

# VOGUE

## This Chilean Valley Is a Red Wine Paradise



If you prefer your wine inky, with bold berry and tobacco notes, then an exploration of Chile's Colchagua Valley could very well be your dream trip. Known for exclusively producing full-bodied red wine varietals like the country's famed carménère, this under-the-radar wine haven is emerging as a paradise for oenophiles everywhere.

Sandwiched between the Andes Mountains and the Coastal Mountain Range, the valley's granitic and volcanic soils merge with an arid Mediterranean climate, causing grapes to ripen slower, often with little intervention. With consistent heat, sensitive skins of white wine grapes perish, while red wine grapes flourish, causing the emergence of an unmatched organic red wine industry. Of the varietals, carménère is certainly the star. Originally hailing from France but now nearly extinct in regions like Bordeaux, in Chile the grape is bottled as a single varietal wine, but it also mixes with the valley's complementary harvest of malbec, cabernet sauvignon, and syrah.

Brian Pearson, founder of boutique travel company Upscape and a pioneer of travel to the region, says cycling is the best way to discover the area's rolling vineyards. "By cycling through the valley you're able to really experience it with all your senses," Pearson says. "Sure, you can go winery to winery by car, but by doing so on bike you're forced to slow down and fully enjoy the stunning mountain and vineyard views of where you are."

Top-notch hotels make the region a breeze to cycle around and visit. The four-room Relais & Châteaux Clos Apalta Residence is in the heart of the Colchagua Valley, and neighboring Viña Vik provides a luxe stay for contemporary art enthusiasts in the Millahue Valley. Both properties run their own wineries.

"Across Chile, we continue to see independent winemakers challenging the norms of more traditional winemaking, from creating new blends and resurrecting old grapes to implementing dry and organic, biodynamic farming practices," says Pearson. "As oenotourism continues to gain popularity, more people will turn to Chile and the Colchagua Valley for consistently great wines, sunny weather, and stunning scenery."

To make the most of a cycling trip to the Colchagua Valley, put these six wineries on your route.

### **Vik Millahue**

Located in the neighboring Millahue Valley, no trip to Colchagua is complete without a stop at Vik. Founded by Norwegian entrepreneur Alexander Vik and his wife Carrie Vik, this winery's holistic oenologists combine cutting-edge technology with the terroir of Millahue to create blends of cabernet sauvignon, carménère, syrah, merlot, and cabernet franc. When you visit, take note of the winery's innovative design and architecture, including a concrete plaza walkway and water feature that naturally cools the underground cellar.