

ENOTOURISM IN GERMANY

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Germany is known for fabulous year-round festivals, medieval castles, amazing history, and mouth-watering food including an assortment of sausages, beer, pretzels and delicious desserts and pastries. But how much do we know of its wine festivals and tours? It appears that despite being well-developed, German wine industry is familiar mostly to those people, who are seeking for new directions to try.

Germany's wine regions boast some of the country's most beautiful scenery, the finest food and the best touted tourist attractions. Castles, lordly manors, great landscapes and fine cuisine are natural components of wine country lifestyle. Each of Germany's 13 vineyard regions has its own set of customs and traditions, which translates into an exceptional range of wines. The main grape varieties are riesling, silvaner and rivaner for white wines, and pinot noir for reds.

There are two major wine-growing regions in Germany: Mosel and Rheingau. The Mosel region is the best-known throughout the world, and covers the Moselle, Saar, and Ruwer rivers. Mosel produces primarily riesling wines, which are generally low-alcohol, fruity wines, that range from off-dry to very sweet.

The Rheingau region runs along the Rhine river, and produces wines that are commonly exported. Rheingau wines are also predominantly rieslings, although roughly one-fifth of the grapes grown there are pinot noir. Although tour providers operate in both regions, they do not cater to English-language speakers, and guided tours are generally arranged once you are in the country.

Most of the regions are concentrated within an hour or two of the Greater Frankfurt metropolitan area, close to Cologne, Heidelberg and Stuttgart, as well as Würzburg. With Autobahn, rail and regional road, all are easily accessible, including Germany's two newest appellations - Sachsen, (near Dresden) and Saale-Unstrut, (between Leipzig and Jena.)

The best times to visit the vineyards are from late April into the summer and then, depending on weather conditions, immediately after the harvest in autumn. There are hundreds of open-air wine festivals (Weinfest or Winzerfest), a perfect opportunity to taste the wines, enjoy local taste treats. There's frequently dancing, and a parade led by the reigning wine queen. Spectacular fireworks displays brighten the skies at the biggest fests, and major culinary events are scheduled at local restaurants.

Every German quality wine undergoes a critical, blind, sensory examination based on a five-point scale devised by the DLG (German Agricultural Society). The testing procedure is divided into two essential parts: judging whether specific prerequisites have been fulfilled; and the examination of a wine's sensory characteristics.

In addition to various types of wine whose names derive from their color and/or method of production, the wine law also permits a number of specialty and regional wines.

Among them the most special and famous is German ice wine. It is a type of dessert wine produced from grapes that have been frozen while still on the vine. The sugars and other dissolved solids do not freeze, but the water does, allowing a more concentrated grape must to be pressed from the frozen grapes, resulting in a smaller amount of more concentrated, very sweet wine. With ice wines, the freezing happens before the fermentation, not afterwards.

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Considering that huge amount of resources and further development of wine tourism routes, we can expect future German enotourism rising. All what is needed to attract more tourists in this direction is a good advertising campaign and developing more special routes.

References:

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