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MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2012

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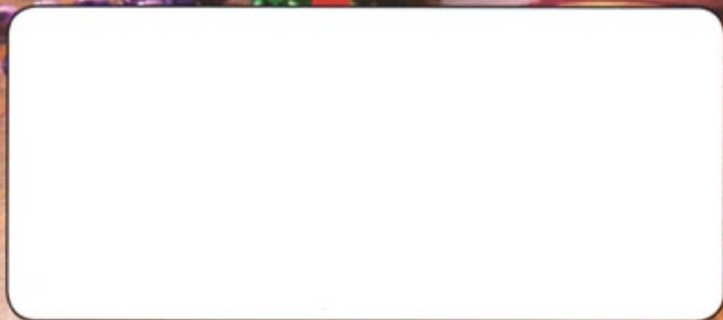
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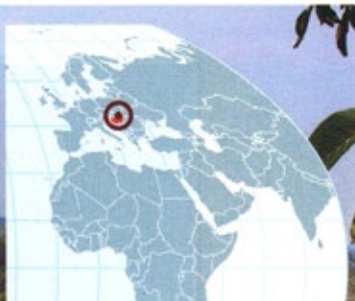
BEST WINE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS 2012

FROM CLASSIC REGIONS TO LESSER-KNOWN CORNERS, OUR EDITORS SELECT THIS YEAR'S BEST IN WINE, FOOD AND SERENDIPITY.

Wine lovers are adventurers, exploring the landscapes of fine wine, eclectic food and far-flung locales with equal aplomb. In their gastronomic pursuits, they're inevitably led to places and cultures across the globe, experiencing first-hand the world of wine and food on the very soil in which its ingredients are grown. Hoofing through the dirt of a centuries-old vineyard; tucking into a local dish at an inn leaning from time; inhaling the must and spice of a barrel room with the winemaker as guide—these are the travel discoveries that propel voyagers with a love of the vine.

In the spirit of this exploration, we've chosen 10 wine destinations on the must-see list for any passionate epicure in 2012. Each one offers an unforgettable combination of beautiful scenery, compelling history, eclectic character and of course, outstanding wine and food. We chose well-known destinations as well as emerging gems, with an eye for both the budget-minded traveler and the bon vivant. Happy travels!





TOKAJ-HEGYALJA

HUNGARY

Rules in Tokaj regarding vineyard selection, terrace construction and irrigation were established in 1641.

Located in the foothills of Northern Hungary, the Tokaj-Hegyalja wine region has been famous for its delicious sweet wines for centuries. Wine has been produced here since the third century, but the region became internationally renowned when Louis XIV served it to his court at Versailles in 1703 and named it the “wine of kings, the king of wines.” France produces a similar and perhaps better-known wine—Sauternes—whose sugar is also concentrated by botrytis, or noble rot. In 2002, UNESCO declared Tokaj a World Heritage Site and recognized more than 1,000 continuous years of Tokaji Aszú production.


—MIKE DESIMONE & JEFF JENSEN

WHERE TO TASTE: Visit Disznókő for its spectacular architecture that combines decorative elements of the 18th century, a Baroque watchtower and a modern circular building designed by the award-winning Hungarian architect, Dezső Eklér. Don't miss the wonderful wines of Dobogó, just steps from Tokaj's main town square. Owned by Izabella Zwack of the Zwack Unicum family, Dobogó will delight you with its rustic Old World charm, quality dry white wines and delicious Tokaji Aszús. The labyrinth of tunnels criss-crossing under Oremus represents some of the finest wine cellars in the region. You could easily get lost amid the bottles and barrels, many of which are age-old.


PROMINENT GRAPE VARIETIES: The indigenous varieties Hárslevelű, Furmint, Sargá Muskotály, Zéta, Kabar and Kövérszőlő are the only ones permitted to be grown under the Tokaji denomination. Long, warm autumns and river mists create a perfect climate for the noble rot found in Tokaji Aszú.

WHERE TO DINE: Enjoy fresh game birds and wild boar at Gróf Degenfeld Castle, the former family hunting lodge of the Austro-Hungarian Habsburgs. Old World elegance, cascading crystal chandeliers and an excellent wine list will make you feel like royalty. Check out Os Kaján in Tolcsva, run by an affable French couple who masterfully blend local flavors and French technique with their beautiful décor. Or dine at Disznókő's excellent winery restaurant, Sargá Borház.

WHERE TO STAY: Gróf Degenfeld Castle Hotel recalls the opulence of the Empire. Andrásy Kúria Hotel and Spa is a great place to unwind with a vinotherapy massage. Mádi Kúria Hotel feels like a French country inn.

WHEN TO GO:
 May ushers in the Tokaj Wine Festival, while October brings the Harvest Festival.

OTHER ACTIVITIES:
 Cyclists will love the beautifully maintained EuroVelo bicycle trails around the region, while history buffs will enjoy the architecture and village walking tours. Make sure to save some time for a day hike in the Zemplén Hills or kayak down the Bodrog River. Families can enjoy a scenic motorboat trip up the Tisza.

BUDGET TIP:
 Gather picnic provisions in local cheese stores, salami and sausage shops, wineries and artisanal bakeries, and head for the parks on the banks of the Bodrog and Tisza rivers.

LOCAL IN-THE-KNOW:
 Izabella Zwack, owner of Dobogó Winery, recommends exploring on foot: “Stand at the top of the St. Tamás Vineyard in Mád and look out over one of the most beautiful valleys in the world. If you visit during harvest, follow the women as they harvest Aszú to see the precision that is involved in picking these grapes, one by one.”



Andrásy Kúria Hotel and Spa: andrassyrezidencia.hu
 Disznókő disznoko.hu

Dobogó: dobogo.hu
 Gróf Degenfeld Castle Hotel: hotelgrofdegenfeld.hu

Oremus: tokajoremus.com
 Os Kaján: oskajan.hu

Mádi Kúria Hotel: madikuria.hu
 Tokaj region: tokaji.hu

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