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How to Experience Europe's Wine Regions Like a Local

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Travel Advisor

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When you think of Europe's great wine regions, images of sprawling vineyards and elegant tastings often come to mind. But to truly drink like a local means stepping beyond the postcard

views and discovering the hidden rituals, favorite haunts, and seasonal moments that make each place unique.

Whether it's sharing a glass at a tucked-away wine bar in Turin, joining a harvest festival in Bordeaux, or pairing a rustic meal with a family's vintage in Tuscany, the authentic wine experience is about connection—to the land, the people, and the culture. Here's how to tap into that local spirit across some of Europe's most iconic wine regions.

Piedmont, Italy



Image courtesy of Casa di Langa

Piedmont's rolling hills in northwest Italy are home to some of the world's most elegant and powerful reds, famously crafted from the Nebbiolo grape into Barolo and Barbaresco wines. It's a paradise for foodies who care just as much about what they're eating as what they're drinking—rich tajarin pasta, prized white truffles, and slow-sipped aperitifs like Barolo Chinato (a spiced, bittersweet fortified wine). Don't miss the International Alba White Truffle Fair each fall, celebrating the region's food, wine, and folklore.

The area is steeped in tradition, with family-run wineries offering intimate cellar tastings for a glimpse into winemaking heritage. Beyond the vineyards, Turin offers a lively urban wine scene with wine bars where locals linger over glasses well into the evening. Insider tip: ask for “crus” or vineyard-specific wines—locals appreciate these nuances.

Anny Chen, a Fora Advisor who specializes in wine travel, recommends: “Piedmont is perfect for fall travel so you can take advantage of the white truffle season there! Restaurants you can't miss include Il Centro and Centro Storico, a local wine bar haunt.”

Where to stay:

Casa di Langa. A chic farmhouse with warm, inviting rooms, rustic stone walls, and a peaceful garden perfect for unwinding after wine tastings.

- **Fora Reserve** perks include \$100 hotel credit, a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Principi di Piemonte | UNA Esperienze. A sleek, modern hotel in Turin’s city center, featuring a rooftop terrace, refined dining, and easy access to the city’s wine bars.

- Fora’s **Preferred Hotel & Resorts Platinum** partner perks include \$100 hotel credit, a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Tuscany, Italy



Image courtesy of Lupaia

Tuscany's rolling hills are home to some of Italy's most famous wines like Chianti Classico and Brunello di Montalcino, both built around the Sangiovese grape. Here, wine isn't just something you drink; it's part of the daily rhythm.

In Florence, locals gather in bustling enotecas in the Oltrarno neighborhood, enjoying carefully chosen wines from small producers. Head to the Tuscan hills for vineyard picnics at family-run estates like Podere Le Ripi and Castello di Volpaia, where you'll taste organic and biodynamic wines while soaking up the views. Foodies will appreciate estates such as Castello Banfi, where Brunello pairs beautifully with rich regional dishes. Hearty Tuscan fare—grilled bistecca alla Fiorentina, tangy pecorino, and wood-fired breads—comes alive with a glass in hand. Finish it off with vin santo and crunchy cantucci biscuits at a local trattoria, and you've got a true taste of Tuscany.

As Anny Chen recommends, “If you’re a meat lover, don’t miss Dario Cecchini’s restaurants in Panzano in Chianti, and pair your steak with a glass of Chianti Classico Riserva.”

Where to stay

Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco. An expansive estate set amid rolling vineyards and olive groves, featuring stone-clad rooms, a Michelin-starred restaurant, and a tranquil spa.

- Fora's **Rosewood Elite** partner perks include €95 spa or food and beverage credit, a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, and an upgrade whenever possible.

Lupaia. A family-run vineyard retreat offering suites with sweeping vineyard views, rustic-modern design, and a warm atmosphere.

- **Fora Reserve** perks include \$50 spa or food and beverage credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Bordeaux, France



Image courtesy of Hôtel Les Sources de Caudalie

Bordeaux stands tall as a classic wine region, famous for expertly blended reds made from Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Cabernet Franc. But beyond the grand châteaux and sprawling vineyards, locals choose to sip vintages in wine bars of the Chartrons district or at bustling markets like Marché des Capucins. Divided by the Gironde estuary, the Left and Right Banks each offer distinct styles and historic estates to explore. Every June, the Fête le Vin festival transforms the riverfront into a lively celebration of Bordeaux's heritage and the rising buzz around small-batch "vin de garage" wines.

