



# of the BEST



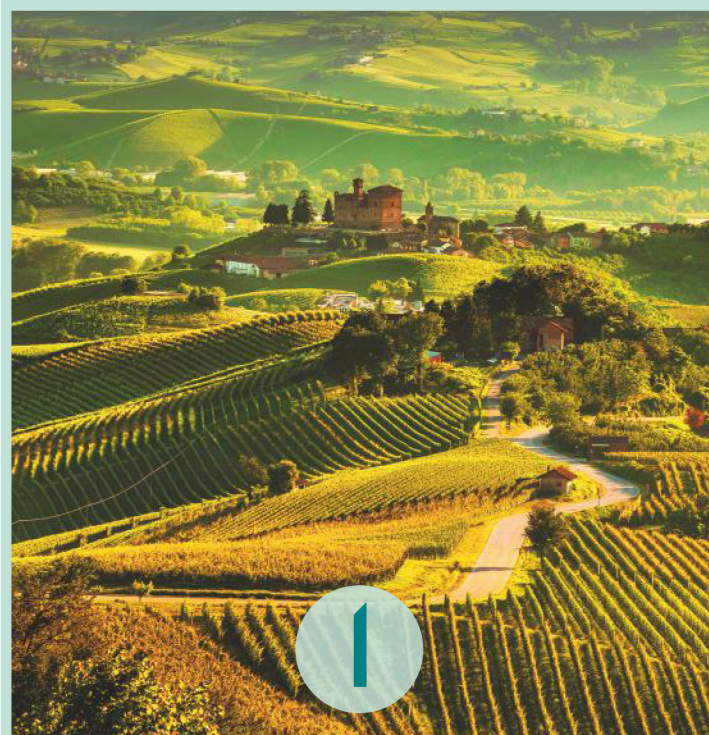
## WINE HOLIDAYS

Laura French picks out top terroirs for clients seeking a bouquet break

**W**ine, glorious wine. A good glass is pretty special at the best of times, but there's something extra-charming about sipping it against a backdrop of sweeping vineyards and silence enveloping you in a serene, blissful bubble.

Which is why it's little surprise tour operators, cruise lines and hoteliers have started uncorking the market in recent years, offering breaks that range from specialist tours led by connoisseurs to scenic cycling trips that take in a vineyard visit or two.

And whether it's a serious oenophile or casual vino drinker you've got on your hands, this doesn't have to be limited to one niche market. Cue our round-up of some of the best wine-themed breaks, ready to help you sell to clients seeking a little sweetener to look forward to in the coming year.

