



**WINE ENTHUSIAST**  
MAGAZINE



**10  
BEST**

**WINE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS**

**2013**





From classic regions to lesser-known corners, our editors select this year's best in wine, food and cultural adventure.

A sense of place—the sights, sounds, smells and spirit of a travel destination—can endear that area to a person forever. For wine lovers, there is no better way to cement that connection than to explore the world around those vines. As the wine market becomes ever more global, packed with offerings ranging from the most storied wine regions to the most offbeat, so does the wine traveler's itinerary.

Each year, our editors travel the world to experience the best wine and food, and in turn, discover the most exciting places to visit. Our list for 2013 represents the wide swath of cultural and culinary experiences on the must-see list.

Whether your tastes lean toward the rustic climbing trails of South Africa's Stellenbosch or a tour of a Puglian castle, this list promises outstanding travel experiences and unforgettable wines.

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## BRAZIL

# Vale dos Vinhedos

Forget about the sandy beaches and bikini-clad beauties of Rio de Janeiro, and instead picture the rolling hills of Italy's Piedmont region. In the late 1800s, southern Brazil experienced a mass influx of Italian immigrants, primarily from northern Italy. The largest and most important wine region in the country, Serra Gaúcha and its *Denominação de Origen*, Vale dos Vinhedos, now account for almost 90% of Brazil's fine wine production. These green hills, dotted with wineries, hotels and restaurants, attract approximately 150,000 visitors per year. Italian cuisine is prominent, and many aged residents speak an almost-lost Venetian dialect interspersed with Portuguese.

—JEFF JENSEN & MIKE DESIMONE

### WHERE TO DINE

At Valle Rustico, don't miss Chef Rodrigo Bellora's filet mignon with house-made chimichurri sauce or polenta with wild boar ragu. With a wine list boasting 21 sparkling, six white and 35 red selections, it's hard to choose just one. At Cabanha's Churrascaria, this traditional pampa-style restaurant features prime cuts of beef that are grilled to perfection over a wood-burning fire. The attached wine shop makes

picking your wine fun, educational and easy.

### WHERE TO STAY

With 128 luxurious rooms, lavish public areas and a world-class spa, Hotel & Spa do Vinho Caudalie is the place to base yourself while touring Brazilian wine country. Don Giovanni Vinhos Vinhedos Pousada is a quaint, family-run bed-and-breakfast, and is a bastion of Old World charm. Eight guest rooms, a winery and an award-winning restaurant are set in a historic house built in 1930.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

Take the family for a relaxing day in Serra Gaúcha's hot springs. Caldas de Prata offers a variety of packages to suit your needs and budget, from a simple pool



### LOCAL IN-THE-KNOW

Flavio Pizzato of Pizzato Vinhas e Vinhos likes to spend his days away from the winery actively engaged with nature. "The region is very steep, green and full of barely explored areas. [Mountain range] Paredão da Eulália is close to our winery, and you can just see the sights there or do a deep forest exploration. Also, Serra Gaúcha's main river, Rio das Antas, is very good for rafting." One of his favorite outfitters is CIA Aventura.



PHOTO: JEFF JENSEN & MIKE DESIMONE; ©CABANHA'S CHURRASCARIA; ©CASA VALDUGA



From left: vazio is one of the most succulent cuts of meat on the menu at Cabanha's Churrascaria; sparkling wines aging on the lees inside the cellar at Casa Valduga



soak (approximately \$9.50) to a luxurious spa day (prices vary by treatment). Make sure to visit the beautiful local waterfall, Cascata da Usina.

#### PROMINENT WINES

Red wines are made using Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Tannat, Ancellotta, Pinot Noir, Touriga Nacional and Teroldego. White grapes include Riesling, Chardonnay, Muscat, Malvasia and Glera (formerly known as Prosecco). Sparkling wines are produced in dry and sweet styles, and are among Brazil's more sought-after sips.

The only red grape that can be labeled as a single varietal in Vale dos Vinhedos is Merlot. Notable examples are made by producers like Miolo, Casa Valduga and Pizzato. The *Indicação de Procedência* Pinto Bandeira allows production of both sweet and dry sparkling wines, and dry reds and whites.

#### BUDGET TIP

Buy a bottle of Brazilian sparkling wine and some *pão de queijo* (cheese bread) and head out to Floresta de Tijuca Municipal Park for a relaxing afternoon amid the local flora and fauna.

#### WHERE TO TASTE

Roughly 130,000 visitors per year pass through Miolo winery's gates. Under the guidance of consultant Michel Rolland, it makes highly regarded red, white and sparkling wines. At Pizzato Vinhas e Vinhos, father and son Plinio and Flavio Pizzato make excellent wines from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir (for sparkling) and some lesser-known varieties. Visitors are often surprised by the impressive European-style buildings at Casa Valduga. Make sure to tour its extensive sparkling wine cellars.

Vinícola Aurora is a co-op with 1,100 member families and a variety of bottlings. The red-wine-spouting, gold-toned Bacchus fountain is a fun photo op. Also, visit Vinícola Salton. Started in 1910, the winery now produces more than 30 wines.



#### ON THE WEB

Cabanha's Churrascaria: [cabanhas.net](http://cabanhas.net)  
 Caldas de Prata: [caldasdeprata.com](http://caldasdeprata.com)  
 Casa Valduga: [casavalduga.com.br](http://casavalduga.com.br)  
 CIA Aventura: [ciaaventura.com.br](http://ciaaventura.com.br)

Don Giovanni Vinhos Vinhedos Pousada: [dongiovanni.com.br](http://dongiovanni.com.br)  
 Hidrotermal Caldas de Prata: [caldasdeprata.com](http://caldasdeprata.com)  
 Hotel & Spa do Vinho Caudalie: [spadovinho.com.br](http://spadovinho.com.br)

Miolo: [www.miolo.com.br](http://www.miolo.com.br)  
 Pizzato Vinhas e Vinhos: [pizzato.net](http://pizzato.net)  
 Valle Rustico: [vallerustico.com.br](http://vallerustico.com.br)  
 Vinícola Aurora: [www.vinicolaaurora.com.br](http://www.vinicolaaurora.com.br)  
 Vinícola Salton: [salton.com.br](http://salton.com.br)



#### WHEN TO GO

Most of Brazil is south of the equator, so the seasons are opposite ours. Go in March to catch the harvest.