.it | www.lisneris.it
- ❖ **TOMMASI** Tommasi's extensive cellars—which include what it claims is the world's largest wooden cask, used to age its Amaron, as well as drying rooms old and new—were well set up for tourists, with an informative guided tour through the various processes of making *passito* wines.
Via Ronchetto 4, 37029 Pedemonte di Valpolicella (VR)
+39 04 57 70 12 66 | Emily.riolfi@tommasi.com
www.tommasiwinery.it
- ❖ **CASTELLO MONACI** This fine old estate in Puglia's Salice Salentino offers two comprehensive tours of the local vineyards, wine cellar, and wine museum, with a tasting paired with traditional local food.
Contrada Via Case Sparse, 73015 Salice Salentino (LE)
+39 08 31 66 57 00 | castello.monaci@gv.it
www.castellomonaci.it

its wines in its small bistro, set in the garden of its estate in Tramin, and also runs the Osteria al Castello in Castel Ringberg, with fine views across Lake Caldaro (www.eleawalch.com).

Heading southeast of Trentino-Alto Adige takes you into Friuli and, ultimately, the Collio zone that skirts the Slovenian border. Following the picturesque 30-mile (50km) Strada del Vino from Dolegna del Collio to San Floriano del Collio is a pleasure at any time of the year, but particularly so in late May, when around 60 wineries band together for the annual Cantine Aperte event, opening their doors to visitors and offering local dishes and wine (www.mtfrilivg.it). The rest of the year it's worth stopping off in the town of Cormons, the main wine center of Collio, and heading to the Enoteca Regionale di Cormons to try the wines of 32 local producers (www.enoteca-cormons.it).

West from Friuli lies the Veneto, with the east of the region home to La Strada del Prosecco, running between Conegliano and Valdobbiadene through the heartland of the sparkling wine's production, details of which can be found at the website of the *consorzio* (www.coneglianovaldobbiadene.it). You'll need to book your appointments in advance before setting out on this route, which runs through a gently undulating landscape of vines, castles, villas, and churches, with Bisol's beautiful 19th-century cellars among the highlights (www.bisol.it). The same company is also involved in an exciting project in Venice: Venissa, on the island of Mazzorbo, has a vineyard producing wine from the rare Venetian grape Dorona, as well as a luxury resort and a Michelin-starred restaurant (www.venissait.it).

Continuing west from Venice, past the beautiful cities of Padua and Vicenza, it's worth stopping in the village of Soave, where one of the region's best producers, Pieropan, has a graceful tasting room and wine shop in the grand Palazzo Pullici, which has been the home of the family business since 1880 (www.pieropan.it). The city of Verona is worth visiting for its range of wine bars alone, such as Enoteca Segreta Antica di Poli Luigi (www.enotecasegreta.it), Antica Bottega del Vino (www.bottegvini.it), and Enoteca Zero 7 (www.enotecazer07.it). It's also an ideal base for a tour of Valpolicella wine country, with Allegrini's gracious and historic headquarters (book in advance at www.allegrini.it) among the cellars worth visiting.

Tuscany and Central Italy

The Platonic ideal of Italian wine is still undoubtedly Tuscany. That may well be a source of annoyance for the inhabitants of other regions of the country. (As the very useful website www.winetouritalia.com puts it, you will get more out of a visit to Italy if you understand "what [it] is, not how it sits romantically in the minds of most tourists as a kind of Tuscany writ large.") But it can't be denied that the Tuscany of cypress trees and medieval hill-towns continues to exert a powerful hold on the popular global imagination—or that it does a fabulous job of catering to those ideals.

