

# Chilean Wine Regions Attract Growing Numbers of Tourists

Nowadays Chile is recognized as a global producer of excellent wines. The Chilean valleys feature a perfect combination of soil, humidity, temperature and sunlight. The New World, especially Australia, has reasons to envy the plentiful supply of water on the Chilean vineyards, coming from the melted snow of the Andes. The Old World has reasons to envy Chile for the lack of wine pests and diseases, its warm and dry summers, and its low production costs.

The Chilean wines are among the most popular wines in the world, impressing with their color, taste, and flavor. They are also among the most organic wines in the world. In 2007 the top markets of the Chilean wine were U.S., Canada and U.K. and the total Chilean wine exports were valued at around \$1.256 billion.



Among the most popular Chilean wine producers are: Concha y Toro, de Martino, Loma Larga, Almaviva, Casa Lapostolle, Altaïr, Casa Marin, Amayna, Viña Leyda, Anakena, Viñedos Organicos Emiliana, Antiyal, Falernia, Haras de Pirque, Gillmore, Matetic, Errazuriz, Veramonte, Pérez Cruz, and Montes.

## History of Wine

The history of Chilean wine covers a long period of time, since the arrival of Spanish conquerors and until the present days. The vines were first introduced to the locals by the Spanish missionaries, in the mid sixteenth century. They needed wine for Catholic mass rituals.

Francisco de Aguirre Copiapó planted the first vineyards in northern Chile and Diego Garcia de Caceres first planted vines in 1554, in the Santiago region. Records dating back to 1555 show that the Spanish already started the mass production of wine from the vineyards of Santiago area. During the next hundred years the cultivation of vines moved south and reached beyond the Bio Bio River.

Between the years 1784 and 1789, the exports of Chilean wine increased fast and they start competing with European wines on the international markets. More than 19 million vines were planted in Chile by the year 1831 and the wine industry began to flourish even more, after Chile gained its independence from Spain.



A modern era of Chilean winemaking is opened by the arrival of the Bordeaux varieties. Don Silvestre Ochagavía Echazarreta introduced in 1851 varieties brought from France such as Merlot, Sauvignon, Cabernet, Riesling, Pinot Noir, and Semillon. All those varieties adapted easily to the Chilean climate.

### **Popular Wine Routes**

Chile takes advantage of their wine popularity by expanding their wine tourist sector as well. There are many wine tours available in all the Chilean wine regions. The Casablanca, Cachapoal, Colchagua, Aconcagua, Maule, and Curicó wine regions offer travelers organized wine tours with bilingual guides, maps, reservation centers and transportation. Among them all, the most well established wine route is in the Colchagua Valley.

The wine tour of Colchagua Valley allows tourists to visit some of the most significant wineries in Chile, including Casa Lapostolle's Clos Apalta, Casa Silva, Viu Manent, Viña Montes, and Emiliana Orgánica. By visiting the wine region Alto Cachapoal tourists can explore the Chilean wineries below the Andes. The regions of Colchagua and Cachapoal specialize in red wines, such as Cabernet, Syrah, and Merlot. The wine blends from the two regions are called Rapel.



The wine tour in Valle de Casablanca region features the wineries of Morandé, Emiliana Orgánicas, William Cole, Indómita, Casas del Bosque, and Viña Mar. The Casablanca wine region is specialized in the varieties of Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, and other aromatic white wines.

The wine routes in Chile divide their tours into “fanatics tours”, “connoisseurs” and “wine lovers”, depending on the caliber of the wines offered for tasting and the price of the tours. The variety of the wines offered range from varietals and reserve wines, to grand reserve, premium and icon wines. The price for a “fanatics” tour can be as high as three times the price of the basic tour.

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