

Demarcated Region

Originally defined on September 18, 1908,

the demarcated Vinho Verde Region extends across the northwest of Portugal, in the area traditionally known as Entre-Douro-e-Minho. The Minho River is its northern border, forming part of the border with Spain, its southern border is formed by the Douro River and the Freita, Arada and Montemuro mountains, to the east it's bordered by the mountains of Peneda, Gerês, Cabreira and Marão, and the western border is the Atlantic Ocean. In terms of geographical area, it is the largest Portuguese demarcated region, and one of the largest in Europe.

The natural conditions of this region are ideal for the production of excellent white wines as well as sparkling wines and spirits. Sparkling Vinho Verde wines have been revealed as having amazing quality, which is connected to the fact that the region produces great wines which, through their natural freshness and low alcohol, show enormous potential for producing good sparkling wine. Already the natural acidity content of the pomace and wines of the region, as well as their organoleptic characteristics, show excellent technical conditions for the production of great grape marc spirit from the distillation of pomace, and great wine brandy, made from the distillation of wine.

Topographically, the region is "a vast amphitheater which, starting at the coast, gradually climbs in elevation towards the interior" (Amorim Girão, Portuguese geographer), exposing the entire area to the influence of the Atlantic Ocean, a phenomenon reinforced by the orientation of the valleys of the main rivers, which run east to west and facilitate penetration of the sea winds. This Atlantic influence, mostly granitic soils, mild climate and high rainfall, are reflected in the freshness, lightness and elegance of the wines of this region.

Variations in the types of soils and microclimates justify the division of the region into nine subregions, with different grape varieties recommended for the production of still wines, spirits and sparkling wines.

The Subregion of Amarante:

Located within the Vinho Verde Region, the subregion Amarante is protected from the influence of the Atlantic, and has a high average altitude, higher temperatures than the regional average, and the hottest summers overall. These conditions favor the development of late-maturing varieties: Azal and Avesso (whites), Amaral and Espadeiro (reds). The soil is granitic, as it is in most of the region. White wines typically have fruity aromas and an alcohol content higher than the region's average. Red wines are beginning to be known in the subregion of Amarante, since the soil and climatic conditions favor good maturation of the grapes, especially the variety Vinhão, which produces brightly colored wines, appreciated by regional consumers.

Subregion Ave:

Includes the districts of Vila Nova de Famalicão, Fafe, Guimarães, Santo Tirso, Trofa, Póvoa de Lanhoso, Vieira do Minho, Póvoa de Varzim, Vila do Conde and the county of Vizela, except the parishes of Vizela (Saint Adrian) and Barrosas (Santa Eulalia).

In the subregion of Ave, vineyards are planted all over the watershed of the Ave River, a prominent area quite irregular and with low altitude, so it is more exposed to sea winds. Thus, the climate is characterized by a low temperature range and average rates of precipitation. In this context, this subregion is mainly a producer of white wines, with a lively freshness and floral notes and citrus fruit. Arinto and Loureiro are planted throughout the region, grape varieties suitable for this type of mild climate, owing to their average maturity, ripening neither early nor late. Trajadura is also considered, which matures early and is softer, perfectly completing a blend with Arinto and Loureiro.

The Subregion of Baião:

Includes the districts of Baião, Resende (except the parish of Barrô) and Cinfães (except the parishes of Travanca and Souselo). The subregion Baião lies in the Vinho Verde Region, at its border with the Douro Region. It is located within the region at an intermediate altitude, which creates a less temperate climate with cold and rainy winters and hot and dry summer months. These features allow the correct maturation of late-ripening varieties, e.g. Azal and the Avesso (whites) and Amaral (red), with higher heat requirements at the end of the growing cycle. This subregion has established itself in the production of white wines of great notoriety made from Avesso, which combine an intense fruity aroma with lively acidity.

The Subregion of Basto:

and Ribeira de Pena.

The subregion Basto is the innermost of the region, lying at an average elevation, and therefore sheltered from the sea winds. The climate is harsh, very cold and rainy in winter and very hot and dry in summer, therefore favoring late maturing varieties such as Azal (white) and Espadeiro and Rabo-de-Anho (reds). It is in this area that Azal reaches its maximum potential and is able to produce very special wines with aromas of lemon and green apple, very refreshing. There is also considerable production of Vinho Verde reds that have lots of vinosity and a full and fresh mouthfeel.

