

INTRODUCTION

We've all experienced it on our travels - whether watching a sunset in California with a glass of chilled Chardonnay or at a barbeque in Texas with a beefy Shiraz - when a local wine could not be more perfectly suited to the moment.

Tasting wine in the place it was made can be a revelation.

This book plots a course through 40 of North America's greatest wine regions, with weekend-long itineraries in each.

We encounter California's cutting-edge wine scene and the incredible reds being made in Texas' hill country.

We venture into the hip urban wineries of Santa Barbara and Portland; travel through Canada's remote Okanagan region; and head out east to explore New York, Virginia, Maryland and more. In each, our expert local writers recommend rewarding wineries to visit and the most memorable wines to taste.

This is a book for casual quaffers; there's no impenetrable language about malolactic fermentation or scoring systems. Instead, we meet some of the continent's most enthusiastic and knowledgeable winemakers and learn about each region's wines in their own words. It is this personal introduction to wine, in its home, that is at the heart of wine-touring's appeal.

Courtesy of Division Winery



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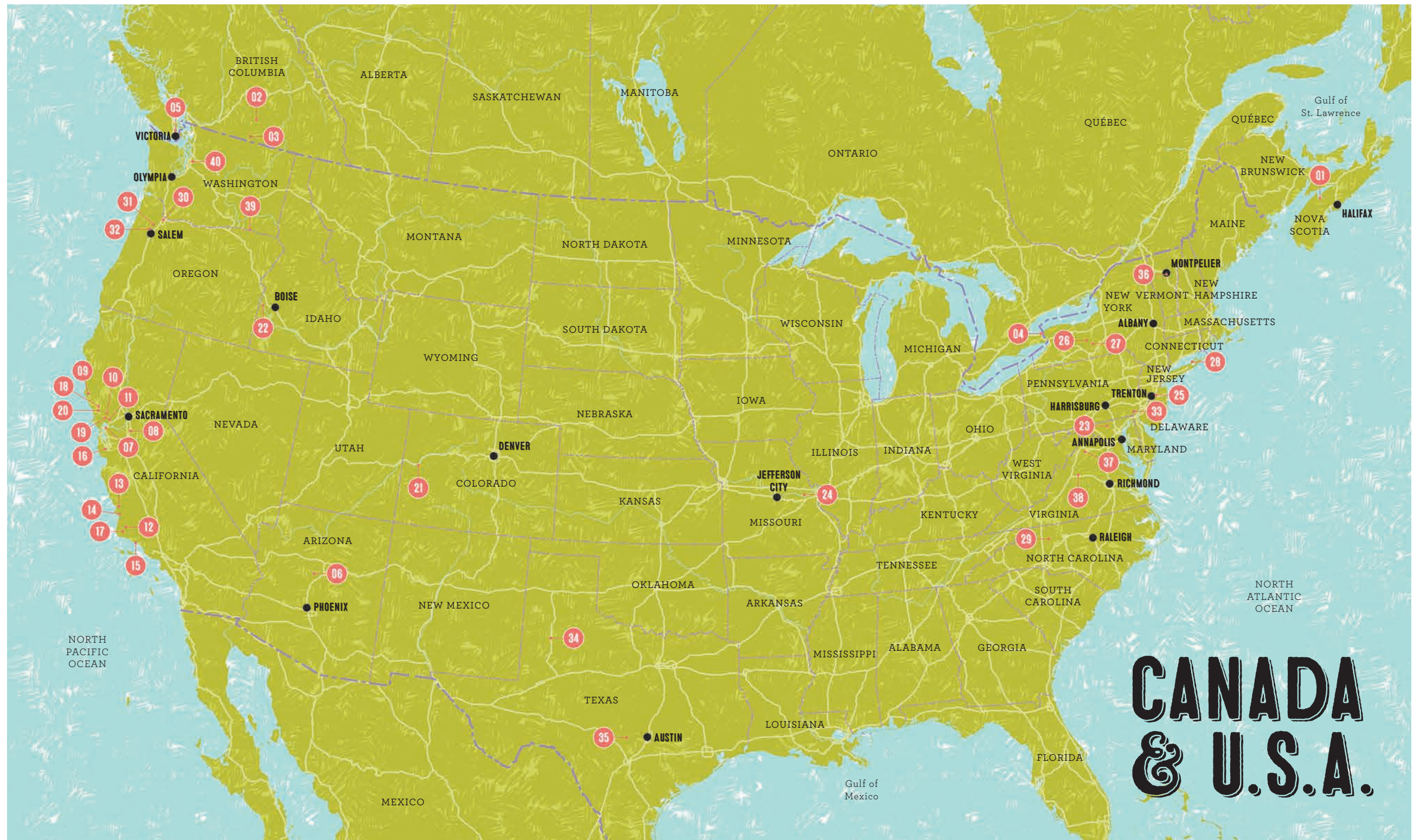
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CANADA





[Nova Scotia]

NOVA SCOTIA

Canada's easterly Maritime province is mastering its bracing climate to make fine sparklings and unusual, delicate wines in the Annapolis Valley.

