

Great Escapes in Chile & Argentina

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After years of producing consistently well-regarded and accolade-earning wines, South America has well and truly stamped its reputation as a must-visit destination for oenophiles. Wine tourism is really taking hold there, with front-running wine producers Chile and Argentina leading the pack for stylish vineyard retreats. We're uncorking two of South America's most exclusive vineyard-based hotels, each specifically designed with wine in mind. So forget about day trips from big cities and hole up in the heart of the winemaking regions, where a vineyard is always within sight and a good glass always within reach.



Chile

Vina Vik, Millahue Valley

Vina Vik is a startling, shiny-roofed structure incongruously nestled in the rugged scrub of the Millahue Valley. From a distance, its shiny titanium roof is a shimmering vision set amid acres upon acres of neat bright-green rows. These are the vines that produce Vina Vik's stunning wine.

Vina Vik is hotelier Alexander Vik's first foray into wine producing and although he already has a clutch of successful, luxury hotels in Uruguay, including Playa Vik and Hotel Estancia, his sights are now firmly fixed on the wine world. This area was chosen specifically for its fertile soil and the bowing branches and plump bunches are testament to its fecundity.

Designed by Chilean architect Smiljan Radic, the winery looks sleek and futuristic. It's a dazzling architectural disk with a moonscape entrance, strewn with boulders and shallow water — designed specifically to keep the cellar

underneath cool. Below, in the barrel ageing room, where the walls are lined with French oak barrels, you can sample a glass of the smooth Vik wine. It's a blend of predominantly Chilean grapes: Carmenère, plus Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah and it's extremely good.

If you love wine, then Vina Vik fits the bill. But the hotel is so much more. Take the bedrooms: the décor is interesting and unique, with a different artist responsible for each one. You might have Japanese-inspired fittings or a bathroom tiled with Euro coins. Then there are the top-notch mod-cons, among them remote-controlled panoramic windows that face the 11,000-acre view. With the colours of the never-ending vines changing as the sun slips behind the distant mountains, it's a peaceful and still scene.

Another serene spot to drink in the views (and more of that lovely

wine) is beside the granite infinity pool. For a closer look at the verdant valleys and forest-clad hills then hop on a horse for a gentle hack through the grassy trails. If a massage beckons, then the Caudalie spa can deliver, with many treatments using grape extracts including exfoliating pips.

At dinner, dishes are produced without fanfare but with slick service. Expect gastronomic fare from local ingredients such as short ribs, chorizo and zingy salsas, paired with lashings of Vik vino.

There are one or two other notable hotels in the area for wine-lovers wanting to create a bespoke tour. Luxurious Lapostolle Residence to the south of Vina Vik overlooks the Apalta vineyards and has only four suites, which ensures an intimate atmosphere. Further to the North is TerraVina, a Scandinavian-style hotel with its own vineyard and epic views of the Andes.



Argentina

The Vines Resort & Spa, Uco Valley, Mendoza

Mendoza, Argentina, is well-known as one of the great wine regions of the world, but its appeal doesn't end with fine vintages. The grand mountains, clear blue skies, architecture, culture and choice of exclusive accommodation make it a destination that no traveller would want to miss.

Approximately 75 minutes south of the city of Mendoza, the once-overlooked Uco Valley (Valle de Uco) is now gaining attention for its breathtaking natural beauty and high-quality wine production. It's also one of the highest-altitude wine regions in the world.

Tucked away among the lush vineyards, you'll find exclusive retreats where you can really get away from it all. The combination of winemaking, adventure and romance proves especially alluring at The Vines Resort & Spa.

Built in 2013, The Vines boasts more than 1,500 acres of land. Outdoor hot tubs, fire pits and private rooftop terraces for

stargazing make their one-bedroom deluxe villas perfect for a romantic getaway. Detail-oriented design indoors gives each villa the feel of an intimate haven set amid vast open spaces and dramatic landscapes.

Just next door to the Vines, you'll find the Gimenez Riili winery. Meet the winemaking family and explore their cosy, traditional winery on a tour led by one of the handsome brothers. While in the Uco Valley, be sure to visit Clos de los Siete, a collaborative project run by four Mendoza wineries that each use distinctly different methods of winemaking. This unique space also hosts frequent art exhibitions.

There are plenty of activities for couples to enjoy within The Vines resort itself. Take to the pampas on horseback or, depending on the season, guests can help with planting vines or punching down fermenting grapes. Afterwards, head to the Barrel Room for a guided tasting session or workshop with master winemakers.

Watching the sun set over the mountains with a glass of the resort's own Recuerdos wine is the perfect way to begin an evening. Follow it up with an open-air barbecue or dine in the onsite restaurant, where Argentina's most famous chef Francis Mallmann uses his mastery of both fire and French technique on the country's famous beef.

Mendoza has so much to explore, and there's a good choice of intimate accommodation where food and wine take centre-stage. The secluded lodge at Algodon Wine Estate, in the rolling foothills of the Sierra Pintada Mountains, has five luxury suites and a world-class winery set in expansive estate grounds. Casa Margot Champagnerie, a five-star boutique hotel with only two rooms, is situated in the heart of Mendoza's most important gastronomic centre, Chacras de Coria, and makes an ideal starting point for exploring the wine trails of Luján de Cuyo.