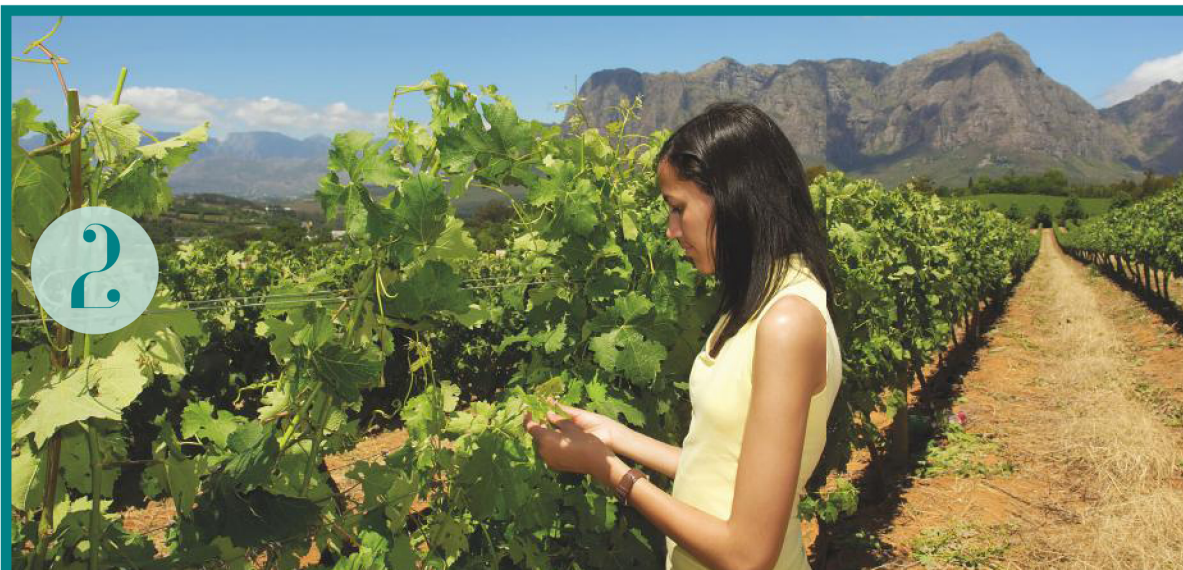


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### ENJOY WINE AND WALKING IN PIEDMONT

From a fruity chianti quaffed in the hills of Tuscany to a sweet marsala sipped in Sicily, Italy isn't short on exceptional wines. Among its most-renowned regions is Piedmont, where rich reds including barolo, nicknamed the King of Wines and known for its earthy, liquorice-like notes, meet majestic castles, colourful hamlets and rolling hills, all set against a snowy Alpine backdrop. For adventurous types wanting to pair drinks with landscapes, look to Headwater's Gastronomic Barolo Walk, a self-guided, nine-day amble through the countryside, which takes in a barolo vineyard and throws in chances to soak up the tipples with white truffles, fresh hazelnuts and Piedmont cheeses along the way.

**Book it:** From £2,049 for departures in spring/summer 2021, including accommodation, transfers and daily breakfasts and dinners. [headwater.com](http://headwater.com)



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### TOUR THE CAPE WINELANDS WITH AN EXPERT

For sheer views alone, South Africa's Cape Winelands steal the show, with postcard-pretty Franschhoek and Stellenbosch set against a dramatic mountain skyline that provides the perfect microclimate for cultivation. You'll find plenty of tours taking guests through the best of its wineries, but for those really keen to get stuck in, suggest Kirker Holidays' 10-night Wine Tour of the Western Cape. Led by expert Tim Clarke, it features immersive experiences including a wine masterclass in Stellenbosch, a traditional braai barbecue with wine tasting at the Kanonkop Estate and a visit to the renowned Hamilton Russell Estate, where guests will sample home-grown pinot noir and chardonnay with eponymous owner Anthony Hamilton Russell himself.

**Book it:** From £5,594 per person, including flights, accommodation with breakfast, wine tastings and some meals. [kirkerholidays.com](http://kirkerholidays.com)

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### STAY ON A VINEYARD IN NEW ZEALAND

The Hobbit, rugby, kiwis, adrenaline – there's little New Zealand doesn't do right, and its wine scene is clearly no exception. For cash-splashing clients keen to stay in the heart of the action, few estates are quite as inviting as Marlborough Lodge, a country manor with 10 suites, a pool and tennis courts, all set amid a 16-acre plot in one of the South Island's biggest wine-producing regions. There's a real emphasis on local, seasonal produce, with local dishes served alongside wines grown on its own vineyard, while those wanting to explore the surrounding wineries can book day tours for further samplings.

**Book it:** From £1,318 per night for a Lodge Suite in 2021, including breakfast. [themarlbroughlodge.co.nz](http://themarlbroughlodge.co.nz)



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### SIP MALBEC IN MENDOZA

As South America's biggest wine producer, Argentina knows how to do a good vintage – and nowhere does it quite like Mendoza, a patchwork of verdant valleys set in the Andean foothills and best known for its dark, plummy malbecs grown at high, sunny altitudes. Home to more than 1,500 wineries and responsible for 60% of the country's wine production, the region isn't short on tasting opportunities, while the city itself is well worth a gander with leafy streets and laid-back cafes meeting lively, student-friendly bars and restaurants. Latin Routes sandwiches three days here between visits to Buenos Aires and Iguazu Falls on its 10-day Flavour of Argentina tour.