Wine tourism is a big deal in Tuscany, its approach widely copied both in Italy and in other warm-climate wine regions all over the world. The many options range from cycle tours (www.tuscanywinebike.com; www.tbiketuscany.com), to private chauffeured wine-and-art tours (www.monterrgioni.info), to week-long cookery and wine-tasting courses (www.tuscany-cooking-class.com). And you can time your visit to coincide with

PLACES TO EAT AND STAY

■ **Palas Cerequio Barolo Cru Resort**

Barolo producer Michele Chiarlo's luxury resort is based in a restored ancient village in the heart of the Barolo zone offering a restaurant, cookery lessons, and wine tours. Borgata Cerequio, 12064 La Morra (CN) | +39 0173 50657 direzione@palascerequio.com | www.palascerequio.it

■ **Tenuta Carretta**

A favored spot for visitors to Barolo country, Tenuta Carretta houses a restaurant featuring Flavio Costa's Ligurian and Piedmontese cuisine and a cozy hotel in traditional style, all surrounded by the vines of the wine estate. Località Carretta 2, 12040 Piobesi d'Alba (CN) | +39 0173 61 91 19 | info@tenutacarretta.it www.tenutacarretta.it

■ **Borgo San Marco**

Luxury lodgings based in a 13th-century building surrounded by 1,000-year-old olive groves in the heart of Puglia, with a range of atmospheric suites, a restaurant, and a spa. Contrada Sant'Angelo 33, 72015 Fasano (BR) | +39 08 04 39 57 57 info@borgosanmarco.it | www.borgosanmarco.it

■ **Relais Torre Marabino**

One of Sicily's top hotels, a deeply tranquil space set on an organic farm and winery in a 19th-century house with impressive tower, near the beach in Santa Maria del Focallo. Azienda Agricola La Moresca, C da Marabino, CP 18, Ispica (RG) | +39 09 32 79 50 60 | info@torremarabino.com www.torremarabino.com

■ **Villa d'Este**

The home of one of the world of fine wine's most prestigious events, the annual Villa d'Este Wine Symposium, is one of the world's great luxury hotels, set right on the shores of Lake Como and with a suitably magnificent wine cellar. Via Regina 40, 22012 Cernobbio (CO) | +39 031 34 81 reservations@villadeste.it | www.villadeste.com

■ **Il Falconiere**

A Tuscan manor house in a beautiful setting with meals and cookery lessons from head chef Silvia Baracchi, tours of the adjacent Baracchi Winery and vineyards, and luxurious rooms. Località San Martino a Bocena 370, Cortona (AR) | +39 05 75 61 26 79 | info@ilfalconiere.it | www.ilfalconiere.it

■ **Villa Abbazia Veneto**

Perfectly situated along La Strada del Prosecco with access to trails in the Venetian countryside, a cluster of lovingly restored 18th-century buildings attached to a Venetian villa and garden. Piazza IV Novembre 3, 31051 Follina (TV) | +39 04 38 97 12 77 | info@hotelabbazia.it www.hotelabbazia.it

■ **Le Volpi e l'Uva**

Groundbreaking Florence enoteca that is still going strong after 25 years, with a brilliantly curated small, producer-led wine list, many available by the glass, and a cantina offering small-plate Tuscan cuisine.

Piazza dei Rossi 1, Firenze | +39 05 52 39 81 32 info@levolpieluva.com | www.levolpieluva.com

■ **Hotel Bue Marino Sardinia**

In a peaceful setting right on the beach on the eastern Sardinian coast, Hotel Bue Marino's cozy rooms are surrounded by Cannonau (Grenache) vines, while the rooftop restaurant has a superb local wine list.

Via Vespucci 8, 08022 Cala Gonone-Dorgali (NU) | +39 078 49 20 07 | info@hotelbuemarinio.it www.hotelbuemarinio.it

■ **Relais Russiz Superiore**

This is a captivating, tranquil guesthouse with seven spacious rooms in a beautiful setting among the vines of Collio wine producer Marco Felluga.