The Subregion of Cávado:

Includes the districts of Braga, Barcelos, Braga, Vila Verde, Braga and Terras de Bouro.

In the subregion Cávado, the vineyards are located almost everywhere in the watershed of the river that gave it its name. It is very exposed to sea winds, in an irregular relief zone and a low altitude. These factors create a mild climate, with a limited temperature range and an intermediate average annual rainfall. In this subregion, in addition to the granitic soils, there is a range of soils of schist origin, but these are not significant in scope. This climate is suitable for the production of white wines, especially Arinto, Loureiro and Trajadura, which are perfectly adapted to these conditions. These are wines with moderate acidity and notes of citrus and pome fruits (ripe apple and pears). Red wines produced in the Cávado Valley are mostly made of Vinhão and Borraçal, showing a garnet red color and intense aromas of fresh fruit. On the mouth the freshness of the subregion where they are produced shows.

The Subregion of Lima:

Includes the districts of Viana do Castelo, Ponte de Lima, Ponte da Barca and Arcos de Valdevez.

In terms of temperature variations, the subregion of Lima is in the middle relative to the other subregions. However, it receives more rainfall. The altitude at which the vineyards are planted is variable and increases from the coast to the interior, where the terrain is also more irregular, creating microclimates in the Lima Valley, sometimes referred to as Low Lima and High Lima. As in the subregion Cávado, in addition to the granitic soils there is a range of soils of schist origin, but these are not significant in scope. The most famous white wines of this subregion are produced from the Loureiro grape variety. The aromas are fine and elegant, ranging from citrus (lemon) to floral (rose). The Trajadura and Arinto varieties are also well represented in this location because they grow well in mild climates influenced by the sea winds. The red wines are produced mainly from Vinhão and Borraçal. Usually it is the most inland areas of this subregion where red wines have better potential, due to climate conditions that affect maturation.

Includes the districts of Monção and Melgaço.

The subregion of Monção and Melgaço has a very particular microclimate, and is therefore planted exclusively with the varieties Alvarinho (white) and Pedral (red), and shares with the subregion Baiao the recommendation for Alvarelhão (red). All three varieties are early ripening. In this subregion soils are of granitic origin, although there exist some local bands of gravel. This microclimate is characterized by cold winters with intermediate rainfall, whereas summers are very hot and dry, which denotes a limited Atlantic influence. The subregion has developed around the south bank of the River Minho on hillsides. The wines made from Alvarinho are the stars of the subregion of Monção and Melgaço.

The Subregion of Paiva:

Includes the county of Castelo de Paiva, the municipality of Cinfães, and the parishes of Travanca and Souselo.

The subregion Paiva is similar to that of Lima, in an intermediate position in the region with respect to temperature variations and high summer temperatures that occur. On the contrary, it does not belong to the group of subregions with the highest rates of precipitation, since it is not as exposed to the influence of the sea, being further inland and at a higher altitude. It is for this reason that the red varieties Amaral and especially Vinhão reach great states of maturation and produce some of the most prestigious red Vinho Verde from throughout the region. Regarding white wines, they are made from the varieties Arinto, Loureiro and Trajadura, which have adapted to temperate climates and are therefore common in almost all of the Vinho Verde Region, but there is also Avesso, a variety more characteristic of interior subregions.

The Subregion of Sousa:

Includes the districts of Pacos Ferreira, Paredes, Lousada, Felgueiras, and Penafiel, and in the county of Vizela, the parishes of Vizela (Santo Adrião) and Barrosas (Santa Eulália).

As in subregions of the Ave and Cávado, the climate is mild, the temperature amplitudes are low, as is the number of days of extreme heat during the summer. Regarding rainfall, is also characterized by being below average. This can be considered a transition subregion, since it is not directly exposed to Atlantic influence, although the influence can be felt slightly. It is an interior region but without strong winters or very hot summers. The main grape varieties are typical of warmer places, Arinto, Loureiro and Trajadura, to which are added Azal and Avesso, which have a more difficult maturation. Regarding red Vinho Verde wines, they are made from the varieties Borraçal and Vinhão, scattered throughout the region, and in addition Amaral and Espadeiro. The latter is widely used for the production of rosé wines.

