

The Connoisseur's

Whether you're a serious wine buff, teetotal, or simply enjoy the odd tippie, winegrowing regions are always fascinating places to visit. Here are our favourite places to immerse yourself in viticulture.



Barrell room and Restaurant at the Casa Silva, Colchagua Valley, Chile

Cape Winelands, South Africa

The Cape Winelands of Stellenbosch, Franschhoek and Paarl are rightly known as the most famous wine producing region of Africa. The Mediterranean climate combined with well-drained, dark alluvial and clay soils were immediately recognised by the French Huguenot settlers who arrived in 1688 and quickly planted their vines and established the region's winemaking tradition. The expertise and passion of these early settlers has been passed down through the generations to make the area one of the most renowned wine producing regions of the world, a passion and expertise that is still very much in evidence today. A visit to one of the smaller wineries such as Camberely Wines will allow you to get a genuine feel for the dedication that goes into wine making in the area. Johnny and Gael exclusively produce red wines and many of these have been honoured with a "Four Star-Plus" rating in the prestigious Stellenbosch Wine Awards. A guided tour of the region can be arranged with Pietman Retief, one of the leading wine experts in South Africa whose tours give you a chance to learn more about the wines and history of the region, as well as sampling some of their fantastic produce.

Peter Felix: 01993 838 426

Central Valley, Chile

No wine drinker can fail to have noticed the amount of wine that now comes from Chile, ranging from entry-level merlots and sauvignon blancs to some simply stunning blends that rival the best wines from any nation. It is clear to any drinker that Chile is a wine producer's dream, in particular the area to the south of Santiago known as the Central Valley. This viticulturist's heaven has a constant backdrop provided by the Andes and consists of a series of quite breathtaking valleys. Accommodation ranges from simple, homely lodges such as Parador de la Viña to the stunning cabins overlooking the central valley at the estate of Casa Lapostolle. Some properties produce their own wines while others act as a gateway to the vineyards, allowing you to sample many different producers. If you really want to get under the skin of the region, staying in a few different properties is really the only way to do it as each valley is suited to different grapes and different properties offer very different experiences. The small Casa Silva is a personal favourite – here you can stay in the original Spanish farmhouse and enjoy top-class food and wine, served overlooking the barrel room of the winery.

Jonathan Goldsmith: 01993 838 609

Franschhoek, South Africa



Casa Lapostolle, Colchagua Valley, Chile



Choice

Tamar Valley, Tasmania

Tasmania is a foodie's paradise, producing buttery, creamy cheeses, bountiful seafood and fine meats - and what better accompaniment to all of this than one of Tasmania's fine, cool-climate wines? Producing lovely chardonnays and pinot noirs, Tasmanian vineyards are quietly gaining a reputation for being amongst the best in the country, with their range of microclimates and rich soil giving their wine a huge diversity of character. The island as a whole is classed as an official 'wine zone' but by far the most famous region is the Tamar Valley, which is host to an extensive array of award-winning cool climate wines. This picturesque valley winds for 50 kilometres from Launceston to the coast, with more than 20 wineries and a dedicated 'wine route'. Here you will find a range of accommodation and superb dining, with most vineyards offering a 'cellar door' where wines can be purchased direct from the winemaker, often at a slight discount.

Mark Dolman: 01993 838 808

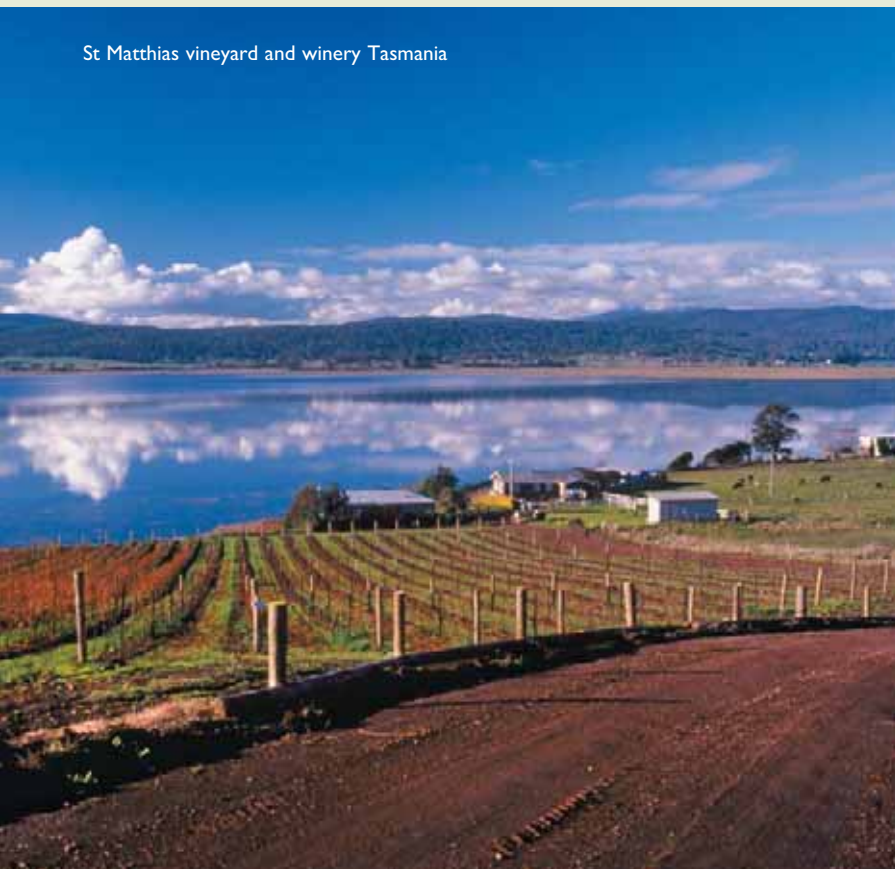
Okanagan, Canada

Imagine rolling hills, long lazy lunches, azure lakes and top class winetasting, and Canada probably isn't the first country that springs to mind. The Okanagan region of Canada is located in central British Columbia between the Rockies and Vancouver and is fast becoming a well regarded wine producing area with a unique micro climate that enables several grape varieties to be grown. The area is renowned for its vineyards, warm climate, rolling fertile orchards and its proximity to Lake Okanagan, which is a favourite spot for watersports and golfing. The leading wineries such as Mission Hill and Jackson Triggs are well established and offer daily tours and tastings. The most prominent varieties of grapes are merlot and chardonnay, but the ice-wines are one of the most delicious types produced here. A great time to experience the region is during the wine festivals which are held in the spring, summer and autumn, when the region comes alive with viticulturists.

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St Matthias vineyard and winery Tasmania



Okanagan Valley, Canada

