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Switzerland Wine Region Tours

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Overview

Switzerland's viticulture dates back to Roman times, although less than 2 percent of the country's wine production is for export. If you want you taste the excellent vintages made from Pinot Noir and Chasselas grapes, you'll have to tour the western and southern regions of Switzerland where most of the vineyards are located.



filet et vignobe image by rachid amrous-spleen from Fotolia.com

You can plan your own wine excursion or take advantage of a variety of wine tours that combine tasting visits with hiking, local gastronomy and history.

Swiss Wine Regions

Located in the western and southern portions of Switzerland, the cantons of Geneva, Neuchâtel, Ticino, Valais, and Vaud are the top wine-producing regions in the country. You experience different languages and cultures in each region as Valais, Vaud and Geneva are in the three-lakes, "French" region of the west, while Neuchâtel is in the German-speaking east and Ticino in the Italian-speaking south. Valais, Vaud and Neuchâtel each have wine museums as well. According to archaeological finds of bottles that date back to the 2nd century BC, Valais is one of the oldest wine-producing regions in the country.

Types of Grapes

While Switzerland has 40 indigenous vines, the predominant grapes are Chasselas, also called Fendant in some parts of the country, and Pinot Noir. The Chasselas produces delicate white wines, while the Pinot Noir yields fruity reds. You also find Gamay in Geneva and Valais, as well as Merlot in Ticino. In eastern Switzerland, Müller-Thurgau (also called Riesling-Sylvaner) is prominent. Most vineyards are family-owned and are small producers.

Types of Tours

Because most of Switzerland's wine is not exported, most wine region tours are offered by local tour operators, although a few international companies combine some Swiss wine regions with neighboring countries, like the Switzerland and Burgundy Wine Tour. Local tours run from a half-day hiking excursion that culminates in dinner and wine-tasting at a local restaurant to one or two days of touring and tasting in a specific region like Ticino. You also see historical attractions and architecture on even the shortest wine tours. Each wine region has its own tourism office with information on vineyards and wine museums, and an official web site is dedicated to Swiss wine, if you want to plan your own oenophile activities.

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