

# ENOTOURISM IN SPAIN

**A. Ivasenko**  
**K. Chala**

*National University of Food Technologies*

Spanish wine history is completely entwined with Spanish history, and wine making has been practiced in the Peninsula from times as far back as those of the Phoenicians. With such a long history and tradition, it is only natural that Spain has a type of tourism specific for wine lovers: the Spanish wine tours. These tours give you the opportunity of visiting some of the most important and historic cellars and wineries in Spain where you can learn about the wine making process, as well as the history and legends about the specific wine cellars.

However, in spite of its long tradition, Spanish wines didn't acquire international recognition until fairly recently. When some wines like Rioja or Jerez started getting attention from international critics, the rest of the wineries in Spain picked up on it, modernized their machinery and techniques, and adapted this very traditional activity to the modern demands. This brought a whole new range of wine styles with a huge improvement in quality. The critics sat up: Spain wasn't a bulk wine producer anymore, but a gourmet wine producing region worthy of high praise.

Suddenly, everyone wanted to visit Spain and to try their excellent wines. With more and more people becoming interested in the Spanish wine tradition, there had to be a way of teaching Spanish wine history in a fun, entertaining way. Thus, Spanish wine tours became all the rage, and now every designation of origin or important cellar has them. Wine tours are a great way to both experience and learn about an important piece of Spanish industry and culture, not to mention, lots of fun!

Wine tours can be a day excursion or span a whole week. Normally, they consist in visits to the cellars, wineries and vineyards, and include a tasting of their different wines where they teach how to differentiate one from the other and show the techniques used in the making of their wines. Some cellars will even gift a smaller bottle of one of their wines to the visitors or offer discounts for those willing to buy.

There are many ways to go on about organizing your wine tour in Spain. You can talk to the cellars directly and organize a visit directly with them. This is great as you can cut out the middle man, but often means that you have to wait until there is a large enough group to merit a tour. Another option would be to talk to a travel agent who specialise in these kind of tours and who will be able to give you the best options. The latter is commonly the best and easier option, especially if you want to visit several wineries in the same day or want to make a whole trip out of it, because they can offer discounts and special promotions, as well as easy transport and lodging.

Organised transport is always a good idea, especially if you are planning to visit several wineries and try their wine - drinking and driving is both unadvisable and illegal. This is also something to bear in mind if you go for the last option of doing a Spanish wine tour. Many tour operators also offer self-sufficient tours. As in

you hire a car and drive between the wineries at your own pace, meaning that you get to see more of the Spanish countryside as well as appreciating the great Spanish wines it produces.

Spanish wine tours are a great way to get acquainted with the lesser known parts of Spain, discover the complex and fascinating world of Spanish wines and brush up on your Spanish lessons!

Andalusia is a wonderful place to visit while in Spain, and it will provide you with a honest view of the Spanish day to day. Seville is one of the prettiest cities in Spain, and very traditional. Granada was for centuries one of the most important Moorish capitals in Spain, and still preserves most of its architecture, so its the perfect place to learn about Spanish history. If you're a fan of beaches and wonderful weather, Cadiz is the place to go.

Murcia, in the southeast of Spain, is a great place to visit if you're looking for a small, no-fuss city with beaches nearby and a wonderful country filled with pine trees, first rate trails for a leisure walk among nature and excellent camping places to enjoy the marvelous Spanish summer nights. And if you're looking for an out of Earth experience, the Lunar Landscape is a must see.

Madrid, the capital city and region of Spain, is located in the center of the Peninsula. It is in fact the only capital in the world with its own designation of origin, but this isn't the only thing that makes Madrid special. As the capital, Madrid is in the very center of all Spanish culture and traditions.

Navarre is on the north of Spain bordering with France. The current Navarre came from the ancient Kingdom of Navarre, which existed until 1841 and from which their current self-government system derives. The capital of Navarre is Pamplona (Iruña in Basque), a very pretty city full of historic buildings and sites, like the Navarre Palace, the Santa María de Pamplona cathedral or the church of San Saturnino.

Barcelona is one of the preferred tourist destination because of the many entertainment and cultural activities it offers. Walk down Las Ramblas, spend a day at the beach or do a tour of Gaudi's architecture, who turned the city into a work of art. Barcelona is a lively city, and there's plenty to do at any time you choose, so it's also a popular place for international students willing to learn Spanish in Spain and Spanish culture.

Catalonia, in the north of Spain, is a popular tourist destination. Barcelona is the capital and the second most important city in Spain, after Madrid.

Castile and León, the land of Ribera del Duero, is the biggest autonomous community in Spain. About 60% of Spain's artistic and cultural heritage is found here, which makes it a wonderful place to visit while on vacation in Spain. The capital is Valladolid, and the second most populated city is Salamanca, which houses the oldest University in Spain, founded in 1218 by Alfonso X.

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