Overflowing farm shops, authentic clapboard settler villages and handwritten pick-your-own fruit billboards signal your arrival in the Annapolis Valley. This is Nova Scotia's bucolic breadbasket, where independent, fair-trade and community-minded enterprises win over both locals and visitors, and fledgling wineries are down-to-earth affairs with no lofty ambitions beyond their organic farming principles.

Though today's wine industry is in its infancy, it was the 17th-century French Acadian settlers who first cultivated grapes here. Nova Scotia's cool climate, enough to send a shiver down the vine tendrils, comes with its challenges for viticulturists – the pulse of the province pounds along with the ocean waves and it's only granted 120 annual days of sunshine compared with about 300 in, say, Australia. Around the Annapolis Valley, vineyards border the tumultuous Bay of Fundy where the highest tides in the world gush in and out each day. The

sea-drenched terroir lends itself to light, zesty or floral whites, acidic reds and sparkling wines.

The local winemakers have had to get inventive to achieve complexity and variety, tearing up the rule books to make way for imaginative techniques, little-known grapes and individual wines. Some have even been engineered for the climate and cuisine: Tidal Bay, the region's signature appellation, is produced to strict criteria and designed to pair with Nova Scotia's local seafood (this is lobster country, by the way). Virtually every winery in the province produces its own version but you'll find it characteristically light, almost crystal clear, with a zing that lashes the mouth like the North Atlantic Ocean.

Nova Scotia is a seasonal destination, so come June to September to ensure all doors are open. The hub of the valley – and a good base for touring – is Wolfville, with its parade of 19th-century, candy-coloured houses, fair-trade coffee shops and big community heart.

GET THERE

Nova Scotia's international airport is in Halifax on the south coast. Hire a car for the 1hr drive to Wolfville in the Annapolis Valley.



01 AVONDALE SKY WINERY

See those settler churches gracing every tranquil village in the Annapolis Valley? Your first stop is one of these. Deconsecrated churches that have fallen out of use are being reimagined across Nova Scotia, and the one that houses Avondale Sky was bought for a mere US\$1. Owners Stewart and Lorraine fell for the unloved 19th-century structure and decided that rather than see it destroyed, they would use the Bay of Fundy's phenomenal tidal power to relocate the church to their vineyard. It took months to find the right tidal window to transport the building up the river by barge, but it now serves as Avondale Sky's tasting room, illuminated by original

stained-glass windows, and the winery has become known as 'the floating church'.

Most of Nova Scotia's signature grapes are hybrid styles that thrive in the province's cool climate. A good one to try here is L'Acadie Blanc, a fuller-bodied grape similar in style to Chardonnay. The name comes from the word Acadia, the historical term for the maritime lands of northeastern North America once ruled by the French, including parts of Nova Scotia.

The winery is a minor detour off the route to Wolfville from Halifax. During the summer months Avondale Sky's D'Vine Morsels restaurant serves lunch, and it's possible to tour the vineyard. www.avondalesky.com; tel 902-

253-2047; 80 Avondale Cross Rd, Newport Landing; 11am-4.30pm daily ✂

02 DOMAINE DE GRAND PRÉ

Just outside Wolfville, the Unesco-inscribed arable plains and marshlands of Grand Pré were toiled over by the Acadians in the 17th century. Archaeological relics, including original dykes and sluices, are considered an exceptional example of how the first European settlers adapted to life on the North American Atlantic coast. You can learn about the legacy of the Grand Pré National Historic Site through information boards inside the winery and at a panoramic lookout point behind the estate, reached by following a nature trail

through the vineyards.

The wine estate is arguably the grande dame of the Annapolis Valley, occupying several historic buildings and producing award-winning vintages. Its owners have concentrated mainly on styles of wine that reflect Nova Scotia's clay-rich, acidic soil and oceanic climate – such as Ortega, Riesling and Seyval Blanc – and have even joined forces with Agriculture Canada to work on hardy local varieties. Castel is the heaviest red produced here, but even that could only be considered medium-bodied compared with wines from the US or Australia.