Via Russiz 7, 34070 Capriva del Friuli (GO) | +39 048 18 03 28 | www.marcofelluga.it



the many wine-themed events that take place in the region, whether the harvest festivals of Greve and Panzano in Chianti in September, or the wine and food festival, Wine & Siena, that takes place across the city in January (www.wineandsiena.it).

Most of the region's wineries welcome visitors, with many housing restaurants and/or guestrooms and all having tasting rooms on their property. Castello di Volpaia, Castello Banfi, and Castello di Ama are among the highest-rated winery restaurants (www.castellodivolpaia.com; www.castellobanfi.com; www.castellodiama.com), while the guesthouses at Fontodi, the ancient monastery at Badia a Coltibuono, and the villa at Barone Ricasoli are among the most atmospheric places to stay (www.fontodi.com; www.coltibuono.com; www.baroneicasoli.com). Wine is also very much a part of a visit to the great cities of Florence and Siena, with Enoteca Pitti Gola e Cantina (www.pittigolacantina.com), Le Volpi e l'Uva, and Casa del Vino (www.casadelvino.it) among Florence's best, and La Compagnia dei Vinattieri (www.vinattieri.net) and Enoteca i Terzi (www.enotecaiterzi.it) two of Siena's best.

A highlight of any trip to central Italy's highlands of Abruzzo would be a visit to the high-ranking Montepulciano producer Masciarelli (www.masciarelli.it), combined with a stay in the owners' beautiful Castello di Semivicoli (www.castellosemivicoli.com), while fabulous gardens and vineyards, along with the restaurant l'Antica Osteria della Colonna, make Principe Pallavicini (www.principepallavicini.com) in Lazio's Frascati Superiore DOC a restful day out from Rome.

The Mezzogiorno and the islands

Compared to parts of the north and center, southern Italy's great wine regions still have a slight feeling of the path less traveled.

Opposite: The beautiful and luxurious Villa d'Este hotel on Lake Como in Lombardy. Above: Castello di Volpaia in Chianti, highly regarded for its restaurant and its wines.

But a wine-themed holiday in Campania on the Tyrrhenian Sea or Puglia on the Adriatic has much to offer. In Campania, the great hilltop town of Taurasi, the Barolo of the south, in Irpinia, is a place of pilgrimage for lovers of these complex Aglianico wines. It's worth starting with a visit to the Enoteca Regionale dei Vini d'Irpinia in the 13th-century Castello di Taurasi, before making an appointment at a leading producer such as Mastroberardino (www.mastroberardino.com) or Cantine Antonio Caggiano (www.cantinecaggiano.it).

On the other side of the south, in Puglia, Italy's "heel," Masseria le Fabriche (www.defabriche.it) is a smart vineyard hotel surrounded by vines, olive trees, and fragrant shrubland—a stylish place in which to base yourself while you explore the region and visit (by appointment) producers such as Masseria Li Veli (www.liveli.it), Gianfranco Fino (www.gianfrancofino.it), or Morella (www.morellavini.com).

Finally, to Italy's islands: Both Sardinia and Sicily have independent wine cultures that have enjoyed a renaissance over the past two decades. In Sicily, the leaders in wine tourism are undoubtedly the Planeta family, with visitor centers in three locations on the island (including, most recently, on the slopes of Mount Etna), as well as a stylish restaurant and hotel, La Foresteria, just up from the beach in Menfi. For a more classical experience, Tasca d'Almerita's Regaleali Estate offers a coolly elegant guesthouse, a cookery school, and a range of wine tastings (www.tascadalmerita.it), while Passopisciaro (www.vinofranchetti.com, by appointment only) is the best place to get to grips with the volcanic viticulture of Etna.

In Sardinia, the peaceful refurbished manor house among vines and olive groves at The Wine Resort on the west of the island (www.margallo.it) will provide a base for exploration of the Cannonau and Vermentino wines produced by such visitor-friendly wineries as Cantina Gallura (www.cantinagallura.net) and Cantine di Orgosolo (www.cantinediorgosolo.it). ■