**Book it:** From £2,099 per person for a 2021 departure, including accommodation, transfers and domestic flights. [latinroutes.co.uk](http://latinroutes.co.uk)





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### SET SAIL AROUND PORTO

Think Porto, think port. The rich, fruity fortified wine was first traded here in the 17th century and takes its name from the city. This heritage is now being celebrated with the opening of World of Wine, a cultural district that will see Porto's centuries-old cellars turned into a series of interactive experiences this summer. Of course, the city really owes its reputation to the verdant terraces of the surrounding Douro Valley, and there's no more idyllic way to explore them than on a river cruise. AmaWaterways has a seven-night Wine Cruise taking in the highlights, with tastings at quintas, hiking excursions, a trip to Salamanca, port sampling in the city and plenty more on the agenda.

**Book it:** From £3,227 including flights and transfers, round-trip from Porto in 2021.  
amawaterways.co.uk

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### GO BEHIND THE SCENES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Whether it's a shiraz in the Barossa region, a cabernet sauvignon in McLaren Vale or a riesling in the Clare Valley, there's something to satisfy most palates in Australia's premier wine region, with tours to suit all budgets too. For those wanting to push the boat out, Australian operator Coast & Co offers private charter tours (and sells through the UK trade). One option is a four-day South Australia and Outback Explorer trip that strings together all the highlights, including a visit to a private chateau, a helicopter flight over McLaren Vale, a scenic flight over Wilpena Pound and a private tour of Wirra Wirra's historic cellars.

**Book it:** From £5,290 per person for a group of two to four, including accommodation, tours, transfers and all meals.  
coastandco.com.au



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### CYCLE THE VINEYARDS OF BORDEAUX

For a classic French wine experience, look to Bordeaux, home to an astonishing 6,000 vineyards, producing more than 9,000 varieties, amid fairytale landscapes of turreted chateaux, mirror-flat lakes and flower-filled gardens. Visitors can stay on vineyards or take off on a group tour, but for those wanting to get a little more active suggest Inntravel's six-night self-guided Bordeaux and St-Emilion cycling holiday. This takes guests through the rolling hills of Bordeaux, Romagne and Cadillac via remote villages, ornate estates and verdant vineyards, where there's ample chance to fuel up for the journey ahead.

**Book it:** From £945 including accommodation, some meals, bike hire, luggage transfers and maps.  
inntravel.co.uk

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### EXPLORE NAPA VALLEY

No list would be complete without giving California its dues, and from the grand old estates of Napa Valley to the laid-back boutiques of Sonoma County, its beauty is matched only by sheer variety. For those wanting to base themselves in the heart of Napa, look no further than Las Alcobas, an adult-only retreat that started as a farmhouse in 1907 and now boasts a spa, farm-to-table restaurant and pool. Winery visits, on-site tastings and luxury dining on the Napa Valley Wine Train are all bookable, while those looking for an added thrill can float in a hot-air balloon and view Napa's iconic rows of vines from an angle they won't forget any time soon.

**Book it:** Las Alcobas costs from \$587 per night for a Superior room in February 2021.  
marriott.co.uk



### BEST OF THE REST

**Canada:** Canadian wine might not get the hype of its fellows, but don't overlook the dark horse. Direct fans of dessert wine to the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, famous for the region's honey-sweet icewines and the annual Icewine Festival in January. For an alternative, suggest Nova Scotia, home to Tidal Bay, a white wine appellation produced only there.

**La Rioja:** Boasting more than 600 wineries, Spain's oldest official wine region deserves a place on the list for any budding connoisseur, blending quaint hilltop villages with a longstanding history of viticulture that will appeal to anyone after a quintessential Spanish experience. Abercrombie & Kent offers a three-day private Basque Country Bites tour including wine-tasting from £1,800.

**Madeira:** Despite the fact Madeiran wine has been around for more than 300 years, this fortified liquor, first designed for sea voyages, is still something of an underdog – as is the island, making its lush green hills, rolling vineyards and opal coastlines still something of a secret. Riviera Travel has an eight-day tour through Madeira with wine tasting from £839.