The vineyard also makes ice wines from vidal and muscat



01 The memorial church at Grand Pré National Historical Site

02 The barrel room at Planter's Ridge

03 Pruning the vines at Avondale Sky

04 Flowers and vines at Avondale Sky



grapes, picked by night in the depths of winter and pressed when frozen. Most curious and memorable, though, is its decadent Pomme d'Or cream liqueur – made with apples but exhibiting the viscosity of an ice wine. Make a dinner reservation in advance for the vineyard's fine-dining Le Caveau restaurant.

www.grandprewines.ns.ca; tel 902-542-1753; 11611 Highway 1; 10am-6pm daily ✂

03 LUCKETT VINEYARDS

The USP at this Instagram-friendly winery is its bright red phone box – a British design classic that nobody expects to see in a field of vines framed by the looking-glass Bay of Fundy. The owner, Pete Lockett, is a hugely successful British-born, Canadian entrepreneur whom staff call 'the rockstar of retail and wizard of wineries', and his wine shop is stacked like the best-dressed high-street window. Out front, Lockett's canopied terrace bistro is the place to come for a casual lunch with gorgeous views.

Nova Scotian reds are typically quite acidic due to the cool climate, but Lockett's signature Phone Box Red has been cleverly engineered: a blend of four local grapes are partially dried in a heat-controlled environment for fuller flavour, then aged in Hungarian and American oak, to pack a greater punch with tannic notes of raisins and prunes.

If you stay for lunch, order the estate's particularly good, zesty Tidal Bay. This official appellation



wine of Nova Scotia is made for food pairing – especially with local salmon, scallops and lobster. Round off your visit with a photo in front of the phone box, or even a phone call – the line still works and it's free to call anywhere in North America... www.luckettvineyards.com; tel 902-542-2600; 1293 Grand Pré Rd, Wallbrook; tours 11am & 3pm daily May-Oct ☒

04 BENJAMIN BRIDGE

For one of the most entertaining winery tours in the valley head to the barnyard hubbub at Benjamin Bridge, where vineyard pigs act as sustainable farmhands and beehives have been erected to encourage natural pollination among the organic vines.

North Americans can't get enough of the Nova 7 sparkling for which the winery is best known. Fizz became Benjamin Bridge's calling card when, as a winery

The best sipping terrace belongs to Planters Ridge, an understated village winery in a 150-year-old timber barn

guide explains, founder 'Gerry took it upon himself to start digging out Champagne caves in the hills behind the vineyard' one year. The local climate is similar to that of the Champagne region and forecasters predict that Nova Scotia is about to enter a peak weather period mirroring that of France fifty years ago, so it seems Gerry's whim was no stab in the dark.

The grapes here are hand-harvested and sparklings are made using the French méthode classique. The signature sell-out Nova 7 is meddled with very little in the cellar, so each vintage has

05 Planters Ridge vineyard

06 Fisherman's Cove

its own character. With an alcohol volume of only 7%, it makes a light complement to Nova Scotian seafood and summer salads. www.benjaminbridge.com; tel 902-542-1560; 1966 White Rock Rd, Gaspereau; by appointment \$

05 PLANTERS RIDGE

If Luckett Vineyards is the rockstar, Planters Ridge has to be the gifted average Joe just waiting to be discovered: its quiet cellar door has bags of charm but less of the whizz-bang presentation. And the award for best sipping terrace in the valley (sorry, Luckett) must go to this understated village winery in a 150-year-old timber-framed barn. The best way to get here is by bike, along Port Williams' Starr's Point agritourism loop.

Tropical fruit characterises Planters Ridge's signature white blend, Quintessence, and summer berries come across in its quaffable off-dry rosé made with a blend of Baco Noir and Frontenac Blanc grapes. Sampling done, head to the elevated patio – the perfect place to watch the sun set over the valley's farmlands, glass of wine in hand, as the sky fades to the colour of a blushing grape. Vineyard tours are available by appointment. www.plantersridge.ca; tel 902-542-2711; 1441 Church St, Port Williams; 10.30am–5.30pm Mon–Sat, noon–5pm Sun ☒\$

From left: courtesy of Planters Ridge; © shaun / Getty Images

WHERE TO STAY BLOMIDON INN, WOLFVILLE

This heritage hotel is a statement address in Wolfville, with a grand front lawn and luxurious olde-worlde rooms. There's a highly recommended restaurant, but if you can't be persuaded to go down for dinner simply order your tipple of choice off the wine list. www.blomidon.ns.ca; tel 800 565 2291; 195 Main St, Wolfville