As Anny Chen says, "Don't miss out on the canelés, a French pastry that's specific to Bordeaux with a custardy centre and a caramelized exterior. Always one of my favorite pastries, and even better, you can bring them home as gifts or souvenirs! Besides the famous red wines, Bordeaux is also known for making some of the greatest sweet wines in the world in Sauternes and Barsac."

Where to stay

Intercontinental Bordeaux Le Grand Hotel by IHG. A grand 19th-century building in the heart of Bordeaux, boasting ornate ceilings, an elegant courtyard, and a luxe spa for city escapes after wine tours.

- Fora's **IHG Destined** partner perks include \$100 hotel credit, a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Hôtel Les Sources de Caudalie. Surrounded by vineyards, this peaceful retreat offers cozy rooms, a vineyard-view pool, and a world-class spa inspired by the region's wine heritage.

- **Fora Perks** include \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Provence, France



Image courtesy of Hôtel Crillon Le Brave

Provence is the ultimate destination for rosé lovers, where crisp, refreshing wines perfectly match the relaxed Mediterranean lifestyle. Locals spend long evenings on vineyard terraces savoring chilled rosé alongside plates of fresh seafood and tapenade. Small, family-run estates such as Domaine de la Mordorée and Mas de Gourgonnier produce limited, artisanal rosés that reflect the flavors of the region. Live like a local and visit colorful produce markets and tasting rooms in Aix-en-Provence’s Cours Mirabeau and Saint-Tropez’s Place des Lices. Summer festivals such as the Fête des Vins de Bandol bring music, laughter, and plenty of clinking glasses to the region’s social calendar. Early summer also paints the landscape purple with blooming lavender fields—a gorgeous setting for wine tastings and picnics. And when it’s time to eat, pair your rosé with Provençal classics like pan bagnat or ratatouille.

Where to stay

Airelles, La Bastide de Gordes. Perched on a hillside overlooking the Luberon Valley, this luxe retreat offers spacious rooms, a standout spa, and inviting terraces.

- **Fora Perks** include \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Hôtel Crillon Le Brave. Set in a historic village, this elegant property features terracotta-roofed suites, a rooftop pool with panoramic views, and a welcoming atmosphere.

- **Fora Perks** include \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Rioja, Spain



Spain's flagship wine region, Rioja, is celebrated for its Tempranillo-based reds, which range from youthful Crianza to richly aged Gran Reserva wines. The local wine culture thrives in lively tapas bars, especially along Logroño's famous Calle Laurel, where locals hop between pintxo bars for Rioja wines paired with chorizo and manchego cheese. Family-run bodegas

welcome visitors for oak barrel tastings, offering a glimpse into Rioja's winemaking history. If you're lucky to visit during harvest, join the Batalla del Vino (Wine Battle) festival in Haro for an unforgettable way to experience local tradition. For a quieter, more authentic feel, exploring towns like Laguardia is a good option for a slower pace and community-centered wine experiences.

Where to stay

Hotel Marqués de Riscal, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Elciego. A striking fusion of contemporary architecture and historic heritage, this luxury hotel offers a rooftop spa, cutting-edge design, and panoramic vineyard views.

- Fora's **Marriott STARS** partner perks include \$100 hotel credit, a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Palacio Tondon, La Rioja Brinas. A boutique hotel set in the Rioja countryside, featuring refined rooms, attentive service, and close access to traditional bodegas.

- Fora's **Marriott Luminous** partner perks include a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Douro Valley, Portugal



Image courtesy of Six Senses Douro Valley

Portugal's Douro Valley might fly a bit under the radar compared to Europe's big wine stars, but it's a total gem—especially if you're into Port. Picture dramatic terraced vineyards hugging the river, where locals kick back at traditional quintas—family-owned wine estates—like Quinta do Crasto and Quinta do Vallado, sipping rich Tawny and Vintage Port. Grab a seat at a riverside tavern in Peso da Régua or Pinhão and dig into smoky sausages and tangy cheeses paired with bold Douro reds—the perfect combo.

For the full experience, hop on a boat cruise along the Douro River and taste your way through some stellar wines as the scenery rolls by. Time your trip right, and you can join the locals during Vindima, the lively grape harvest festival, complete with grape stomping and plenty of laughs.

Where to stay

Six Senses Douro Valley. A luxurious retreat perched above the Douro River, featuring contemporary rooms, a riverside spa, and immersive wine experiences that celebrate the region's heritage.

- Fora's **IHG Destined** partner perks include \$100 hotel credit, a welcome amenity, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

Octant Douro. A stylish, modern hotel overlooking the vineyards, offering sleek accommodations, an infinity pool, and personalized tours.

- **Fora Reserve** perks include a complimentary massage for two, daily breakfast, an upgrade and extended check-in/out whenever possible.

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