PLANTERS' BARRACKS COUNTRY INN

Behind the jelly bean-coloured façade, this boutique country estate offers rooms with period features such as claw-footed tubs. It's in a rustic setting near Port Williams village – ideal for tackling the Starr's Point Loop. www.plantersbarracks.online; tel 902 697 3303; 1464 Starr's Point Rd, Port Williams

WHERE TO EAT THE NOODLE GUY

This artisanal pasta restaurant started life



as a stall at the Wolfville Farmers' Market. It's a simple affair, with revolving C\$10 dishes chalked up on a board. Jam sessions rock out on Saturday afternoons. www.thenoodleguy.wordpress.com; 964 Main St, Port Williams; 10am–7pm Mon–Sat

LE CAVEAU RESTAURANT
Domaine de Grand Pré's restaurant is the pinnacle of fine dining in a valley that focuses mostly on farm-to-table markets and cafes. Chef Jason Lynch champions Nova Scotia on a plate and has won awards for his imaginative use of local ingredients. The restaurant's leafy terrace is a lovely spot on summer nights. www.grandprewines.ns.ca/restaurant; 11611 Highway 1; 11am–9pm May–Oct, check online for winter opening times

WHAT TO DO

STARR'S POINT LOOP

This 8km agritourism trail lassoing the village of Port Williams traverses cross-country tracks and field-facing backroads, linking together pick-your-own fruit farms, a cheese-tasting room, antiques barn, innovative small-batch distillery and beloved local Port Pub. It can be explored walking or cycling, but note it's a sweltering hike on sunny summer days as there's precious little shade. www.starrspointloop.com

BURNTCOAT HEAD PARK

An hour east of Wolfville, the highest tides in the world have been recorded at this 3-acre park. Up to 1.6 billion tonnes of water surge into the Bay of Fundy's basin each day; when the water drains you can skip for miles. Knowledgeable

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

guides at Burntcoat Head offer tours exploring the area's geological history and tidal pools out on the seabed. At high tide, there are nature trails and a lighthouse museum to visit. www.burntcoathadpark.ca

CELEBRATIONS

NOVA SCOTIA ICEWINE FESTIVAL

Some cellar doors close altogether in winter, but Wolfville's annual ice wine festival in February/March keeps the winemakers' fires blazing. Dessert wines from across the Annapolis Valley are brought to the tasting table, paired with food from local chefs. www.nsicewinefest.com

LOBSTER BASH

The king of shellfish is cheap and plentiful along the Bay of Fundy coast. In Digby, a 1.5hr drive from Wolfville, the local lobster is celebrated at the end of June with outdoor concerts and competitions for the best lobster chowder, lobster banding, trap stacking and trap hauling. www.lobsterbash.ca



[British Columbia]

NORTHERN OKANAGAN LAKE

The freezing winters of northern Okanagan belie an impressive range of grape varieties grown in vineyards characterised by stunning views and complex soils.

Courtesy of Bench 1775 Winery / Adrian Photographers - adrianphotographers.com

This trail begins not on the ground but in the air, with a 50min flight from Vancouver to Kelowna offering astonishing views of a landscape created by ancient glacial activity. The resulting mountains, snow, endless forests and piercing turquoise lakes are panoramic jaw-droppers, and far-removed from the kind of scenery most associated with wine-growing.

The Okanagan Valley has a complex geology; the glacial movement led to large deposits of silt,

GET THERE

Kelowna is less than an hour's flight from Vancouver. Car hire is available.

sand and gravel on the valley's bed and sides, resulting in a lot of sand-heavy soils in the south and rocky, sparse soils in the north, with assorted differentiations in between, all of which yield refreshingly diverse wines.

With the vineyards lying north of 49°, you might expect the kind of cool temperatures found in Champagne or the Mosel. Many visitors are surprised that vines can be grown here, but despite the icy winters a vast array of grape varieties can succeed, largely thanks to the hot summers. There's another benefit to the northerly location; short growing seasons are compensated for by long sunlight hours, so grapes have no problem reaching maturity. Add in the differentiation between day and night and you have wines that retain great freshness and thus zingy acidity – a signature stamp of the Okanagan.

The wine industry and vines here are young, but growing fast; in 1984 there were 13 wineries in BC, today there are 174 in the Okanagan alone. This means fewer rules with regards to planting (more than 230 grape varieties are sown) and wine styles, and all the more fun for wine fans.

This trail focuses on the Northern Okanagan Valley, from Kelowna down to the cluster of award-winning wineries on the Naramata Bench, and across to the other side: to Summerland and Westbank. These areas are well known for cool climate grape varieties, such as Riesling, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.



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